

Translated Texts for Historians Volume 31

# **The Armenian History attributed to Sebeos**

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commentary by JAMES HOWARD-JOHNSTON Assistance  
from TIM GREENWOOD  
PART I. TRANSLATION AND NOTES

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## PREFACE

The translation of the History attributed to the Armenian Sebeos is a joint undertaking. James Howard-Johnston [JH-J] had been working for some time on the Armenian sources for the history of the first half of the seventh century in the context of Byzantine-Sasanian conflict and the early Muslim conquests. When Robert Thomson [RWT] arrived in Oxford in 1992, we read together parts of the History of Sebeos. In 1994 we were approached by Dr Mary Whitby on behalf of the Editors of *Translated Texts for Historians* with the suggestion that we prepare an English rendering of the Classical Armenian text for that series. We decided that RWT would prepare a translation of the text with notes on questions of specifically Armenian interest, while JH-J would add a general historical commentary putting this work in the broad context of Near Eastern history of the period.

Although the result is a joint product in which the authors have consulted each other regularly, prime responsibility for the English rendering with the accompanying notes lies with RWT. The historical commentary by JH-J is printed separately after the translation, organized by sections rather than by discrete notes to individual points. Our hope is that the reader without knowledge of Armenian will be able to use this evidence in a reasonably reliable fashion, not only placing it within a wider perspective, but also noting at the same time the many problems within the Armenian text as it has come down to us.

We are greatly indebted to Timothy Greenwood, not only for correlating the various sections for the final version of the manuscript, but also for the Index of Technical Terms and for many perceptive comments throughout the book's preparation. The Nubar Pasha Fund of the University of Oxford has provided generous support in the preparation of the book. Maps 1-3 have been prepared by Professor R.H. Hewsen, maps 4-5 by JH-J.

RWT, JH-J Oxford,  
September 1998

## TRANSCRIPTION OF ARMENIAN

Our intention in this volume is to enable the reader to grasp the pronunciation of Armenian words. Thus we have not employed the standard linguistic conventions as followed in *Revue des études arméniennes*. The ' after a consonant indicates the aspirated form. In Armenian, p is to be distinguished from p', etc.

a	b	g	d	e	z	ē	ë	t'	zh	i	
u	p	q	η	t	q	t	ϱ	β	ϑ	h	
l	kh	ts	k	h	dz	ł	ch	m	y	n	sh
L	h	δ	q	ζ	δ	η	δ	đ	j	ū	z
o	ch'	p	j	ř	s	v	t	r	ts'	w	
n	z	u	ŷ	n	u	q	m	p	g	t	
p'	k'	aw									
ψ	φ	o									

## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>A</i>	Armenian MS, Matenadaran 2639, written in 1672 at Bitlis; see Introduction.
<i>Aa</i>	See Bibliography: Texts, s.v. Agat'angelos.
<i>AAE</i>	<i>Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy</i> .
<i>AG</i>	H. Hübschmann, <i>Armenische Grammatik I. Etymologie</i> (Leipzig, 1895; repr. Hildesheim, 1962).
<i>AON</i>	H. Hübschmann, <i>Die altarmenische Ortsnamen</i> (Strasbourg, 1904; repr. Amsterdam, 1969).
<i>AŠX</i>	See Bibliography: Texts, s.v. <i>Ashkharhats'oyts'</i> and Secondary Literature, s.v. Hewsen.
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i> .
<i>C.H.Iran III</i>	E. Yarshater, <i>Cambridge History of Iran III, The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Periods</i> , 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1983).
<i>CSCO</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium</i> .
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i> .
<i>EH</i>	See Bibliography: Texts, s.v. <i>Buzandaran</i> .
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i> .
<i>E.I.</i>	<i>The Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> . New Edition, 9 vols. (incomplete) (Leiden, 1960-).
<i>E.Ir.</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia Iranica</i> , ed. E. Yarshater, 7 vols. (incomplete) (London and Costa Mesa, California, 1985-).
<i>GCS</i>	<i>Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte</i> .
<i>G.P.</i>	See Bibliography: Texts, s.v. George of Pisidia.
<i>HAnjB</i>	H. Achařean, <i>Hayots' Andznannumeri Bařaran</i> , 5 vols. (Erevan, 1942-1962; repr. Beirut, 1972).
<i>HArmB</i>	H. Achařean, <i>Hayerēn Armatakan Bařaran</i> , 7 vols. (Erevan, 1926-1935; rev. ed. 4 vols., Erevan, 1971-1979).
<i>HATS</i>	Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies.
<i>HHSTB</i>	<i>Hayastani ev Harakits' Shrjanneri Telanunneri Bařaran</i> ed. T'.Kh. Hakobyan, St.T. Melik'-Bakhshyan, H.Kh. Barselyan, vol.1 (A-D) (Erevan, 1986), vol.2 (D-K)

# INTRODUCTION

## I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The text traditionally attributed to Sebeos belongs to a very small company of extant chronicles composed in Christendom in the seventh century. It was written at the end of the first phase of the Islamic conquests, when there was a perceptible faltering in the hitherto irresistible advance of Arab forces and hopes rose among Christians that they might awaken from the nightmare, that the triumphs of Islam would turn out to be ephemeral.

The task Sebeos set himself was to record the events which had led to these disasters. In a brief preliminary section, he ranged back to the late fifth century, to connect his subject with that covered by his immediate historical predecessor, tazar P'arpets'i. His own principal topic, though, was the reign of the Sasanian king Khosrov II (590-628) or, as he put it, 'the story of the destructive and ruinous Khosrov, cursed by God'. He is described as a brigand who directed the Aryans' raid over the world, 'who consumed with fire the whole inner [land], disturbing the sea and the dry land, to bring destruction on the whole earth'.

Sebeos' theme was no narrow one. He did not confine himself to an account of Armenian affairs in difficult times, but rather reached out to cover important contemporary developments in the domestic history and mutual relations of Armenia's two great neighbours, the Persian empire, governed from its re-institution in the early third century AD by the Sasanian dynasty, and the East Roman empire. His perspective was Persian rather than Roman, as is made plain by his own definition of his subject. The reign of the last great Sasanian king formed the framework for his often detailed account of warfare, diplomacy and politics in the core of his history. Armenia was presented implicitly as a component part of a Persian world, which provided noble Armenians with a larger arena where they could achieve real distinction.

But there is also a strong dynamic thrust to Sebeos' history as the narrative builds up to the sudden demise of the Sasanian empire and the collapse of the familiar world-order between 635 and 652. He divides these dramatic events into three distinct phases, each of which posed

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different threats to Armenia: first there was a period of close cooperation between the great powers in the 590s which enabled them to apply pressure more effectively than ever before on the Armenian nobility and to extract large fighting forces for service far afield; then Armenia became the main theatre of war in the initial and final phases of the last great conflict between the rival empires (603-630); finally, Armenia felt the force of expanding Islam from as early as 640 and thereafter had at all times to take account of the immense military potential of the Caliphate.

Both aspects of Sebeos' principal theme need some introduction. Armenia must be placed in a wider Near Eastern setting and the strength of its ties with Persia should be gauged. Then the late antique world- order, with its two rival imperial poles (Persian and Roman), and the strains to which it was subjected in the fifth and sixth centuries should be outlined, before a summary account is given of the three final phases in the history of the ancient Near East covered by Sebeos.

### **(i) Armenia in Late Antiquity**

Armenia in antiquity formed the most important component of Transcaucasia.<sup>1</sup> Occupying a varied terrain of tangled mountain ranges, sweeping lava flows and rich alluvial plains, the Armenians were a more formidable power than their northern neighbours, the Iberians and the heterogeneous peoples of the Caucasus, and had drawn the Albanians to their east into their cultural orbit. But Transcaucasia as a whole was not, and is not, tidily demarcated from the surrounding world. Physically it acts as a giant causeway linking the two highland power-centres of the Near East, the greater Iranian and the lesser Anatolian plateaux. Of these two neighbouring worlds, it was the eastern, Iran, which could exert influence over Armenia the more easily. In classical antiquity, Armenia with the rest of Transcaucasia was transformed into a large north-western outlier of successive empires centred on the Iranian plateau, the Achaemenid, the Parthian and the Sasanian. For their own security, each of those empires needed to control the Caucasus and the

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<sup>1</sup> Transcaucasia is a convenient, though modern, designation for the complex world backing onto the Caucasus, comprising, in late antiquity, Abasgia, Lazica, Suania, Iberia, Albania and Armenia. The viewpoint is that of the north, from the steppes which generated formidable nomad powers, more than capable of menacing the peoples living beyond the Caucasus mountains.



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lands backing onto it, and the brute facts of geography which made this imperative also made it possible. The steppe on the Caspian shore is easily reached from Iran proper and itself provides easy access into the deep interior of Transcaucasia, along the open valleys of the Kur and Araxes rivers which arc round the south-eastern redoubt of Armenia (modern Karabakh) and run to distant watersheds in the west. Even the Roman empire in its heyday could only exert a fleeting hegemony beyond those watersheds and had to be content with no more than a quarter of Armenia in the partition agreed with Sasanian Persia in 387.

Persian influence had percolated into Armenia over the centuries and can be seen to be pervasive in late antiquity when indigenous sources provide us with a first clear view of Armenian institutions and culture. The nobles, *nakharars*, who shaped Armenian political life were a Persian aristocracy writ small. They headed a clearly stratified social order and were themselves used to the careful gradations of aristocratic status which had evolved around the Sasanian monarchy. Theirs was a courtly culture remote but nonetheless moulded by that of the Persian court. The great social occasions were the same and were regulated by a similar etiquette. Grand hunts helped to develop and maintain the fighting prowess needed to sustain the status of individual noble families with a steady flow of prestige. Banquets enabled greater and lesser noble houses to display their power and by their generous entertainment to renew and strengthen their ties with friends and followers. On these and other occasions minstrels might commemorate the past achievements of the family, reciting tales of heroic deeds in war, of long-drawn-out intrigues, in which low cunning would play a part beside valour.<sup>2</sup>

A countervailing force began to play on Armenian society in the fourth and fifth centuries, as Christianity took root. New religious connections were established, with Syria and Anatolia, which would, in the longer run, fray the long-standing cultural and ideological dependency on Persia. By the mid fifth century, the opposition between the new faith, tugging at Armenia from the west, and its traditional secular orientation to the east produced a palpable tension. But the hold of Persia was not broken. When the Sasanians cracked down on Christianity and made observance of Zoroastrian rites a condition for preferment, the leaders of armed resistance could not escape the gravitational pull of Iran. Political and individual existence was almost inconceivable

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2 Garsoian, 'Prolegomena' and 'The Locus'.

outside the empire of the Aryans. It would take another century and three major wars between the Christian and Zoroastrian powers, before their shared religion gave the Romans real diplomatic grip over Armenia.<sup>3</sup>

While Persian secular culture and a Persian code of aristocratic conduct exerted great influence in Armenia, they could not entirely shape the behaviour and thought-world of the *nakharars*. Heirs of a distinctive local culture, sheltering behind a language barrier (permeable but nonetheless a barrier), living in a peculiarly fragmented landscape which the snows and bitter cold of winter broke down annually into its constituent parts, the *nakharars* were unusually particularist. The locality, the *gawar*, of which there were some 200, was prime. The local noble family, its extended kindred held together by a system of inheritance which allowed no alienation of property or rights through female lines, sustained its status within the locality or localities under its control by adhering to traditional aristocratic values and by competing with the *nakharars* of neighbouring localities for prestige and power (mainly in the form of followers and disposable wealth). Late antique Armenia was a land in which local lordship was well developed more than half a millennium before it took root in north-west Europe. It signalled its presence and durability by the widespread use of surnames and by the emergence of the castle as the nodal point of *nakharar* power. Of course, some of these cohesive, locally rooted noble families acquired and retained greater prestige and power than others, but not even the greatest of families - in Sebeos' day the Mamikoneans - could exercise more than an attenuated, persuasive authority over the middling and lesser sort of *nakharar*. The aristocratic social order in Armenia was naturally resistant to higher authority, whether from within Armenia or from without, and was to prove peculiarly resilient and tenacious in late antiquity and the early middle ages.<sup>4</sup>

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3 bazar 136-9, 166-9.

4 Localities: Hewsen, 'Introduction'. Armenian social structure in general: Toumanoff, *Studies* 11<sup>^</sup>—41 (a survey marred by frequent resort to the legalistic language of medieval European feudalism). Bar on female inheritance: Adontz/Garsoian 141-54 (misinterpreting a limited measure to impose the Roman law of inheritance on the most romanized of the four Roman provinces of Armenia as a general attack on a key element of the *nakharar* system).

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**(ii) Relations between the Great Powers**

The Persian-Roman agreement of 387 which brought about the partition of Armenia inaugurated over a century of peaceful co-existence. Fighting flared up on only two occasions, but both crises were rapidly and successfully defused. This phase of symbiosis was a remarkable phenomenon, given the antithetical established religions of the two powers, their clashing imperial ideologies and the fragile, artificial frontier separating their rich Mesopotamian and Syrian provinces. Recurring, full-scale conflict in the preceding century and a half had demonstrated that they were evenly matched in resources and that, with the passage of time, as the arms race multiplied the number of fortresses on both sides of the frontier in the main Mesopotamian theatre of war, there was less and less to be gained from warfare and at increasing cost. But the rapprochement was precipitated by events in the steppe world. The sudden irruption of Altaic nomads into the western half of Eurasia in the middle of the fourth century brought formidable fighting forces to bear against the northern frontiers of both sedentary powers in turn - the Chionites against the north-eastern extremity of the Sasanian empire (medieval Khurasan) from the 350s, the Huns into Ukraine from the 370s from where they disrupted long-established Roman patterns of client- management in eastern Europe and were soon able to attack both halves of the empire. There can be little doubt that rising danger from the north made the governing elites of both empires aware of their common interest as ordered states of the settled, civilized south and ensured that they remained committed to the accommodation of 387 long after it had been reached.<sup>5</sup>

Why then did relations turn sour towards the end of the fifth century? It was not as if the two sides were being driven in different directions by domestic considerations. On the contrary, as a large Christian enclave consolidated itself alongside the large community of Babylonian Jewry in lower Mesopotamia, demanding fair consideration and obtaining it from most kings, the old antagonism between Zoroastrian dualism and Christian monotheism was muted.<sup>6</sup> At the same time there was a steady

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5 General on Persian-Roman relations, fourth-early sixth centuries: Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, Howard-Johnston, 'The Great Powers'; Whitby, *Emperor Maurice*.

6 Brock, 'Christians', who, however, inclines to follow the Roman sources in stressing the crises in Persian-Roman relations and the resulting bouts of domestic tension between the Sasanian government and its Christian subjects.

convergence between the social and economic structures of the two sides: urbanization gathered pace in the core Iranian plateau territories of the Sasanian empire, nurturing elites of their own to take an initially modest place beside the long-established court-centred aristocracy; and a new governing class of court magnates with trans-Mediterranean connections and ramified landholdings interposed itself between the imperial authority and the cities in the East Roman empire.<sup>7</sup> The principal destabilizing factor is to be sought in the same foreign quarter, the nomad world of the Eurasian steppes, which had brought about the long period of good relations. Catastrophe in central Asia in 484 - a crushing defeat of the full Sasanian field army by the Hephthalites, the death of the king, Peroz, who was in command, and a humiliating period of subsequent tributary status - instituted a prolonged and profound domestic crisis within the Sasanian empire. Traditional beliefs and the traditional social order came under threat in the reign of Kawat I (488-531). Kawat showed considerable political agility, lost, then recovered his throne, and resorted to the ultimate weapon of many a beleaguered autocratic regime - a foreign adventure which might bind together fractious interest groups and gather a rich haul of booty and prestige to buttress his position.

A single event, therefore, began the unravelling of good relations between the Sasanian and East Roman empires - Kawat's sudden invasion in great force in autumn 502, through the Roman sector of Armenia, then south across the Taurus into northern Mesopotamia where he besieged and captured Amida, the greatest city of Rome's frontier zone. Two years of sustained counter-offensive, involving perhaps the largest army ever deployed by the Romans in a single campaign, compelled the Persians to return Amida (for a price) in 505 and to accept an armistice late in 506. The *status quo* was restored but not the goodwill necessary to sustain it.<sup>8</sup>

The 502-505 war was the first of five wars, each larger in scale and greater in intensity than the one before, which were increasingly to dominate the Near East in the sixth and early seventh centuries. A long interlude of uneasy peace, used by the Romans to strengthen their diplomatic position on the northern and southern flanks of the zones of conflict as well as to improve the physical defences of south-west

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7 Howard-Johnston, 'The Great Powers' 206-11; P. Heather, 'New Men'.

8 Christensen, *L'Iran 292-1*, 334-53.

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Armenia, was followed by their war of revenge (527-532), the second in this series of wars and no more successful than the first. Thereafter political conditions in the steppe continued to be a prime factor in shaping relations between the empires: the fading of Hephthalite power by 540 assuredly encouraged Khosrov I (531-579) to launch his own surprise attack on the Romans in that year and thereby to provoke a third, much longer conflict which was to last the best part of two decades; the creation by the Turks in the 550s of an empire straddling the whole of central Asia forced Khosrov to make significant diplomatic concessions in order to secure a durable peace in the west and bring the third war to a formal close with the peace treaty of 561; finally it was a Turkish diplomatic initiative, offering the Romans an alliance against Persia, which tempted Justin II (565-578) to go to war in 572, inaugurating a fourth, prolonged and intensive bout of conflict (572-591). The consequences were fateful. For, by agreeing to joint offensive action with the great nomad power of the north, Justin sliced through the only strong bond of common interest linking the two empires, and the war itself was to go disastrously wrong right from the start.

There were other contributory factors. By the end of the fifth century, Christianity was corroding Armenia's traditional affinities with Persia (and the tough anti-Christian measures introduced by the Persians in the middle of the fifth century backfired). There was thus a real and growing danger that the Romans might be able to draw more and more of Christian Transcaucasia into their sphere of influence, thereby exposing Iran itself to increasing threat along easy lines of attack.<sup>9</sup> Far to the south, in Arabia, the balance of power favoured the Persians. They had built up an extensive and effective system of beduin alliances, which were managed primarily through a favoured client dynasty, the Lakhm Nasrids, from Hira, on the edge of the lower Mesopotamian alluvium. By the beginning of the sixth century, the Arab forces led by the Lakhm were clearly superior to the array of local Arab clients shielding Rome's desert frontage, thereby exposing both Syria and Palestine to direct attack across the desert. Both growing military threats, that to the Sasanians in the north, and that to the Romans in the south were hard

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<sup>9</sup> Two defections demonstrated that the danger was a real one by the 520s: the new king of Lazica, Tzath, came to Constantinople for baptism and investiture in 521 or 522; the Iberian king, Gurgun, transferred his allegiance to the Romans around 525 (Greatrex 132- 3,137).

to counter: neither arena presented serious natural impediments to an attacker; the cordon of fortifications protecting Syria and Palestine, instituted at the end of the third century with the function of policing movements along the desert frontier, had been thinned and could not possibly cope with an attack in force; and there was a dangerous dearth of man-made defences in Armenia which might have reduced the permeability of the frontier zone and acted as an effective deterrent against attack.

Mutual awareness of increasing vulnerability on one flank, and tempting prospects of gain on the other, introduced a new and dangerous sensitivity and volatility into international relations. Something akin to a great game developed along the whole length of their mutual frontier, as each side sought to gain or counter an advantage. But despite all their efforts, resulting for the Persians in their gaining temporary possession of Lazica in the 540s (with the longer-term possibility of threatening Constantinople by sea) and for the Romans in their achieving an ephemeral dominance of the northern desert in the 550s through their new preeminent Arab clients, the Ghassan, the geopolitical position at the opening of the fourth and penultimate Persian-Roman war in 572 was much as it had been at the beginning of the sixth century.<sup>10</sup> But attitudes had been hardened, not least by an increasing militarization of the two societies instituted by the reform programmes of the young rival rulers in the 530s, Khosrov I and Justinian I, who pursued the same aim of increasing tax yields by different means."

### (iii) Late Sixth Century

The first notable event of the recent past recorded by Sebeos was the assassination of the military governor (*marzpan*) of Persarmenia in February 572 by Armenian insurgents, which triggered the fourth Persian-Roman conflict of the century. He then speeds through the whole course of the war, noting fleetingly a few engagements which took place in Armenia, so as to close rapidly with the first substantial episode of his narrative, the political convulsion of the Sasanian empire (589-591) which brought the war to an end. From this point on he provides a relatively rich and varied diet of historical notices, almost

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10 Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 197-202, 207-18, 250-4.

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entirely focused on the fortunes of Armenia, Armenian troops and noted Armenian *nakharars* over the following two and a half decades, with one important digression into Sasanian domestic history. Since his coverage is both fragmentary and sometimes confusingly arranged, it is necessary to give a summary history of the period.<sup>11</sup>

The principal reasons for the evident deterioration in the relations of the great powers through the sixth century have been outlined above. The Turkish diplomatic initiative of 568/569 was the main precipitant of the fourth war. But much else was going on at the time, as the great game reached a climax. Justin II was in secret contact with dissidents in Persarmenia where traditional loyalties were by now so frayed that there was a real prospect of raising the whole fractious country in rebellion against Sasanian rule. The aged Khosrov I Anush Ēgriap ('of immortal soul') was, however, more than his match. He counterattacked diplomatically in the south, imposing direct rule on south Arabia in 570/571 and, by summer 573, succeeded in suborning the Ghassan, Rome's leading Arab clients. In the north-east he managed, by means unknown, to abort or halt the Turkish attack (there is no evidence that it materialized on cue in 573). Although the Persarmenians did rise up in 572 and succeeded, with Roman aid, in capturing the capital, Dvin, the rebellion was contained. Then, in 573, Khosrov's army swept up the Euphrates (the Ghassan having melted away) and caught the Roman army by surprise near Nisibis, while the Lakhm, Persia's Arab clients, raided deep into Syria. The comprehensive victory achieved in this campaign enabled Persian forces, over the following years, first to concentrate on re-establishing firm control of Persarmenia (achieved by the end of 577) and then to take to the offensive south of the Taurus. After an interlude in 579, when fighting yielded to diplomacy, the Romans launched an offensive of their own (580-581) which culminated in a direct attack on lower Mesopotamia, but Persian defences proved highly effective. Thereafter the war settled down into one of attrition in northern Mesopotamia.

As the 580s advanced, both powers faced problems from their nomad neighbours on other frontiers. The Avars set about the conquest of the Balkans, working their way down the Danube valley and then, from autumn 586, attacking Thrace. The damage which they and their Slav

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<sup>11</sup> Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 138-82 (Balkans), 250-307 (Near East), supplemented by historical notes 4,5,7-12,15-19,22-24 below.

11 Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* 1,278-85; Rubin, 'Reforms'.



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neighbours caused was so serious that troops had to be redeployed from the eastern front in 587. At roughly the same time, the Sasanians were compelled to deploy a large field army, under the command of Vahram Ch'obin, in the north-east to face the Turks. The strain of the long war now told on both sides. First Roman troops in the east, angered by certain economy measures announced in 588, staged a muted mutiny, or military go-slow, confining themselves mainly to defending their positions. Then a greater crisis broke in the Sasanian empire as Vahram Ch'obin was returning victorious from the east. Late in 589 he rebelled against Khosrov's son and successor, Ormizd, rendered unpopular by the strict control of the administration and of expenditure enforced by war. As Vahram's army advanced by a circuitous route on the capital, Ctesiphon, Sasanian loyalists deserted Ormizd to rally round his son Khosrov II Aprucz ('victorious'), who was enthroned on 15 February 590. But since his position militarily was no stronger than his father's, he was soon forced to flee to Roman territory and to ask for Roman assistance to recover his throne. After considerable debate and in return for very substantial territorial concessions in Transcaucasia, which would extend Roman rule over the greater part of Armenia and Iberia, the Romans committed themselves to his cause in summer 590 and, in conjunction with Persian loyalist forces, restored him to power in a well-planned operation put into effect the following year.

The next decade witnessed an unprecedented degree of co-operation between the great powers, which greatly limited the freedom of manoeuvre traditionally enjoyed by the *nakharars*. There was no longer a safe-haven across the border for those who had fallen foul of one or other set of imperial authorities. If there was a danger of armed insurrection (as there was in 594, in the Persian sector), the military forces of the two sides would combine to snuff it out. Policies too were harmonized. Both empires sought to draw substantial numbers of fighting-men into their service. Thereby they both enhanced their own military power and rendered Armenia somewhat more pliable. There was no question, however, of their setting out to dismantle the traditional, hieratic, parti- cularist social order of Armenia (a plan ascribed to the Emperor Maurice by Sebeos). Both Roman and Persian authorities worked with rather than against existing structures. The highest commands were allocated to members of the grandest families, Musher Mamikonean in Roman service, Smbat Bagratuni in Sasanian. Whole units were recruited under the command of their traditional leaders, the *nakharars*

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of the localities from which they came. There was also an element of competition in the recruiting process which worked to the Armenians' advantage. It was not easy to allocate all *nakharar* families, especially the grandest with ramified connections, neatly to one or other sector. Some therefore had the option of choosing in which army to serve and exercised it. Some junior members of the Mamikonean family did so, as did a small group of refractory and potentially dangerous *nakharars* who were offered a choice of imperial authority to which to submit in 594.

There were differences of approach. The Romans, with a more urgent need for additional troops, because of the continuing grave crisis in the Balkans, were ready to apply more pressure. They instituted three distinct recruiting drives. The first was an emergency measure introduced before the end of the war in the east, in response to Avar successes in 586, which eventually provoked armed resistance, led by Smbat Bagratuni in 589. The second was part of the military reorientation made possible by the events of 589-591, troops being raised in Armenia to join those regular Roman forces and Armenian contingents which were transferred from the east to the Balkans for a sustained counter-offensive against the Slavs from 593. There they served under Mushel Mamikonean, until his death in a heavy defeat inflicted by the Avars in 598. Finally, in an effort to make good the losses suffered then, orders were issued to raise a new force and thirty thousand households were targeted. Not unnaturally there was considerable reluctance to respond. The Persians, by contrast, relied more on financial inducements, and the comparative attraction of service in Iran as against the unfamiliar and hazardous Balkans. Even so, they too encountered resistance on one occasion (in 594) and, later, lost a whole Armenian force, stationed at Ispahan, when it deserted *en masse* to the rebel Vstam.

The Armenians were therefore in no danger of losing their semi- independence in the decade following Khosrov's restoration to the Sasanian throne in 591. The Romans were too preoccupied with pressing military problems in the Balkans and in Italy to do anything beyond extracting troops from Armenia, while Khosrov II could not afford to alienate the population of what remained of Persarmenia, now that the Armenians had finally broken free of their long-lasting ideological dependence on Persia. As for the Romans and the Persians, the balance of power shifted perceptibly in favour of the latter. The rebel forces of Vstam, Khosrov's maternal uncle, who had briefly challenged Khosrov in the field in 595 before being driven back into the Elburz mountains,

were finally defeated in 601 (by an army commanded by Smbat Bagratuni). Khosrov's domestic position was remarkably secure, given the circumstances of his accession, while that of his benefactor Maurice was deteriorating under the stress of unceasing war.

#### **(iv) The Last Great War of Antiquity**

A mutiny of the Balkan field army precipitated a coup against Maurice in November 602. Maurice was executed together with his sons (with the possible exception of the eldest, Theodosius, who was rumoured to have escaped). Khosrov, who owed his throne to Maurice, could claim every justification for mobilizing that winter. But besides his natural desire to avenge his protector and ally, there were reasons of state encouraging him to go to war: the territorial concessions extracted by Maurice had gravely weakened Persia, not only by granting the Romans a full half share of Transcaucasia but also by giving them control of the whole length of the Armenian Taurus and hence of the direct routes connecting the Armenian and Mesopotamian theatres of war. Circumstances too were propitious: the Turks had entered a phase of political introversion (which would last until 614) and it soon became plain that there was widespread opposition to the regime of the new emperor, Phocas, which was likely to disrupt Roman military preparations.

The Persian-Roman war of 603-630 was the last, the longest and the most violent of the conflicts fought by the two empires in late antiquity. Since it is the centrepiece of Sebeos' history and he provides a great deal of valuable, if at times dislocated, information, it is worth describing in some detail.<sup>13</sup> The reader of the text and its associated historical notes will thereby be able to place individual episodes in their proper historical context.

There were three clearly differentiated phases to the war. The first, extending from the opening actions of spring 603 to late summer 610, was a phase of attrition. Without serious distractions on his northern or north-eastern frontiers facing the steppes, Khosrov was able to concentrate his field forces in the west. His initial objectives, the threatening forward fortress of Dara in northern Mesopotamia and the territories

<sup>13</sup> What follows is a summary of the conclusions reached in Historical Commentary, nn.25-45, 47 below. A full analysis of the third phase is presented in Howard-Johnston, 'Heraclius' Persian Campaigns'.

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in Transcaucasia which he had been forced to cede to the Romans in 591, were attained in the first three years of fighting. Then, after a widespread recruiting campaign in 606, he launched simultaneous major offensives in both theatres of war with forces which were now probably considerably larger and certainly better-motivated than the Roman forces facing them. By 610 the whole of the Roman sector of Armenia and northern Mesopotamia were in Persian hands. Only the Euphrates, the Romans' innermost line of defence, stood between them and the interior of Anatolia in the north or the rich provinces of Syria and Palestine in the south.

Political divisions within the East Roman empire contributed to the initial Persian success in 603 and 604 - since the commander-in-chief of the Roman Near East had rebelled against the new regime of Phocas at the centre and co-operated with the Persians, thereby depriving the beleaguered garrison of Dara of any prospect of relief in a reasonable time. A second round of internal conflict, this time much wider in its scope, fatally weakened the Roman defensive effort in 610. The governor of north Africa, the elder Heraclius, had launched a revolt aimed at overthrowing Maurice's murderer and successor Phocas some two years earlier. The revolt had steadily built up momentum, as Egypt was won over and anti-government propaganda was sprayed to considerable effect over Syria and Palestine. It now culminated in a direct naval attack on Constantinople which, in the event, met little resistance and installed its commander, the younger Heraclius, as emperor in October 610. Under the cover of these dramatic and distracting events, the Persians crossed the Euphrates and overran northern Syria, reaching the Mediterranean coast beyond Antioch. A year later they thrust deep into Anatolia and seized Caesarea of Cappadocia. These were the opening campaigns of the second phase of the war (610-621), a phase in which the pace of Persian advance quickened markedly once a renewed Turkish threat in central Asia had been successfully countered by the end of 615.

The Roman empire was now divided in two. The military high command was gravely hampered by having to rely on sea transport to move troops between Anatolia and the provinces south of the Persian bridgehead in northern Syria. The Persians held the strategic initiative and could strike at will against either of the two halves of the empire. This difficult situation was rendered permanent when Heraclius' counterthrust of 613, aimed at recovering a land corridor in the region of

Antioch, failed and he was forced to fall back on Anatolia. The Persians made good use of their position, first to push through southern Syria (Damascus fell in 613) to the northern edge of Palestine where they made Caesarea their forward base. Their attention remained focused on the Near East in 614, where they attacked and captured Jerusalem. In the following years it oscillated between the two remaining aggregates of Roman territory in Asia, in a way which succeeded in bewildering the Romans and preventing them from anticipating future Persian moves. In 615 Anatolia was transected by an expeditionary force which reached the Bosphorus. In 616 Palestine was brought under direct Persian rule, in an operation involving probably a massive display of force and great dexterity in handling the different, antagonistic local religious groups. A double invasion of Anatolia in 617 seems to have acted as a large-scale diversionary operation before the successful invasion of Egypt. The Roman grip on Egypt was prised loose when Alexandria fell in 619. Within two years the whole of Egypt with its immense resources was securely held by the Persians.

Egypt was the richest of the prizes captured in the second phase of the war. The Persians could now supplement their own resources with those of the whole Roman Near East as they planned the third and final phase of the war. From their forward positions on the upper Euphrates and in Cilicia they prepared to invade Anatolia and advance towards the nerve-centre of the Roman empire, Constantinople. They had made contact with the nomad Avars who had established a powerful state in eastern Europe, centred on the Hungarian plain, and intended to coordinate operations with them. At first things went according to plan. The Persians attacked from the east in 622 and set about the systematic conquest of the northern edge of the Anatolian plateau, while an advance force penned back the Roman field army, under the emperor Heraclius' personal command, in Bithynia where it had been exercising. Heraclius may have succeeded in breaking out and winning some minor successes, but he was soon forced to hurry back to Constantinople when the Avars attacked in force in the west. The Persian advance continued the next year, reaching the north-western segment of the Anatolian plateau where Ancyra was captured. Heraclius was detained in the west, engaged in the difficult and perilous business of trying to patch up relations with the Avars.

Then came one of the most astonishing reversals of fortune in the annals of war. Heraclius cut loose from his own territory and counter-

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attacked with what remained of the Roman field armies. Troops who had suffered defeat after defeat in the first two phases of the war had now been transformed into a well-trained, fast-moving and highly motivated force. Heraclius' single greatest achievement was to rebuild their morale. This he did with the aid of a theme developed by Armenian churchmen at the time of Armenia's armed resistance to the forcible imposition of Zoroastrian worship in 450-451. The war, he insisted, was a holy war; death in battle would bring the crown of martyrdom to his men and direct access to the rewards of paradise. In spring 624 he invaded Transcaucasia, where he was to stay for nearly two years, causing as much damage and disruption as possible, outmanoeuvring the three Persian armies which were sent to trap him in 625, summoning the Christians of the north to aid the Christian empire in its hour of need, and striving to bring the revived Turkish empire into the war on the Roman side. He survived the supreme crisis of the war in 626, when two Persian armies invaded Anatolia and a massive Avar force besieged Constantinople, and returned to Transcaucasia in 627. The Turks had answered his call and had intervened, occupying Albania and invading Iberia.

Heraclius met the *Yabghu Khagan*, viceroy of the supreme ruler of the Turkish empire, outside Tbilisi (Tp'khis), which the Turkish army was besieging, in the course of 627. The purpose of the summit was evidently to plan joint operations against the Persians. Then Heraclius moved south towards the Zagros mountains, his safety and that of his troops guaranteed by the presence of a massive Turkish force. In October, as winter drew nearer, the Turks withdrew north, and Heraclius, in a bold stroke which took the Persians completely by surprise, struck south across the mountains, won a decisive victory in the region of Nineveh (on 12 December), and advanced rapidly into the metropolitan region, thereby undercutting the prestige of Khosrov and encouraging opposition to him at court and in the military high command. After two months of sustained military and political pressure, Khosrov was deposed in a virtually bloodless *putsch*, headed by his eldest son Kawat II, on the night of 23-24 February 628. Immediately the new king sued for peace. Negotiations proved difficult, but eventually the Persian occupation forces evacuated the Roman Near East (in 629). The return of peace and the victory of the Christian empire over its Zoroastrian adversary were formally celebrated on 21 March 630 when Heraclius made a ceremonial entry into Jerusalem bringing back the fragments of the True Cross from Persian captivity.

**(v) The Arab Conquests**

Such in outline is the dramatic story of the last great war of antiquity, to which Sebeos is one of the most important witnesses. It was total war. Each antagonist committed all available resources, material, human and ideological, to the struggle. The nomad powers of the north, Avars and Turks, were drawn in, and there were important repercussions in the west and south. As East Roman prestige plummeted throughout the Mediterranean world and its northern hinterlands, the non-Roman peoples settled in former Roman territories were released from ideological submission to the empire. In Arabia too, the news from the north impressed itself on men's minds. The established world-order was evidently breaking down, a clear sign to some that the end of time was near. A sense of imminent doom was an important strand in the early preaching of Muhammad, before the *Hijra* ('emigration') to Medina in 622. In the short term Muhammad's words had a profound, transforming effect only on his immediate listeners at Mecca, but before long they would remould politics as well as ideas in an important region of Arabia, and the consequences of that would affect the whole of western Eurasia.

Seldom, if ever, in the history of humanity has the political order of so large an area been transformed so radically in so short a time as was that of the Near East in the two decades following the death of Muhammad in 632. The extraordinary feats of the Dutch republic in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are dwarfed in scale, while the only commensurate phenomena in classical antiquity, the rise and expansion of Greece or Rome, were sluggish processes compared to that of the *umma* (Muslim community) founded by Muhammad.

There can be no doubting the significance of the Arab conquests which are the central theme of the third and final section of Sebeos' work. The established binary world-order in western Eurasia was destroyed in a few strokes. The two main agricultural resource-bases of the Near East, the Mesopotamian alluvium and the Nile valley, were annexed. Sasanian military power was broken and the empire absorbed whole. The East Roman empire was stripped of its rich Near Eastern provinces and driven back behind the mountain defences of Anatolia, to maintain a precarious independence at great economic and cultural cost on the margin of the new Islamic empire. That empire, initially lightly governed from a small number of widely separated military bases,

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began to acquire a proper bureaucratic grip over its subjects from the end of the seventh century. It created a vast single market in which unhampered mercantile enterprise stimulated three centuries of economic growth and extensive urbanization in the continental interior (including Transcaucasia). Ideas could also circulate widely and relatively freely (outside Arabia, where Islam was imposed). Confident in the intellectual and religious force of their faith, the Arabs left its propagation to cultural market forces (with a little fiscal help) and those forces proved remarkably efficacious over the coming generations.<sup>14</sup>

The causes of so extraordinary a phenomenon are not hard to identify. First and foremost, there was the impetus imparted by the new faith with its awesome, austere monotheism. It should cause little surprise that it brought about a coalescence of fractious kin-based groups over a steadily increasing proportion of Arabia, nor that it induced unprecedented discipline and commitment in soldiers who knew that they were Allah's earthly agents and were putting his plan for mankind into effect. The hesitant, skirmishing character of traditional beduin engagement was cast aside. The small, basic units of beduin life, mobile, fluid, adaptable extended families, operating according to a shared code of values within a framework of loose-knit tribes, were welded together into large, effective fighting forces.<sup>15</sup> This process had already been set in train by the actions of the organized powers, Persian and Roman, on the periphery of Arabia. As they sought to project their influence into the interior through nexus of Arab clients, the flow of patronage and cash affected the traditional social order, enhancing authority, inducing greater social cohesion - an effect which rippled outwards in what was a single, competitive, segmentary system.

Once proper coagulation was achieved and large, highly motivated cavalry forces could be deployed from within Arabia, both the neighbouring empires were strategically vulnerable. Rome's desert frontage was in effect indefensible, given its length, the absence of natural defences (apart from the central natural redoubt of the Golan heights, Jabal Hawran and the adjoining *harras*), and the advantage of inner lines enjoyed by the Arabs. Persia was in a stronger position, with a natural line of defence along the Euphrates, and canals and irrigation channels impeding movement in the central alluvium. But the Sasanians relied

14 Kennedy, *Prophet*; Donner, *Conquests*; Lombard.

15 Lancaster and Lancaster, 'Tribal Formations'.



even more than the Romans on Arab clients to guard the desert approaches and the new system of multiple clientage, introduced in the first decade of the seventh century in place of their previous reliance on a single, premier client (the Lakhm), was not impervious to the call of Islam. With several key groups changing sides, Persian forward defence was gravely weakened and the Arabs acquired valuable local knowledge to guide them across the irrigated country beyond the Euphrates.

The importance of the phenomenon of Arab expansion may be indisputable, and the process may be susceptible to explanation on the lines suggested above, but the process itself is hard to document. For serious doubt has been cast on the value of the voluminous materials about the conquests presented in Islamic sources, and there is very little non-Islamic material of demonstrable worth to put in its place.<sup>16</sup> This is a void which Sebeos can partially fill, as two leading Islamicists realized several years ago.<sup>17</sup> This is the greatest service rendered by Sebeos to latter-day historians. With the help of the information which he supplies, it becomes possible to analyse the process of expansion, to break it down into a series of distinct campaigns, and to determine the degree to which they were planned and co-ordinated. This is a task undertaken in the historical notes to the third section of Sebeos' work, the results of which may be summarized as follows.

The record of events in Sebeos, supplemented from other Christian sources, suggests strongly that Muslim forces were concentrated against a single major target at a time. First it was Palestine and Syria, which were opened up to invasion and occupation by at least three battles fought in 634 and 635. Then it was the turn of Mesopotamia, where an initial thrust into the alluvium in 636 led to an ultimately disastrous Sasanian counter-attack in winter 637-638 and the fall of the capital, Ctesiphon. In the first half of 640 (itself followed, within two years, by the conquest of Khuzistan). The next targets were Egypt, largely overrun by late spring 641 (when the issue of whether or not to continue the resistance contributed to a serious political crisis in Constantinople), and the Iranian plateau, conquered piecemeal 643-652 after the battle of Niwand (642) had opened convenient routes of invasion. Finally, forces were regrouped for a grand land and sea assault on the rump Roman empire in 654.

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<sup>16</sup> Noth/Conrad.

<sup>17</sup> Crone/Cook, *Hagarism* 68.

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It is evident, even from this briefest of outlines, that there was effective co-ordination of operations, which implies in turn some overall strategic planning. From this, without any other evidence, it could legitimately be inferred that effective authority was being exercised from the centre, presumably by the acknowledged leaders of the Muslim community, Muhammad's successors, the Rashidun caliphs. That they wielded political authority is made plain by Sebeos (they are designated kings and are superior to Muawiya, the formidable governor of Syria). He also states unambiguously that they were in overall charge of military planning, *a propos* of the redirection of forces from the north-eastern extremity of Iran (after the defeat, flight and death of the last Sasanian ruler, Yazkert III, in 652) to the Mediterranean, with what remained of the East Roman empire designated their next target. There are three separate references to the caliph's management of this complex process. The inescapable conclusion that the nascent Islamic community had state-like powers which were highly effective in war should not occasion too much surprise. After all, over a century earlier, Yusuf, Jewish ruler of Himyar (522-525), had demonstrated the organizational capacity of pre-Islamic south Arabia in a series of well coordinated operations which imposed his authority on the Yemen in a few months. Effective kingship was nothing new in Arabia.<sup>18</sup>

Sebeos ends his history with a rush of information about recent and contemporary events within his wide field of vision. Everything revolves around the advances of Arabs, who first impinged upon Armenia in 640 and 643. Alongside the record of Arab successes, an account is given of the reactions in Persia, Transcaucasia and the East Roman empire. As the crisis continued and intensified, there was increasing disagreement as to how to respond both among the Armenian nobles and in the governing circle in Constantinople. Then, in 654 and 655, relief came. A series of reverses - before Constantinople, in Cappadocia, in Media, Iberia and the Caucasus - gave fleeting hope to non-Muslims.

In the short run the hope was justified. The Muslim world imploded. A prolonged struggle (656-661) for pre-eminence was fought out between Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law 'Ali, who had the backing of important interests in Arabia, Iraq and, initially, Egypt, and Muawiya securely entrenched in Syria and Palestine. The Romans, or

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Byzantines as we should now call them (now that they were reduced to a rump state), seized the opportunity to assert their authority over Transcaucasia and thereby unite eastern Christendom in the face of Islam. But, as Sebeos notes in one of three postscripts, the civil war ended in the comprehensive victory of Muawiya, involving rather more bloodshed according to him than is admitted by Islamic traditions. Muawiya's success boded ill for the future.

Before long, the Arabs were once again the political masters of Transcaucasia. They resumed their outward movement, with Byzantium as their most prestigious and most conveniently positioned target. The Armenians had to learn to operate within the new Islamic world, relying ultimately on mountain fastnesses, deep-rooted local lordship and the new religion which they had imbibed from the Roman world in late antiquity to maintain their identity and semi-independence. The Byzantines were entering a long, grim era of military struggle, in which the wholehearted commitment of the peasant mass of the population and guerrilla techniques of fighting were to play a vital part.<sup>19</sup>

19 Laurent/Canard; Whittow, *Orthodox Byzantium*.

## II. THE ARMENIAN TEXT

### (i) The Manuscripts

The text translated below was first published by T'adeos Mihrdatean in Constantinople in 1851 under the title 'History of bishop Sebeos on Heraclius'. Since the item in both of the manuscripts he used has neither author nor title, the attribution needs some explanation. In fact Mihrdatean was not the first to think that a lost work mentioned in medieval Armenian texts had been discovered. Brosset in his report of travels in Armenia and Georgia in 1847-1848 had already briefly described the work, noting that in the opinion of Jean Chakhatounof [Yovhannes Shahkhaf unean] it was the History of Sebeos.<sup>1</sup> Shahkhat'unean had so identified the text in 1833 in his description of a manuscript written in 1672 in the monastery of John the Baptist at Bitlis, now in the Matena- daran, no. 2639.<sup>2</sup> As early as 1831, in a letter dated to 15 May, he refers to the description of the building of the church of Zuart'nots' 'in the History of Sebeos'.<sup>3</sup>

This manuscript, Mat 2639 [henceforth *A*] was one of the two MSS used by Mihrdatean for his 1851 edition. The other was an older MS, dated to 1568, which has now disappeared. *A* remains the earliest surviving witness of the History attributed to Sebeos, and from it all other known copies derive. It is a famous manuscript, containing texts of other historians, and the earliest complete texts of Lazar P'arpets'i and Koriwn.<sup>4</sup> The abbots of the monastery of St John the Baptist, Amir- dolu," played an important role in the preservation of Armenian historical works by having copies made from ancient, now lost, codices.<sup>5</sup> Corruption of *amlordi*, 'son of the barren one'.

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1 Brosset, *Rapports* 49-55.

2 Shahkhat'unean's description is in Mat 3801; see Abgaryan, *Ananun* 27.

3 Abgaryan, *Ananun* 15, n.l. For the building of Zuart'nots' see **147,175**.

4 Earlier fragments of these writers, but not complete texts, are known.

5 Mat 2639 was copied from a text in old uncial script [*erkat 'agir*, hence the confusion of ° letters M and T], which lacked some pages; see the description in Abgaryan, 32. For the role of this monastery in the preservation of Armenian texts see Akinean, *Bateshi Dprots'e*.

The present state of A, however, does not correspond to that of the manuscript written in 1672. The first description was made close to 1675 by Vardan Balishets'i, who had had the MS written. He lists: Agat'an- gelos, Movses, Elishe, the History of Nerses [Catholicos], tazar P'arpets'i, Khosrov.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, in the description of the MS, then at Ejmiatsin, in the catalogue of 1828 drawn up by Manuel Gyumush- khanets'i, its contents are listed as: Agat'angelos, Movses Khorenats'i, Elishe, tazar, 'an anonymous History',<sup>x</sup> Koriwn. Abgaryan's more careful examination of the MS has indicated that the [untitled] Koriwn, *Life of Mash tots'* is in a different hand from that of the previous items. It was written by a Grigor whose hand is recognizable in other manuscripts and who was born in 1670.<sup>8</sup> Therefore the original MS ended with Vardan's 'Khosrov'. The reason for that attribution is unknown.<sup>9</sup>

## (ii) Contents of the Text

Before the discussion turns to the identity of the historian, it may be useful briefly to describe the text in question. Mihrdatean divided the text, which he published in 1851 as 'History of bishop Sebeos on Heraclius', into three sections, although the manuscript A does not have such divisions. The first two sections he ascribed to an 'Anonymous'; only the third section did he entitle 'History of Sebeos'. Mihrdatean noted that there were a few headings in the text of his manuscript, but that he himself was responsible for the division of the third section into 38 chapters and for the information in the headings to those chapters. In his 1939 edition of the Armenian

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7 Abgaryan, 'Remarques' 209.

8 Abgaryan, 'Remarques' 210-11.

9 Several Khosrovs are known. If this is the supposed author's name, the only plausible one in this context is a 'Khosrov historian' mentioned by name only in lists of Armenian historians by Kirakos Gandzakets'i of the thirteenth century, and Mkhitar Ayrivanets'i of the fourteenth century. See the discussion in Abgaryan, *Ananun* 26. Shakhhat'anean mentions in a letter of 25 April 1847 to Catholicos Nerses that he has heard of a text of Khosrov in a MS at Astraxan (Abgaryan, *ibid.*). But no History by Khosrov has ever come to light. Abgaryan ('Remarques') had suggested that the author may have been Khosrovik, a seventh-century cleric of the church of St Hrip'sime. This opinion he later retracted.

If 'Khosrov' is the title of the work it is more appropriate than [History of] 'Heraclius', but still does not cover the full sweep of this History. For the importance of the shah Khosrov in the book see the section below, 'Sebeos as Historian', lxii.

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text, Malkhasean subdivided some of these 38 chapters, creating a total of 45 for the History and 52 for the entire text. In the critical edition, Abgaryan retained Malkhasean's divisions and headings.

Mihrdatean's first two sections were not entirely new to scholars of Armenian history. The first, now commonly called 'The Primary History', offers a version of the settlement of Armenia by the Armenian eponymous ancestor Hayk' and his sons, plus an account of the rise of the Parthians, which have parallels with the information given by Movses Khorenats'i.<sup>10</sup> The second section presents a list of kings of the Armenians, Persians, and Greeks, plus an account of the origin of the Mamikonean clan, which are based on Movses and the later Step'anos Taronets'i (Asolik).<sup>11</sup>

It was the third and major part of the text published by Mihrdatean which was new.<sup>12</sup> For the first time a valuable source for the history of Armenia in the sixth to seventh centuries became available. Furthermore, this newly discovered text provided much information concerning the Byzantine-Iranian conflict of that period, the collapse of the Sasanian dynasty, and the early conquests of the Muslims. Consequently, this History 'on Heraclius' by 'bishop Sebeos' has been a frequently quoted source for historians of the early Byzantine and Muslim worlds as well as of Armenia, not only for its particular perspective but also because contemporary sources in Greek are scanty and historical writing in Arabic begins later.<sup>13</sup>

### (iii) The Attribution to Sebeos

In 1828 the work which interests us was still 'an anonymous History'. But in Shahkhat'anean's list of 1833<sup>b</sup> this becomes *Patmut'iwñ (karts'i)*

10 M.X., Book I.

11 These two short sections are not included in the translation below. For available renderings in western languages, see Bibliography: Texts, s.v. Sebeos.

12 In Abgaryan's edition section I runs to 8 pages, section II to 9, and the History proper to 113 pages. The History begins as chapter 7, which is Mihrdatean's 'Prologue'.

13 For the historical importance of this History see the section above, 'Historical Background', xi-xii, xxvi-xxx. The first translation into German by Hiibschmann was fragmentary. The text is usually quoted from the 1904 French rendering by Macler. But all translations made before the critical edition and full textual commentary by G. Abgaryan (published in 1979 in Erevan) are now outdated. Neither the Italian translation by Gugger-otti, nor the incomplete English translation by Bedrosian, has a commentary.

8 *Patmut'wn mianhelinak*; see Abgaryan 32. The short work on Nerses would not be too difficult to overlook.

15 Also in Mat 3801, which contains the list of Manuel Gyumushkhanets'i.

*Sebeos*, 'the (supposed) History, Sebeos'. Any doubts had been cast aside by 1837, when in another list the item is clearly described as '[the History] of Sebeos, bishop of the Bagratunik', on the emperor Heraclius'.<sup>16</sup> This attribution was accepted by Brosset, though he notes that the text in the MS was anonymous.<sup>17</sup>

Three points here should be distinguished. A Sebeos, bishop of the Bagratunik' in the seventh century is known; a 'History on Heraclius' is mentioned by several Armenian authors; and a historian Sebeos appears in some lists of Armenian historians. So was Shahkhat'anean correct in bringing these three points together: identifying the History in Mat 2639 with the History on Heraclius, assuming that this was written by Sebeos, and asserting that this Sebeos was the Sebeos bishop of the Bagratunik'?

*fa) Sebeos the Bishop*

The name Sebeos is not attested in Armenian save for a bishop of the Bagratunik' who was one of the signatories of the Canons of the council of Dvin held in 645, 'in the fourth year of Constans the pious king'.<sup>18</sup> His name appears as number 8 in the list of 17 bishops under the Catholicos Nerses III who confirmed twelve canons on matters of ecclesiastical discipline. He is not otherwise attested. Even the original form 'Eusebios' is only found once: in Agat'angelos, as the name of one of those sons of pagan priests whom Gregory the Illuminator supposedly made bishops of various regions.<sup>14</sup> If the author of our text was in fact this bishop, who had been a participant at the council of Dvin where important ecclesiastical matters were discussed, it is remarkable that he failed to refer to it. The identification of this known Sebeos with the author of a history attributed to a Sebeos - which has yet to be shown to be the text translated below - remains merely a supposition.

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<sup>16</sup> In the same Mat 3801, f.98a; see Abgaryan 33.

<sup>17</sup> Seen.l above. However, Brosset was in error when he claimed that the historian John Catholicos (whose Armenian name is Yovhannes Draskhanakertts'i) names Sebeos. John was familiar with the text - see further below, xxxv - but never names it.

<sup>18</sup> For the date see Mahe, 'L'eglise' 472. For the text of the canons and the list of attending bishops, see *Kanonagirk' Hayots'* II 200-15.



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*(b) The Text in Later Historians*

The first Armenian historian to overlap with Sebeos<sup>19</sup> is Lewond of the late eighth century, whose own History begins with the Muslim invasions of Armenia. In the first four chapters of his work there are parallels with the account of events in Sebeos, but no direct quotations.<sup>20</sup> Not until the tenth century does anyone quote Sebeos verbatim, for the ninth-century History by Shapuh Bagratuni - which one might assume to contain material relevant to the earlier history of that family - is lost. Soon after 905 T'ovma Artsruni wrote a detailed account of the origins and exploits of the Artsruni noble family in the area of Lake Van. He was indebted to numerous earlier writers, whom he did not hesitate to adapt for his own purposes. By name he mentions only Movses (Khorenats'i), Koriwn, and Elishc among Armenian authors.<sup>21</sup> But none of his sources did he copy so exactly as Sebeos, who is his prime source for the campaigns of Heraclius against Iran, the fall of the Sasanian dynasty, and the early Muslim advances.<sup>22</sup> Later in the same century the Catholicos Yovhannes Draskhanakertts'i composed a History which is unique in Armenian, being the composition of a man who played a major role himself in the events described. Yovhannes has some brief comments which show acquaintance with the work of Sebeos, but his prime interest was in the history of his own times.

The important point to note is that none of these historians - nor later writers who abbreviate their predecessors, such as Step'anos of Taron writing just after the year 1000, or the chronicler Vardan of the thirteenth century - ever suggest that their information came from an author

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19 We use the name 'Sebeos' for the author of this work without prejudice as to its correctness. 'Pseudo-Sebeos' would be inappropriate, since such a title implies that the History was deliberately foisted on to an earlier author called Sebeos. For similar reasons the title 'Pseudo-Movses' for the History of Movses Khorenats'i is inappropriate, since there was no well known person of that name whose authority could be claimed for a later composition. The Histories of Sebeos and Movses are by persons unknown.

20 The parallels to passages in Sebeos found in later writers are noted in the commentary. For Lewond see xxxix, xlii below.

21 He used, but does not name, Agat'angelos, the *Buzandaran*, Sebeos, Lewond. For non-Armenian texts known to him in translation see the Introduction to Thomson, *Thomas Artsruni*.

22 T'ovma's History was composed soon after 905, though a series of later continuators carried the story of the Artsruni house down to the beginning of the fourteenth century. Details of the borrowings from Sebeos are included in the commentary to the English translation of T'ovma by Thomson; see Bibliography: Texts, s.v. T'ovma Artsruni.

19 Aa 845.

named Sebeos. Even though it is not common for Armenian historians to cite their sources by name, earlier historians are mentioned often enough for this silence to be noteworthy.

(c) *The 'History of Heraclius'*

Yet although later writers do not quote a historian 'Sebeos' by name as a source - though a Sebeos is mentioned in certain lists, as we shall note below - there are references to a 'History of Heraclius'. The first comes in the work of Ukhtanes of the late tenth century. His History has not survived in its entirety. But in the second part, which deals with the separation of the Armenian and Georgian churches, he quotes this 'History of Heraclius' for information about Smbat Bagratuni, *marzpan* of Vrkana under the shah Khosrov II Parviz.<sup>24</sup> The author whom Ukhtanes quotes was writing in the time of Smbat, i.e. the turn of the sixth and seventh centuries, for he states: 'And now for the present times, ... he is most helpful and ... supplies with his assistance our [people] of Armenia'. Ukhtanes does not make it clear whether this passage, written by a contemporary of Smbat, is to be construed as a statement by the author of the 'History of Heraclius', or whether it came from an earlier source used by that author. In any event, the quotation from the 'History of Heraclius' does not come from the text identified by Mihrdatean as 'Sebeos', even though it refers to an important figure in the latter work.

Furthermore, other extracts from the 'History of Heraclius' have survived in collections of liturgical readings.<sup>25</sup> Their version of events in the reign of Heraclius is echoed by the tenth-century Movses Daskhurants'i,<sup>26</sup> though he mentions neither this title nor an author. So it is clear that a historical work dealing with Heraclius did exist in Armenian, that only fragments have survived, and that it was not identical with the text now attributed to 'Sebeos'.

Nonetheless, the name of an author Sebeos is not unknown to medieval Armenian historians. Many of these were conscious of writing in an established historiographical tradition. Lazar P'arpets'i, for example, writing at the beginning of the sixth century, specifically cites

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24 Ukhtanes, Part II, ch.35.

25 For these texts see Mahe, 'Critical Remarks'.

26 Also known as Kalankatuats'i, IIII.

Agat'angelos and P'awstos Buzand as his predecessors, considering his own work to be the third History of Armenia.<sup>27</sup> By the time of Step'anos Taronets'i, widely known as Asoiik, who composed his History at the beginning of the eleventh century, these lists had naturally become longer. Asoiik indicates that Eusebius of Caesarea and Socrates Scholasticus were the two principal stars of Greek historiography. Among the Armenians he then lists: Agat'angelos, Movses Khorenats'i, Elishe, Lazar P'arpets'i, P'awstos Buzand, Sebios, 'author of the History of Heraclius', Lewond, Shapuh Bagratuni, John Catholicos, and 'then myself, in my turn'.<sup>28</sup> In Asolik's list the placing of P'awstos, who described events of the fourth century and had already been cited by Lazar, is peculiar; but all the other writers are listed in the chronological order of the content of their books.

Samuel of Ani, whose Chronicle goes down to 1180, follows this list closely. After Eusebius and Socrates among the Greeks, 'in our nation' there were Agat'angelos, Movses Khorenats'i, Elishe, Lazar, 'Heraclius, described by bishop Sebeos', Lewond, Shapuh, John Catholicos, Step'anos Asoiik. A generation later Mkhitar, also from Ani, ends his list of Armenian historians with Samuel; but he fills out the list with several works passed over by Asoiik and Samuel. It runs: Lerubna, Agat'angelos, P'awstos Biwzandats'i, the History of Nerses, Koriwn, Movses Khorenats'i, Lazar P'arpets'i, Elishe, Shapuh, 'Sebeos, which is the [History] of Heraclius', the History of the Aluank', Lewond, John Catholicos, Asoiik, Aristakes Lastivertts'i, Kozern, Samuel. In the thirteenth century the historian Kirakos mentions in his own list 'Sebeos on Heraclius'. The longest of such lists is that by Mkhitar Ayrivanets'i, whose Chronicle goes down to 1328. He too mentions Sebeos - in a form closer to the original Greek form, 'Ewsebi[os], on Heraclius' - though he places him after Shapuh.

From such lists, and the references to a 'History of Heraclius' already cited, not only was a 'History of Heraclius' known to have existed, but its author was

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27 tazar 2-5. The brief life of Mashtots' by Koriwn, which he knew and cited, he did not consider to be a History in the proper sense of the term.

28 Asoiik 11. It is worth noting that here and in the later Mkhitar Anets'i and Kirakos the spelling of the name Sebeos follows an abbreviated form of the Armenian rendering of the Greek Eusebios; Mkhitar Ayrivanets'i has 'Eusebi'.

recognized as a certain bishop 'Sebeos'. It is hardly surprising then, that when a text dealing with the sixth and

seventh centuries came to light, Shahkhat'anean should have assumed that this was it.<sup>29</sup> But the two difficulties remain. Verbatim quotations from our text are never identified as by Sebeos; and the text known as the 'History of Heraclius' offers a different version of events. The author and original title of this work published as the 'History of Sebeos' remain unknown.

#### **(iv) The Date of Sebeos' History**

In the text translated below there are several remarks expressed in the first person. These authorial comments do not resolve the problem of authorship. The majority of them are merely rhetorical allusions to the subject in hand - phrases such as 'Now **I** shall recount..., whom I mentioned above..what more shall I say?..., I shall now speak about..., as I said above'. In a spirit of Christian humility the author refers to 'my insignificant tale'. Although he does not specifically refer to Armenia as 'our' land (in the first person), he places himself firmly in the tradition of Armenian historians. At the beginning, with regard to events of the reign of Yazkert II, he states: 'All that has been written by others'. It was the historians Elishe and tazar P'arpets'i who had described the rebellion of 450-451, the death of its protagonists led by Vardan Mamikonean, and the martyrdom of the captured clergy. Their works precede that of 'Sebeos' in the MS 2639. Our author then proceeds to summarize the topics to be treated by himself from the end of the fifth century down to the success of the Muslims against Iran and Byzantium in the mid seventh century: 'All this I wished to relate to you succinctly through this book'.<sup>30</sup>

He seems to indicate that he lives - or claims to be living - close to the times described. For he lists the Persian generals who had come to Armenia 'down to the present time'.<sup>31</sup> However, this list only reaches the end of the reign of Maurice; nearly 60 years passed from then to the accession of Muawiya as caliph, with which the History ends. So the

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29 His attribution was more justified than the identification of a previously unknown text as the lost History of Shapuh Bagratuni in 1921. Shapuh had dealt with the fortunes of the Bagratids, whereas the text published by G. Ter-Mkrтч'anean and M. Ter-Movsesean was a collection of fabulous tales primarily dealing with the Artsruni house of Vaspurakan. See the Bibliography: Texts, s.v. *The Anonymous Story-teller*.

30 See 66.

31 See 70; for the list 71,105. For further lists see also 111 and 113.

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phrase comes from his source.<sup>32</sup> Closer to the end of the History, when describing the visit of the emperor Constans II to Dvin in 653, Sebeos blames the Catholicos Nerses for a pro-Chalcedonian position: he 'perverted the true faith of St Gregory [the Illuminator], which all the Catholicoi had preserved on a solid foundation in the church from St Gregory down to today'.<sup>33</sup> It is possible that this description of the emperor's visit was written by an eye-witness, for the account of the emperor's private conversation with a bishop who tried to avoid communicating with the Greeks is one of the more vivid episodes in the book. But whether that bishop was 'Sebeos', whether the historian is accurately repeating an informant's version, or whether it is an imagined conversation in the style of the shah's conversations in *Elishe*, cannot be proven. A further indication that the author was writing close to the times described is his reference to eye-witnesses for early Muslim attacks into Iran and farther east.<sup>34</sup>

Later writers do not help us date this History more accurately. It is quoted at length by T'ovma in the early tenth century. But, as noted above, the earlier parallels in *Lewond* are not verbatim quotations. So the existence of the History in its present form before 900 cannot be demonstrated by external evidence. Nonetheless, the author's personal knowledge of the circumstances of the time, and especially of details of Iranian culture, would be surprising in one who lived two centuries after the demise of the Sasanian dynasty. Although Sebeos is willing to give credence to unlikely tales that favour the Christian church - such as the baptism of shah Khosrov Anushirvan - his gullibility does not prove a late date. He is more interested in spirited acts of valour than in careful descriptions of campaigns. His lively stories often confuse the progressive chronology of the narrative as a whole. But the book is intended as a portrayal of events close to his time and the immediate working out of God's providence foretold by the prophet Daniel, rather than as a subsequent, matured reflection with a specific purpose, such as are the *Histories of Elishe* and of *Movses Khorenats'i*. A closer parallel would be the *Buzandaran*.

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32 For these sources see the section below, 'Sebeos as Historian', lxi-lxxvii.

33 See 167.

34 See 139.

**(v) Sebeos in the Tradition of Armenian Historical Writing***(a) His Predecessors*

Sebeos was conscious of writing in a tradition of Armenian historiography. It may therefore be useful to consider this work in the broader context of Armenian historians before and just after his time. For the purpose of the present argument I shall assume that this History was indeed written in the second half of the seventh century. And I shall deal only with Mihrdatean's Part III, the long narrative from the fifth to the mid seventh century which is translated below. More troublesome will be the question of the dates to be assigned to some of the other major Armenian histories.

Contemporary scholarship is not agreed on the order of composition of the early Armenian histories, still less on their precise dating. Since my purpose is to highlight certain features of Sebeos' work by means of a general comparison, it is not immediately pressing to give final answers to these questions. For the sake of the argument I shall make the following assumptions:

1. The first historical work composed in Armenian was the life of the inventor of the Armenian script, Mashtots', written by his pupil Koriwn within a decade of the master's death.<sup>34</sup> Mashtots' died in 439/440, but it is not known when Koriwn died (or when he was born). Koriwn's short biography was used by Agat'angelos, who wrote the classic description of the conversion of Armenia; but the latter does not name any Armenian author, since he is supposed to be writing before the invention of the Armenian script. Koriwn is first mentioned by name in Lazar P'arpets'i and Movses Khorenats'i.
2. The History of Agat'angelos was not written in Greek by a contemporary of the events it describes, as the author of the surviving Armenian redaction claims. The first Armenian recension is now only known through Greek and Arabic translations.<sup>35</sup> The surviving Armenian text is a later reworking, which in turn was translated again into Greek and

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<sup>35</sup> The parallels between the different redactions are noted in the Introduction to Thomson, *Agathangelos*, where each section is analysed. See also Garitte, *Agathange*, and Winkler, 'Our Present Knowledge'. Unless otherwise stated, the references in this book are to the Armenian text, Aa; for a further discussion see Bibliography: Texts, s.v. Agat'angelos.



Arabic. The first explicit Armenian reference to 'Agat'angelos' as author, and hence to the second redaction, is found in tazar P'arpets'i, writing just after 500. The earliest version is generally assumed to date from the last third of the fifth century.<sup>36</sup> The author of the *Buzandaran* was familiar with a written version of Trdat's conversion and the work of Gregory, but he does not mention an author 'Agat'angelos'.<sup>3</sup> The history of Christian Armenia following the deaths of the first converted king, Trdat, and of St Gregory the Illuminator down to the division of the country circa 387/390 was set down in a work called the *Buzandaran Patmut'iwnk'*, or 'Epic Histories'. This is mentioned by bazar as the second History of Armenia and attributed by him to a certain P'awstos, who is otherwise unknown. This work too was probably composed in the last third of the fifth century; its latest critic places it in the 470s.<sup>37</sup>

4. A much broader sweep of history is covered by the work of Movses Khorenats'i, who refers to these three previous historians. His own History places Armenia in the context of ancient world history by incorporating Armenian legendary material into the framework of the *Chronicle* of Eusebius, and takes the story down to the death of Mash-tots'. Movses claims to have been a disciple of Mashtots', so his work would date to the second half of the fifth century. But his use of texts known only later in Armenian - for he used Armenian translations, not the originals - has led to grave doubts about that date. Furthermore, although he is by far the most learned of Armenian historians, with the widest range of foreign written sources, he put his learning to the cause of the Bagratuni family who did not rise to pre-eminence in Armenia until the eighth century. The dating of Khorenats'i remains highly disputed, but its composition fits the early eighth better than the late fifth century.<sup>38</sup> However, the matter is not of direct significance for a comparison of the style and interests of Sebeos with this enigmatic author.

5. Lazar P'arpets'i is a known figure, who played some role in the events of his time and wrote a History from the time where the *Buzandaran* ends down to the elevation of Vahan Mamikonean as Persian governor

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36 Thomson, *ibid.*, and Garso'fan, EH 11, with references to previous literature. In Wink-<sup>er s</sup> analysis of the versions no date is offered for the surviving Armenian redaction.

37 Garso'fan, EH \.

38 Review of evidence in Thomson, *Moses Khorenats'i*, and Mahe, *Mo'ise de Khorene*. Note that the first two parts of Mihrdatean's text, the 'Primary History' and the 'Chronicle',

<sup>0</sup> have some connection with Movses.

35 Review of previous scholarship in Winkler, *Korivns Biographie*, esp. 81 for the date of the biography.

(,marzpan) for Armenia in 485. Vahan was tazar's patron and hero; his History and an accompanying Letter (defending himself against charges brought by personal enemies) were composed around 500. The middle section of Lazar's History deals with the revolt of 450-451 which was led by Vahan's uncle, Vardan Mamikonean. To that revolt Elishe devoted an entire book.

6. The *History of the Armenian War* by Elishe claims to be written by an eye-witness. It has many verbal agreements with Lazar's version, such as identical lists of persons, which cannot be mere chance. No common source is known; the question is rather the priority of the one account over the other. Elishe is not otherwise attested, save in later legends. His account is more easily explained as an elaboration of Lazar's briefer version, in which he dealt with the specific occasion as a paradigm for more general questions of the interaction of state and church and the problem of loyalty to a non-Christian sovereign.<sup>40</sup> It became the accepted account of the revolt against Sasanian Iran and the standard expression of Armenian moral values, much quoted and echoed down to the present day.

7. The History of Lewond deals with the Muslims and Armenia, overlapping at the beginning with the end of Sebeos and ending with the elevation of Step'anos as Catholicos in 788. None of the previously named historians is mentioned in the book. Although nothing is known of Lewond, and the date of some of the documents included in his History is unclear, the work was quoted verbatim by T'ovma Artsruni just after 900. A date soon after 790 for Lewond is generally accepted.

It is not necessary to prolong this list. There are no extant historians from the ninth century, the work of Shapuh Bagratuni being lost. Only with T'ovma Artsruni soon after 900 does the historiographical tradition begin again in earnest, and by the time of Step'anos Asolik just after 1000 it had become customary to list the author's predecessors.<sup>41</sup> Let us return to Sebeos.

*(b) Features in Common and Differences*

The first feature which Sebeos shares with many of the historians just mentioned is that he is a shadowy figure. The identities of all early Arme-

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<sup>40</sup> Thomson, Introduction to *Eiishe*.

<sup>41</sup> See above for these lists.

nian historians, with the exception of Koriwn and tazar, are unknown. This gap was later filled by legendary accounts, none more elaborate than those which describe the activities of Movses Khorenats'i on behalf of Armenian orthodoxy.<sup>42</sup> But the fact remains that although the *Buzandaran* and the Histories of Agat'angelos, Elishe, Movses, Lewond, and T'ovma may be datable within certain limits, they cannot be assigned to authors known from other sources. So it is not at all surprising that an account of the events covered by our text should in fact be anonymous. Traces survive of a different work, the 'History of Heraclius'. Asolik attributed this to a Sebeos of whom he says nothing. Samuel of Ani calls him a bishop. Modern authors naturally identified him with the bishop of the Bagratunik' who attended the council of Dvin in 645. But the identification is no more secure than that of P'awstos - the author of the *Buzandaran* according to Lazar - with the bishop P'awstos mentioned three times in that text.

(c) *The Geographical Sweep*

Where Sebeos does differ from his predecessors, and from many of his successors, is in the geographical sweep of his narrative. Armenian historians are of course aware of the dangerous position of their country between the greater powers of the Roman empire and Sasanian Iran (or the later caliphate). Events in those lands to east and west, or in the Caucasus to the north and Syria to the south, are mentioned when they are relevant to the fortunes of Armenia as a whole or of individual prominent Armenians. Accounts of Armenian visits to the Sasanian court are particularly common, since all historians came from that larger sector of Armenia under Iranian suzerainty. [Indeed, the facts that the script was invented in Iranian Armenia, and that Mashtots' had problems with Roman authorities over the use of Armenian within the empire, point to the cultural pre-eminence of this eastern sector after the division of circa 387.<sup>43</sup>] But Sebeos devotes much attention to events in Iran, Byzantium, and the early Islamic empire which did not have a direct and immediate impact in Armenia, though in the long run the Armenians naturally did feel their effects. Movses Khorenats'i had a

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42 The legendary activity of Movses was integrated with tales about David, the 'Invincible' philosopher; see Kendall and Thomson, *David* xv-xvii.

43 Emphasized by M.X., III 57, developing Koriwn, ch.16.

longer-range view of history in time, taking as his subject the whole sweep of Armenian history from Noah's descendants to the death of Mashtots'. But he did not expatiate at length on events in foreign lands. Sebeos thus is untypical, even if his foreign interests are in dramatic episodes rather than continuous coverage of events.

Armenian histories are generally entitled *Patmut'iwn Hayots'*, usually translated as 'History of Armenia'. The phrase is ambiguous, however, for in classical Armenian *Hayk'* [nominative of *Hayots'*] can refer either to the people or the land. In any event, the interests of the authors rarely extended beyond the ruling elite, both secular and ecclesiastical. They concentrated on the personal fortunes and prowess of members of the great families, and did not regard the whole of society as their brief. Sebeos is no exception. For the period he covers there was no Armenian monarchy to provide a focus for the narrative, and Sebeos makes it clear that Armenia was not a unified polity. He concentrates on the major families whose princes play the pre-eminent roles - the Mami-koneans, the Bagratunis, and the Rshtunis. These, and all the other noble houses, each have their own political agendas at different times. They react to circumstances; the only consistency in their policies is that of seizing every opportunity to preserve their individual liberties. Alliances with the emperor or the shah are made and broken seemingly at random, and advantage is taken of every reverse of fortune in the empires to east and west. Such a struggle for survival is typical of Armenian history and not confined to the sixth and seventh centuries.

Historians were well aware of the habitual disunity of the Armenians.<sup>44</sup> The conflicting policies of noble families are thus often described, and one frequently reads of princes refusing to join in a rebellion or fighting alongside the foreigner against their fellow-countrymen. In this regard the narrative of Sebeos echoes the earlier *Buzandaran* and the histories of Elishe and Lazar. Nonetheless, broader points of view are frequently offered by the historians through the medium of speeches. This will be addressed below.

(d) *The Purpose of Historical Writing*

Armenian historians usually indicate in one way or another the purpose behind their composing a written record of the events described. The

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44 This theme recurs often; cf. Thomson, *Ehshé* 89 and notes.

## SEBEOS

attern was set by the first such writer, Koriwn, in the long preface to his biography of Mashtots'. Two aspects may be distinguished: the express wish of a patron or person in a position of authority who commissions the author, and the author's own motivation. Whether the latter is but a reflection of the patron's orders is not necessarily clear. Koriwn claims to be writing at the behest of Yovsep', the later locum-tenens of the patriarchate during the rebellion of 450. And few are the Armenian histories which are not dedicated to a patron.

The most explicit of such dedications is that by Lazar P'arpets'i to Vahan Mamikonean. They had known each other from childhood, though their positions were hardly equal. Vahan later supported bazar in difficulties with his ecclesiastical superiors. In gratitude Lazar dedicated his work to Vahan, whose career is described in the third part of the History and whose appointment as *marzpan* of Armenia forms the climax of the whole book. Other early dedications are to persons less well known, with the exception of Agat'angelos' implausible claim that king Trdat himself commissioned the History.<sup>45</sup> Elisehe dedicates his History to a certain David Mamikon, priest, who is otherwise unknown. Since the hero of the work is Vardan Mamikonean (uncle of the Vahan just mentioned), a dedication to a member of that family is natural. The dedicatee of the History by Movses Khorenats'i is equally obscure. Movses says that he was requested to undertake this work by a certain Sahak Bagratuni. There are several Sahak Bagratunis recorded, but the uncertain date of the composition of Movses' History makes identification impossible. The important point, however, is that the Bagratuni interest is plainly stated at the beginning. As noted earlier, this History is explicitly and implicitly an encomium of that noble family - concentrating on its supposed Jewish origin, its importance in Armenia from remote antiquity, and the leading role played in more recent times by its princes - to the extent that earlier Armenian historians are corrected in favour of Bagratid interests. The real prominence of the Bagratids by the late eighth century is reflected in the dedication by tewond of his History to a Shapuh Bagratuni - though this Shapuh is not mentioned in the text or in other historical sources.<sup>46</sup>

To this general tradition of dedication to a patron there are two inter-

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45 See above for the probable date of the surviving recension of the Armenian text of gat angelos. By then Trdat had been dead for well over a century.

46 For his place in the Bagratid stemma see Toumanoff, *Dynasties* 113.

esting exceptions: the *Buzandaran* and the History of Sebeos. In both cases the unknown authors were closely associated with ecclesiastical interests; they were also interested in notable acts of martial valour by leading princes. But neither author expresses any overt suggestion that he was encouraged to his task by a person in higher authority.

Whether commissioned or not, the authors of Armenian historical works do usually offer further thoughts on their motives. Koriwn indicates that he had already been planning some record *\yishatakarari\* of his teacher Mashtots', through whom Armenia had gained a divinely- bestowed script, when Yovsep's command arrived with the encouragement of those who had been his fellow-pupils. He also defends his undertaking on the grounds that throughout the Bible the good works of pious men and women are praised so that others might emulate their deeds.<sup>47</sup> The saints themselves have no need of further glory, but his, Koriwn's, account will be an encouraging example [*awrinakk'ajalerits'*].

The author of the surviving Armenian recension of Agat'angelos often quotes or adapts Koriwn, without acknowledgment; identical purposes are thus expressed in his Preface and Epilogue. The Greek and Arabic versions of the first redaction, however, end merely with the author's declaration that he composed this accurate narrative, having been an eye-witness, so that his readers might themselves practice such noble deeds and become pleasing to God. Lazar also speaks of encouraging readers to emulate the virtues of spiritual men and the deeds of earlier valiant men.<sup>48</sup>

The spiritual and secular virtues are differentiated by Elishe and Movses Khorenats'i. For the former the salvation of one's soul is paramount, though this cannot be divorced from the fate of the Armenian people as a whole. He explicitly notes that he has recorded the vices of his villain, Vasak prince of Siwnik', so that readers will avoid such conduct and cleave to the good. The death of Vardan on the battlefield in the defence of Armenian traditional liberties is proclaimed as a martyr's death which will bring immediate salvation. So the writing of history has a moral purpose - the encouragement of virtue and the reprobation of vice - which is linked to the defence not only of the Armenian church but more especially of Armenian traditions. Those who like prince Vasak refused to support the revolt against suppression of Arme-

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47 Koriwn, ch.2, 34; see Mahe, 'Une legitimisation scripturaire'.

48 Lazar 5.

## SEBEOS

nian liberties are not merely traitors to their country, they are apostates from the faith. This interpretation of the motives of those who joined in the rebellion of 450 had a more significant impact on later generations, even down to the present, than the more straightforward narrative of the same events in Lazar.

The attitude of Movses Khorenats'i is oriented rather towards the secular virtues by which the great noble families claimed superiority in their perpetual rivalries. The antiquity of one's pedigree had to be matched by the splendour of one's ancestors' deeds of military prowess and acts of wise government. In these respects, needless to add, the Bagratuni family particularly excelled. History therefore has as its prime purpose the recording of great deeds for the emulation of succeeding generations; acts of opprobrium are to be avoided. Movses does not deny spiritual values or the deeds of piety which set good examples. But to a greater extent than other early Armenian historians, his interest lies in the secular world.

The lack of expressed purpose in both the *Buzandaran* and Sebeos is thus unusual. Both authors think of themselves as continuing an historiographical tradition - which was naturally more fully developed by the time of Sebeos than when the author of the *Buzandaran* referred to his work as a brick set in the wall of a larger construction.<sup>49</sup> It may be that Sebeos assumed that the purposes of history had already been sufficiently expounded by his predecessors. His successor Lewond certainly felt no need to explain himself: the leaving of an accurate record was justification enough.

#### (vi) Literary Characteristics

Although Armenian historians often mention their predecessors,<sup>50</sup> they rarely name their sources for the specific events described. In some cases the historian claims to have been an eye-witness, leading the reader to suppose that no previous written account existed. In the case of Agat'angelos the eye-witness claim is manifestly false. Of Elische nothing is known, and his History is probably later than that of Lazar. This latter is the first known writer who actually was personally familiar with the

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<sup>49</sup> *Buzandaran* III 1.

<sup>50</sup> As, for example, bazar says that he is continuing the works of Agat'angelos and P'awstos.



hero of his History, though the events of the first section of his work occurred well before his birth.

The case of Movses Khorenats'i might seem to be different, in that he does refer to the works of earlier Armenian writers, namely Agat'angelos and Koriwn, and to foreign sources, Josephus and the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius. On the other hand he does not acknowledge his great debt to the *Buzandaran*, attributed to P'awstos by bazar and later Armenian writers, or to tazar himself. Nor does he mention the works of Philo and Socrates Scholasticus from which he borrowed, or the *Chronicle* of Eusebius on which he relied heavily. In fact many of his references to other writers are misleading and tendentious, as he claims to find authority for his own interpretations of known events in those earlier writers.<sup>51</sup> It was the exception, not the rule, for an Armenian historian to specify his source of information.<sup>52</sup>

In like fashion, the literary debts of Armenian writers were never acknowledged: for example, the borrowings from the *Alexander Romance* by Movses, the adaptation of lives of Syrian martyrs by Elishe, or the reworking of Koriwn by Agat'angelos. So it is not surprising that Sebeos says little about his own sources. He does once refer to information from eye-witnesses about the Muslim expansion into Iran and beyond, though his own account of those events is very sketchy.<sup>53</sup> And he quotes at length the Armenian response to a letter from the emperor on theological matters, which he indicates had been placed in the keeping of the Catholicos.<sup>54</sup> Otherwise, Sebeos does not indicate that he used any written source, either for specific information about events or as a basis for the various letters that he includes in his History.<sup>55</sup>

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51 Details in the Introduction to Thomson, *Moses Khorenats'i*.

52 When T'ovma Artsruni quotes Sebeos verbatim he does not identify his source. He probably knew the work as an anonymous composition, though he did not suggest that he was in fact copying a previous account.

53 See 139.

54 Letter, see 148-161; kept by Catholicos, 168. For the authenticity of the letter as reported by Sebeos, see below.

55 The following discussion is primarily concerned with Sebeos and his use of Armenian texts. The question of foreign sources that may have been available to him is covered in the section 'Sebeos as Historian', lxvi-lxx.

## SEBEOS

*(a) The Bible*

Some of the dramatic episodes in Sebeos' narrative depend on biblical parallels, a notable example being the despatch of insulting letters to the emperor in Constantinople and his reaction. Since for all Armenian authors the Bible was the literary resource *par excellence*, themes from those books<sup>56</sup> constantly appear. Indeed biblical vocabulary is so pervasive that it is often difficult to decide whether a parallel is being hinted at, or whether the historian naturally expressed himself in such a fashion with no further nuance intended.

Explicit quotations from the Bible, given as direct quotations which are often identified, occur frequently. They are found most especially in ecclesiastical correspondence, as in the exchange of letters between the Catholicos Komitas and Modestos of Jerusalem. Explicit citations also form an important aspect of theological argument. The Armenian defence against efforts to bring them into communion with the Greeks is naturally buttressed by quotations identified as coming from the Bible.

In the narrative quotations of, and allusions to biblical authors are not usually identified. Sebeos uses biblical imagery for the mundane as well as the dramatic. It seems of no profound significance that when describing a victory he states: 'The Lord strengthened his mercy for Heraclius on that day, so that they massacred them to a man .. 𐌸'<sup>57</sup> Or that, when describing the treaty between Teodoros Rshtuni and Muawiya, he should preface the text with his own comment: 'Teodoros, with all the Armenian nobles, made a pact with death and contracted an alliance with hell, abandoning the divine covenant'.<sup>58</sup> It may be doubted whether shah Khosrov would have quoted the psalter in his letter to Heraclius bidding him to submit: 'For if you descend into the depths of the sea, I shall stretch out my hand and seize you'.<sup>59</sup> Such language, whether a direct quotation or merely an allusion to scripture, came naturally to Armenian clerics. It is, however, noteworthy that there are significantly fewer biblical allusions in the earlier part of Sebeos' History than

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56 I.e. the Old and New Testaments, and also books now included in the 'Apocrypha' such as Maccabees. The great majority of Armenian authors, including historians, were clerics who would have learned much of the Bible by heart and heard the texts repeated daily and weekly in church services.

57 See **126**; cf. Ps. 102.11.

58 See **164**; cf. Is. 28.15,18.

59 See **123**; cf. Ps. 138.8.

in the second part dealing with events closer to his own time. His narrative concerning shah Khosrov and the Armenians of that era is more reminiscent of the 'gestes' of the Mamikoneans as portrayed in the *Buzandaran*. One may suspect that when quoting or referring to tales known from oral tradition, Sebeos was less inclined to elaborate them with biblical quotations; when describing in his own words events closer to his own days his recourse to biblical imagery became more frequent.<sup>60</sup>

On occasion the narrative is embellished with biblical material where the reader might unwittingly take the passage as straightforward narrative. Thus, when describing the Muslim attack on Constantinople for which Muawiya had prepared a vast armada, Sebeos lists the various siege engines which had been stowed on board the ships. But these armaments have been lifted directly from the account of the siege of Jerusalem in I Macabees, 6.51. The books of Maccabees were particularly popular in Armenia. Historians often made direct comparisons between the Maccabees and their Armenian heroes, and frequently borrowed military imagery for their own purposes. Hence it would be rash to deduce from Sebeos' account of the events of 653/654 that the Muslims were provided with machines to throw Greek fire.

More important from the point of view of the writing of history is Sebeos' use of prophecy. As noted above, Sebeos does not spell out any moral or political purpose which his History might serve. Nonetheless, he clearly thought that events occur as part of God's plan; and that plan had been obscurely adumbrated in prophetic utterances. His book originally ended with quotations from Deuteronomy describing disasters to come, and a return to words from Daniel's vision of the four beasts.<sup>61</sup> The fourth beast he identifies with the Muslims, and warns his readers that the day of destruction is close by. And like many later Armenian historians, Sebeos blames such foreign invasions on the sins of his fellow-countrymen.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup> See the Index of biblical Quotations and Allusions: their frequency greatly increases in the description of the rise of Islam and the Muslim conquests. This is reflected also in Sebeos' use of prophecy, for which see below. Thus the exploits of Musher Mamikonean or of Smbat Bagratuni have few biblical parallels.

<sup>61</sup> The final page seems to be a later addition, describing the end of the Muslim civil war and the peace brought by Muawiya. It does not seem logical that Sebeos should end his historical narrative on the theme of peace, and then add the prophecy of disasters to come. We therefore follow the order of the MSS and not the text as printed in Abgaryan. See further 175 n.923.

<sup>62</sup> See 162.

Daniel's vision of the four beasts is expounded by Sebeos in greater detail on the occasion of the Muslim defeat of the Sasanians in 642. The four beasts were associated in Daniel, chapter 7, with four successive kingdoms, but there

the kingdoms were not explicitly identified. For Sebeos the first, the eagle, was the kingdom of the Greeks; the second, the bear, was the kingdom of the Sasanian Persians, the Medes and the Parthians; the third, the leopard, was the kingdom of the north, Gog and Magog;<sup>63</sup> the fourth kingdom is that of the Muslims, 'which shall consume the whole earth'. (Armenians who lived to see the later invasions of the Turks and then of the Mongols updated Daniel's vision. The later interpretation of the four beasts in the *Life of Nerses*, for example, is quite different.) For Sebeos the power of the new Muslim empire seemed much greater than that of Sasanian Iran, in whose orbit most Armenians had lived up to that time.<sup>64</sup>

Not only Daniel, but other prophets too had foreseen the appearance of the Muslims; the Arabs were of the stock of Abraham from Ishmael, son of Hagar. In Genesis it had indeed been stated that 'his hands would be on all', and Isaiah too had spoken of their invasion when referring to the tempest coming from the south.<sup>65</sup> Although the relationship of the Arabs to the Jews as sons of Abraham from different mothers was a biblical theme picked up by all commentators, as the first Armenian to describe their inroads into his own country Sebeos drew on scriptural prophecies of broader application not applied to the Arabs before their newly found vigour as Muslims.

That originally Sebeos ended his History with a reminder of prophetic warnings of disasters to come was a new departure for Armenian historians. The History of Agat'angelos peters out with a vague description of St Gregory's later years. Although the *Teaching of St Gregory* - longer than the section called 'History' - had ended with the theme of the second coming, this was not set in a concrete historical context. The *Buzandaran* ends with the political decline of Armenia after the division of the country into Roman and Iranian spheres, but

<sup>63</sup> Gog and Magog are not mentioned elsewhere in Sebeos. He identifies the kingdom of the north with the Babylonians (i.e. the Persians), 162, and contrasts them with the Arabs to the south.

<sup>64</sup> The identification of Daniel's fourth kingdom as that of the Arabs is a major feature of the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius, composed in 691/692; see the Introduction to the edition of the Syriac text by Reinink.

<sup>65</sup> See 162. Cf. Gen. 16.12; Is. 28.15,18.

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no biblical parallels are seen. Elishe's description of the rebellion of 450/451 ends with praise of the virtue of the women in Armenia, deprived of their menfolk who had been killed in action or were still imprisoned in Iran. Only Lazar comes to a triumphant climax with a biblical theme, drawing a parallel between Vahan Mamikonean's appointment as *marzpan* and David enthroning Solomon as his successor. The pessimistic tone of Sebeos, however, becomes common in later times. John Catholicos ends on the sad theme of oppression due to the Armenians' sins. Calamity and repentance are frequently echoed thereafter, most dramatically by Aristakes Lastivertts'i. In contrast, an optimistic genre of Armenian prophecy was to develop later, foreseeing the eventual liberation of Armenia and the restoration of both the Arsacid monarchy and the line of patriarchs descended from St Gregory.<sup>66</sup> Sebeos, however, has no such consoling message.

#### *(b) The Use of Speeches and Letters*

All Armenian historians, with the exception of Koriwn in his *Life of Mash tots'*, considered it part of their literary trade to enhance the narrative with speeches, soliloquies, letters, and messages. Such devices not only enlivened the story, they gave the historian an opportunity to express the motivation of his characters in a natural way. Perhaps the most subtle use of reported speech is found in Elishe, who by presenting discussions between shah Yazkert and his advisors makes their persecutions of Armenians more comprehensible as a matter of state interest. The reader is not to suppose that Elishe was present at such audiences, or that he in some way obtained a record of what was said: the shah's speeches and the advice of his counsellors were a literary device. Similarly in Lazar the long negotiations between Vahan Mamikonean and the shah's representatives give the author an opportunity to reflect on the general problem of conflict between political and religious loyalties. There is thus no *a priori* assumption with regard to speeches or messages in Sebeos that these represent anything more than similar literary techniques to enliven the narrative and bring out the personalities and motivations of his protagonists.

His most obvious category of rhetorical device is that of the soliloquy. When Peroz reflects on his strategy to deal with Armenia, faced

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<sup>66</sup> See, for example, Sanjian, 'Contemporary Armenian Elegies'.

## SEBEOS

at the same time with an attack from the Kushans, or when Khosrov I Anushirvan absolves himself from personal responsibility for the rebellion of Vardan in 572, such passages are hardly extracted from eyewitnesses but are the words of Sebeos himself.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, Sebeos also reports tales that came to him complete with such reports. In the story of the discovery of a fragment of the True Cross a dream plays an important role. The relic was preserved in a church belonging to the Dimak'sean family; its miraculous origin would be known to its possessors and is unlikely to be the invention of Sebeos.<sup>68</sup>

There are many such speeches and conversations in Sebeos. When the source of Sebeos' information about the events described is unknown, it is impossible to decide whether the conversation was already part of the story as handed on to him, or whether he embellished a sparser narrative. When shah Khosrov II sought help from Maurice against his rebel general Vahram, were the emperor's consultation with the senate, their rejection of Khosrov's appeal - on the ground that the Persians are a deceitful nation, which would seem plausible to an Armenian writer - and the emperor's over-ruling of their advice all part of the information that reached Sebeos?<sup>69</sup> He certainly shows acquaintance with debates in Constantinople on the later occasion of the Persian general Shahen's negotiations with the emperor Heraclius in 615.<sup>70</sup>

The fortunes of king Khosrov and his dealings with Armenia are the main focus of the first half of this History.<sup>71</sup> Sebeos pays particular attention to the heroic deeds of Armenian princes during his reign, notably the behaviour of Mushel Mamikonean and the loyal service of Smbat Bagratuni. Such 'gestes' are reminiscent of the exploits of Mamikonean princes in the *Buzandaran*.<sup>2</sup> They would be handed down by word of mouth until put in writing by Sebeos. But whether the exchanges between the

67 See 67,69. Cf. also Ormizd's 'inward reflection' and his decision to seek help from the Arabs 74; the plan of Atat Khorkoruni to bring over the Huns, 87.

68 See 98-99.

69 See 76. The Greek accounts have no exact parallels.

70 See the section below, 'Sebeos as Historian', lxxii.

71 For that reason some scholars considered the title of the work to be a 'History of Khosrov' rather than a 'History of Heraclius' who is given less space in the narrative. See Abgaryan, 'Remarques' for a review of such opinions.

72 The interest in heroic tales concerning the Mamikonean princes and the dealings with shahs is the most significant feature shared by Sebeos and the author of the *Buzandaran*.

<sup>e</sup>sp. Toumanoff, 'The Mamikonids and the Liparitids', where he discusses the Mamikonean bairns to Chinese descent, for this epic theme.

shah and the Armenian prince formed an integral part of the narrative as it reached Sebeos, or whether he expanded the tale himself, is impossible to tell.<sup>73</sup> In the case of the martyrdom of Sargis and Varaz Vahewuni their last words are likely to have formed part of the original story, given the long-standing tradition of martyr narratives in Armenian.<sup>74</sup>

A distinction between reported speeches, which are literary inventions, and reported letters is not clear cut. Since several of the letters to which Sebeos refers were official documents of the Armenian Catholicosate, and since Sebeos had detailed information of events at the centre of the Armenian church, one cannot assume that all such letters are his invention. But neither can one necessarily assume that they are all taken verbatim and in full from copies in Armenian archives.

That the patriarchal archive contained many significant letters is clear from the collection known as the *Book of Letters*. First edited in an organized fashion in 1077, it was later expanded with numerous additions.<sup>75</sup> This collection contains some of the correspondence between Armenian prelates and their Greek, Syrian and Georgian counterparts, plus other documents of theological importance. *The Book of Letters* offers no direct evidence for any of the documents quoted by Sebeos, but does indicate that such letters were indeed preserved for later reference and use. Even if the exchange between the patriarch of Jerusalem Modestos and the Catholicos Komitas is not mentioned by other Armenian sources, this is no argument against its authenticity. The frequent coming and going of Armenians to Jerusalem on pilgrimage is well attested in a variety of sources.<sup>76</sup> Although Komitas' response to an appeal for financial help is guarded, the frosty relations between the Chalcedonian Greeks and the Armenians in the early seventh century explain his failure to make a contribution.

The most elaborate letter quoted by Sebeos is the defence of Armenian orthodoxy by Catholicos Nerses and his bishops, which was prompted by the emperor Constans II's envoy Dawit' in 649, but not actually sent to Constantinople. It is plausible that the Catholicos did not send a reply to the emperor's demand that the Armenians should effect a union of faith with the Greeks. Sebeos makes it clear that Nerses

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73 See **80ff, 104**.

74 See **89**.

75 See the description in Tallon, *Livre* 16-20.

76 See the notes to the translation of these letters below. **116ff**.

## SEBEOS

had pro-Greek leanings, which he effectively hid from his compatriots.<sup>77</sup> If Nerses, under pressure from his bishops, signed a document upholding the traditional Armenian position in opposition to imperial orthodoxy, he would have been embarrassed to have had it shown to Constans. It was therefore conveniently 'preserved in the church' - i.e. in the patriarchal archive.<sup>78</sup> The question here is whether the lengthy document as quoted by Sebeos is an accurate record of the Armenian response as agreed and signed by the bishops, or a rewriting by our historian of an actual letter. It is unlikely to be a total fabrication since it plays a major role in the undoubtedly authentic visit of Constans II to Armenia in 653.

The basic argument of this letter is that the Armenians have preserved the true faith, of which the Nicene creed is the touchstone. The orthodoxy of the Armenians was recognized by the shahs Kawat and Khosrov I. Later, at a disputation at the Sasanian court of Khosrov II, not only was the true faith of the Armenians found sealed in the Persian archives, the patriarch of Jerusalem declared that the councils of Nicaea, Constantinople, and Ephesus confirmed the Armenian creed, whereas the council of Chalcedon was not in conformity with the true faith. That council had [supposedly] been led by Theodoret, who was of the opinion of Nestorius.<sup>79</sup> According to this letter, the Armenians had learned the true faith from St Gregory 'almost thirty years' before it was confirmed at the council of Nicaea and reconfirmed on the occasion of king Trdat and St Gregory meeting the emperor Constantine in Rome. The faith of St Gregory is enshrined in the 'Book of St Gregory' - i.e. the History of Agat'angelos and especially that section known as the 'Teaching'.<sup>80</sup> The creed as quoted is not the Nicene formula, however, but the standard Armenian creed, which is closely related to the pseudo-Athanasian '*Hermeneia eis ton symbolon*' and the second creed of Epiphanius.<sup>81</sup> The

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77 See **167**: 'He perverted the true faith of St Gregory ... [and] muddied the pure and crystalline waters'.

78 For the deposit of similar confessional documents in a monastery, see Movses Das-khurants'i, Book III, chapter 9. [TWG]

79 See **150**. That Theodoret was 'in charge' of Chalcedon first appears in the *Book of Letters* in the early seventh century, 119. He is often anathematized in earlier documents, <sup>as in</sup> the letter of Catholicos Babgen, 48, on the occasion of the first synod of Dvin in 505.

80 In its present form, as used by Sebeos, this part of the text cannot predate the end of the fifth century.

¶ See Denzinger, *Enchiridion* for the text, and Kelly, *Creeeds* for a discussion of these Greek creeds.

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only Greek writer quoted in support of the Armenian position is Cyril of Alexandria.

With regard to the Persian shah's confirmation of Armenian orthodoxy, Flusin has demonstrated that that is not to be confused with a debate held at the Sasanian court in 612 known from Syriac sources. At an earlier gathering attended by two Armenian bishops, probably held between 605 and 609, Khosrov showed himself favourably inclined to the Monophysites. Not only were they an important minority in Iran, they were dominant in Syria and Armenia which the shah was in the process of recovering. This discussion at court was later rewritten in terms of the Chalcedonian issue, which had not been Khosrov's direct concern at the time.<sup>82</sup> Other parts of the letter also reflect themes found in Armenian anti-Chalcedonian texts. It is, however, noteworthy that differences of liturgical ritual, which loom so prominently in other such letters, are ignored. This lends credence to the authenticity of the document, at least in its main lines. A later adaptor of the letter would not have omitted to emphasize the errors of the Greeks in their manner of communion using leavened bread and water mixed with the wine in the cup. Nerses would have played down such disputes.<sup>83</sup>

From the point of view of Armenian historiography this letter in defence of orthodoxy is notable as the first of its kind. Of course, Sebeos had in mind, and indeed quoted from, the *Teaching of St Gregory*. But that document in the History of Agat'angelos was not *overtly* a defence in opposition to the creed of another church. It is an important text, enshrining many of the standard points of Armenian theological tradition and putting them back into the mouth of Gregory before the council of Nicaea. Its implicit targets may be read back into it. Armenian historians before Sebeos, however, did not include specifically anti-Greek polemical tracts in their Histories.<sup>84</sup>

Not that Armenian historians ignored theology. The author of the *Buzandaran* is concerned with the dangers of Arianism, against which

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82 Flusin, *St Anastase*, II, 114-18. The question remains whether the text quoted by Sebeos reflects a real defence composed by Nerses and his bishops in 649, or whether this letter is the creation of Sebeos himself.

83 For a more detailed investigation of the letter, see Thomson, 'The Defence'.

84 I pass over documents such as the *Demonstration* attributed to John Mandakuni, which deals with the question of one or two natures in Christ, and the extensive correspondence between Greek authorities and Armenian theologians from the fifth century onwards, since the context here is that of historical works.



his hero Nerses fought valiantly. Movses Khorenats'i emphasizes the heresy of Nestorius, condemned at the council of Ephesus.<sup>85</sup> Lazar and Elishe quote the defence of Christianity supposedly sent to the shah Yazkert. But this is a repudiation of Persian religion rather than an overt defence of Nicaean orthodoxy. In the letter of Leo III included in the text of *tewond*,<sup>86</sup> the defence of Christianity is also a general one; no specific Armenian position is defended against other Christian groups. In the tenth-century work of John Catholicos two theological letters are included: one from Nicholas Mystikos of Constantinople to the Catholicos, and one from John to the emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus.<sup>87</sup> Neither deals with divisive issues of faith and practice. Not until Asolik [Step'anos of Taron] and the even later Matthew of Edessa do long polemical declarations by Armenian defenders of the faith appear. The speech in Matthew, attributed to king Gagik II before the emperor in Constantinople, is authorial;<sup>88</sup> the letter by Khach'ik found in Asolik has a parallel in the *Book of Letters*.<sup>89</sup> Like the letter in Sebeos, these documents are concerned with the theological divisions introduced by the council of Chalcedon.

Sebeos quotes many other documents, not of a theological nature, whose authenticity is less easy to assess. The more significant of these are discussed below.<sup>90</sup> In the absence of any parallel evidence - as exists, for example, with regard to the negotiations between Shahen and Heraclius - there remain two problems. Is the document based on an actual written text, or at least verbal agreement? And even if this is likely, is the wording that of the original or Sebeos' own? That Muawiya and the Armenian prince T'eodoros Rshtuni came to an agree-

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85 M.X. III 61. He notes that the Armenian church leaders were not present at that council.

86 The existence of this letter attributed to Leo III is attested in Greek and Latin sources; for the Armenian see Mahe, 'tewond'.

87 Yovhannes Draskhanakerts'i, ch.LIV.

88 See Gouillard, 'Gagik II'.

89 Asolik III 21, indicates that the letter he quotes was sent at the command of Khach'ik, the Armenian Catholicos, in response to a letter from the Metropolitan of Sebaste. The letter in the *Book of Letters* 302-22, states that it was written on Khach'ik's orders by Samuel Kamradzor (a noted theologian interested in liturgical questions). The texts are not identical. That in Asolik is based on a catena of relevant authorities, see Dedurand, 'Citations patristiques'. That attributed to Samuel has fewer direct quotations, although some of the same Fathers are mentioned.

90 See the section below, 'Sebeos as Historian', lxiii-lxx.

ment on the terms of the Armenian submission is entirely plausible, given the way in which Sebeos attacks it. That the Armenians were allowed to pay tax, after a three year remission, 'as much as you may wish',<sup>91</sup> seems less likely. The promise of Vahram to give vast areas of land to the Armenians in return for help in his rebellion is again plausible. But did Mushel use elaborate biblical imagery in his response - as would befit a learned cleric such as Sebeos - or was the Armenian prince's reply more direct?<sup>92</sup>

It is less than likely that shah Khosrov would call his own Persian subjects 'impious',<sup>93</sup> or that his letter to Heraclius was deliberately phrased in reminiscence of Isaiah's description of Sennacherib's ultimatum to the Jews.<sup>94</sup> Maurice's letter to Khosrov urging that they join together in exterminating the Armenians, which echoes the sentiments of the senate's advice to Maurice concerning the Persians, is inherently implausible. It does, however, reflect an understandable Armenian view of the attitudes of the two empires towards their country.<sup>95</sup> Also befitting the situation are the Muslim message to Heraclius that Palestine was theirs, since it had belonged to Abraham, and the complaint of Roman soldiers that Armenians regarded them as impious because they accepted the council of Chalcedon.<sup>96</sup> Each of the letters and documents quoted by Sebeos has to be considered separately in the light of its role in the narrative and of external evidence.

(c) *Sebeos' Chronology*

The earliest Armenian writers, Koriwn, Agat'angelos, and the author of the *Buzandaran*, do not pay much attention to questions of exact dating. Elishc and Lazar are more careful, using the regnal years of the Sasanian shahs as guideposts. The only Armenian historian to devote specific consideration to chronology is Movses Khorenats'i. Influenced by late antique concepts of historiography, as well as the particular example of Eusebius' *Chronicle*, he emphasizes that not only must events be properly dated, the writer must proceed in a strictly chronolo-

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91 See 164.

92 See 77-79.

93 See 85.

94 See 123.

95 See 86.

96 See 136,148.

gical manner. That is, events must be mentioned at the appropriate point in the narrative.<sup>97</sup> Since Movses integrated into his narrative a great deal of material which had come down orally, devoid of any clear historical setting, he made a particular effort to date and explain such legends, in addition to making earlier Armenian sources, such as Agat'angelos, more precise.<sup>98</sup> Sebeos, though not showing any knowledge of Movses and his History, comes closest in giving frequent precise indications of date.

On the other hand, the narrative in Sebeos does not progress in a clear chronological fashion. Although there is a thread running through the work which is progressive, Sebeos frequently digresses. He may move forwards or backwards as his attention is attracted by an association of ideas - a procedure explicitly condemned by Movses. Since Sebeos does not warn the reader of such digressions, a reference to 'the next year' when he returns to his original topic may refer not to the year just mentioned, but the year of the original story.

At the beginning and end of his work Sebeos makes brief remarks about his approach to the subject. On reaching the reign of Khosrov II he gives a precis of the disasters inflicted on the world by this 'Sasa- man brigand'.<sup>99</sup> He says that he 'will recount [*charets'itsj* the 'tales [*araspels*]' of the destructive events by means of 'story-telling [*vipasa- nelov*]. The stem *char* refers to narrative; but *afaspel* in Armenian renders the Greek *mythos* and *vep* renders *epos* or *historia*. These Armenian expressions emphasize the content of the book. Sebeos is interested in tales and stories, which are the main feature of the first part of the History dealing with the reign of Khosrov II. The episodic character of his work emerges clearly. Although the sections of his History are usually dated by the regnal year of shah or emperor, it is noticeable that when describing the prowess of Mushel Mamikonean in the reign of Maurice Sebeos gives no dates. This prince's exploits are reminiscent of the 'gestes' of the Mamikoneans which are a

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<sup>97</sup> See the Introduction to Thomson, *Moses Khorenats'i*.

<sup>98</sup> For example, in dating the introduction of idol worship into Armenia, M.X. II12; or with regard to the date of Trdat's restoration, M.X. II82: 'We made a detailed investigation and found that Trdat gained the throne in the third year of Diocletian.' Agat'angelos had given no date nor had he named the emperor.

<sup>99</sup> See 72.

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prominent feature of the *Buzandaran*.<sup>100</sup> One would not expect tales of this ilk, which may have come to Sebeos by word of mouth, to have a precise dating.

At the end of the History he picks up the theme of progressive narrative.<sup>101</sup> He apologizes for setting down in unintelligent fashion the details of 'the order [*karg*] of this History'. The expression *karg* is stressed by the earlier Lazar, who undertook 'to arrange in order the multifarious fortunes of Armenia,' and who praises the exposition, *kargadrut'iwn charits'* ['ordering of the narrative'] of his predecessor Agat'angelos.<sup>102</sup> So even if Sebeos is primarily interested in tales, he is aware of the necessity for orderly progression in the narrative. Unfortunately, the story-telling introduces some uncertainties into the chronological framework of his History as a whole.

As noted below,<sup>103</sup> the digressions which seem to confuse the chronology generally make literary sense in that Sebeos follows a story through to its logical conclusion; where he sticks to strict chronology the theme is often lost. The problem is that his return to an original theme is rarely marked as clearly as is desirable. Another confusing trait is that he does not always distinguish unequivocally the different participants in events. 'They' and 'them' may follow confusedly in a paragraph, and sometimes only the general sense indicates which is the subject and which the object. Such ambiguity is a common feature of Armenian writing.

100 Cf. above, xli, xliv-xlvi, for the parallel between Sebeos and the *Buzandaran* in this regard.

101 See 176.

102 Lazar 2.

103 See the section below, 'Sebeos as Historian', lxiii-lxiv.

### III. SEBEOS AS HISTORIAN

Sebeos (born probably near the beginning of the seventh century, died after 661) set himself a demanding task. The larger world within which Armenian leaders had had to manoeuvre with subtlety and determination to maintain their semi-autonomy had changed out of all recognition in his lifetime. A multitude of political and cultural forces had been and were still at work - the centripetal pull of Armenian lordship at the level of the locality, tensions between rival Christian confessions in eastern Christendom at large, the formidable military power which could be projected into and beyond Armenia by its great neighbours, Roman, Persian and Arab, political disputes which might erupt into bloody conflict in the territories of those neighbouring powers, the intrusion of a new, spare monotheism with an extraordinary capacity to mobilize its adherents for war. Even at a great remove, thirteen and a half centuries later, it is hard for the modern observer to comprehend the long-drawn-out breakdown of the late antique world-order in the late sixth and early seventh centuries. How much more difficult then must it have been for Sebeos with changes of all sorts staring at him from so close at hand.

Sebeos did not shrink from the task, by confining himself to a tightly delimited set of localities. His history was on a grand scale, reaching out to encompass the full geographical extent of Armenia's three great neighbours. Roman warfare in the Balkans, Persian in central Asia, and Arab along the whole perimeter of their expanding empire came within his remit, as well as high-level politics at their centres and their actions within Armenia. Nor did Sebeos reduce his labour by confining himself to a record of current events, writing down the news as it came to him, with perhaps a short introductory section on recent history - a work which would have approximated roughly to the final third section of his text. No, he sought to understand the overall shape of events, the causal sequence lurking within them, by retreating back to the Armenian rising

572 and the outbreak of a long war between the great powers of which the rising was the first act. He thereby provided a context for the

Persian troubles of 589-591 which ended with the installation by the Romans of Khosrov II on the Sasanian throne.

Of course, supernatural forces played a part in human affairs (miracle-working relics feature in the text and one great miracle, the storm which saved Constantinople in 654), but, for Sebeos, the long interlude between Creation and the Last Days was one in which material causes, above all the political decisions and actions of individuals, played a major part in shaping events. And of the agents at work in the recent past, one was singled out as the prime mover, Khosrov II Apruez. His reign and the great war with the Romans which he initiated in 603 were therefore placed at the centre of the history. In order to be understood, though, this Khosrov-focused core had to be framed with an account of the unusual circumstances leading to his accession and a full record of the working-out of the destructive forces unleashed by him which showed little sign of easing at the time of writing. This was the rationale of Sebeos' history, as he makes plain [72]. Its impressive chronological as well as geographical scope testifies to a real sense of historical development on his part, a tacit acknowledgement that events could not be understood unless attention was given to causal connections and to the interplay of diverse forces affecting the whole world within his field of vision over a large swathe of the recent past.

If a historian's prowess is ultimately to be judged by the extent to which he understands historical processes and can offer a coherent explanation or set of explanations for what happened, then Sebeos, unpretentious though he be as a historian, should be ranked high. The modern historian may seek to supplement political causes with social and economic, but the importance of political decision-making and the military actions which it initiates is undeniable. Sebeos too tried to look beyond politics and warfare, but he looked up rather down, and what he could discern, with the help of the prophecies of Daniel and Isaiah, made grim reading. The visible world with all its turbulence was very near its end. The Day of Judgement was coming with long strides upon humanity, great and small, Armenians and outsiders, conquered peoples and Arab conquerors.

The test of a historian's analytical and explanatory powers is merely the last in a series of tests which should be carried out on his historical judgement. There are three earlier stages in the formation of a work of history, at each of which his performance may be measured. First sources need to be amassed, evaluated and quarried. A historian may be

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judged by the degree of critical acumen shown in his choice of sources and selection of material from them. The more careful the discrimination between reliable and unreliable information, the more a historian will be esteemed. Next he must put individual pieces of evidence together to present a coherent, intelligible narrative of events. Competent editorial skills at this stage are essential. Third he should be dispassionate, should not allow feelings of his own, however intense they may be, whether generated by social attachments or deep-rooted opinions, to influence his writing. Next to credulity, bias is the great enemy of history, and its eradication must be the aim of the historian, however difficult it be to achieve completely.

Sebeos has already been watched at work in the previous section (II. The Armenian Text). It has been shown that he was ready to use the highest available grade of source material - documents. The exposition of Armenian Monophysite faith which he incorporates in his text [148 161] has been adjudged to have a large, authentic core dating from 649.<sup>1</sup> The same confidence may be put in the authenticity of two purported letters which he includes, from Modestos, acting head of the church in Jerusalem after the deportation of Patriarch Zak'aria in 614, and the Catholicos Komitas [116-121 with nn.35 and 36].<sup>2</sup> The former writes what is in effect an apologia for the Persian authorities in charge of Jerusalem, focusing on reconstruction and a prohibition on Jewish immigration into the city. The latter replies guardedly with generalities, within which lurks his refusal to contribute to the cost of reconstruction. The only explanation for the substance and tone of these letters is that they were written, as they purport to be, by contemporaries living under the watchful eye of the Sasanian authorities. Had Sebeos concocted them, he would surely have made some use of the propaganda which Christians had let fly once they had heard the news of the fall of Jerusalem. Spurious material may also have been identified (Maurice's advice to Khosrov on dealing with Armenia in 591 [86 with n. 15], Khosrov's 624 ultimatum to Heraclius [123 with n.38]), but the presence of long documents, incorporated apparently whole, inspires a fair degree of confidence in the reader.

The general scheme of Sebeos' reconstruction of history has been outlined. The outer framework is chronological. The narrative advances

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<sup>1</sup> Thomson, 'The Defence'.

<sup>2</sup> Citations refer to numbered historical notes, which are to be found in Part II. Historical Commentary.

from Sebeos' chosen starting-point in 572 to the time of writing in the 650s. As one might expect, the volume of material increases as the narrative approaches and then enters the period when Sebeos was at work. The notices are fullest and most frequent for the last two and a half years, from 653 to the middle of 655, covered in the main text (which is then brought to a close with a concluding peroration and three updating notices, evidently added later and extending the coverage to 661 [175- 176]). But, as has been observed, while there is a general chronological progression, chronology is disregarded at many points in the narrative. It seems then that there is a second, subsidiary organizing principle, which is thematic. Thus Sebeos is ready to follow the fortunes of an individual well beyond the point reached in his general narrative (e.g. Smbat Bagratuni's career in Persian service from 599/600 to his death in 616/617 [96-104] or that of his son Varaztirots' in the 640s [143-144]). Similarly he may bunch together events spread over several years in a single geographical arena (e.g. episodes involving Theodosiopolis from 607 to 609/610 [111-112]). There are therefore casts forward (and, more occasionally, backward) which disrupt the chronological progression of Sebeos' narrative, giving it in places a disjointed, jerky air (as shown in the previous section).

Nonetheless, when he is placed within the peer-group of his predecessors and immediate successors among the historians of Armenia, Sebeos can hold his own on the first two basic tests, choice of source material and editorial methods. When it comes to the third stage in the formation of history and the historian's duty to combat bias, Sebeos stands out from them. With two notable exceptions, his record of the Catholicosate of Ezr (berated for seeking to bring about a reconciliation with the Chalcedonian church of Constantinople [131-132 with n.49]) and some sharp criticism of Nerses III [167], Sebeos succeeds in keeping his historical record cool and objective. In particular, as has been observed, he avoids showing partiality to any one Armenian princely house, instead allowing the spotlight to pick out a succession of leading players from different families. He was evidently a churchman, so steeped is he in the Bible, who managed to avoid particular aristocratic entanglements or, at any rate, to avoid revealing them in his narrative.

The close scrutiny of the substance of Sebeos' history undertaken in the historical notes which form the second part of this book makes it possible to widen and deepen these preliminary investigations. Careful elucidation of individual notices, comparison of Sebeos' material with



that provided by other sources of demonstrable worth, and consideration of the contexts of reported episodes - the three main functions of the historical commentary - unmask several more of the sources used by Sebeos, reveal rather more of the editorial practices involved in piecing together his narrative, and, most important, provide an external control on the accuracy and objectivity of his history. The following remarks pull together a number of suggestions, which are scattered across the historical notes. For full justification of many of the conclusions offered here the reader is referred to the relevant historical note or notes, where the evidence is set out in detail and the arguments are developed in full.

### (i) Sources

Sebeos makes extensive rather than merely occasional use of documentary sources. Besides the three clear cases, already mentioned, in which whole documents are reproduced in the text, there are many other passages which show signs of being based on documents. The documents in question were of official origin, a majority of them Persian. Since the Sasanian empire had a fully developed bureaucratic apparatus of government, it should cause no surprise that official notices and communiques were issued and circulated widely, just as they did in the contemporary Roman world, nor that copies reached Armenia and were preserved in an archive (most probably that of the Catholicosate at Dvin) where Sebeos found them.

Two documents announce themselves by their form. The first is a long letter of the usurper Vahram Ch'obin to Mushel Mamikonean in 591, which is incorporated in the text [77-78]. The generous terms offered by Vahram in an attempt to detach the Armenian forces from the coalition backing Khosrov II make sense in the circumstances. With battle imminent and his own forces outnumbered, it was vital to weaken the opposing side. There is nothing in the letter to make one doubt its authenticity. The second is the list of Persian governors and military commanders in Armenia from 572 to 627, which Sebeos has broken up and distributed across his text.<sup>1</sup> Full details are recorded in a systematic way

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<sup>1</sup> Twelve governors are listed in a first long notice [70-71], covering the period 572-602, of whom five reappear in a later doublet [105]. The appointments of the next six, all but one active military commanders (602/603-ca.615), are noted at the appropriate points in the narrative of Persian operations in the Armenian theatre [107-111]. Finally there comes a

- the name of the postholder, his length of tenure, and any notable achievements or setbacks. Since it would have taken painstaking research by Sebeos to gather these details and the format in which they are presented is at odds with that of a chronicle, it may be concluded that Sebeos took the information, already neatly packaged, from an official register, which had been kept up to date in a lay or ecclesiastical office at Dvin for as long as the Persians exercised effective authority in Armenia.

It is obviously harder to detect the presence of documentary material if an original document has been gutted for its content. The key indicator is no longer form (since that has been discarded) but the precision of detail and lucidity characteristic of documents. Inevitably the process of identifying such material becomes more conjectural. But some soundings yield encouraging results. In the historical notes, the following summaries of documents or document-based passages are identified: (i) the treaty defining the terms of Armenia's client-status agreed by Teodoros Rshtuni with Muawiya, governor of Syria, in 652/653 [164]; (ii) a formal warning not to enter Armenia, issued by Muawiya to the emperor Constans II in 653 [165], which was intended to stiffen his resolve and ensure that he was in Armenia rather than organizing the defence of his own core territories in the following campaigning season; (iii) Muawiya's ultimatum to Constans II, on the eve of his land and sea attack on Anatolia and Constantinople in 654 [169-170]; (iv) a set of Persian communiques on the fighting in the northern theatre of war (Armenia and eastern Anatolia) between 603 and 611 [107-112] - this is the most conjectural of these suggestions, since positive traces of such material have only been detected at one point [110].

The extent to which it may be legitimate to extrapolate from these instances must be left to the individual reader's judgement. That there may be more rather than less documentary material lurking within Sebeos' text is suggested by the following consideration. Speeches put into the mouths of protagonists traditionally provided classical historians and their late antique Armenian counterparts with a way of injecting comments of their own into the narrative of events and showing off their literary skill. In Sebeos' case, though, words put into direct speech can

short list of the last four, ending with Էրօճ Vehan who was killed at the battle of Nineveh on 12 December 627 [113].

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be demonstrated, on at least one occasion, to rest on a solid documentary base. The occasion was an acute crisis in 615, when a large Persian expeditionary force had reached the Bosphorus and Heraclius went out to negotiate with the Persian commander, Shahen. Extraordinary, humiliating concessions are made by Heraclius in the speech put in his mouth by Sebeos [122-123]. In effect, he offers to make the Roman empire a Persian client-state and to give the Persian king the right to invest a client-ruler of his own choice. Corroboration of these terms is to hand in the *Chronicon Paschale* (707-9) which reproduces *verbatim* and in full the Senate's formal statement of the Roman position subsequently sent to the Persians. There are a number of other telling points of correspondence between the speech and the document. There can be little doubt that Sebeos had access to an accurate report, emanating either from the Roman or the Persian authorities, about the negotiations and that he has transmuted it into a speech. If documentary material can make its way into a speech, it may have percolated imperceptibly into many parts of his narrative of events.

A source of a different type, a biography of Smbat Bagratuni, has already been identified and compared to the 'gestes' which, as Nina Garsoian convincingly argues, made a substantial contribution to the *Epic Histories*, composed in the late fifth century (cf. The Armenian Text above). Smbat had an eventful career, first in Roman, later in Persian service. Four long notices [91-93,96-104] deal with four distinct phases of his life: his leading role in a failed rebellion provoked by Roman recruiting policy in Armenia and his subsequent punishment (589), his service as *marzpan* of Vrkan (599/600-606/607), six years or more of retirement in Armenia, and his tenure of the supreme command in the north-east (614-615). Material has evidently been excerpted and abridged from a single source, since the four notices have several characteristics in common. They are biographically oriented and laudatory in tone. Various of Smbat's achievements are spotlighted: he is a man of powerful physique who performs heroic feats as a young man (against wild beasts in the arena in Constantinople) and in old age (a duel with an enemy commander); he is a fine general, whose successes in the field bring him high honours at the Sasanian court; and he is a pious Christian, interested (it is implied) in the fate of Christian deportees whom he encounters in Sasanian frontier lands, glad to receive a fragment of the True Cross recovered from a battlefield, and refounder of the church of St Gregory at Dvin. With less emphasis on low cunning, more on piety,

and no concealment of setbacks suffered by the hero (exile to north Africa, one defeat in Vrkan and another at the hand of the Turks), the biography of Smbat is more rounded than the 'gestes' underlying the *Epic Histories* and tinged with hagiographical elements. Its closest analogue is a biography of Juansher (died 668), the dominant figure in Caucasian Albania during and after the initial phase of Arab expansion, which was extensively used by Movses Daskhurants'i.

There is a great deal of demonstrably high-grade information about Roman affairs which Sebeos assuredly derived from Roman sources, but only in one case can a specific provenance be suggested with reasonable confidence. There is a general correspondence between Sebeos' and Theophanes' accounts of Heraclius' two northern counter-offensives of 624-626 and 627-628, which points to use of a common source. There are differences in their coverage, attributable to different selections of material, Sebeos' being rather more sparing, but there is a striking similarity between the ways in which the two authors present operations, in particular those of 625 and autumn-early winter 627-628 [nn.39 and 42]. Strong evidence of their dependence on a common source is obtainable if their accounts of a single episode, a surprise attack on the Persian headquarters in winter 625-626, described in some detail in both texts, are compared [n.40]. The common source may perhaps be identified as an officially sponsored history of the two sets of campaigns, itself based on the emperor's dispatches, which was intended to circulate widely in the Christian Near East.<sup>1</sup>

The third section of Sebeos' text, devoted to recent and current events, is not as susceptible to source-critical dissection as the first two. The flow of information reaching Sebeos increased markedly and it came from several different quarters. More editorial work was required to fit this material into his history. So the more obvious indicator, form, vanishes, and some distinctive features of substance are obscured. There is also a relative dearth of useful comparative primary material which might have suggested connections between Sebeos and other extant sources. The only recourse is to turn to the internal characteristics of Sebeos' material and its disposition in his text, to see whether blocs of distinctive material may be identified, on the basis of subject-matter and general approach. This is a perilous enterprise, but justifiable if it can

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1 Howard-Johnston, 'Official History'.

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help establish a pattern of arrangement of material in the text and explain transitions between topics, which can be abrupt.

Four sets of distinctive material, distributed across the text in a small number of separate blocs, are identified in the historical notes. Between them these four types of material fill up a large part of the narrative dealing with events following the end of open warfare between Persians and Romans early in 628. It is impossible to demonstrate that any of them corresponds to a specific, independent, written source used by Sebeos, although such a hypothesis would account most easily for their existence. For the sake of clarity, each set has been given a label and provisionally identified as derived from a single source. In the order of their contribution to Sebeos' text, they are: (i) the Persian Source, which gives an overview of Persian politics and warfare after the death of Boran in 632 and which may have taken shape in Khuzistan [nn.46, 54, 56, 59, 67]; (ii) the Dvin Source which takes a close interest in Roman court politics, the part played in them by high-ranking Armenians, and their repercussions on Armenia [nn.50, 51, 55, 58, 60, 61, 66]; (iii) the Rshtuni Source, which gives a detailed account of the military exploits of its principal subject, T'eodoros Rshtuni [nn.51, 55, 62]; and (iv) the Palestine Source, which restricts itself to regional history and shows a marked anti-Jewish bias [nn.52, 53, 57].

Such is the haul of primary sources, long since vanished, from a trawl of Sebeos' text. They make an impressive list. Sebeos discharged the basic duty of research more than competently. His history incorporates a wide variety of generally reliable material. The most questionable of the identifiable sources are the biographies of Smbat Bagratuni and T'eodoros Rshtuni, but even they supplied enough particulars to enable the reader to follow their subjects' careers and to make judgements independently of the laudatory thrust of the texts. The chief criticism which might be levelled is that Sebeos is too niggardly with some of his sources, that his selection of materials is too restricted. It is frustrating when, for example, Smbat Bagratuni disappears from view in 589 or soon afterwards as an exile in north Africa, to reappear ten years later as newly-appointed Persian governor of Vrkan, without any explanation as to how his transfer to Persian service was effected and how he gained the favour of Khosrov. It is then highly misleading when the last chunk of excerpted and abridged material from the biography, about Smbat's grandest appointment, in 614-615, is placed after what, at first sight, appears to be a brief visit to Armenia at the end of his tenure of the *marz-*

*panate* of Vrkan in 606/607, and reference is made to the passage of a single intervening winter [100 with n.21].

Clean excisions and simple juxtapositions of this sort are regular features of Sebeos' work. Most of the transitions, however, are clearly visible and thus unlikely to confuse the reader. The material itself, much of it enriched with detail extracted from documentary sources, has been judiciously selected. There may not be as much of it as one would like, but what there is inspires confidence.

## (ii) Editorial Treatment

Sebeos restricted his work on the raw materials which he had gathered to that of abridgement and arrangement. He did not seek to pulverize his sources and then to combine some of their powdered remnants into a new mixture of his own devising. Nor did he strive to impress his readers with his literary skills and learning, thereby burnishing whatever he took from his sources with an outer layer of fine writing. He could write fluently and vividly, as he showed in what was probably a piece of autobiography (the recalcitrant bishop's audience with Constans II at Dvin in 653 [167-168]), but the writer yielded to the scholar and he was content with the modest role of transmitting, in conveniently abridged form, valuable materials which he had found in sources which he trusted. It is therefore possible to discern the individual contributions of his sources and the pattern which those individual contributions make in his work as a whole.

Insofar as it can be judged - mainly by the coherence and intelligibility of the resulting notices - the work of abridgement was carried out competently. There are, as will be seen, some passages into which too much has been compressed or in which material relating to separate but similar episodes has been conflated, but they are very much the exceptions. The same generally favourable conclusion is reached on the overall structure of Sebeos' history. The overriding principle in the arrangement of his discrete notices is chronological. Dates scattered sparingly through the text mark a steady chronological progress. The majority (14) are Persian, taking the form of numbered regnal years of individual kings. Beginning in 572, they establish a series of fixed points stretching forward to the defeat and death of the last king, Yazkert III, in 652. In the third section, they are supplemented by similar Roman regnal dates (nine all told) and two which calibrate events from Muhammad's death in 632. An outer

chronological framework is thus constructed, within which individual notices are, for the most part, correctly placed.

Sebeos, however, did not allow himself to be tyrannized by time, breaking up sequences of events in different arenas into neat, annual notices. Apart from the problem of assigning all events, many of them not dated in his sources, to a specific year, this would have made for a jerkier, at times less intelligible narrative. The problems which can arise from too close an adherence to chronology can be illustrated from the Vahewuni episode (a rebellion in Persarmenia in 594/595, which went wrong). Rather than carry the story on to its *denouements* on both sides of the frontier (the Roman suppression of a later rebellion by one group, the stationing of another group by the Persians at Ispahan and their subsequent desertion), Sebeos divided up his material into three notices placed at chronologically appropriate and necessarily separate places in his text [**87-88, 89-90, 94** with n.15]. Broken up like this, the story is hard to follow. The reader is better served, on the whole, if closely related material is bunched together, as long as some indication is given that an individual notice has thrust forward (or backward) beyond its immediate neighbours. Sebeos normally does so: thus a date (616/617) is given for Smbat Bagratuni's death after his recall from the north-east, showing that this longest of casts-forward has surged 17 years into the future from its starting-point, Smbat's appointment to Vrkan in 599/600 [**96-104** with nn. 19-21]; similarly, Sebeos makes it plain that he is breaking with strict chronology by dating the two later events which he tacks onto a notice, correctly placed, about the capitulation of Theodosiopolis in 607 [**111-112** with n.30]; the same is true of his consolidated (and misleadingly compressed) bloc of material from the Dvin Source about Constantinopolitan and Armenian politics in the 640s [**142-145** with nn.60 and 61], which is given a terminal date (645/646), and is followed by a notice, taken from the Rshtuni Source, about an earlier Arab reverse in Armenia, carefully dated to 643 [**145-147** with n.62].

There are, however, several places where something is awry with Sebeos' editing: (a) four notices have been dislodged from their proper place, thereby disrupting the chronological flow; (b) two notices are excessively compressed and inaccurate; and (c) there are three instances of conflation. Most of these mistakes are venial, but one is serious and does extensive damage to Sebeos' account of the second phase of the last Persian-Roman war. The following summary lists these major editorial errors together with such explanations as may be offered:

(a) (1) The first of the recorded episodes involving Srabat Bagratuni, his active opposition to Roman recruiting policy in Armenia and his subsequent fate, has been displaced from its proper position in 589 (a date supplied by Theophylact Simocatta) and associated with the Romans' second recruiting drive in Armenia in the early 590s rather than the first (in winter 586-587 after a disastrous autumn in the Balkans) [91-93 with n. 17].

(2) A tantalizingly laconic notice about a Persian advance, under the command of Shahen, as far as Pisidia in south-west Asia Minor [113 with n.32], has been misplaced well before rather than after an account of the Persians' advance to the Bosphorus in 615 [122-123]. This may be partly attributed to the damage caused to this part of Sebeos' text by the conflation of the 615 invasion with the Persian-Avar siege of Constantinople in 626 ((c) (3) below).

(3) A similar displacement of a better-reported episode from the same period was probably another consequence of this conflation: Philip- picus' counter-attack into Persarmenia which succeeded in forcing Shahen to withdraw from the Bosphorus in 615 [114 with n.33] has been put well over two years earlier, before the coronation of Heraclius' eldest son, Hera- clius Constantine, on 22 January 613 (*Chronicon Pascale* 703-704).

(4) Disorder has crept into Sebeos' account of the Armenian component of the grand anti-Roman offensive launched by the Arabs in 654. The formal request by Teodoros Rshtuni for Arab aid and the military successes which followed in 654 are reported twice [169, 172, 173 with n.73]. It is hard to account for the detachment of the second pair of notices from the first, unless Sebeos was beginning to struggle to keep abreast of the press of events and was simply writing down items of news as they reached him.

(b) (1) Immediately after noting Phocas' seizure of power in 602, Sebeos introduces a cast-forward about the circumstances which led to his fall eight years later [106 with n.26]. A great deal has been packed into a short notice, history being somewhat garbled in the process. The cast-forward is also not flagged with a date.

(2) A highly compressed notice gives an inaccurate account of the short reign of (Heraclius) Constantine III in 641 (reduced from over a hundred to a few days and ending with his murder [140-141 with n.58]).

(c) (1) Three distinct episodes have been combined in a notice misdated to 623: the coronation of (Heraclius) Constantine III as a baby in 613, his designation as nominal head of state on the occasion of Heraclius' departure for his first campaign in Asia Minor in 622, and Heraclius' second departure at the start of his first counter-offensive (624-626) [124 with

n.38]. Superficial similarities between the phenomena he is recording may have misled Sebeos into conflating them.

(2) Two distinct stages in the career of Valentinus, the Romans' military strongman in the early 640s - his successful *demarche* demanding enhanced powers for the prosecution of the war against the Arabs in 642/643 and his failed bid for the throne in 644/645 which ended in his death - have been merged together in a single notice dated to 642/643 [142-143 with n.60]. This looks like a ham-handed and excessively abridged cast-forward.

(3) Elements relating to the joint Persian-Avar attack on Constantinople in 626 have been grafted onto a long notice about Shahen's advance to the Bosphorus in 615 and his subsequent negotiations with Heraclius [122-123 with n.37]. This has grave consequences: the greatest crisis of the war for the Romans has been eliminated from its proper place in 626; important events in the previous decade, when the Persians consolidated their grip on Palestine and invaded Egypt, are passed over in silence; and such events as are noted, are either displaced ((a) (2) and (3) above) or are reported baldly, without reference to their full context (Heraclius' first counter-offensive of 624-626 [124-126]). This conflation looks like a deliberate, interventionist editorial act. Sebeos, probably unable to conceive of Persian armies reaching the Bosphorus in two separate offensive thrusts in the course of one war, when they had never done so hitherto in late antiquity, abandoned his usual restraint, became overbold, and made a terrible, inexcusable mistake.

With this glaring exception (and the extensive disruption which it caused to Sebeos' narrative of surrounding events), Sebeos has pieced his text together out of his assembled raw materials in workmanlike fashion. His other lapses are relatively few and can be accounted for without bringing his general competence as an editor into question. Sebeos was aware of his failings, writing at the end [176]: 'I may have arranged the details of this history in accordance with the unintelligent thought of my own mind, and not in accordance with the worthy grace of knowledge'. He thereby acknowledges both that the task of combining<sup>ls</sup> variegated evidence was hard and that he was not always successful. It<sup>ls</sup> the apology of a conscientious editor, who worried about his errors father than priding himself on his general performance. The latter-day<sup>er</sup> reader is, however, struck much more by his successes than his failures -



by the general coherence of his narrative of the two long wars fought by the great powers and by the successful interweaving of several storylines in the interlude between them and during the final sweep towards his own day.

### (iii) Value of Sebeos' History

Given the generally high quality of the sources selected by Sebeos and generally competent editing on his part, there is little reason to doubt the reliability of much of his history. But tests should be carried out to see whether this faith is justified. This is one of the principal tasks undertaken in the historical notes. Wherever Sebeos' coverage overlaps with that of other sources of proven worth, a comparison is made, to test his reliability. The results of a whole series of such comparisons confirm, indeed enhance Sebeos' standing as scholar and historian.

The most useful tests are those which can be carried out over a longish tract of text, on nexus of related notices, taking one or more high-grade, independent sources as controls. The results are uniformly good, save for those passages already discussed where ham-handed editing is discernible. They establish both the accuracy of Sebeos' version of events and the extent of his contribution of material not duplicated elsewhere.

(i) Sebeos' account of the deposition and death of Ormizd (589), the appeal of his fugitive son, Khosrov II, for Roman aid, and his restoration (591) [73-80] can be corroborated on several key points by the fuller account of Theophylact Simocatta, as well as scattered notices in the eastern sources. Sebeos adds unique information about the political process leading to Ormizd's fall, about the terms on which the Romans gave Khosrov their support, and (probably) about Vahram's vain attempts to win over the Armenian force commanded by Mushel Mami-konean [nn.8-11].

(ii) Sebeos' chronology can most easily be tested by comparing the dates given in the early part of his second section: two sources of unimpeachable chronological authority, the *Chronicon Paschale* and the *Chronicle to 724*, supplemented by the *Life* of Theodore of Sykeon and the *Short History* of Nikephoros, between them corroborate his dates for the accessions of Phocas and Heraclius (given in regnal years of Khosrov II) [106, 112-113 with nn.25, 31], the siege and capture of Dara (603-604) [107 with n.27], the failed blockade of Caesarea of Cappadocia (611-612) [113 with n.31], and the fall of Jerusalem (614) [115-116 with n.34]. As has already been shown, Heraclius' negotiating stance in 615 is reported with impressive precision and accuracy. Sebeos' own contributions to a modern reconstruction of the first one and a half

phases of the war are very considerable: notably, his detailed coverage of campaigns in Armenia, and a succinct *expose* of the circumstances which led to the Persian attack on Jerusalem.

(iii) Not unexpectedly, since they may well depend on a common source, there is a close correspondence between Sebeos' and Theophanes' accounts of Heraclius' operations from spring 624 to winter 625/626 [124-126 with nn.39-41]. Although Sebeos' is the sparser narrative, he supplies much detail (especially geographical) missing from Theophanes, as well as valuable additional pointers to the strategy of both sides. Sebeos' account of Heraclius' second counter-offensive (627-628) tallies equally well with Theophanes' [126-127 with n.42]. Additional corroboration, relating to both sets of campaigns, is obtainable from George of Pisidia's summary of Heraclius' achievements, the *Heraclias*, and the principal eastern sources.

(iv) A comparative dearth of Persian sources makes it harder to test Sebeos' material on later Sasanian history, save for two episodes - the fall of Khosrov II in late February 628 (reported in some detail in several eastern sources) and the loss of Mesopotamia (636-640) about which valuable supplementary material is supplied by Movses Daskhurants'i. Sebeos' notices about both can be corroborated on all essential points [127,137 with nn.43, 54].

(v) For the Arab conquests and Christian responses (in Constantinople and Armenia), there is very little comparative material to bring to bear on Sebeos' relatively full narrative. But such bits and pieces as can be retrieved provide some confirmation. Thus Sebeos' account of the invasion of Palestine complements that of *Chron. 724*, the two victories and subsequent occupation which he reports fitting without difficulty between an earlier victory near Gaza and the later invasion of Syria noted laconically by the chronicle [135-136 with n.53]. An opportunity to check Sebeos' version of Roman political history comes after Heraclius' death in 641: although, as has been shown, there is some conflation of material, the main thrust of his account can be corroborated from notices culled from Nikephoros, John of Nikiu and Theophanes [140-141,142-143 with nn.58,60].

Close examination of Sebeos' text thus demonstrates its historical worth. A generally high standard of historical accuracy is achieved. There are passages of lower quality, where something has gone awry in the editorial process, but they are isolated and have been identified. The credit, of course, belongs not so much to Sebeos himself as to his sources. His role was to let them speak for themselves, limiting his editorial interventions to abridgement and arrangement. His restraint is impressive. He regarded Khosrov as the primary agent of change on earth, the destroyer of the established order. In a passage of editorial comment on his accession [72], he calls him a brigand, destructive and ruinous, cursed by God. These sentiments, however, are not allowed to seep into the history proper, where he maintains a remarkably dispassionate tone and even refrains from crowing over Khosrov's death.

Sebeos shows equal editorial self-control in confining his overarching view, that the world was nearing its end, to a small number of editorial interjections. These mark and comment upon crucial historical moments - Khosrov's accession (590), the battle of Nihawand (642) which destroyed the Sasanian empire as a unitary state, an important episode in the continuing Roman political crisis provoked by the Arab conquests (651), and the concluding peroration. There is an eschatological resonance to the language used, in the first editorial on Khosrov [72], of Khosrov's military successes ('the wrath evoked from on high and the anger flaming up below; the torrents of fire and blood ... the cry of demons and the roar of dragons') and of the Arab invasions for which he is held responsible ('a whirlwind razing mountains and hills, rending plains ...'). The two images of fire (disturbing the sea and dry land) and whirlwind are picked up and expanded in the three later passages of comment. The full exposition of the eschatological theme comes in the second editorial [141-142] on 'the fearful calamity of the Ismaelite brigand who set fire to sea and land', in which the Arabs are identified as the fourth of Daniel's beasts. Fire and wind merge into the mortal hot wind blowing from the south and burning the fine trees of newly-planted orchards, a tempest overtaking the whole earth, in the third editorial [161-162], while the connection between Arab expansion and the end of the world is reinforced at the end of the main text [176-177] by the image of fire used of both, flaming up from God's anger and kindled in the desert.

There is an evident passion, more than understandable given the circumstances, in these passages composed by Sebeos, but it is penned

## SEBEOS

back and not allowed to affect the narrative proper. It is only when he comes to the question of Christian doctrine, which would determine whether or not Armenians would achieve salvation, that Sebeos loosens his grip on himself. He inserts a long defence of the Monophysite confession, thereby interrupting his rapid-fire account of the Arab conquests [148-161], and he writes a mendacious account of the negotiations which resulted in a temporary union of the Armenian church with the patriarchate of Constantinople in 631, presenting it as a personal initiative of the Catholicos, Ezz, rather than the considered decision of a general assembly of clergy and laity [131-132 with n.49].

With two exceptions then, this massaging of facts and a misguided editorial intervention which caused extensive damage, Sebeos played the modest part of transmitter of material from selected sources. This self-effacement of the historian from his history more than matches that of the anonymous Constantinopolitan author of *Chron. Pasch.*, who, a generation earlier, compiled its final contemporary section almost entirely out of documents, official bulletins and extracts from them. Sebeos' judgement was equally sound - hence his inclusion of a substantial amount of documentary material - but the range of his sources and of his coverage was far greater. Sebeos' history thus combines solidity with range, and is well presented in a format which strikes a generally successful balance between thematic coherence and chronological progression. Causal connections within and between different sets of events are thereby rendered visible.

Sebeos' contribution to our knowledge of the ending of classical antiquity is greater than that of any other single extant source. Without him, we would know very little of the history of his homeland across some 80 dramatic years and would have a much more fragmented view of the rise and fall of Sasanian fortunes over the period. He fills in a number of important blanks in the coverage by other sources of the last war between the rival empires. He provides some fascinating glimpses of Roman politics in an age of crisis. But his text is to be treasured above all as presenting the fullest reliable and chronologically precise account of the Arab conquests and providing unique information on the circumstances leading to the first Arab civil war. Sebeos appreciated that the familiar world was being destroyed in his own time. He took it as an unmistakable sign that time itself was very near its end, and, by his carefully controlled editorial interventions, imparted a sombre urgency to the story which he told.

### NOTE TO THE READER

The following translation has been made from the critical edition of the text prepared by G.V. Abgaryan entitled *Patmut 'iwn Sebeosi* (Erevan, 1979). This work will be referred to throughout as 'Abgaryan'. The numbers in bold in the translation and elsewhere represent the page numbers in Abgaryan's edition, not the page numbers of this book.

The chapter numbers and headings are surrounded by square brackets because they do not appear in the original MSS and are nineteenth-century additions. Given that the original Armenian of Sebeos can be highly ambiguous, for the sake of clarity certain words have been added to the text; these are also contained in square brackets.

The transliteration of proper names is a perennial problem, not least because the text itself is inconsistent in its spelling. In general the standard Armenian form has been rendered in the translation although well-known individuals and places outside Armenia have been given their more usual names; thus Muawiya rather than Mawias and Jerusalem rather than Erusalem.

To facilitate reference to available English translations, Armenian texts are cited by chapter or section where such divisions exist - e.g. Agat'angelos, the *Buzandaran*, etc. When only page numbers for the Armenian text are given, these are clearly marked in the English version given in the Bibliography. Some Armenian sources are not available in English, and some have never been translated at all.

## ANNOTATED TRANSLATION

[64]

[CHAPTER 7]<sup>1</sup>

*[Armenia after the extinction of the rule of the Arsacids. Contents of the present History, from the rebellion of Vahan to the rise of the Ismaelites and their rule from Egypt to Persia]*

When the times of Arsacid rule declined in Armenia and the reign of king Vramshapuh came to an end,<sup>2</sup> the race of the Kark'edovmayi<sup>3</sup> empire ruled over it. He undertook a terrible and dreadful plan, in concert with the venomous<sup>4</sup> and most important Chaldaeans<sup>5</sup> and all the leading nobles of his kingdom, to remove the fruits of piety from the land of Armenia. Thereby he gained no profit but was greatly harmed, and piety flourished more gloriously than ever.

I refer to the times of the reign of the maleficent Yazkert,<sup>6</sup> and [65]

1 Macler begins his translation here; Gugerotti chose to include all the previous Armenian text in his translation. For the preceding sections, see The Armenian Text, xxxii-xxxiii above. The chapter headings are not in the original manuscript but derive from modern editors.

2 King Vramshapuh of Armenia [401-417?] was followed briefly by his older brother Khosrov [bazar 18; M.X., Book III, ch.55], then his son Artashes [422-428?]. bazar describes at length the efforts of the Armenian nobles to depose him. The Arsacid family was dispossessed in his sixth year, and Persian *marzpan*s governed thereafter. For this title see Index II below and EH 544.

3 Kark'edovmayi: Abgaryan, n.118, and Toumanoff, *Studies* 189, give previous attempts to explain this word as an error. Abgaryan supposes it to be a corruption of *ch'ar k'aw- deayts'*, 'evil Chaldaeans' [see n.5 below]. Frendo, 'Sebeos' 6, n.12, takes the word to be a confusion of Carchemish and Carthage. However, *Kark'edovn* is associated with Persia in the Armenian text of 'The Seventh Vision of Daniel', *Ankanon Girk'*, 244. See also Macler, *Apocalypses* 63.

4 Venomous: *darnashunch'*, 'blowing bitterly, cruel'. It is usually associated with winter weather, but the *NBHL* notes it once as applied to Herod. On 172 it is applied to the Muslim ruler.

5 Chaldaeans: magicians, *AG* 318. They are stressed as the shah's advisors [*Buzandaran*, Book IV, ch.54], and associated with magism [Elishe 15]. See also 72.

6 Yazkert II, shah of Persia [438-457].

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how he wished to destroy the rites of God; how the valiant Armenian nobles and the head of the Mamikonean house, the zealot for God Vardan called 'the Red',<sup>7</sup> in unison with his fully armed fellow warriors and their troops, armed themselves for battle, taking up the shield of faith, and putting on like a strong breast-plate zeal for the divine word were eye-witnesses as it were, seeing before their eyes the crown sent to them from above.<sup>8</sup> Therefore they despised death, reckoning it better to die on the divine road. How the Persian army advanced on them in great force; and how they fulfilled their own martyrdom by attacking them. How the holy martyrs of Christ captured by the heathen<sup>9</sup> fulfilled their own martyrdom at Apr-Shahr close to the city of Nishapur at the spot called T'eark'uni<sup>10</sup> - all that has been written by others, as that same History indicates.<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, all the evil that occurred in the time of Peroz;<sup>12</sup> Vardan's rebellion against Khosrov, and the revolt of the Persian troops against Ormizd; the death of Ormizd and the reign of Khosrov; the death of Maurice and the reign of Phocas; the capture of Egypt and the slaughter at Alexandria; the invasion of Heraclius into the northern regions to the king of the T'etals; the dispatch of an enormous multitude of peoples; the Greek raid into Atrpatakan, their plunder

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7 Vardan Mamikonean is the hero of the Histories by Elishe and tazar. Sebeos is the first to use the epithet 'the Red', the meaning of which he does not explain. Nicknames are not common in classical Armenian texts, but cf. Vardik of Mekk' on 138 below, who acted as a guide. He is called *Aknik*, 'little eye'. The Mamikonean house was the most important in Armenia until the seventh century; see EH 385-6.

B For these Armenians' zeal for martyrdom see esp. Elishe 100,114, and tazar 67. The troops did not see crowns during the battle, but for the imagery cf. Elishe 150; bazar 68,72.

9 I.e. the clergy taken to Iran as captives after the battle of Avarayr.

10 T'eark'uni is first mentioned by Sebeos; cf. Thomson, *Elishe* 30. tazar, 96,101, calls the site Rewan; T'.A., 79, refers to the desert of Apar. Abgaryan, n.120, supposes the name is a corruption of *orkoch'iwr ark'uni*, 'which was called royal'.

11 I.e. Elishe and tazar. Their works precede Sebeos in the original MS. But the meaning of 'that same History' is unclear, unless it is a general title for the story of the martyrs.

12 Sebeos implies that no one else had described any events after the martyrs' deaths, thus ignoring the History of bazar.

Notes for the following persons and places will be given when they occur in Sebeos' narrative. But the surviving text of Sebeos does not refer to an invasion of Heraclius among the T'etals. T'ovma Artsruni sometimes quotes a longer version of Sebeos. Either our present text is defective or Sebeos has taken this list of topics from a source which he did not follow exactly. For the problem of the sources used by Sebeos, see the Historical Commentary.

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and booty and return through P'aytakaran; the coming of the Persian **antiy** from the east to attack them; the battle which [took place] in the land of Aluank'; the emperor's return to the city of Nakhchawan and the battle of Archesh. the return of the emperor back to his own territory; yet another attack against Khosrov; the battle at Nineveh; the raid to the city of Ctesiphon; the return to Atrpatakan; the death of Khosrov; the reign of Kawat; the treaty between the two kings; the abandoning of Greek territory; the return of the divine Cross to the holy city. Then after this the arousal of enormous anger; the last disasters of the brigand in the south; and how the armies of Ismael were unexpectedly stirred, and in a moment of time defeated the power of the two kings, seized from Egypt as far as beyond the great river Euphrates [66] and to the border of Armenia, and from the shore of the great western sea as far as the royal court of the Persians, all the cities of Syrian Mesopotamia, and Ctesiphon and Veh Artashir<sup>3</sup> and Marand, Hamadan, as far as the city of Gandzak and the great Hrat<sup>13</sup> in the province of Atrpatakan - all this I wished to relate to you succinctly through this book.<sup>14</sup>

[CHAPTER 8]<sup>15</sup>

*[Vahan's rebellion against Peroz. Death of Peroz and reign of Kawat. Vahan is appointed marzpan of Armenia. Death of Kawat and reign of Anushervan Khosrov. Rebellion of Vardan. Khosrov's battle with him and defeat.]*

In the years of Peroz king of Persia<sup>16</sup> there took place a suppression of all the privileges and rituals and usages of Christianity. Such severe tribula-

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13 I.e. the Great Fire, now Takht-i Suliman; Hewsens, *ASX* 266, II.198A, and Schippmann, *Feuerheiligtümer* 349-50. For the fire cult see Russell, *Zoroastrianism*, ch.15.

14 Book: *gir*, 'document'. If Sebeos states that Vardan's death is described by 'others', but only he will describe the years of Peroz, he [or his source here] either is deliberately ignoring tazar or is unaware of that History.

15 Ch.I in Macler.

16 459-184. For his anti-Armenian attitude, see tazar 108-68, esp. 166.

13 Veh Artashir: On the right bank of the Tigris, so named circa 230, one of the five cities which composed the Sasanian capital; cf. Veh-Khosrov on 69. The other cities were Seleucia, a Greek foundation, Ctesiphon of Parthian origin, and Vologesias, founded 69 AD, south of Seleucia on the royal canal linking the Tigris and Euphrates. The standard Armenian form for Ctesiphon is Tisbon; see EH 594.



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tion of persecution and contempt assailed the princes, that they cast off from themselves the yoke of servitude. The Mamikonean Vahan rebelled, expelled the Persians, and seized power by force.<sup>18</sup>

Then king Peroz sent against him a large army of Huns.<sup>19</sup> He gave them strict orders to kill the rebel, and to put all males to the sword. The *sparapet* Vahan made haste to oppose him with 30,000 elite armed men. They were drawn up contingent facing contingent and line facing line.<sup>20</sup> And they promptly attacked each other at the sound of the trumpet on the plain of Geran.<sup>21</sup>

Then the divine Word came to their assistance. The wind created an intense storm of dust around the armies and poured it onto the Persians, surrounding them as with thick darkness at noontime.<sup>22</sup> A dreadful slaughter occurred on both sides, and one could not distinguish the corpses of the fallen - neither Persian nor Armenian soldier. However, the Armenian army gained strength and defeated the Persian army with a massacre. After pursuing the fleeing survivors, they returned totally victorious.<sup>23</sup>

This Vahan also collected the tribute of Armenia and restored the

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18 Vahan Mamikonean [no. 17 in *HAnjB*] is the patron and hero of bazar's History. He held by hereditary right the title of *sparapet*, 'commander-in-chief [for the title see Index II below, s.v. 'commander' and *EH* 560-1], but was not appointed *marzpan* until 485 in the reign of Valarsh, 67 below. The title *marzpan*, 'governor of a border district', was given to governors of Persian Armenia, whether they were Persians or native Armenians; see Index II below and *EH* 544. Cf. also below 96, 111. For the Mamikonean house, see *EH* 385-6, Toumanoff, *Studies* 209-10.

19 Huns north of the Caucasus are frequently mentioned in early Armenian historians; cf. Hewsens, *ASX* 246, n.82A. On occasion they supported Armenians and Georgians *against* the Persians, cf. bazar 117-26. Since the next paragraph refers only to Persians, some have been tempted to emend 'Huns' to 'Persians' - i.e. Peroz, king of the Persians, sent a large army...'. See Abgaryan n. 129.

20 Contingent: *gund*, for the military sense of 'detachment, battalion' see *EH* 529. *Chakat* [see^G 186], 'forehead', is the standard Armenian term for a line of battle.

21 Geran: This site is not mentioned by other Armenian authors. Perhaps it is in the area of the modern Geran river in Aluank', for which see Hewsens, *ASX* 262, II.166A. T'.A., 84, calls the battlefield *Eriz*, following bazar.

22 Darkness at noon: There are several biblical parallels, but not in the context of battle. Cf. also the noon darkness which caused the conversion of king Mihran of Iberia; *K'art'lis Ts'khovreba*: Q, 109; V, 58.

23 Many of Sebeos' battle descriptions contain similar rhetorical embellishments, which are common to many Armenian historians; cf. *EH* Appendix V, 'Epic and Scriptural Formulae' 586-96.

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great churches which the Persians had ruined in the city of Valarshapat<sup>24</sup>[67] and in Dvin and in Mzrayk', and in many places in Armenia. And he renewed again the prosperity of the land.

Now although Peroz the Persian king wished to gather another army to attack Armenia, yet he did not have an opportunity; for news of the enemy gave him no respite in the area of the K'ushans and that frontier, since the king of the K'ushans himself was marching against him with a large army.<sup>25</sup>

Then, gathering his troops, he went to oppose him in great haste. He said: 'I shall first go and defeat him; and then at my leisure I shall return to Armenia. Let my sword not spare them, men or women.' Marching rapidly he arrived to confront the enemy in the east. There was a terrible battle. They defeated and destroyed the host of the Persian army, so not a single one of them escaped or fled. King Peroz also died in the battle with his seven sons.

Then his son Kawat reigned over the land of Persia.<sup>26</sup> Because the power of his numerous army had been broken, he did not wish to engage in war with anyone, but made peace on all sides. He also made a treaty with the Armenians, summoned Vahan to court, and greatly honoured him. He bestowed on him the office of *marzpan* of the country<sup>27</sup> and the principality of the Mamikoneans.<sup>28</sup> He received an oath of full submission, and despatched him peaceably to his own country.

After Vahan his brother the *patrik* Vard held the office for a short

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24 For Vahan's actions cf. Y.D. XVI3. Valarshapat was the Arsacid capital of Armenia, superseded as the administrative centre by Dvin after the end of the monarchy. It became the religious centre in the late fourth century, after Ashtishat, because of its association with Saint Gregory the Illuminator, bazar, 157, refers to Vahan restoring the town which 'had grown old' [*not* 'destroyed']. See Khatchatrian, *L'Architecture Arménienne* 87 for the cathedral and its restoration in 484/485. Mzrayk' is not in tazar or other Armenian sources.

25 See bazar 155-6 for Peroz's attack on the 'Hephthalites'. Elishe, 11, calls the K'ushans 'Huns'. Armenian authors often use these terms inexactly; see Thomson, *Elishe* 63,n.5.

26 Kawat I: 488-531. Sebeos omits Valarsh [484-488], mentioned explicitly by bazar 178 and by Y.D. XVI5.

27 This is the climax of bazar's History, who says that Valarsh appointed Vahan and does not mention Kawat.

28 Since Vahan was the chief of that noble family, official recognition of his hereditary right as *sparapet* is probably intended.

time, then died.<sup>29</sup> After him Persian *marzpan*s came. But the Armenians were unable to wage war and remained in submission down to the *marzpan* Suren and Vardan lord of the Mamikoneans.<sup>30</sup>

Then in the 41 st year of the reign of Khosrov,<sup>31</sup> son of Kawat, Vardan rebelled and rejected submission to Persian rule in unison with all the Armenians. They killed the *marzpan* Suren, taking him by surprise in the city of Dvin, seized much booty, and turned their allegiance to the Greeks.<sup>32</sup>

At that time, before this event, a certain prince Vahan, prince of the land of Siwnik', had rebelled and seceded from the Armenians.<sup>3n1</sup> He requested Khosrov, king of Persia, that they might move the *divan*<sup>34</sup> of the land of Siwnik' from Dvin to the city of P'aytakaran,<sup>35</sup> and that he might set that city in the census<sup>36</sup> [68] of Atrpatakan, so that the name of Armenians would no longer be applied to them. And the order was carried out.

Then the Greek king<sup>37</sup> made an oath with the Armenians and confirmed the same pact which had been made between the two kings -

29 tazar only mentions Vard Mamikonean [no.1 in *HAnjB*] during Vahan's lifetime, and does not use the title *patrik*. Toumanoff, *Dynasties* 331, places his death in 510/511. For the Byzantine title of patrician, *patrik* [AG 371], see *ODB*, s.v. The use here implies seventh-century practice, not that of the fifth century.

30 For Suren see Justi, no. 15, where references to Byzantine sources are also given. Vardan [no. 11 in *HAnjB*] was Vard's grandson.

31 Khosrov I: 13 September 531-February 579; so July 571 to July 572.

32 On this rebellion of 572 and the acceptance of communion with the Greeks by Vardan and the Catholicos John II [which Sebeos ignores], see John of Ephesus, Pt. III, Bk. 2, 18-23, and Garitte, *Narratio* 175-212. Y.D., XVI19, follows Sebeos, but Asolik, II2, expands. He calls Suren *Chihr Vshnasp* [AG 49], a relative of shah Khosrov, who maltreated the wives of Armenian nobles and was killed with the sword by Vardan on 22 Areg in the 41st year of Khosrov, the seventh of Justinian, i.e. 23 February 572. Asolik adds that when Vardan took refuge in Constantinople, Justinian named the main door of St Sophia 'the door of the Armenians'.

33 Vahan: no. 19 in *HAnjB*. For the house of Siwnik' see *EH* 408-9, and Toumanoff, *Studies* 214. For this event see Toumanoff, *ibid.*, Adontz/Garso'ian 172; and in greater detail Garitte, *Narratio* 211-13, who accepts Akinean's dating to between 552 and 557.

34 *Divan*: chancery, centre of administration, AG 143^1.

35 P'aytakaran: see Hewsens, *ASX* 59 [map, 60A] and 253^4.

36 Census: *shahrmar*, Adontz/Garsoi'an 435, n.14; *Eransahr* 122, n.3. MacKenzie, *Pahlavi Dictionary*, explains the word as a compound of *shahr*, 'land, country', and *mar - hamar*, 'reckoning'. Sebeos uses the Armenian equivalent, *ashkharhagir*, describing the same event later, 175.

37 Justin II, 15 November 565-5 October 578.

the blessed Trdat and Constantine.<sup>38</sup> He gave them an imperial army in support. When they had received the army, they attacked the city of Dvin; after a siege they destroyed it from top to bottom, and expelled the Persian troops who were stationed in it.

But suddenly a great tumult fell on them. For the Persians had turned the church of St Gregory, which they had built near the city, into a storehouse.<sup>39</sup> They [the Greeks] had set it on fire and burned it. Therefore a great tumult befell them.<sup>40</sup>

Then Mihran Mihrewandak<sup>41</sup> attacked them with 20,000 troops and many elephants. There was a great battle on the plain of Khalama- khik'.<sup>42</sup> They defeated the Persian army with tremendous losses, put them to the sword, and took from them all the elephants. Mihran escaped with a few men, and they returned to their own country.

This is the Vardan against whom the Persian king, called Anush Ēriap Khosrov,<sup>43</sup> came in person with a host of fully armed troops and many elephants. He marched through the province of Artaz, crossed Bagrewand, and passed by the city of Karin.<sup>44</sup> Continuing on his way, he came to Melitene and camped opposite it.<sup>45</sup>

On the morning of the next day with great promptness they drew up contingent facing contingent and line to line,<sup>46</sup> and engaged each other

38 See Aa 877 for the details of this agreement, which is frequently mentioned in later Armenian historians. Pact: *ukht*, as Elishe 72; *ukht dashanats'* in *Buzandaran*, III 21; *dashink'* in Agat'angelos. The letter in defence of Armenian orthodoxy, 155-160 below, emphasizes the visit of Trdat to Constantine and the pact. For the development of this legend in Armenian authors see Thomson, 'Constantine and Trdat'.

39 For the church of St Gregory see Khatchatrian, *L'Architecture Armenienne* 53-8. Sebeos describes below its restoration, 100, and completion, 112.

40 Sebeos, like many Armenian authors, does not always make it clear who is the subject of the verb and who the object. Here I take the 'tumult' to be one between Greeks and Armenians; the reference to the Persians simply explains how the church had become a storehouse. There are similar obscurities later. Cf. The Armenian Text, Ix above.

41 Mihran: See Justi, *Mithrana*, no.13. He is not mentioned outside Sebeos.

42 Khalamakhik': as also 70. Although this battle is mentioned by later Armenian writers, e.g. Y.D. XVI22, the site is unknown. It appears to be near Dvin.

43 Khosrov I: 13 September 531-February 579. For the name see AG 20.

44 Artaz is in Vaspurakan; see Hewsens, *ASX* map 66. Bagrewand is in Ayrarat; see Hewsens, *ASX map* 69. Karin [Theodosiopolis, Erzerum]; see Hewsens, *ASX* map 61.

45 Melitene: a correction by Patkanean for *i teli* of the MSS; Abgaryan n.140. The capture of Melitene by Khosrov in 576 is not mentioned in other Armenian sources.

46 As 66. Sebeos' vocabulary for battle scenes is very standardized; such repetitions will not be noted below.

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in battle. The battle grew intense over the face of the land, and the conflict became very dense. The Lord delivered the Persian king and all his army to defeat. They were routed before their enemies by the sword, and fled before them with great precipitation. Not knowing the roads to take for flight, they went and cast themselves into the great river called Euphrates. The swollen water carried away the multitude of fugitives like a host of locusts;<sup>47</sup> not many were able to save themselves that day. But the king with a few men escaped by the skin of his teeth,<sup>48</sup> taking refuge in the elephants and cavalry. He fled through Aldznik<sup>49</sup> and returned to his own residence.

They seized all their camp with the royal treasures. [69] They captured the queen and the women,<sup>50</sup> and appropriated the entire [royal] pavilion, and the golden carriage of great value, which was set with precious stones and pearls and was called by them the 'glorious' carriage.<sup>M</sup> Also seized was the Fire which the king continually took around with him for assistance, which was reckoned more important than all other fires; it was called by them *At 'ash*.<sup>51</sup> This was extinguished in the river with the *movpet-movpetan* and a further host of the most eminent persons.<sup>n3</sup> At all times God is blessed.

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47 Locusts: *marakh*. Although the simile is common in the Old Testament, there is no direct parallel for being swept away in this fashion.

48 Skin of his teeth: *mazapur*, 'escaping by a hair', a very common Armenian expression; cf. 173.

49 Aldznik': on the east bank of the Tigris; see Hewsens, *ASX51*, map 60A.

50 Queen: *bambishti*, *AG* 116-17. Women: *banukan* [*AG* 117], for the *zbanakn* of the MSS, first corrected by Carriere on the parallel of *Buzandaran* III 21, V 2. Garso'ian, *EH* 308, notes that this phrase may have become a cliché, though there is a close parallel with the victory of Galerius in 297.

51 Fire: *Hrat* \ see 66 for this Fire in Atrpatakan. *At'ash*, *AG* 92.

[CHAPTER 9]<sup>52</sup>

*[The belief in Christ and baptism of Anusheruan Khosrov. The Persian marzpan and generals who came to Armenia after Vardan down to the end of Sasanian rule]*

This Khosrov, who was called Anush Էրիւթ, <sup>53</sup> during the period of his reign before this rebellion restored the land, because he was a lover of peace and promoter of prosperity. When that rebellion occurred, <sup>54</sup> thenceforth he was prompted and aroused to anger, reckoning himself blameless on the grounds that: 'I was a father to the whole country and not a master, and I cared for them all like sons and friends. So now', he said, 'God will seek [vengeance for] this blood from them.' This Khosrov, during the time of his reign, closed the Passes of the Chor and of the Aluank'; <sup>55</sup> he captured the king of the Egerians, and seized by arms Antioch in Pisidia. <sup>56</sup> The captives he settled at the royal residence.

He built a city and named it Veh Anjatok' Khosrov, <sup>57</sup> which they call Shahastan-i Nok-noy. He also captured Dara <sup>58</sup> and Kalinikos, and seized in a raid the region of Cilicia.

He held the throne for 48 years. <sup>59</sup> At the time of his death the light of the divine Word shone splendidly around him; for he believed in Christ, saying as follows: 'I believe in one God, who created heaven and earth, whom the

52 Macler, ch.2.

53 I follow the text of Abgaryan in these minor variations of spelling.

54 I.e. the rebellion of Vardan, 67.

55 The Pass of the Chor is one of the litoral passes south of Darband; that of the Aluank' is due north of Shemakha; they are to be distinguished from the other main pass through the Caucasus, the Dar-i-Alan; see Hewsen, *ASX* 122-3. For the region Aluank', *ibid.*, 57-9, map 60.

56 Antioch on the Orontes is intended, sacked in 540. 'Pisidia' seems to be an unconscious reminiscence of Acts 13.14. Egeria: Lazica, the area disputed between Byzantium and Iran in the reign of Justinian. For Greek sources see Toumanoff, *Studies* 255.

57 Veh Anjatok', a corruption of *Veh a: Antioch*, 'better than Antioch'. Veh-Antioch of Khosrov was founded in 540, one of the five cities of the Sasanian capital; it was the city for those deported from Byzantine territory. Cf. John of Ephesus III 6.19; M.D. III0. Nok-noy: corrected by Markwart, 'Nachtrage' 301, from the *Oknoy* of the MSS.

58 For the importance of Dara see also **107**. For its capture in 573 cf. John of Ephesus III 6.5-8.

59 See n.31 above. Khosrov Anushervan is praised by John of Ephesus III, 6.20, as a friend of Christians, but he does not imply he converted to Christianity! Cf. also *Histoire nestorienne* 147. However, Y.D., XVI 34-6, and Vardan, 59, follow Sebeos. Cf. **85** and **'49 -151** below for Khosrov II Parviz's attitude to Christians.

51 Pavilion. *mashaperchan*, *AG* 192, *EH* 544. Carriage\ *despak*, *AG* 140. Royal Carriage: *despakp'arats'*, referring to the *roya'p'ark'* which protected the legitimate king of Iran. On this important concept see Garso'ian, 'The Locus', and further refs. in *EH* 552.

53 Extinguished: lit: 'drowned', *hetdzaw*. For Armenian sarcasm at fire worship and the drowning of fire cf. *Elishe* 175-6. *Movpet-movpetan*, *AG* 195, 'chief mobed' (i.e. *magus*); the standard Armenian form is *mogpet*, see n.62.

Christians profess to worship: Father and Son and holy Spirit. For he only is God, and there is none save him whom the Christians worship.'

He commanded his servants to send the royal *mogpet*<sup>62</sup> [70] to distant places on duty, and to remove the others from the royal residence. He summoned the archbishop, who was called Eran Catholicos,<sup>63</sup> and was baptized by him. He ordered the liturgy<sup>64</sup> to be celebrated in his room and the precepts of the Lord's Gospel to be read, and he communicated in the life-giving body and blood of the Lord. Then he took leave of the Catholicos and of the Lord's Gospel, and sent him to his own place.

Then after a few days he fell asleep in his good old age. The Christians took his body and placed it in the sepulchre of the kings. His son Ormizd reigned after him.<sup>65</sup>

Now these are the generals of the Persian king who came one after the other to this land of Armenia: from the rebellion of Vardan lord of the Mamikoneans, son of Vasak, down to the present time.<sup>66</sup> Some were killed in battles, some fought battles,<sup>67</sup> others gained a victory and departed.

When they killed the *marzpan* Suren, in that same year<sup>68</sup> came a certain Vardan Vshnasp;<sup>69</sup> but he was unable to accomplish any undertaking. He stayed for one year and departed.

Then came Golon Mihran<sup>70</sup> with 20,000 fully armed troops and many

62 *Mogpet*: AG 195, the chief mobed (*magus*). This is the standard Armenian form; cf. n.53.

63 Eran: corrected by Patkanean from the *er and* of the MSS on the basis of Vardan, 59; i.e. the Catholicos of Iran. For the title see AG 39; cf. also 150-151, with reference to the reign of Khosrov II. There Sebeos states that Kawat and Khosrov had sealed the written faith of the Armenians! For Byzantine interest in Christianity in Persia see Mango, 'Deux Etudes' 117.

64 Liturgy: *zham*, which originally meant the service 'Hours'. The *NBHL* refers only to the *Mashtots'* for this sense.

65 Ormizd IV: February 579-deposed, February 590.

66 I.e. Vardan II, 67, not the Vardan immortalized by Elische. Vasak: *HAnjB*, no.10. 'Down to the present time': the last general mentioned is Hoyiman 71, 105 in the time of Maurice. The generals were followed by governors. Sebeos may thus be taking his information from a previous written source composed much earlier than his own book.

67 Fought battles: *paterazmets'an*. There is no variant to the text, but for the sake of the sense Macler proposed *partets'an*, 'were defeated', following Carriere; see Abgaryan n.152-

68 I.e. 572; see above, 67.

69 For the name see AG 83; Justi 353; called Vahram by Y.D. XVI23.

70 See A G 49 for variant forms of the name in later Armenian historians. Cf. Justi 374 s.v. Wlon - i.e. the same Mihran as on 68.

elephants. He had with him many auxiliaries from the forces<sup>71</sup> of the innumerable races who dwell along the mountainous Caucasus - the races of the Huns<sup>72</sup> - and also a command from the king to extirpate the men from the

country of Armenia: to root out, dig out, exterminate and mercilessly destroy the land. He arrived, but the populace survived by staying somewhere in some inaccessible fortresses or by fleeing to remote lands. However, many were unable to escape because they [the Persians] put to the sword and slew those whom they found. He waged war in Iberia and was defeated. He came to Armenia and seized Angl by a false oath.

P'ilippos, lord of Siwnik',<sup>73</sup> waged a battle at the city<sup>74</sup> and at Khalamakhik', and another battle in Vanand at the village of Ut'mus. In both he was defeated. He stayed for seven years and departed.<sup>75</sup>

Then king Anush Ēgrian Khosrov came himself, as I said, and fought a great battle at Melitene in which he was defeated;<sup>76</sup> then he left.

[71] Then came Tam Khosrov.<sup>77</sup> He made two campaigns: one in Basean at Bolorapahak where the Murts' and Araxes join; and one in Bagrewand at Kt'ni.<sup>78</sup> In both he won a splendid victory. He stayed for two years and departed.

Then came Varaz Vzur;<sup>79</sup> he waged a battle in Vanand at the village of Ut'mus, where at first he was defeated, and then was victorious. He stayed for one year and departed.

Then came the great Parthian and Pahlaw *aspēt*.<sup>80</sup> He made a

71 Forces: *chambar*, lit. 'camp', AG 186-7.

72 See above, nn.19, 25.

73 P'ilippos [no. 1 in *HAnjB*] presumably opposed Golon. Toumanoff, *Studies* 214 indicates he was Presiding Prince 574-576.

74 I.e. Dvin, the administrative centre of Armenia. Sebeos implies that the battle at Dvin and at Khalamakhik' was the same; cf. n.42 above. Vanand is in Ayrarat; Hewsens, *ASX65*, map 69. Ut'mus is not otherwise attested.

75 He: it is unclear whether P'ilippos or Golon is intended. The number seven is wrong if it is the latter; see Historical Commentary.

76 See above 68, for the battle of Melitene. Here the order of the pages of *^s Vorlage* are in disorder: after 'Khosrov' the text continues 'Vndoy imprisoned' as 73 line 13 of Abgaryan s edition. See the numbering of the folios in the margin of that edition. Patkanean's edition follows the MS. f 77 Tam Khosrov: AG 87, for the name; and see further Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 263.

78 Bolorapahak and Kt'ni are not attested in other sources.

79 See AG 71-2; Justi 350.

80 Part'ew = Pahlaw, AG 633-5. This was the family to which the Armenian Arsacids<sup>Were</sup> *^ated*: Aa 32, M.X. II 71-2. See further 73 below. *Aspet*, 'commander of the cavalry'; see *EH* 509, for references to both the Iranian and Armenian offices.

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campaign in Shirakawan<sup>81</sup> and was victorious. He stayed for seven years and departed.

Then the *marzpan* Hrahat,<sup>82</sup> who went to Nisibis<sup>83</sup> as ally of his own people in battle. There they were defeated, and then gained a victory. Returning from there he waged another campaign in Bznunik' at Tsalka-jur<sup>83</sup> and was victorious. He stayed for four years and departed.

Then came the *marzpan* Hratrin Datan.<sup>84</sup> Thereafter the Persians were unable to resist in battle the Greek army. In his time Ormizd was killed, and his son Khosrov reigned. He stayed for two years and departed.

Then Persian governors<sup>85</sup> came, until the end of the peace between Persians and Greeks and between the two kings Maurice and Khosrov.

Then [came] Vndatakan Khorakan. The Persian troops killed him at Garni,<sup>86</sup> and having rebelled went themselves to Gelumk'. Then Merakbut; then Yazden; then Butmah; then Hoyiman.<sup>87</sup>

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81 In the province of Shirak in Ayrarat; Hewsens, *ASX* map 69. The exact location is uncertain.

82 For the name, *AG* 48; for the office, n. 18 above.

83 Tsalkajur is not attested elsewhere; but for various sites with names from *tsatik* 'flower', see *AON* 435. Bznunik' is in Turuberan, on the north-west shore of Lake Van; Hewsens, *ASX*' map 62A.

84 I.e. Hratrin, son of Dat, *AG* 36. Ormizd IV: February 579-February 590. Khosrov II: February 590-February 628.

85 Governors: *sahmanakalk'*, in meaning similar to *marzpan*, but not used in a technical sense. In *Aa* 873 the word is equated with *bdeashkh*. For these border lords see *EH* 516-17. For the end of the peace see further below.

86 The famous fortress of Arsacid times north-east of Dvin, *AON* 365. Gelumk" is Gilan.

87 This list is given again on **105**. Here *apa*, 'then' wrongly appears between Vndatakan and Khorakan. One person is intended, since Khorakan and Nikhorakan are to be identified [see *AG* 57, and *Justi* 220]. Even though Sebeos gives in the two lists different places for his death [Garni and Dvin], For Merakbut [Merakut, **105**] see *AG* 53; Yazden, *AG* 55; Butmah, *AG* 33; Hoyiman, *AG* 48.



[72]

**CHRONOLOGICAL BOOK Royal history**<sup>88</sup>

Tale of the Aryans,<sup>89</sup> raid over the world by the Sasanian brigand Apruez Khosrov, who consumed with fire the whole inner [land], disturbing the sea and the dry land, to bring destruction on the whole earth.

Now I shall recount in narrative fashion the tale<sup>90</sup> of the destructive events which befell the world: the wrath evoked from on high and the anger flaming up below; the torrents of fire and blood, and the raids of brigands; the death-bringing attacks, the cry of demons and the roar of dragons,<sup>91</sup> the races of Chaldaeans<sup>92</sup> and of men descended from giants, of brave armed cavalry, from east to west, from north to south. [I shall describe] those of the south,<sup>93</sup> aroused with great passion, attacking each other, and the fulfilment of the command of the Lord's anger against the whole world. Like the whirlwind they arose and burst out<sup>94</sup> to destroy everything within, to raze mountains and hills, to rend the plains, to crush in pieces the stones and rocks beneath the heels of their horses and trampling hooves.

So I shall expound the story of the destructive and ruinous Khosrov, cursed by God.

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<sup>88</sup> Chronological Book: *matean zhamanakean*, a caique on the Greek *chronographia*. Royal history: Abgaryan, n.166, notes various later Persian histories in which Khosrov II and Vahram Ch'obin feature prominently: the *Khoda-nama*, *Fihrist*, and *Shahnama*. This heading did appear in the manuscript.

<sup>89</sup> Of the Aryans: *arianakan*. Although the Armenian adjective could also mean 'valiant, heroic', the content is Iranian.

<sup>90</sup> Tale: *araspel*; in narrative fashion: *vipasanelov*. For these terms applied to historical writing see Thomson, *Moses Khorenats'i* 11. Here Sebeos indicates the episodic character of his narrative.

<sup>91</sup> Dragon: *vishap*, for which see M.X. I 30. Eznik associates the *vishap* with the devil. Here it stands for the shah, as in Elishe 44. In Ezek. 29.3 Pharaoh is the great *vishap*.

<sup>92</sup> For Chaldaeans see above, n.5.

<sup>93</sup> The Muslims, whose invasions followed the fall of Sasanian Iran. The theme of invasions from the 'south', prophesied in the Old Testament, figures prominently below 161 162.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Is. 28.15a, 18b. The verses 15b and 18a are quoted below 164, concerning the pact of T'eodoros with the Muslims.

83 Nisibis: The Armenian form of Nisibis is variously spelled in Sebeos. Here *Mrtsuni*, elsewhere *Mrtsuin*, or more usually *Misbin*. It is to be distinguished from the earlier site Mtsurn, which had disappeared by the fifth century. See EH 479-80.

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[CHAPTER 10]<sup>96</sup>

*[The reign of Ormizd and slaughter of the nobles. Vahram Mirhewandak defeats the Mask'ut'k'. Ormizd is angry at his small share of booty. Vahram's troops rebel against Ormizd and make Vahram their king. The attack of Vahram on Ormizd. The nobles kill Ormizd and appoint his son Khosrov as king. The flight of Khosrov from Vahram.]*

It happened after the death of Khosrov son of Kawat that his son Ormizd<sup>97</sup> reigned over all the land of the Persians. His mother, called Kayen, was the daughter [73] of the great Khak'an, king of the Petals,<sup>98</sup> and the wife of Khosrov his father. Although very distinguished though his paternal ancestors, he was even more notable and ferocious<sup>99</sup> on his maternal side. For he eliminated all the nobles and ancient lines<sup>100</sup> and original [princely] houses from the land of Persia. He killed the great *asparapet*, the Parthian and Pahlaw, who was descended from the criminal Anak's offspring.<sup>101</sup> Tutors had taken him away from the brigand Khosrov, king of Armenia, and fled to the court of their king, to Persian territory. The king presented him with the gifts promised to his father Anak, restoring his original Parthian and Pahlaw [lands], crowned and honoured him, and made him second in the kingdom.

This *sparapet* had two sons, one called Vndoy and the second Vstam.<sup>101</sup> [Ormizd] had Vndoy imprisoned in Gruandakan.<sup>102</sup> Vstam

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96 Macler, ch.3.

97 Ormizd IV, above n.85.

98 T'etals: here *T'etalats'ik'*, as if T'etal was a place name. The T'etals are associated with the area of the K'ushans, as below and Elishe 18. For the title of their king, *Khak'an*, AG 159; for Kayen see Justi 151.

99 More ferocious: *gazanagoyn*. *Gazan*, 'wild beast', is a common epithet for the shah; cf. Elishe 7.

100 Ancient lines: *nakhnik'*, lit. 'ancestors'.

101 Sebeos does not indicate how many generations had passed from Anak's time to that of this *sparapet*, for the title, n.18. For these names, AG 85.

102 Gruandakan: not otherwise attested.

## HISTORY

escaped and fled. He stirred up no few wars in those days on his own account.

It happened at that time that a certain Vahram Merhewandak,<sup>103</sup> prince of the eastern regions of the country of Persia, valiantly attacked the army of the T'etals and forcibly occupied Bahl<sup>104</sup> and all the land of the K'ushans as far as the far side of the great river which is called Vehrot and as far as the place called Kazbion.<sup>105</sup> For he passed beyond the lance of the valiant Spandiat, of whom the barbarians say that, having reached this spot in war, he thrust his lance into the ground.<sup>106</sup>

Then this Vahram, giving battle to the great king of the Mazk'ut'k' who was in that region beyond the great river,<sup>107</sup> defeated the multitude of his army and killed their king in the battle. He seized and appropriated all the treasures of that kingdom. Then he sent letters with the news to the Persian king through his messengers, and a small part of the booty from the enormous [74] treasures acquired from the plunder of the expedition, as a token from these precious things of his control.<sup>104</sup> And all the treasure he bestowed on his troops according to each one's merit.

Now when king Ormizd saw the messengers who had come with the news, and had read the army's letter of greeting, and had received the gifts - the share of booty from the precious royal treasure - although he was outwardly joyful and humoured the men, yet inwardly he exclaimed in anger: 'The feast is exceedingly grand, and I acknowledge the token of this portion. But from such great treasures it was not right to send to court [merely] this much.'

Then instead of a letter of greeting he ordered a letter to be written in

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103 Vahram: *AG* 78, i.e. Vahram Ch'obin. Merhewandak, or Mihrewandak, 'servant of Mithra', *AG* 52. *T.A.*, 85, abbreviates the account of Sebeos.

104 Bahl, i.e. Balkh, is named by Sebeos the capital, *shahastan*, of the K'ushans; cf. *Bu:andaran* V 7, 37.

105 The Vehrot is the Oxus. Kazbion is the Gozbon of the *ASX* [Hewsen, *ASX* 74], equated by Marquart with Diz-i-rojin [*Eransahr* 89], which is associated with the legend of Spandiat; see next note.

106 See *M.D.* II 40-1, for the 'gigantic savage monster' invoked as God by the Huns, called Aspandiat by the Persians. Other [non-Armenian] refs. in *AG* 74, and see further Tchukasizian, 'Echos' 324—5. Barbarians: *barbarosk'*, not the usual Armenian word for foreigners. The Greek word may imply a Greek source [?].

107 The M azk'ut'k' are linked with the *Honk'* and placed on the northern border of Virk' and Aluank' by the *Bu:andaran* III 5-7. Further discussion of this enigmatic name in *EH* 389-90. *T.S.*, III 6.9-14, refers to Vahram's attack on the 'Turks', i.e. Huns, in the Caucasus.

101 See Aa 32, for Anak as Parthian and Pahlaw. According to Armenian tradition Anak murdered king Khosrov [father of Trdat] in the second half of the third century. After he had himself been killed in revenge, one of his sons was taken back to Persia; the other, Gregory [the future 'Illuminator' of Armenia], was taken to Greek territory; see Aa 34. Zenob calls the first son Suren, and describes his later career, 70-1. Anak's original lands are the *bun ashkharh* of Aa 32.

109 Control; lit. 'rule.'

very angry terms, which he despatched by a company of auxiliaries and royal guards,<sup>110</sup> with orders to go to the army and seize the whole treasure. They went and began to demand it. Then all the troops were galvanized. They killed the king's trusted [servants], rebelled from his service, and installed Vahram as their king. They sealed an oath according to their custom.<sup>111</sup> In unison they returned from the east and made for Asorestan<sup>112</sup> in order to kill their king Ormizd, eliminate the house of Sasan, and confirm Vahram on the royal throne. Rapidly they joined forces and went off, taking a multitude of brave and warlike eastern people.

Now while such confusion was embroiling the land of Persia, Yovhan *patrik* and a Greek army were keeping the city of Dvin besieged,<sup>113</sup> attacking it with catapults, and were close to destroying the wall. But when this news arrived, they abandoned it and went off, making their way to Atrpatakan.<sup>114</sup> They seized control<sup>115</sup> of the whole country, and put all the men and women to the sword. Taking all the plunder and captives and booty, they returned to their own land.

When news of this uproar reached the Sasanian court and Ormizd the Persian king, not a little fear enveloped him. Summoning his nobles who were at the royal court and the companies of auxiliaries and life-guards, he decided to take the royal treasure and all the personnel<sup>116</sup> of the royal court and to cross the great river Tigris by the pontoon-bridge at Vehkawat<sup>117</sup> and to cut the cables of the bridge. He

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110 Auxiliaries: *hamaharz*, 'aide-de-camp', *AG 111*. Guards: *p'ushtipan*, *EH 554*. The two are linked again below.

111 I.e. with salt; see also below, 78. 83,128. Cf. *Buzandaran* IV 53.

112 I.e. northern Mesopotamia; *EH 449*.

113 Yovhan: John Mystacon; for his biography see *PLRE* III. s.v. no.101, 679-81, and Whitby, *Emperor Maurice 277*. Dvin: n.24. Catapults: *mek'enay*, *AG 365*, the Greek *mechane*, in Armenian a general term for siege machines; see also 171 n.889. Cf. also *M.X. III 28*, for the *mek'enay* known as 'donkey'. See further Marsden, *Greek and Roman Artillery*, 1969 and 1971.

114 Atrpatakan: Atropatene, *Hewsen.4iS.Y63*, 178, n.132, map 73.

115 Seized control: *lastets'in*. The verb normally means 'to arrange' and the root *last* is used of the planks of a raft, 75 below. The *HArmB* quotes this sense in translations of Basil and Chrysostom. but in no other original Armenian text except Sebeos here.

116 Personnel: *ambokh*, 'crowd'.

117 Vehkawat: south of Ctesiphon. For its location see Morony, *Iraq 147*, and map, 127. Pontoon-bridge: *zom*, *AG 350*. Cf. also n.525.

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planned to take refuge in the multitude of the army of the king of the . u<sup>118</sup> Arabs.

[75] But this did not so turn out. For the king's counsellors and the auxiliaries and the guards took counsel and decided to kill Ormizd and to install as king his son Khosrov.

Now because the queen,<sup>118</sup> mother of the royal prince and daughter of that *asparapet* who was a noble of the house of the Parthians who had died,<sup>119</sup> [was] sister of Vndoy and of Vstam, and Vndoy himself was a wise and prudent man valiant of heart, they planned to release him and make him their leader and head of the undertaking. Going to the fortress of Gruandakan, they released him and all those imprisoned with him. They despatched a trusted messenger<sup>120</sup> with very fast horses, and wrote to his brother Vstam [asking him] to come to the place of their undertaking in great haste. He rapidly arrived.

There gathered at the royal hall<sup>121</sup> all the nobles, generals, and troops who were present at that time. Entering the royal chamber they seized king Ormizd; immediately they put out his eyes on the spot and then killed him. They installed his son as king over the land of Persia, and began to make preparations for flight beyond the great river Tigris.

Not many days later Vahram rapidly arrived, like the swoop of an eagle.<sup>122</sup> Since Khosrov was a young boy at the time he [began to] reign, his uncles Vndoy and Vstam took him and crossed the great river Tigris by the pontoon-bridge, then cut away the cables of the bridge. When Vahram arrived, he seized the whole palace, the treasure and royal harem,<sup>123</sup> and installed himself on the throne of the kingdom. He

118 This is Khosrov's mother; 'the royal prince' renders *shaphoy*.

119 Who had died: The Armenian is plural, although the sense refers to the deceased *asparapet*, not the house of the Parthians.

120 Messenger: *surhandak*, a common word rendering *tachudromos*.

121 Hall: *dahlich* \ Elishe, 136, states that this was the gathering place of the greatest nobles; M.X., III 55, implies that a banquet was held in the *dahlich*. This is contrasted with the private 'chamber', *seneak* of the king. Ormizd was killed in February 590.

122 Swoop of an eagle: *khoyanal artsui*, a popular simile, e.g. **108** below; cf. Thomson, *Moses Khorenats'i* 186, n.3.

123 Harem: *kanays*, 'women' as opposed to the royal wives, *tiknayk'*, as **127**; at **85** the nuance is unclear.

118 Arabs: *Tachikk'*, derived from the name of the tribe Tai, AG 86-7. After the rise of Islam the word came to mean 'Muslim', and was applied to Persians, and especially to Turks. For Arabia as Tachkastan, see **134** and n.589.



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ordered planks of wood to be lashed together, and crossed the river in order to capture Khosrov.

The latter was unable to stop from fear. After they had crossed over they carried on in flight, deliberating on the road whether it would be better to go to the king of the Arabs or to the king of the Greeks. Then they reckoned it best to take refuge with the king of the Greeks: 'For although there is enmity between [us], they said, yet they are Christians and merciful; and when they take an oath they cannot be false to that oath.' Taking the direct road to the west, they entered the city called Khalab and stopped there.<sup>125</sup>

[76] But he [Vahram], although he had crossed the river was unable to catch them up. They returned to Ctesiphon.<sup>126</sup>

### [CHAPTER 11]

*[Khosrov's letter to the emperor Maurice. The decision of the senate. Maurice sends Khosrov an army in support. Two letters of Vahram to Mushel and his response. The battle in which Vahram's army is defeated. The flight and death of Vahram.]*

Then king Khosrov sent to king Maurice prominent<sup>127</sup> men with gifts, and wrote as follows: 'Give me the throne and royal station of my fathers and ancestors; send me an army in support with which I may be able to defeat my enemy; and restore my kingdom; [then] I shall be your son. I shall give you the regions of Syria - all Aruastan as far as the city of Nisibis<sup>128</sup> - and of the land of

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125 I.e. Aleppo. T.S.,IV 10.4, says Khosrov went to Circesium. The *ChroniconAnonymum*, 19-20 names Na'amān as the Arab leader to whom Khosrov thought of fleeing; cf. Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 297-8. For legends of Khosrov's conversion see Goubert 173-5. According to the later Armenian *History of Taron* 158. Khosrov fled to Maurice's presence, and was baptized in the Chaldean faith [!] before returning with an army to regain his land.

126 Ctesiphon: Sebeos varies between Tisbon and the more usual Tizbon.

127 Prominent: *chokh*, implying rich and powerful, as in IV Kingdoms 10.6, 'the great men of the city'. T'.A., 85-6, follows Sebeos for his version of these events.

128 Aruastan is the region around Nisibis, Beth Aramaye; Hewsens, *ASX* 159. For the variant spellings of *Mtsbin*, cf. n.83 above.

Armenia the area of *Tanuter* authority<sup>129</sup> as far as Ayrarat and the city of Dvin, and up to the shore  
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of the lake of Bznunik<sup>130</sup> and to Arestawan; and a great part of the land of Iberia, as far as the city of T'p'khis.<sup>131</sup> Let us observe a pact of peace between us until the death of us both; and let this oath be secure between us and between our sons who will reign after us.'

Then the king gathered all the senate<sup>132</sup> and asked their advice. He said: 'The Persians have killed their king Ormizd and installed his son as king- The royal army has installed someone else as king in the east. He came with a large army and seized the kingdom for himself. The former's young son has come to me in flight and seeks from us an army in support, and promises to act thus. Now what shall we do? Shall we agree? Is it proper to agree, or not?' Then they said: 'It is not proper to agree, because they are an impious<sup>133</sup> nation and altogether deceitful. In their distress they make promises, but when they emerge into calmer [times],<sup>134</sup> they renege. We have suffered many evils from them. Let them slaughter each other, and we shall have relief.'<sup>135</sup>

At that point king Khosrov was in great danger and saw death before his eyes; for he had escaped from the mouth of the lion<sup>136</sup> but had fallen into the mouth of enemies from whom there was no flight.

But the king rejected the advice of the senate. Of his own accord he sent his son-in-law P'ilipikos<sup>137</sup> and had him bring a favourable response. He received an oath from him, and gave him a royal army [77] in support: Yovhan *patrik*

129 *Tanuterakan ishkanu'iwn*, often called *tanuterakangund*. This is the area in which *tcmuter* ['head of house or family', *EH* 563] custom prevailed, and was used as a general name for much of Persian Armenia; Adontz/Garsoi'an, 180-2.

130 I.e. Lake Van. Arestawan on the north-east shore was the site of the royal fisheries; *EH* 445.

131 T'p'khis is the standard Armenian spelling for Tiflis, old Georgian *Tp'ilisi*, 'hot', i.e. hot springs. The later description of territory given up, below 84, adds further details.

132 *Snklitos*, usually *sinklitos*, the *Greeksunkletos*, *AG* 379-80. The plural is used on 124 for 'senators'.

133 Impious: *anawren*, 'without law, or religion', commonly applied by all Armenian writers to the Persians.

134 Distress... calm: for the contrast of *nehit'iwn* and *andorr*, Ps. 4.2.

135 For this final sentiment cf. the letter of Maurice to Khosrov, 86, re the Armenians!

136 As Dan. 6.27, Ps. 21.22, etc.

137 P'ilipikos: *p'esay*, as below 114 and T.A. 86, means 'son-in-law' or 'bridegroom'; but P'ilipikos was the *brother-in-law* of Maurice, having married his sister Gordia. See *PLRE* III, 1022-26, s.v. Philippicus, no.3; Nikephoros, ch.2; Grumel 361. For his career see also Flusin, *St Anastase* II, 85-6.

from the region of Armenia, and Nerses *stratelat* from Syria<sup>138</sup> with his army.  
They passed in review -

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138 Yovhan: Cf. n.113 above, T.S., IV 15.2. Nerses: He seems to be the same Nerses described as *zawravar*, 'general', in Syria, **106-107** below. See *PLRE* III, 933-35, s.v. Narses,

three thousand cavalry in hundreds, in thousands, in battalions according to their banners.<sup>39</sup>

They agreed to gather the troops of the land of Armenia who at that time were at hand. They passed in review - about 15,000, the battalions of each of the nobles, in hundreds, in thousands, in battalions, according to their banners.<sup>1</sup> All of these were fully armed, elite warriors, burning with courage like fire, who did not hesitate or turn their backs. Their faces were the faces of lions; the swiftness of their feet like the swiftness of gazelles in rapidity over the plains.<sup>2</sup> With promptness and in all preparedness they set out on their way.

Then the rebel *mihrats'i*,<sup>3</sup> taking his army, the elephants, and all the royal treasures, set off and reached Atrpatakan. They encamped a little distance from each other in the province of Vararat.<sup>4</sup>

Then Vahram wrote a letter to Mushel<sup>5</sup> and the other Armenian nobles, which ran as follows: 'I would have supposed that while I was fighting against your enemies, you would have come from your region to assist me, so that you and I in unison might remove that universal scourge,<sup>6</sup> the house of Sasan. But behold, you have gathered together and come against me in battle to assist that fellow. Yet I shall not be afraid of your assembled Roman worthies<sup>7</sup> who have come against me. As for you Armenians who demonstrate an unseasonable loyalty, did not that house of Sasan destroy your land and sovereignty? Why otherwise did your fathers rebel and extricate themselves from their service, fighting up until today for your country? So you have attacked

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1 For an assessment of Armenian military strength, see Toumanoff, *Studies* 234-43.

2 Their faces... plains: I Chr. 12.8, of the Gadite troops who joined David [save that the Old Testament has 'mountains' for 'plains'].

3 I.e. Vahram, called above M;7;rewandak.

4 This province within Atrpatakan is not attested in other Armenian sources.

5 I.e. Mushel Mamikonean [*HAnjB*, no.12], who held by right the office of *sparapei*, commander-in-chief. For later legends concerning this Mushel see Goubert 192-7.

6 Scourge: *paluhas*, lit. 'punishment'.

7 Worthies: *erits'ants'*, which means 'elder', hence 'presbyter, priest'. This sarcastic epithet may mean literally 'priests' as supposedly unwarlike. Roman: *hrovmayets'i*, w№ Sebeos uses as well as voyn, 'Greek', for the Byzantines.

## HISTORY

me in order to abrogate so many services<sup>147</sup> of yours. For should jChosrov be the victor, those two in concert will eliminate you. But let it seem *good* to you to remove yourselves from them, and to join me and lend me assistance. If I shall be victorious, I swear by the great god Aramazd, by the lord Sun and the Moon, by fire and water, [78] by IVlihr and all the gods,<sup>148</sup> that I will give you the kingdom of Armenia, and whoever you wish you may make king for yourselves. I shall give up for you all the land of Armenia as far as the Caucasus<sup>149</sup> and the Pass of the Aluank'; and on the side of Syria, Aruastan, Nisibis, and Nor Shirakan<sup>150</sup> as far as the borders of the Arabs, because that was yours in the time of your ancestors;<sup>151</sup> in the west, as far as Caesarea of Cappadocia. I shall not presume to pass beyond [Mt.] Zarasp.<sup>152</sup> Let the treasure of this kingdom of the Aryans be reckoned sufficient for you and me; and be content with that until your kingdom is re-established.'

In accordance with their tradition, salt was wrapped up and sealed with the missive.<sup>153</sup>

When they received the letter and had read it, they made no response to the message, nor did they mention it to many people, because they were afraid of disunity.<sup>154</sup>

Then he wrote again a second letter: 'I wrote to you to separate from them, reckoning sufficient for you and me all this land and all the treasures of this kingdom. So you did not wish to heed me, because you did not reply to the proposition. I am sorry for you, he said, because tomorrow morning I shall show you armoured<sup>155</sup> elephants, and on

147 Services: *vastaks*, a very common term for the duties of Armenians to the shah, stressed by Elishe 11,46, etc; tazar 49. Cf. 81 below.

148 For such oaths cf. Elishe 44,185; M.X. II 19.

149 The Caucasus mountain range: Kapkoh in Armenian.

150 Nor Shirakan is the Armenian border province north of Adiabene, EH 483-4. Nisibis: Mtsruin; for the spelling cf. n.83 above.

151 See Aa 842 for the borders of Armenia supposedly covered by Saint Gregory's Preaching activity: from Satala to Atrpatakan, from the Dar-i-Alan to Nor-Shirakan!

152 On the western border of Parskahayk', modern Mt. Seyah, the ancient Median Gates of Strabo, XI 13.8, see Hewsen, ASX178, n.133.

153 Cf. 74 above.

154 The disunity, *amniabanut'ivn*, or discord of Armenian princes is a common theme in Armenian historical writing. Cf. the comments of the patriarch Sahak in tazar 23, or «ishe 89-90, and 87,92, etc. below.

155 Armoured: *vars* is difficult. *Var* means 'flaming', but the *NBHL* notes later uses *^re* it seems to render the Greek *barus*, 'heavy', hence 'powerful'. But in his retelling '© Sebeos, T'. A. has *vareals*, 'armoured'. Because tomorrow morning: The MSS are cor-

no.10. *HAnjB*, s.v. no.16, gives no other references. *Stratelat*, from the Greek, is found as early as the *Buzandararf*; see *EH* 561-2.

139 Hundreds... banners: See *EH* 522 for banners, *drawshk'*, and coats of arms, and 529 for *gund*, 'battalion, or contingent'. Cf. also 94 below.

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them an army of armed warriors who will rain down on you iron arrows thrown by hand, tempered steel lances,<sup>162</sup> with darts, from their powerful bows, strong young men fully armed to repel<sup>163</sup> [you], fast Arabian horses, axes and swords of tempered steel, and blows as many as may be necessary for you and Khosrov.'

Mushel responded as follows: 'Kingship<sup>164</sup> is from God, and he gave it to whom he wished. But you must be sorry for your own self, and not for us. I know you for a braggart. You do not have confidence in God, but in valour and the strength of elephants. But I tell you that, if God wills, tomorrow the combat of valiant men will envelop you, and they will burst upon you and the multitude of your elephants like the most violent clouds of heaven. From on high there will be a fearsome crashing [79] and flashing; warriors will assail you on white horses<sup>165</sup> with heavy lances, and will penetrate your host like thunderbolts of flashing fire, that will drop down from heaven to earth and burn up the brushwood of the plains and the forests, green and dry alike.<sup>166</sup> For if God wills, a fierce tempest will blow away your power like dust, and the royal treasure will return to the palace.'

There were with them that Vndoy and Vstam whom I mentioned above, and about 8,000 Persian mounted troops.

On the morning of the following day, while the sun was striking the horizon, they drew up, front line facing front line, and crashed against each other in battle. Powerful was the shock in the midst of the melee. They fought from dawn to evening, and both sides became weary in the conflict.<sup>167</sup>

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162 Lances: *shawaruns* [*shtiaruns* in T'.A.], otherwise unattested. *Shawar* is a kind of reed.

163 To repel: *vanelots'*, which I take as a future participle, not a gen. pi. of the past participle. The reading is an emendation for the *valnelots'* of the MSS; see Abgaryan n.210.

164 Kingship: The MSS have *mardasirut'iwn*, 'benevolence', but Abgaryan emends to *t'agaworut'iwn*, following T'.A. 87. The theme is from Ps. 21.29, where 'kingship' is *ark'ayu-t'iwn*.

165 Heavenly warriors on white horses: The theme is found in T'.A. 148 and frequently in the *History of Taron*. Cf. II Macc., chs3,5,10,11, Zech. 1.8.

166 This sentence has been corrupted in various ways in the MSS. I follow Abgaryan's text. There are various biblical parallels, e.g. Is. 40.24.

167 As in most Armenian historians, parallels for battle scenes can be found in the Armenian version of the Books of Maccabees. For the sun striking the horizon, cf. I Macc. 6.39.

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So severe was the slaughter that thick streams of blood flowed to irrigate the whole land. The rebel force was unable to resist the Greek army and fled. But the latter pursued them until the night was pitch dark, scattering corpses over the plains and roads. Many they slew with their swords, and many they captured. Binding their hands behind their backs, they brought them before the king.

The host of elephants charged off forcefully. But the armed nobility, galloping in pursuit,<sup>168</sup> pierced from below the armour of the riders who were on the backs of the elephants. Fearlessly and intrepidly they fought. After killing many elephants and their riders and handlers, by force they turned back the multitude of elephants. These were brought before the king.

Then they attacked the encampment of Vahram's army. In his tent was the royal treasure and all the numberless and immensely precious treasures of the kingdom. They plundered it all. With their swords slashed in pieces the many gilded cushions<sup>169</sup> with sumptuous and varied decoration. [80] They went in [different] directions, phalanx by phalanx,<sup>170</sup> a multitude of camels and mules carrying their loads. They were all filled with enormous booty. Then the Persian army collected not a little of the scattered treasure and restored it to their treasury. Through that victory king Khosrov was strengthened on that day over all his enemies, and his rule was confirmed.

He ordered the multitude of captured cavalry and elephant-riders to be stripped, their hands tied on their shoulders, and to be trampled under the feet of the elephants.<sup>171</sup> They were unable to find any trace of Vahram, because he had escaped and fled. He went and took refuge in Bahl Shahastan,<sup>172</sup> where by Khosrov's order he was put to death by its people.

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168 Nobility: *azatagund*, for which see *EH* 513. In pursuit: *zhet*, lit. 'after them'. It seems that the elephants charged away from the Greek/Armenian army, though *dimeal*, 'char- Sing', normally implies against the enemy.

169 Cushions: *gahoys*, used for 'throne, banqueting couch'; *EH* 525.

170 Phalanx: *p'aiang*, *AG* 386. The sense of *ikofmans*, 'in [different] directions/regions', •s not clear.

171 For this punishment inflicted on Armenians by Persians, see *tazar* 72-3; further references in Thomson, *Etishe* 99, n.4.

'66 I.e. Balkh; see above, n.105. Where: *urew*, for the *orpes*, 'as', of the MSS, *anemenda-UonbyMalkhasean*; see Abgaryan n.214, and T'.A. 88. For Vahram's defeat in 591 and his 'ght to the east see Historical Commentary.



upted, and this reading was proposed by Malkhasean, based on the version in T'.A. 87; see Abgaryan n.206.

## [CHAPTER 12)

*[Khosrov's deceit against Mushel. Accusation of the Greek princes concerning Khosrov to the emperor Maurice. Maurice defends Khosrov and summons Mushel to the palace. Khosrov gives the emperor the lands according to the promise of the pact.]*

It happened in the days after that great battle had passed, while king Khosrov was sitting in his tent and the Persian army was encamped around him, and the Greek army was distant from them by a day's journey, encamped separately with the vast amount of their booty, and all his greatest nobles were standing in the presence of the king, that the king began to speak, saying: 'Would there ever have been in a royal land someone who was able to seize another king, his enemy, the plunderer of his kingdom, who would not kill him and exterminate all the male line from his country, but would rather take him in adoption, crown him, honour him with purple [robes], defeat his enemies, install him on the throne of the kingdom, give him royal treasure from his own treasures, and release him to go his own way in peace? Yet such gifts my father king Maurice bestowed on me, which no one among mankind could give to his own beloved son.' Some of them replied, saying: 'O king, live for ever.'<sup>167</sup> We do not know whether it would be right to be grateful, or not. For every kingdom is secured by its treasures, and they have taken as booty all the treasures of this kingdom.'

The king replied and said: The treasures of my kingdom [81] I shall extricate from them with their own accumulated treasures, because all that is mine. But for me this is the most important, that that traitor<sup>168</sup> escaped and fled. He is a brave man and may once more gather another army from the valiant nations of the east.

They replied to him, saying: 'They liberated that traitor, because we saw with our own eyes that Mushel Mamikonean had captured him, but gave him a horse and arms and let him go.' They said this because they were evilly disposed against him. For when they saw his cruel courage,<sup>169</sup> they were terrified and their hearts were inclined away from

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167 Cf. the Persian salutation in Neh. 2.3.

168 I.e. Vahram. Traitor: *tiraseats'*, 'hating his lord', applied in bazar, 23, to the fickle Armenians.

169 Courage: *haways*. This is a *hapax*\ see *HArmB*, s.v., for the sense and Abgaryan, n.215, for proposed emendations.

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him- The king did not at all understand what that statement might mean, because he was a young lad and immature. Nor did he recall the tumult of such troops,<sup>170</sup> but set his mind on those false words and said: 'Let Mushel be summoned here and be bound feet and hands, until I inform the emperor about him.'

At the same time he ordered a letter<sup>171</sup> to be written, and despatched one of his messengers to Mushel. 'Come promptly,' he said, 'A very important matter has arisen.' He commanded his guards, saying: 'Be ready, so that when he comes and I shall signal with my hand to you, you may immediately hold his hands behind [his back] and bind him. But be prepared, because he is a valiant man, and perhaps either he will die himself or he will kill me. And if he himself should die, I will have to give an account for him to the emperor.' He gave a similar command to the door-keepers: 'Take care that when Mushel comes to the door of my tent, you remove from his waist his belt and sword, saying that one is not allowed to enter before the king bearing arms.'

So while [Mushel] was making an accounting and review among his soldiers to see the number of living and dead, those who had fallen in the battle, the messenger came before him, greeted him and offered him the letter. Mushel took the letter and said to him: 'Is it a greeting of peace?' The messenger replied: 'It is a salutation and peace; and I do not know anything else save only that it was commanded to me to summon you in haste.' Then immediately he equipped himself as for war, because he reckoned that perhaps some military action had arisen, or some gift would be offered him in return for his efforts.<sup>172</sup> He took with him 2,000 fully armed men from among both nobles and non-nobles,<sup>173</sup> whom he knew to be worthy of honour and in whose horsemanship he had confidence.

[82] He [Khosrov] had written concerning him also to the *patrik* Yovhan to let him go. So the latter commanded him to set out equipped

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170 Tumult of such troops: *khrovut'wn aynpisi zawrats'n*. This is not clear; perhaps Sebeos means the disturbances which naturally occurred when Armenian and Persian troops were in close contact.

171 Letter: *yethkar*, not attested before Sebeos; see AG 198-9. Just below it is referred to by the common word *t 'uft'*.

172 Efforts: *vastaks*, the tasks and duties owed to the shah; see n.147 above.

173 Nobles and non-nobles: *azat*, *anazat*. Although the Armenian cavalry was in the <sup>mas</sup>in composed of nobles [see *azatagund* in n. 162 above], non-nobles were not restricted to foot service; see EH 554-5, s.v. *ramikspas*.

as he was, and he<sup>174</sup> ordered them all to put on their arms. He himself put on his own armour. Thus they equipped themselves and set out.

Now when they had entered the camp and had approached the royal pavilion,<sup>175</sup> he was faced with an order not to proceed in such a great number, but to post [most of] them outside and to present himself to the king with a few men.

He did not agree to do this, but went with his forces close to the door of the royal tent. The Persian army surrounded the tent, fully armed. Dismounting from his horse, he went to the door of the tent with 50 men. His troops remained as they were, armed and each on his horse. The king was frightened, and all his army. They began to conceal their deceit. When he reached the door of the tent, the door-keepers approached and said: 'Remove your belt and sword and put off your armour, because it is not allowed to enter the king's presence thus attired.' A suspicion fell into his heart, and he began to prepare and ready himself for escape. He replied to the door-keepers, saying: 'From my youth I have been raised by my ancestors and forefathers as a companion to kings; and now I have arrived at the royal court and the place of formality.<sup>176</sup> Should I put aside my armour and remove my baldric and belt, which I never undo in my own house in festivity? Or should I recognize the malevolence of the Persians?' He commanded one of his young men to run and bring forward his troops in support, and he himself turned to go back.

The king was informed that he did not wish to enter in that fashion, but had turned back and departed. The king began to conceal his perfidy and said: 'So let that plan be abandoned. Let him come as he wishes.' For he was a youth, and the strength of his army was weak and modest. They summoned him back, saying: 'He has commanded you to enter however you wish.' He returned, saying: 'Let me see what favour the king of kings may intend to bestow on me.'

He entered the tent into the presence of the king with seven men, fell on his face, did obeisance to the king,<sup>177</sup> and stood up. The king did not

<sup>174</sup>As so often in Sebeos, the subject is unclear; cf. Introduction II, The Armenian Text Ix. Presumably here Mushel is intended.

<sup>175</sup> Pavilion: *mashkaperchan*, as 69, n.51.

<sup>176</sup>Formality: *handes*, lit. 'review', as just above of Mushel with his army. The exact sense here is not clear.

<sup>177</sup>Did obeisance: lit. 'kissed the ground'. For this ritual before the shah or important officials cf. **97, 152**. For the expression see Thomson, *bazar* 298, *erkrpagut'iw*n. Stretch out his hand: *bazar*, 172, describes the shah's politeness when Vahan came to court; cf. also Elishe 44.

stretch out his hand as previously to receive [83] and greet him, but sat sullenly as he was. And they stood there in this perverse fashion.

The king was frightened and uncertain; out of fear he did not dare give the command as he had planned, or to say anything - important or trivial. The other turned and hastily left the tent. They brought him his horse; he mounted and departed. When the king saw that, he was greatly frightened and wished to conceal his plot. He stood up from the throne, ran to the door of the tent, went outside, and sent a leading noble after him. He had taken to him salt sealed as an oath,<sup>178</sup> and summoned him, saying: 'So that you may depart hence with honour and respect, and not reckon in your mind that we have any other intentions toward you.'

He did not so wish, but went his way. Then he planned this against them: at the third hour to attack the tent and kill him. And he gave the order to his troops who were standing armed around Khosrov's tent. But<sup>179</sup> he and his troops came to their senses; they desisted from their proposed sedition and departed.

While they were on their way, one of the king's guards encountered them. They seized him and took him along with them. Mushel threatened him with an oath, that unless he told him the plot hatched against him he would be killed.

Then, having made him swear an oath that he would not hand him over to the king, he told everything. The next day, in the morning, he went to the court of the *patrik* Yovhan, saw him and recounted all the wicked [plans], bringing forward the officer<sup>180</sup> of the guards, who also stood up and related all the events which had occurred. The princes and all the army were in turmoil; but remembering the oath and the emperor's perturbation, they did not make the matter public. They said they would write to the king and inform him about all these wicked events. But Mushel declared in front of them all: 'Unless that man is killed, through him the whole territory of the Roman empire will be destroyed.'

Then they prepared gifts - a large part of the booty of their sovereign, crowns and a diadem set with emeralds and pearls, a great quantity of gold and silver, rare precious gems, and [84] elegant robes from among the clothes which the Persian kings used for their adornment, and royal

<sup>178</sup> Salt: *asn.III* above.

<sup>179</sup> But: the text has *vasn zi*, 'because', which makes little sense.

<sup>180</sup> Officer: *ostikan*, used for 'prefect, or governor', *EH* 551.

horses with their own royal equipage. Having prepared these gifts, they sent them with a messenger bringing the news, writing down also an accusation against king Khosrov; and they despatched with the gifts four hundred cavalry. Khosrov was informed: They have had removed from your treasures part of the booty as a treasure for their king, and have written an accusation concerning you.' Bitterly angry, Khosrov sent troops after them to catch them on their way and to slay Mushel promptly and secretly; taking the royal treasure, they were to bring it to him. The Greek officers too quickly learned about these events and sent a very powerful force after them. When they caught them up, they let not a single one escape. And word of this did not get out. Taking the treasure,<sup>181</sup> they brought it to the palace in great joy.

The king received the gifts and sent a letter with profound thanks through a messenger of his. He wrote to them to abandon that intention of accusing the king:<sup>182</sup> 'If you do not take care of his person, I shall seek [account] of him from your hands.' He also wrote to the king to release them all with thanks.

Then king Khosrov gave gifts to them all according to each one's rank and dismissed them from him. He himself set out from Atrpatakan and reached Asorestan, his own royal residence. He was confirmed on the throne of the kingdom, and he carried out his promise of gifts for the emperor. He gave over to them all Aruastan as far as Nisibis; and the land of Armenia which was under his control, [namely] the *Tanu-terakan tun* as far as the river Hurazdan, the province of Koteik' as far as the town of Garni and up to the shore of the lake of Bznunik' and up to Arestawan,<sup>183</sup> and the province of Gogovit as far as Hats'iwn and Maku.<sup>184</sup> The region of the *Vasपुरakan gund*<sup>185</sup> was subject to the Persian king. Of the Armenian nobles, the majority were in the Greek

181 Treasure: The MSS read *zawm*, 'the army', emended to *zawarn* by Akinean and accepted by Abgaryan n.222.

182 I.e. Maurice glosses over the intention of Khosrov to kill Mushel.

183 Up to Arestawan: the text has *ts'up to*, as also T.'A. 88; but Zaminean, Patkanean, and Adontz/Garso'ian read, i.e. the accusative, 'and Arestawan'.

184 For the area surrendered cf. above, 76. T'. A., 88, and Y.D., XVI40-1, follow Sebeos; the version in Vardan, 59, is somewhat different.

185 Vasपुरakan is first attested in the early seventh-century *Ashkharhats'oyts'*; see Hewsén. ASX 179-81. Derived from the Persian *wcispuhrgan*, 'principal, special' [Mac- Kenzie, *Palilavi Dictionary* 88], it refers to an area east of the line dividing the Persian and Roman sectors of Armenia.

sector, and a few in the Persian. He also gave over a large part of the land of Georgia as far as the city of Tp'khis. But the kins? summoned that Mushel to the palace, and he saw his country no more.

[85]

[CHAPTER 13]<sup>186</sup>

[*The piety of queen Shirin. Khosrov's command to remain firm in the ancestral religion*]

He had many wives<sup>187</sup> in accordance with the tradition of their magism. But he also took Christian wives; one of these was a very beautiful Christian woman from the land of Khuzastan, named Shirin. She was the queen, the chief wife.<sup>188</sup> She built a monastery and a church near the royal residence, and established there priests and ministers.<sup>189</sup> She appointed allowances<sup>190</sup> and money for clothing from the treasury; she adorned it with gold and silver. With head held high she boldly preached the gospel of the kingdom at the royal court. None of the greatest Chal- daeans dared open his mouth or say anything great or small against a Christian.

But when the days were fulfilled and she reached the end of her time, many of the magi who had converted to Christianity were put to a martyr's death in various places.<sup>191</sup>

He gave a command, saying: 'Let none of the impious dare to convert to Christianity, and none of the Christians to impiety, but let each one remain firm in his own ancestral tradition.'<sup>192</sup> And whoever

186 Macler, ch.4.

187 Wives: *kanayk'*, women, or wives? Cf. n.124 above.

188 Queen, chief wife: *Bambishn, tiknats' tikin*. See EH 514 for this double expression. Shirin: see Justi 302, with references to Greek and other sources, and Goubert 176-8. On 151 below she is claimed as an adherent of the Armenian church! Cf. T.S. V 13.7-14.11 for Khosrov and Shirin: Khosrov requested saint Sergius to grant Shirin a child, and sent gifts to the shrine. Khuzastan is Susiana.

189 Ministers: *pashtoneay* is ambiguous, lit. 'minister', specifically, 'deacon'.

190 Allowances: *rochik*, 'stipend, or wages'; see EH 555, for various examples.

191 Macler states that this sentence is 'evidemment interpolate'. It refers to a later period. Flusin, *St Anastase II*, 118-27, 'Martyrs sous Chosroes', notes that although there were Christian martyrs during his reign, Khosrov was not a zealous persecutor.

192 The shah uses the Armenian description of Persian religion! See n.133 for *anawren*. Ancestral tradition: *hayreniawrenk'*. This is a major theme of Elishe's History, taken from the Books of Maccabees. See the Introduction to Thomson, *Elishe* 12.

does not wish to hold his ancestral religion, but in rebellion abandons his ancestral traditions, shall die.' Now on the feast of Palm Sunday<sup>193</sup> they used to go from Shirin's monastery, with other Christians, to the door of the royal apartment, and they would read the gospel as an act of worship.<sup>194</sup> They would receive gifts from the king and depart. And no one dared say anything against them.

[CHAPTER 14]<sup>195</sup>

*[The emperor Maurice requests from Khosrov the body of the prophet Daniel. The miracles which occurred when bringing the body.]*

It happened in those days that the Greek king requested from the Persian king the body of that dead man which was kept in the city of Shawsh, in the royal treasury, placed in a bronze container.<sup>196</sup> The Persians called it [the body of] Kay Khosrov, and the Christians said it was that of the prophet Daniel. King Khosrov ordered his request to be honoured. But queen Shirin was greatly disturbed over these events. Since she could do nothing to change [86] the king's will, she ordered all the Christians of the land to beseech Christ with fasts and prayers that that [source of] grace<sup>197</sup> should not be removed from the country.

The whole populace gathered at that place; with fervent requests and tearful laments they begged Christ to prevent [its departure]. They brought mules for it and a royal carriage,<sup>198</sup> took [the body] and set off. But when they had gone out through the city gate, suddenly the springs which came up in the middle of the city and flowed outside, dried up. The whole populace with sighing and lamentation followed it.

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193 Palm Sunday: *otogomean*, the Greek *eulogemene*; see *A G* 368.

194 As an act of worship: *pashtmamb*; cf. M.X. III49. of Sahak 'observing' the religious rule.

195 Macler, ch.5.

196 Container: *awazan*, in Christian terms, 'font'; cf. the 'laver of brass', in Ex. 30.18. Shawsh: Susa. Abgaryan, n.230, adds references to later tradition concerning Daniel in Muslim and Jewish writers. According to Y. D., XXVI 24, the *sparapet* Smbat was killed at the caliph's court in 855 and buried in Daniel's tomb. Kay Khosrov: the hero of the Iranian epic.

197 For grace, *charis*, in the bones of saints see Lampe, s.v. *leipsanon*. Cf. the fragment of the Cross, 98, as a source of grace.

198 Carriage: *despak*, *AG* 140.

It happened that when they had gone a distance of three stades<sup>199</sup> from the city, suddenly the mules attached to the litter stopped, and no one was able to move them from the spot.<sup>199</sup> Abruptly turning back, they forcibly broke right through the crowd and the troops, and ran into the city. When they entered the city gate, the waters of the river were released and flowed, and the springs gushed forth in abundance as before.

They rapidly informed the emperor about this.<sup>200</sup> He had offerings brought to it [the corpse] and ordered them to act as it wished. They left it and departed.

[CHAPTER 15]<sup>201</sup>

*[The treacherous plot of Maurice to empty Armenia of Armenian princes. The flight of many princes from the Greek sector of Armenia to Persia.]*

At that time the king of the Greeks, Maurice, ordered a letter of accusation to be written to the Persian king concerning all the Armenian princes and their troops: They are a perverse and disobedient race, he said; they are between us and cause trouble.<sup>202</sup> Now come, I shall gather mine and send them to Thrace;<sup>203</sup> you gather yours and order them to be taken to the east. If they die, our enemies die; if they kill, they kill our enemies; but we shall live in peace. For if they remain in their own land, we shall have no rest.<sup>204</sup>

They both agreed. The emperor began to give orders that they should gather them all and sent them to Thrace. He strongly insisted [87] that the command was carried out. And they began to flee from that region and to submit to the Persians, especially those whose land was under his authority. He received them all with honours and bestowed on them

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199 For mules drawing a carriage with relics stopping, cf. I Kingdoms, 6.14; Aa 811; Pseudo-Shapuh 67; Step'annos Orbelean, ch.50.

200 Emperor: *kaysr*, not Khosrov. Although this Latin term is common in Armenian for the emperor of Byzantium [EH 537-8], Sebeos usually refers to him as 'king', *t'agawor* or *ark'ay*. Cf. also n.664.

201 Macler, ch.6.

202 Cause trouble: *ptoren*, lit. 'they muddy'. Cf. the proverb in Eznik 358, 'the spring is muddied from the source', concerning Marcion.

203 *Trake*. The more usual form *Tirak* appears on **104,105**.

204 Cf. the sentiment of the senate about the Persians, 76.

199 Stade: *asparez*, the length of a stadium; AG 109; EH 508-9.



gifts greater than those of the emperor. Especially when he saw their flight from the emperor, with even greater affection he wished to win them over to himself.

### [CHAPTER 16]

*[The auditor comes with a great treasure to attract the Armenian princes from the Greek sector. The princes seize the treasure. The unity of the two kings against the robbers. Reconciliation; some of the princes go to the Persians, and others to the Greeks.]*

Now when the king of Persia saw the flight of these men from the emperor, he sent to Armenia the auditor<sup>206</sup> of Vaspurakan with much treasure and many honours, so that in this way he might subject them to his own service. The auditor went to Armenia accompanied by the treasure on many camels.

When Samuel Vahewuni with other companions of his went to meet him and encountered him on the borders of the land of Atrpatakan, they seized the treasure but spared the auditor's life. They were the following: Atat Khorkhoruni, Samuel Vahewuni and Mamak Mamikonean, Step'anos Siwni, and Kotit, lord of the Amatunik', and T'eodoros Trpatuni,<sup>207</sup> and about two thousand cavalry. They had reckoned that: 'With this treasure we shall make the Huns ours.'<sup>208</sup> Receiving support from them, we shall wage war against both kings, and by force restore our own land to us.' But when they reached the city of Nakhchawan,<sup>209</sup> their plans of unity dissolved. Not trusting each other, they divided out the treasure and encamped at the fen called Chahuk.<sup>210</sup>

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206 Auditor: *hamarakar*, the fiscal officer for Persian Armenia, Adontz/Garso'ian 180; cf. *AG* 80.

207 Atat: *HAnjB*. no.3. For the Khorkhoruni house, *EH* 429 and Toumanoff, *Studies* 208-9. Samuel: *HAnjB*, no.8. For the Vahewuni house Toumanoff, *Studies* 215. Mamak: *HAnjB*, no.1. Step'anos: *HAnjB*, no.16. Kotit: the only one in *HAnjB*. For the Amatuni house see *EH* 346-7, Toumanoff, *Studies* 197-8. T'eodos in the MSS here [*HAnjB*, no.1], but T'eodoros elsewhere. For the Trpatuni house, see Toumanoff, *Studies* 199.

208 The Huns north of the Caucasus; cf. n.19 above. Here the MSS read *Hayastans*, 'Armenia' 'Huns' is the emendation of Malkhasean; see Abgaryan n.236.

209 On the Araxes and at the border of Armenia and Persia; cf. **105**. For this major town see *EH* 482; Hewsen, *ASX* 63A, 65, map 66.

210 Chahuk is a district in Siwnik'; Hewsen, *ASX*65. For Armenian mutual distrust, cf. 78, n.154.

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The auditor went to court and informed the king [88] of all that had opened; the words of the emperor were vindicated.<sup>211</sup> Then king Khosrov ordered a letter to be written to the emperor; he asked for an army in support, and sent back to Armenia the auditor of Vaspurakan. Then he [the emperor] ordered the general Heraclius,<sup>212</sup> who was stationed in Armenia, to take his troops and march against them in war. So the forces of the two kings joined together at the city of Nakhchawan. Now when these armies had united against them [the rebels], they began to send messages to them, that there should not be battle and the shedding of blood between Christians, but they should desist from their folly and submit to the authority of the king. And they confirmed this for them by an oath: 'You have nothing to fear from the king.' The auditor added: The king of kings sent me to you, and I have brought you the treasure. You have nothing to fear from the king of kings.' And he swore an oath to them in accordance with their custom.<sup>211</sup>

They began to waver and to split apart from each other. Mamak Mamikonean, Kotit, lord of the Amatunik', and Step'anos and still others in their company abandoned them. Declaring themselves innocent to the auditor, they submitted their forces to the authority of the king of Persia. But Atat Khorkhoruni and Samuel Vahewuni fled with their own troops. Passing through the village called Sawdk',<sup>213</sup> they reached the land of the Aluank' and made for the Huns. After crossing the river called Kur, they camped on its bank.

The others also reached the edge of the river and camped on the near side. Since they were unable to rely on the forces<sup>214</sup> ^ of the Huns, they then sought an oath from the king of the Greeks and submitted to him. Some went to the auditor and returned to their own land. The auditor assembled all the Armenian princes and soldiers who were from the Persian sector. Urging them with entreaties and sweet words, he brought them all to unity, and formed various contingents.<sup>215</sup> He left [them] in that country with a few [troops] and departed: 'Until I give

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**211** I.e. Maurice's letter, **86**.

212 The general, father of the emperor; see *PLRE* III, s.v. no.3, 584-6. Cf. Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 230-3.

213 Inland from the south-east corner of Lake Sevan, where there is a pass into Arts'akh; see Hewsen, *ASX*193, n. 196.

214 Forces: *ehambar*, 'camp', hence 'army, or force'; *AG* 186-7.

215 Various contingents: *gunds gunds*; cf. n.20.

213 I.e. with salt; see 74 above.

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news about you, he said, and an order comes [for you] to remain there.' For he had reckoned that others would come to them and increase [their number].<sup>217</sup>

But the emperor hastily summoned Atat Khorkhoruni with his troops to the palace. He bestowed on him compliments and honours, gave him many presents, and sent him to Thrace.

[891

#### [CHAPTER 17]<sup>218</sup>

*[The rebellion of some princes in the Greek sector and their death. Enemies from the Thracian side threaten the Greek empire.]*

On the Greek side the Vahewuni nobles<sup>219</sup> rebelled - Samuel whom I mentioned above, Sargis, Varaz Nerseh, Nerses, Vstam, and Teodoros Trpatuni. They planned to kill the *curator*<sup>220</sup> while he was staying at a spa<sup>221</sup> to be cured of an illness, near the city of Karin. But he learned of it somehow and fled for refuge into the city. They attacked the spa, but did not encounter him. Then they plundered whatever they came across, took much booty and went to the inaccessible land of Korduk', intending to hold those fortresses.<sup>222</sup>

The Greek army pursued them, with the general Heraclius and Hamazasp Mamikonean.<sup>223</sup> When they [the fugitives] had arrived close to the fortress, they crossed the river called Jerm<sup>224</sup> by the bridge which

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217 See **94** below for the sequel.

218 Macler, ch.7.

219 Nobles: *sepuhk'*, used of nobles who are not the heads of families, see *EH* 558-9. Samuel: **87**. Sargis: *HAnjB*, no.5. Varaz Nerseh: *HAnjB*, no.3. Nerses: *HAnjB*, no.18. Vstam: *HAnjB*, no.2.

220 *Curator*: *korator*, *AG* 360. For this Byzantine office see the *ODB*, s.v.

221 Spa: *ijermki*; Abgaryan, n.241, follows Malkhasean's emendation for the *ijermi* of the MSS. For hot springs in this region see Hewsens, *ASX* 59,153, n.25.

222 The adjective *amur*, also used as a noun, 'fortress', may be used of a site, 'impregnable, strong', or of a mountainous region, 'inaccessible, secure'; cf. *EH* 506. It is not always clear in Sebeos whether a fortress or a region [as Gelam, **95**] is intended. The verb *amranam* means 'to entrench oneself, take refuge in a secure place'.

223 Hamazasp: *HAnjB*, no. 16.

224 The Jerm, i.e. 'hot' river, is a tributary of the Tigris, the Bohtan-su; *AON* 331, Hewsens, *ASX* map 64. In the valley of the Jerm was a fortress called Zrayl famous for its impregnability [*amrut'iwjn*].

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is called the bridge of Daniel. They destroyed the bridge, and posted themselves at the defile to defend the site of the bridge. They [the Greeks] stopped at the river-bank and pondered what they should do. Since they did not find a ford, they were intending to return, when unexpectedly a travelling priest encountered them. They seized the priest and said to him: 'Show us the ford over the river, otherwise we shall kill you.' He led the army and pointed out the ford below. The whole army crossed the ford. Some of them guarded the fortress from the rear, some held the bridgehead and the entrance to the valley,<sup>225</sup> while others entered the fortress and attacked them. There was a dreadful slaughter, but they managed to exterminate them.

In the battle they killed Nerses and Vstam and Samuel, who made no little carnage around them. But Sargis and Varaz Nersch they captured with some others. They brought them to the city of Karin and then cut off their heads. At the moment of decapitation Varaz Nerseh said to Sargis: 'Let us cast lots, whom they will kill first.' But Sargis said: 'I am an old man and a sinner; I beg you grant me this gift. Let me have this small comfort that I do not see your death.' Then they cut off his head first. But Teodoros Trpatuni escaped and fled to the court of the Persian king. [90] He ordered him to be bound and handed over to his enemies to be put to death. And with great cruelty he had him tortured.

The enemies from the region of Thrace plundered the kingdom. With their enormous multitude of troops, through rapid campaigns<sup>226</sup> they wished to eliminate the kingdom and the nation of the Roman empire, and to rule themselves over the royal capital.

### IC HAPTER 18]<sup>227</sup>

*[Maurice gathers an army against the Thracians. He appoints Mushel Mamikonean general. At first the Greeks defeat their enemies; but the second time they are beaten in a great rout. The killing of Mushel.]*

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225 Entrance to the valley: *dzoraberan*, 'valley-mouth', not otherwise attested. Since compound nouns are so easily formed in Armenian such *hapax legomena* are common; T'ovma Artsruni's History is particularly notable in this respect.

226 Through rapid campaigns: *i dzern hapcheppaterazmats 'n*. *Hapchep* normally means 'rapid, urgent', rather than the 'incessant' of Macler. For these Avar raids of 583, 586-588, see Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 140-55.

227 Macler, ch.8.

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At that time the king of the Greeks gave an order to assemble all of his troops from the eastern region, because there was peace and he had no problems in Syria from the Persian empire. He ordered them all to cross the sea and to gather in the regions of Thrace against the enemy. He further commanded all the cavalry from Armenia to assemble, and the chief nobles,<sup>228</sup> [and those] who were experienced and capable of standing firm and fighting in battle in the line of spearmen. He also ordered other forces to be brought from the land of Armenia in great numbers, all of them willing and of elite stature;<sup>229</sup> to be formed into battalions and that, equipped with arms, they should all cross to the land of Thrace against the enemy, and Mushel Mamikonean as their general.

So they went to attack the peoples who occupied the western regions on the bank of the great river Danube. There was a fierce war over the face of that land. The power of the enemy was crushed before the Greek army, which put them to flight across the river Danube. They themselves promptly sent a messenger bearing news of the great victory to the emperor and all the palace.

They [the enemy] went raiding into the inner part of the land, passed through some narrow places, and ravaged the whole country. When they came face to face, there was a great battle. They defeated the Greek army and destroyed them with great slaughter, putting them to flight before them. The enemy occupied [91] the narrow place in front of them, defeated them with the sword, and they were barely able to escape for refuge into the fastnesses<sup>230</sup> of the land of Thrace. They captured Mushel Mamikonean, bound him to a very high tree in the forest, and killed him. A great number of Armenian nobles and troops were exterminated and slaughtered on that day.

Then once more the king gathered another army and ordered it merely to act on the defensive.<sup>231</sup>

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228 Chief nobles: *ishkhans nakhararats'*, lit. 'princes of nobles'.

229 Willing: *kamov*, 'volunteers'? Of elite stature: *entrov hasakv*, *hasak* can refer to stature or age, 'in their prime of life'.

230 Fastnesses: *amurs*; see n.222; 'secure areas' rather than 'fortresses'.

231 Act on the defensive: *zgunanalanjants'*, lit. 'to take care of themselves'.

## HISTORY

[CHAPTER 19]<sup>232</sup>

*[The emperor Maurice's order to preach the council of Chalcedon in the churches of Armenia. Division of the see of the patriarchate.]*

Yet another command came from the emperor, to preach the council of Chalcedon in all the churches of the land of Armenia, and to unite them in communion through his army. But the clerics<sup>233</sup> of the Armenian churches fled to a foreign land. Many, disregarding the command, stood their ground and remained unmoved. But many others, swayed by ambition, united by joining in communion. Then the see of the Catholicosate was divided into two: one named Movses and the other Yovhan - Movses in the Persian sector and Yovhan in the Greek.<sup>234</sup>

Yovhan united in communion with them; but Movses would not at all have contact with them. All the vessels of the church of St Gregory in Dvin were taken<sup>235</sup> and placed in safe-keeping in the city of Karin. Subsequently he himself [Yovhan] was led off into captivity in the land of Persia, to the capital Ahmatan.<sup>236</sup>

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232 Macler, ch.9.

233 Clerics: *mankunk' ukhli*. *Manuk* is 'child, youth, servant, soldier'; *ukht* is 'covenant, clergy'. The expression should refer to clerics in general, there being no equivalent to the Syriac *benai qeyama* in Armenia. The phrase is quoted [s.v. *ukht*] in the *NBHL* as occurring in Socrates VII20, but it does not appear in the printed text. It would, however, make more sense in context if it referred to the congregations. Cf. **154**, n.757.

234 For the Armenian attitude to the Christological definition of Chalcedon see Sarkisian, *The Council of Chalcedon*. A final split with the imperial church of Constantinople did not take place until the second council of Dvin in 555. On this territorial division, with a pro-Chalcedonian Catholicos in the Roman sector and an anti-Chalcedonian Catholicos in the Persian, see Garitte, *Narratio* 225-54. Movses is Movses II, Catholicos 574-604; for his death, see **100** below. Yovhan [John] was from Kogovit [Gogovit] in Ayarat, which had been ceded to Maurice and was thus now in Roman territory; see **84** above and **112** for his death. The division is described in greater detail by Y.D., XVIII4-16.

235 Were taken: the MSS read *zor taran*, 'which they [the Armenian impersonal pi.] . Macler proposed the emendation: *zor tar[aw] YovhJan*, 'which John took', but it seems unnecessary.

236 I.e. Hamadan, Ecbatana, *AG* 17. For John's captivity and death see below, **112**, and *Narratio* 263-5.

[CHAPTER 20]<sup>237</sup>

*[Another command from the emperor to collect troops from Armenia and send them under the command of Sahak Mamikonean and Smbat Bagratuni. Smbat turns back; and his plan to rebel. Smbat is captured and brought to Constantinople. Sentence is passed against him to be thrown into the arena. The exploits of Smbat there and his finding mercy. His subsequent exile to Africa.]*

At that time another command came from the emperor to seek out again and find from Armenia elite armed cavalry, 2,000 in number, and to put them under two reliable men, and to despatch them in great haste.

[92] They sought out and chose 2,000 armed men and put these 2,000 under two reliable men: 1,000 to Sahak Mamikonean, and 1,000 under the command of Smbat Bagratuni, son of Manuel.<sup>238</sup> They did not send these by the same route, but despatched Sahak Mamikonean with one thousand via Sebastea, and Smbat Bagratuni with the other [thousand] via the region of Khaltik'.<sup>238</sup> Sahak set out, brought his force to the palace, and presented himself to the king.

But when Smbat reached Khaltik', he balked,<sup>239</sup> because his force had become frightened en route, not wishing to go to that place<sup>240</sup> in compliance with the king's request. The king was informed of these events. Then through letters and trustworthy messengers he promised with an oath to send him back promptly to his own country with great honour. He also promised great rewards and gifts to the troops, and in this way he cajoled them into reconciliation. They proceeded in unity and presented themselves to the king. The king fully equipped the troops and despatched them to the borders of Thrace; Smbat he sent in great honour back to the land of his own people with many gifts.

Then once more the remaining Armenian nobles began to unite, and

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237 Macler, ch.10.

238 Khahik' is in the region of Lazica west of the river Phasis; Hewsens, ASX 57.

239 Balked: *brnanay*, lit. 'held firm'.

240 I.e. Thrace.



## HISTORY

sought a way to extricate themselves from service to the king of the Greeks and to enthrone their own king, so that they too would not be obliged to die in the regions of Thrace, but could live or die for their own country. Their intended plans did not gain firm unity amongst themselves; but some of them informed against the others and brought news of the plot to the king's ear. Then they dispersed here and there and stole away.<sup>241</sup>

Then royal messengers arrived with warrants,<sup>242</sup> arrested Smbat with another seven men, and brought him before the king. When they had been examined in the crowded tribunal,<sup>243</sup> sentence was passed on them to be stripped and thrown into the arena.<sup>244</sup>

He was a man gigantic<sup>245</sup> in stature and handsome of appearance, strong and of solid body. He was a powerful warrior, who had demonstrated his valour and strength in many battles. Such was his power that when he passed through dense forests under strong trees on his big- limbed and powerful horse, grasping the branch of a tree he would hold it firmly, and forcefully tightening his thighs and legs around the horse's middle he would raise it [93] with his legs from the ground, so that when all the soldiers saw this they were awestruck and astonished.

So they stripped him, dressed him in breeches,<sup>246</sup> and threw him into the arena as prey for the wild beasts.

They released a bear against him. Now it happened that when the bear attacked him, he shouted out loudly, ran on the bear, hit its forehead with his fist, and slew it on the spot.

The next time they released a bull against him. But he grasped the horns of the bull ... raised a great shout<sup>247</sup> ... and when the bull grew weary in the struggle, he twisted its neck and broke both horns over its head. Losing strength, the bull retreated and turned to flee. But he ran

241 For Armenian disunity, cf 78, n. 154 above.

242 Warrants: *hrovartaks*, AG 184, meaning 'an official letter'.

243 Tribunal: *hraparak*, a public place of assembly where enquiries were held; cf. Elishe 27.

244 Arena: *kiwnikn*, AG 357, the Greek *kunegion*. The *HArmB* only notes its use in Sebeos. The other seven men appear to have escaped combat; see the end of 93.

245 Gigantic: *anheded*, 'monstrous', as in M.X., 19, of the giants descended from the first gods.

246 Breeches: *andravartis*, as Ex. 28.42.

247 There appears to be a lacuna; Abgaryan, n.261, notes several emendations, but none<sup>1s</sup> totally persuasive.

238 Abgaryan distinguishes two Smbats Bagratuni, as does the *HAnjB*. s.v. no.1 3 and 14. But the Smbat who was exiled to Africa seems to be identical with the one who later served the shah; see further below **96**, and Toumanoff, *Dynasties* 111. See also Historical Commentary. For Smbat's career see also Goubert 197-204. For the Bagratuni house see EH 362-3, and Toumanoff, *Studies* 201-3. Manuel: *HAnjB*, no.10. Sahak: *HAnjB*, no.29.

after it, seized its tail, and held on to the hoof of one of its feet. He pulled off the hoof, which remained in his hand. The bull fled away from him, with one bare foot.

The third time they released a lion against him. It happened that when the lion attacked him, he gained such a success from the Lord that taking hold of the lion's ear, he mounted it. Then grasping its wind-pipe, he throttled the lion and killed it. The roar of the large crowd filled the land and they requested mercy from the king.

Wearied from the struggle, he sat on the dead lion to rest a little. Then the queen fell at the king's feet and begged him to show mercy to him, because previously that man had been dear to the king and his wife, and they had called him their adopted [son]. He was astonished at the man's strength and toughness. Heeding the supplications of his wife and of all the palace, he commanded him to be accorded mercy.

Then they led him off to wash in the baths. They washed and clothed him, and summoned him to the royal feast. After a short time had passed, not so much from the king's ill will but from the calumny of rivals, he ordered them to be put on a ship and to be exiled to distant islands. Then he ordered [him] to cross to Africa<sup>249</sup> and to be made *tribune*<sup>250</sup> among the soldiers who were there.

[94]

### [CHAPTER 21]<sup>251</sup>

*[Khosrov summons to court by letter the nobles whom the auditor had left. He shows them great honours, and settles their troops in the city of Ispahan.]*

252

As for the nobles and troops on the Persian side, I mentioned above that the auditor departed and left them until the royal command should

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249 For Africa as a place of exile, cf. 133 below. Him: there is no object to the verb, so it is unclear whether Sebeos refers here solely to Smbat. There is no reference to exile in T.S. III 8.6-8, who puts Smbat's prowess in the arena and the emperor's clemency before the deposition of Ormizd by Vahram.

250 Tribune: The MSS read *i bun*, 'natural, original', which Malkhasean emended to *tribun* on the basis of the version of these events in Mkhitar Anets'i's Chronicle.

251 Macler, ch.II.

arrive. Then couriers<sup>252</sup> arrived with letters summoning them all together to the royal court. These are the nobles and troops who went with each one's contingent and banner<sup>253</sup> to the court of the Persian king Khosrov in the sixth year of his reign.<sup>254</sup>

First: Gagik Mamikonean, son of Manuel;

Second: Pap Bagratuni, son of Ashot the *aspet*;

Third: Khosrov, lord of the Vahewunik';

Fourth: Vardan Artsruni;

Fifth: Mamak Mamikonean;

Sixth: Step'anos Siwni;

Seventh: Kotit, lord of the Amatunik',<sup>255</sup> and others from the nobles with them. When they reached Asorestan and the site of the royal court, they presented themselves to the king. He joyfully received them, and with notable splendour favoured them with honours. He ordered the greatest nobles to be kept at the royal court, stipends<sup>256</sup> to be paid them from the treasury, to be given their own quarters, and summoned every day to the royal banquet. He commanded their troops to be stationed in the territory of Ispahan, and that they should be cared for in a friendly way with all willingness.

## [CHAPTER 221<sup>257</sup>

*[The murder of Vndoy. The flight and rebellion of Vstam, and his going to the regions of the Parthians.]*

At that time king Khosrov decided to seek vengeance for the death of his father from those nobles who had killed him.<sup>258</sup> First he wished to condemn his maternal uncles. He commanded Vndoy, the one I mentioned above, to be arrested, bound and killed. But his brother Vstam did not happen to be at the royal court at that time. Although he

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252 Couriers: *peshaspikk'*, as *Buzandaran* III 21. For the term, *AG* 230.

253 Contingent and banner: *gund, draws*; see above, nn.20,139.

254 *Le.* 594/595.

255 Gagik: *HAnjB*, no.1. Manuel: *HAnjB*, no.9. Pap: *HAnjB*, no.5. Ashot *aspet'*. *HAnjB*, no.9. Khosrov: *HAnjB*, no.13. Vardan: *HAnjB*, no.13. Mamak: *HAnjB*, no.1. Step'anos: *HAnjB*, no.16. Kotit: the only one not attested in the *HAnjB*.

256 Stipends: *rochiks*, as 85 above and n.190.

257 Macler, ch.12.

258 For Ormizd's death see above 75.



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summoned him deceitfully with many entreaties, as if he were unaware of the death of his brother, nonetheless he was informed somehow and did not [95] fall into his deceitful trap, but rebelled and took refuge in the inaccessible land of Gelam. He gathered all their troops and put them under his own command.

Going to the area of Reyy<sup>260</sup> on a raid he plundered all the many lands of the Persian empire. Then king Khosrov took his own army and went to attack him; the emperor's army was with him. There was a pitched battle between them in the land of Reyy. In that battle the Armenian troops performed no few acts of valour, on seeing which the king was even more astonished.

Now because the rebel could not resist, he took refuge in the mountainous territory where he entrenched himself.<sup>261</sup> In this way neither side defeated the other, so they returned to their own territory. The rebel Vstam went to the secure land of Gelam, and then from there he journeyed to the regions of the Parthians, to the original land of his own principality,<sup>262</sup> in order to bring under his own control the troops of that region and having been thus [reinforced] to return.

The king marched to Asorestan and reached his own royal residence, accompanied by the princes of the Armenian nobles.

### [CHAPTER 23]<sup>263</sup>

*[The death of the Armenian nobles who were in Asorestan. The killing of Kotit Amatuni at the instigation of Khosrov. The rebellion of the Armenian army which was stationed at Ispahan. The seizure of the auditor's treasure, and departure of some into the land of the Parthians to Vstam.]*

At that time occurred the death of the [following] Armenian princes. At the royal court Gagik Mamikonean and Khosrov, lord of the Vahe-wunik', died a natural death. Mamak Mamikonean, sent to Armenia concerning the army, as soon as he arrived at the city of Dvin died after only a few days. Step'anos Siwni had a dispute with his paternal uncle

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260 For the spelling see AG 70. According to the ASX the two main cities of Media were Re and Aspahan; Hewsens, ASX74.

261 Entrenched himself: *amranayr*. For the meaning of *amur* [cf. 'inaccessible' just above] and its derivatives see n.222.

262 His Parthian origin was stressed above 73.

263 Macler, ch.13.

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Sahak concerning the principality.<sup>264</sup> Sahak wrote a writ of condemnation against him and sealed it with his own seal, that of the bishop of his house,<sup>265</sup> and also with the seals of other princes of Siwnik', to remind the king of the crime of their rebellion.

[96] Then the king ordered Step'anos to be bound and cast into prison. They cut off his head during the actual fast of Holy Week.<sup>266</sup>

Having sent Kotit as messenger to Nisibis, he ordered the cavalry to lie in ambush on the plain. Attacking him like brigands, they killed him on the road. But their troops who were stationed in the land of Ispahan,<sup>267</sup> when they learned what had happened, rebelled and pillaged the land. They took the royal treasure which was in the auditor's house, which had been amassed from the taxes of that land, and set out for the fortress in the land of Gelam. Peroz's<sup>268</sup> army arrived in pursuit, and put some of them to the sword. Some of them committed suicide lest they be captured, while others barely escaped and took refuge in the secure land of Gelam. Not encountering Vstam there, they set out for the land of the Parthians and presented themselves before him.

[CHAPTER 24]<sup>269</sup>

*[Smbat Bagratuni is appointed marzpan of Vrkan. He subdues the rebels and establishes good order in the land of Vrkan.]*

It happened at that time that Smbat Bagratuni became pleasing in the eyes of king Khosrov.<sup>270</sup> He gave him the *marzpanate* of the land of

264 Principality: *tanuterut'iw'n*; for *tanuter* see n.129 above. Sahak: *HAnjB*, no.30.

265 I.e. the bishop of the noble house of Siwnik'. For Armenian episcopal organization, based on the *nakharar* families and not the cities, see the discussion in Garso'ian, 'City' 79. Crime: *vnas*, lit. 'harm, damage'.

266 Actual fast: *ibun ahihats'sn* [*at*, 'salt', *hats'*, 'bread'].

267 I.e. those of the nobles listed on **94** above.

268 Peroz's: *perozakan*. Macler suspects something is wrong and suggests 'Persian' or 'victorious' [from the etymology]. It would seem simplest to suppose that this Peroz was a general who is not mentioned elsewhere in Sebeos.

269 Macler, ch.14.

270 Mkhitar Anets'i, ch.17, identifies this Smbat with the Smbat who was exiled, **92-93** above; but he reverses the order, putting Smbat's service for the shah before his escapades in Constantinople. Mkhitar says that Smbat died in Tizbon. Y.D., XVII. followed by Asolik and

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Vardan, refers only to Smbat's service for the shah. For a review of different opinions see Abgaryan n.272.



Vrkan,<sup>271</sup> made him prince over all that region, and favoured him even more with honours and authority. He heaped gold and silver on him and robed him in expensive and splendid garments. He gave him the belt and sword that had belonged to his own father Ormizd. He put under his control Persian and Armenian troops, and ordered him to go to the land of his appointment.

At that time the lands called Amal, Royean, Zrechan and Tapara- stan<sup>272</sup> had rebelled against the Persian king. He defeated them in battle, smote them with the sword, and brought them into subjection to the Persian king. He established prosperity over all the area of his *marz- panate*, because that land had been ravaged. [97] There was in that country a community deported<sup>273</sup> from Armenia and settled on the edge of the great desert which extends from Turk'astan and Delhastan.<sup>274</sup> They had forgotten their own language, lost the use of writing, and lacked the priestly order. There was also there a group of Kodrik' who had been taken captive with our own men; and furthermore not a few from the Greek empire and from the region of Syria.

The community of Kodrik' were infidels.<sup>275</sup> But over the Christians there shone a great light. They were confirmed in the faith and learned to write and speak their language. A certain presbyter among them who was named Abel was appointed to priestly rank in that land.<sup>276</sup>

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271 *Marzpan*: for this office see n.18 above. Vrkan is to the south-east of the Caspian Sea. On 100 Sebeos states that Smbat held the post for eight years: 595-602 according to Tou- manoff. *Dynasties* 111. Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 127 accepts 595 as the likely date of Smbat's appointment as *marzpan*; but see n.298 below.

272 Taparastan is on the south coast of the Caspian. For Amal and Royean see *Eransahr* 136; for Zrechan, *ibid.* 125.

273 Community deported: *azgn gerealk'*. I take the sing, *azg* to refer to the captives [in the pi.] being a group of one ethnic origin.

274 Delhastan is Dehistan, *Eransahr* 94. Asolik, II 2, and Vardan, 60, add: 'called Saga- stan'.

275 Does Sebeos mean the Kotri in the south-east of Iran [cf. *Eransahr* 187], or the Kordrik' on the border of Asorestan? For the problem of the latter name see Hewsen, *ASX*170-4. In the second case 'infidel', *anhawat*, might point to their being Christians not in communion with the Armenians.

276 Priestly rank: *karg k'ahanayut'ean*. I.e. Abel was already ordained, hence a 'presbyter', *erets'*, and now appointed to an official status by Smbat. Y.D., XVII3-6, elaborates on this, calling him a 'bishop'; and Asolik, II2, adds: 'since then they have been attached to the see of St Gregory'. For further references to later information see *HAnjB*, s.v. Abel, no.2.

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CHAPTER 251<sup>277</sup>

*[Vstam's attack into Asorestan against Khosrov and his death en route through the treachery of Pariovk, king of the K'ushans. The scattering of Vstam's army. The battle of the marzpan Smbat with the (people of) Gehim and his defeat.]*

It happened at that time<sup>278</sup> that Vstam subjected to himself the two kings of the K'ushans, Shawk and Pariovk.<sup>274</sup> Assembling all the troops of the regions of the east, he attacked Asorestan with a large and powerful army in order to kill Khosrov and seize his kingdom for himself. His forces were [posted] to right and left at a distance from him; and the king of the K'ushans, Pariovk, was in support behind him. Then the king of the K'ushans planned treachery. He came in front of him with a few men, and dismounting from his horse he did obeisance on his face seven times.<sup>281</sup> The other came forward and ordered him to mount his horse again. But he had laid a trap for him on the road. Pariovk said to him: 'Bid your retinue withdraw from you, so that I may speak some words of counsel with the king.'<sup>281</sup> He did not perceive his treachery, so commanded his men to go away from him. While they were proceeding along the road talking, suddenly those in ambush emerged from their places, struck Vstam and killed him. Pariovk, meeting his troops as arranged,<sup>282</sup> immediately informed them. They rode in pursuit, came up and seized Vstam's wife [98] and all his baggage and goods, then rapidly turned back and departed.

Later, after some days had passed, the news reached all the troops. They were discouraged, lost their mutual solidarity, and went off each to his own place. In like manner the Gelum army that was accompanying him went straightaway to the strongholds<sup>283</sup> of their own land. Those Armenian men who had rebelled in Ispahan<sup>284</sup> and joined Vstam, went

<sup>277</sup> Macler, ch.15.

<sup>278</sup> When Smbat became *marzpan*, 599/600.

<sup>279</sup> See *Eransahr* 83<sup>4</sup>t, for these kings in later Iranian tradition. For Vstam's rebellion see Goubert 283-7.

<sup>280</sup> Obeisance: lit. 'kissed the ground'; see above **82**, n.177.

<sup>281</sup> I.e. Pariovk treats Vstam as his royal superior. Retinue: *ambokh*, lit. 'crowd'.

<sup>282</sup> As arranged: *zhamadir leal*, lit. 'having made a rendezvous'. The *Chronicon Anon- ynum* 16, states that Vstam was killed by a 'Turk'.

<sup>283</sup> Strongholds: *amurs*, or perhaps 'secure [regions]'. On this word see above, n.222.

<sup>284</sup> In Ispahan: *i Spahan*, which is Akinean's emendation followed by Abgaryan; the MSS all read *i Smbatay*, 'from Smbat', see Abgaryan n.284. These troops of Kotit and

with them. When they had reached the land called Komsh,<sup>290</sup> which lies behind Vrkan on the far side of the range which crosses it, and had come to the village called Khekewand, they were opposed by Shahr Vahrich<sup>291</sup> and Smbat, *marzpan* of Gurkan, with a large [force]. The army of the Gelumk' were not more than two thousand. There was a battle at that place. They defeated the Persian army, put them to flight and pursued them. Many they killed, and many they captured. Then they returned and camped near the site of the battle, those Armenians with them. Many died among the soldiers and among the Armenians who were with the *marzpan* Smbat.

### [CHAPTER 26]<sup>292</sup>

*[The discovery of a fragment of the Lord's Cross through a vision.]*

Now three months before that battle took place a certain man had a dream and became aware of it. His name was Yovsep'. 'A man,' he said, 'of wonderful appearance came and said to me: "A battle will take place in three months' time, and many will fall in the battle. But go to the site of the battle, and this will be a sign for you. You will see a man fallen on to the surface of the earth, and his body will shine out among all the corpses. Go and take for yourself whatever you see beside him. And be careful, he said, not to forget that source of grace,<sup>293</sup> because it is miraculous.'" He rose up and went, and when he reached the place he found just as had been said in the vision. For they had stripped that one and all the bodies.<sup>294</sup> He had with him a leather bag over his shoulder. Now his body was lying amidst the corpses. He approached and took [99] the bag. He saw that there was a silver box in it, and a cross inside that, in

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290 Komsh is south of Tabarastan; *A G* 46, *Eransahr* 71-2.

291 He is not otherwise attested; for the name see *A G* 59-60.

292 Macler, ch.16.

293 That source of grace: *zshnorhn zayn*, as of Daniel's body, 86. This is omitted in *A*, but found in the older MS [now lost] used by Mihrdatean; see Abgaryan n.286.

294 There are several references in Armenian historians to the practice of despoiling the dead after a battle; see Thomson, *Etishe* 77, n.9. On this occasion the *diakaputk'* missed the leather bag, *shagoyr mashkelen*. *Shagoyr*, 'bag', is not attested elsewhere in classical texts, but is used in modern Armenian.

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which was a large fragment of the Lord's Cross. He signed himself with it, and taking it went to join his companions.

All the troops left that place and went to the strongholds of their own country. Then the king requested Vahrich at court, and sent great thanks to Smbat because he had fought loyally, and when defeated had not abandoned his post but had only fled after all the others.

[CHAPTER 27]<sup>295</sup>

*[Another battle of Smbat with the enemy in Taparastan and his victory. Smbat is more greatly honoured than all the marzspans. Smbat's coming to Armenia. The [re-] building of the church of St Gregory at Dvin. The Catholicosate of Abraham Rshtuni.]*

When the next year came round,<sup>296</sup> all the forces of the enemy gathered together and went and camped in the province of Taparastan. Smbat also gathered his own troops and attacked them in battle. The Lord God delivered the enemies' army into Smbat's hand. He put them all to the sword, and the survivors fled to their own regions.<sup>242</sup> Then those with them<sup>297</sup> requested an oath and pact, and came before Smbat; and that Yovsep' was with them. Now Yovsep' held his discovery in front of him [Smbat], described the vision, and told of the many signs which had been worked among the barbarians. Then Smbat stood up and genuflected before it; taking hold of it, he signed himself with it. He entrusted it to a certain blessed man, Mihru,<sup>298</sup> whom he had put in charge of his own house as a reliable servant; he was from the house of the Dimak'- seank'. He gave it to the church which the priests of his house served.<sup>299</sup> Then the king sent him a letter with much thanks, greatly honoured him and promoted him above all the *marzspans* of his kingdom. He sent to him all [kinds of] serving vessels in gold, royal robes, gilded diadems,

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295 Macler, ch.17.

296 After Vstam's rebellion, probably 601.

297 I.e. the Armenians from Ispahan.

298 For the name see AG 54; it is the only one attested in the *HAnjB*. For the Dimak'sean house see EH 369 and Toumanoff, *Studies* 204. Blessed: *eraneli*, possibly 'notable'.

299 For clergy of the household cf. the bishop of the noble family above 95. Served: *unein*, lit. 'possessed, held'.

Step'anos [96], who joined Vstam, had rebelled against Khosrov, not his *marzpan* Smbat. Arutiunova-Fidanjan, '*Smbatay*' supposes them to have been Chalcedonian Armenians.

292 Sebeos' battle descriptions contain many cliches; cf. nn.23, 516. See further Appendix V in EH 586-96, 'Epic and Scriptural Formulae'.

stockings<sup>296</sup> set with precious stones and pearls. His son, called Varaz tirots', whom he had raised as one of his own sons<sup>297</sup> and was respected by the whole royal court, he appointed as butler, to serve wine to the king himself.

[100] Smbat held the *marzpanate* of that country for eight years. After that an order came summoning him with much honour to the royal court. The king bade him visit his own country in the 18th year of his reign.<sup>298</sup>

Then he requested permission from the king to [re-]build the church of St Gregory which was in the city of Dvin.<sup>299</sup> Because the late Catholicos Movses had died, and there was no *vardapet* in that place,<sup>300</sup> he hastily sought permission from the king. When the permission reached his country, he then made a request concerning the supreme cathedra,<sup>301</sup> that they might appoint to it a bishop as guardian of the church and primate of its salvific role.<sup>302</sup> They installed Abraham, the bishop of Rshtunik', on the patriarchal throne.<sup>303</sup> Then they began to lay the

296 Stockings: *zangapanak*, AG 149.

297 This refers to the practice of boys being raised in other noble or royal families: the master of the family was the *dayeak*, the child his *san*. See EH 521, with bibliography. The young men of the same age were *smndakits'*, as 143; see also 112. Varaztirots': *HANjB*, no.1.

298 The 18th year of Khosrov is 606/607. It is not clear how long Smbat was at court before returning to Armenia. Did his eight years as *marzpan* begin in 599? Toumanoff's dates, 595-602 [as n.271 above], seem too early.

299 For the church see 68. Y.D., XVII7-10, indicates that the previous edifice had been built of bricks and wood, whereas this church was built of polished stones and cemented with lime mortar. See further Khatchatrian, *L'Architecture Armenienne* 55-8.

300 Sebeos passes over the locum-tenens 604-607, Vrt'anes [*HANjB*, no.7], famous for a treatise on images; see Der Nersessian, 'Apologie'. Movses II had died in 604; see 91 and Garitte, *Narratio* 258-9. In that place: *i telwojn yaynmik*, where all the MSS read *i telwojn yaynosik*, 'in the place among them.' On the correction see Abgaryan n.295. *Teli* could also mean 'position, rank.' Vrt'anes is called *k'rt'ol*, 'orator, scholar, poet' in the *Book of Letters*, but not *vardapet*, 'teacher, scholar'. For that rank in the Armenian church see EH 567 for the early history, and Thomson, 'Vardapet' for its later development.

301 Supreme cathedra: *at 'or mets*, the 'great throne'.

302 Bishop as guardian: *tesuch'khamol*. *Tesuch'* is 'overseer', i.e. a literal rendering of *epi-skopos*; *khamol*, 'caring'. Primate: *arajnord*, 'leader', used in both secular and ecclesiastical situations. Of its salvific role: *p'rkut'ean iwroy*, which I take to refer to the church as an institution. Gugerotti renders: 'e dirigesse il restauro di essa', i.e. the building. But *p'rkut'awn* means 'salvation', not 'restoration'.

303 Abraham: Catholicos from 607 to 609/610; he died in Khosrov's 21st year, 111-112 below. For his career, see Garitte, *Narratio* 258-68. For the province of Rshtunik', see EH 487-8 and Hewsens, ASX185, n.146.

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foundation of the church. He gathered master-stonemasons and set over them reliable superintendents, and commanded them to bring it to a rapid conclusion.

The commander of the fortress and the *marzpan* wrote a letter of complaint to the king, declaring: 'It is very close to the fortress and there is danger from an enemy.' The order came back from the king: 'Let the fortress be demolished, and the church built in that very spot.' Amen.

[CHAPTER 28]<sup>304</sup>

*[Smbat is summoned again to the Persian court, is honoured with the office of tanuter which is called Khosrov-Shum, and is sent against the K'ushans. The Armenian nobles who accompanied him. A small battalion of Persians is surrounded by the K'ushans and defeated because of the disobedience of Datoyean. The killing of Datoyean. Smbat in single combat kills the king of the K'ushans. The flight of the K'ushan army. The Persian army plunders their country. Smbat is summoned to court with great splendour.]*

When the winter had passed and spring-time had come, the messengers arrived with letters and summoned him with great splendour to the royal court. He went and presented himself to the king at the [place] called the Great Dastakert.<sup>305</sup> On coming into the outer hall he was seated on a rug and *apahlak*,<sup>306</sup>

1101] Then the king bestowed on him the office of *tanuter* called Khosrov Shum,<sup>307</sup> robed him splendidly with a hat and robe of silk woven with gold, exalted him tremendously with a collar set with gems, a necklace, and silver cushions.<sup>308</sup> He bestowed on him the Lesser Ministry of Finance,<sup>309</sup> the administration of the country. He gave him

304 Macler, ch.18.

305 This term refers in general to the royal domain [EH 520, Flusin, *St Anastase* II, 244], but here specifically to the palace of Khosrov II. See further the article *Daskara* in *E.I.* II, col.165-6.

306 The meaning of *apahlak* is unknown. Outer hall: lit. 'coming out into the hall', but no reference is made to an inner chamber whence he might 'come out'.

307 Khosrov Shum: 'joy of Khosrov', AG 214. a title not given to other Armenians. Elsewhere Sebeos uses *tanuter* in an Armenian context, as 76.

308 Collar, necklace: *chambar*, AG 186-7, *gumartak*, AG 130. For silver cushions, cf. 79, n.163.

309 Lesser Ministry of Finance: *vacharn p'ok'r*. See Abgaryan n.300 for various opinions. In this context *vachar* is more plausibly rendered 'finance' than by its general

four-keyed trumpets and guards for his court from among the royal retainers. He gathered for him an army in fearsome array against the land of the K'ushans in the east, and he bade him make *marzpan* whomever he might wish. So he departed, reached the nearby land of his former command, Komsh,<sup>310</sup> summoned to himself from Vrkan his own original army of compatriots, and went directly to the east.

These are the princes of the Armenian nobles who [joined] him with each one's contingent and banner:<sup>311</sup> Varazshapuh Artsruni; Sargis Tayets'i; Artavazd and Vstam and Hmayeak Apahuni; Manuel, lord of Apahunik'; Vram, lord of Golt'nik'; Sargis Dimak'sean; Sargis Trpa-tuni;<sup>312</sup> and others of the nobles. His troops were about 2,000 cavalry from that land.<sup>313</sup> He saw that the K'ushan army had spread out in raids over the face of the whole country. But when they heard news of him, they came together and departed. He followed in hot pursuit, and quickly caught them up. When they saw that he had pursued them, they turned to face him in line of battle; they attacked each other in a mutual assault. The K'ushan army turned in flight and was defeated by the army of Khosrov Shum. Many of them were killed, and many fled. He withdrew and camped at Apr Shahr, in the province of Tos; and with 300 men took up quarters in the walled village called Khrokht.<sup>314</sup>

Then the kings of the K'ushans requested help for themselves from the great Khak'an, king of the regions of the North.<sup>315</sup> A host of 300,000 came to their support, and crossed the river called Vehrot, [102] which comes

meaning of 'trade'. The following phrase, 'administration of the country', *divan ashkharhi*, is in apposition and seems to explain it.

310 For Komsh see 98. n.285. Reached: *ehas*, a correction by Patkanean for the *i Hays*, 'to Armenia', of the MSS.

311 Contingent and banner: *gund ew drawsh*. For these expressions cf. 94, n.254. Varazshapuh, *HAnjB*, no.3. Sargis Tayets'i: *HAnjB*, no.7. For the house of Tayk' see Toumanoff, *Studies* 231, n.285, and for the region, *EH* 493-4.

312 Artavazd: *HAnjB*, no.17; Vstam: *HAnjB*, no.3; Hmayeak: *HAnjB*, no.8; Manuel: *HAnjB*, no.8. For the Apahuni house see Toumanoff, *Studies* 199, and the region, *EH* 444. Vram: *HAnjB*, no.3. For the house of Golt'n see Toumanoff, *Studies* 203-4, and for the region, *EH* 465. Sargis Dimak'sean: *HAnjB*, no.8. Sargis Trpatuni: *HAnjB*, no.9

313 That land: i.e. Vrkan.

314 Apr Shahr is near Nishapur, cf. 65. For Khrokht see *Eransahr* 66, and for the province of Tos, *Eransahr* 74-5. Walled village: *k'alak'agiwl*, a literal rendering of the Greek *komopolis*. The sense of *k'alak'* is a walled enclosure, as the description of Khrokht just below makes clear. See in general, *EH* 527, s.v. *giwlak'alak'*, 535-6, s.v. *k'alak'*.

315 For the title *Khak'an* see above 73 n.98.

out of Turk'astan from the land of Ewilat via the Gymnosophists, the Shamn and Brahmn, and flows into India.<sup>316</sup> Camping on the river bank, they sent out raids westwards; and unexpectedly coming up they surrounded *thtkomopolis*, for the village had a strong wall encircling it.<sup>317</sup> Then Smbat ordered his 300 men to take refuge in the fort at the centre of the village. He mounted his horse, and with three men - whose names were Sargis Dimak'sean, Sargis Trpatuni, and one of the armed men of the village who was mounted, called Smbatik<sup>318</sup> - rushed forward precipitously, reached the gate, cut through the crush of soldiers, and escaped. The 300 who had taken refuge in the fort in the middle of the village attacked the troops [of the enemy].<sup>319</sup> The commander of their force was a certain Persian prince named Datoyean, [appointed] by royal command.<sup>320</sup>

Now although Smbat, that is Khosrov Shum, sent word to him to withdraw, he did not wish to obey but went out to do battle against them. However, they defeated the Persian troops and put Datoyean to flight. They themselves sent out raids and made incursions as far as the borders of Reyy and of the province of Ispahan. Having plundered the whole area, they returned to their camp. When a command came from the great Khak'an to the Chembukh,<sup>321</sup> they crossed the river and returned to their own country.

Then an Inspector from court came to Smbat and Datoyean, a certain senior noble whose name was Shahrapan Bandakan.<sup>322</sup> All the

316 The Vehrot is the Oxus. According to the *Ashkharhats'oyts'*, Soukry 46 [cf. Hewsens, *ASX15*], the Persians called the Vehrot P'ison. The P'ison forms near the Gymnosophists, who are called Shamn and Brahmn by the Persians. See further *Eransahr* 148. The river Ewilat is introduced from Gen. 2.11, which describes the P'ison. For later Armenian theories about these rivers see the texts cited by Abgaryan n.305.

317 *Komopolis: giwlak'alak'*, translated just above as 'walled village'; see n.314. Strong: *amrut 'ean*; for the ambiguity of the stem *amur* see above, n.222.

318 This Smbatik is not attested elsewhere; *HAnjB*, s.v. no.1. Armed men: *zinakirk'*, 'bearers of arms', usually meaning the attendant who carried a noble's weapons.

319 Of the enemy: the text has 'his', which presumably refers to the Khak'an's army.

320 Datoyean: the commander, *hramanatar*, of a relief force, not the commander of the 300. For the name see *AG* 36; Just 82. His activity as a Persian general is mentioned below, 108. Although in this episode he is put to death, this occurred 'a short time' before Smbat's own death in 616/617. On 108 Sebeos describes an earlier Persian invasion of Armenia.

321 Chembukh: see *Eransahr* 247 for the various forms of this word in other sources; it is a title, not a personal name. See also Dowsett, *Movses Daxuranc'i* 83, n.4 [at II, 11].

322 For the name see *AG* 59; Just 276. Inspector: *k'nnol*, active participle from the verb *k'nnel*, 'to investigate'. The usual form is *k'nnich'*, 'one who conducts an enquiry'.



surviving troops exculpated Smbat. But Datoyean was taken in bonds to the court and put to death by the king.

Then Smbat assembled the army and re-armed it. He also brought in many other troops to his support, and went to attack the nation of the K'ushans and the Hephthalite king.<sup>323</sup> The latter moved against him with a large armed force. They reached the battlefield and drew up their lines opposite each other. Then the king of K'ushans sent a message to Smbat, saying: 'What advantage is it that such a host enter into battle, or that our armies be destroyed? And how will my and your valour be recognized? Come, let me fight you alone. I shall come as a champion from my side, and you from yours, so that today my valour may be known to you.'<sup>324</sup> Then putting his hand on his heart,<sup>325</sup> he said: 'Behold, I am ready to die.' [103] Coming out from either side, they rapidly confronted each other. Between the two battle-lines they fought with each other. They were not able immediately to overcome the other, because they were both men of gigantic<sup>326</sup> strength and fully covered in armour. But help came from on high: the armour of the K'ushan king, chain-mail from Bahl and a solid cuirass,<sup>327</sup> was split by Smbat's lance, and he powerfully struck him as a corpse to the ground and slew him. When his army saw their king [killed], they were terrified and turned in flight. The others pursued them with cavalry attacks as far as Bahl, the capital of the K'ushans, and they plundered the whole country: Harew, Vatages, all

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323 Hephthalite: *Hep't'aleay*. This is the only reference in Sebeos to the Hephthalites; cf. *Eransahr* 66-7: the king of the K'ushans is of Hephthalite' origin, subject to the Khak'an.

324 For the term *akhovean*, 'champion', and the many examples of single combat in front of armies drawn up for battle see Thomson, *Armenian Version* 47, n.77. Earlier examples include the challenge of the ruler of the Goths to the emperor, Aa 39; the single combat of Manuel and Meruzhan, *Buzandaran* V 43.

325 His heart: lit. 'himself'.

326 Gigantic strength: *skayazawr*, as of Trdat, Aa 202, or of Hayk', Y.D. I 20. Champions in single combat are normally called 'giants' in the Georgian Chronicles; cf. also M.X.II 82,85.

327 Armour: *amrut'iwn*, lit. 'protection'; cf. n.222 above for the meanings of *amur*. Chain-mail: *vertamut*, corrected by Abgaryan n.312 from the *vertewamut* of the MSS on the basis of the version of these events in Simeon Aparants'i. The word is followed by *bahlak*, a hapax: Acharean, *HArmB*, s.v., translates it as 'gloves'. Abgaryan renders it as 'from Bahl' - though *ak* is not a regular adjectival ending. Solid cuirass: *kur zrahin*, *zrah* is the 'breastplate' of I Thess. 5.8. Cf. *Buzandaran* V 37, where it is translated by Garso'ian as 'armour', but it is not included in her extensive discussion of arms and armour, EH 568-72.

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Tokhorastan, and Talakan.<sup>32^</sup> He also captured many fortresses which he burnt down. Then he returned with a great victory and much booty, and went and camped in the province of Marg and Margrot.<sup>328</sup>

The messengers bearing the news rapidly reached king Khosrov and described in full the acts of valour which had taken place. King Khosrov was happy and greatly rejoiced, and he ordered a large elephant to be decorated to bring him to the hall [of the palace].<sup>329</sup> He also commanded his son Varaztirots' to be promoted, who was called by the king Javitean Khosrov.<sup>330</sup> He ordered treasures to be distributed to his host.<sup>331</sup> And he wrote him a letter of deep gratitude, summoning him to the court in great honour and splendour.

### CHAPTER 29]<sup>332</sup>

*[The death of Smbat. Rebellion of the Armenian nobles from the Persians and their submission to the Khak'an.]*

When he had approached within a day's journey of the royal court, the king ordered all the nobles and his army to go out to meet him.<sup>333</sup> He commanded the auxiliaries<sup>111</sup> to meet him with a fine horse<sup>334</sup> from the royal stable with royal equipage. So he proceeded with great splendour and glory and presented himself to the king.

On seeing him he welcomed him with joy, and stretched out his hand to him. He [Smbat] kissed his hand and fell on his face.<sup>335</sup> **[104]** Then the

328 Marg is Marv, and Margrot is Marv-rud, 'Marv on the river'; Gyselen, *Geographie* 85. The location of the latter is not clear; see Barthold, *Historical Geography* 35.

329 Hall: *dahlich*, as above 75, n.122

330 Javitean: 'eternal'. For the title see AG 68.

331 Host: *ambokh*, lit. 'crowd'. It was used on **102** for the 'press' of soldiers by the gate; but a more disciplined army is intended here.

332 Macler, ch.19.

333 Day's journey: *awt* usually *awt'ewan*. Cf. Elisha 44, where a prominent Persian goes out to greet the Armenians.

334 Fine horse: *nzhoyg*, often used of horses from the royal stables, e.g. *Buzandaran* IV 12.

335 For the ritual of greeting cf. **82-83**.

- 328 For these regions on the north-eastern confines of the Sasanian empire see *Eransahr* 64-7. For Bahl as the capital of the K'ushans, cf. 73, n.105.
- 335 Auxiliaries: *awzandakk*, 'assistant, helper', not attested in the *NBHL* as a term for a group of soldiers.

king said to him: 'You have done your duty<sup>338</sup> loyally and we are especially grateful to you. From now on trouble no more to wage war, but stay here, close by. Take, eat and drink, and devote yourself to our happiness.<sup>338</sup> He was the third noble in the palace of king Khosrov, and after remaining [there] a short time he died in the 28th year of his reign.<sup>339</sup> They brought his dead body to the land of Armenia to his ancestral sepulchre, and placed it in a tomb in the village of Dariwnk', which is in the province of Gogovit.<sup>340</sup>

Then they rebelled and submitted to the great Khak'an, king of the regions of the north, under the Chinese<sup>341</sup> Chepetukh. They went from the east to the west across the regions of the north to join the army of that Chepetukh at the command of their king the Khak'an. Passing through the Pass of Chor with many troops, they went to assist the king of the Greeks.<sup>342</sup>

[CHAPTER 30]<sup>343</sup>

*[The flight of Atat Khorkhoruni from service to the Greeks; his taking refuge with Khosrov and being honoured by him. Then his rebellion from*

338 Happiness: *urakhut'iw*n'; cf. the meaning of Smbat's Persian name, Khosrov Shum, n.307 above.

339 I.e. 616/617. Cf. Y.D. XVII17-18.

340 Smbat's son was also buried there, below 144. Dariwnk' is variously spelled in Armenian: Darewnk', Daroynk', and Darawnk' on 145; see Hewsen, *ASX2U*. It had earlier been an Arsacid stronghold, not a possession of the Bagratids; EH 459. Gogovit is a common spelling for Kogovit. Tomb: *tapan*, perhaps 'coffin'. The word is used of Noah's ark.

341 Chinese: *chenastan*, lit. 'China' with a place-name ending. However, the *Chenk'* are in the Caucasus, according to Zenob, 22, and Vardan, 37, and may perhaps be identified with the Tzans. But they were often confused with - or deliberately interpreted as - the Chinese; cf. M.X. II 81, who gives the Mamikonean family a 'Chen' origin elaborated in terms from the description of China in the Ashkharhats'oyts'.

342 This paragraph seems to be misplaced; see Abgaryan n.321. Macler notes that it is the only reference in Sebeos to the Khazars giving aid to Heraclius in his war against Khosrov II. But the passage does not refer to any specific people; on 65 Sebeos had stated that he would describe 'the invasion of Heraclius into the northern regions to the king of the T'etals', a promise unfulfilled unless this paragraph belongs to that lost section. In the next chapter we are in the reign of Maurice. For the Pass of Chor see 69, n.57 above. Chepetukh: a variant of Chembukh [102, n.321 above]; see Markwart, *Siidarmenien* 385.

343 Macler, ch.20.

## HISTORY

*jsfosrov and his death. The Persian and Greek governors in Armenia in the years of peace between the two kings.]*

jsfow what more shall I say about Atat Khorkhoruni and his further rebellion?<sup>345</sup> He was a great *patrik*, for which reason the king ordered him to be summoned to the palace; so he went to him with seventy men. He splendidly honoured him and those accompanying him with a worthy and appropriate reception. He gave him gold and silver vessels and very many treasures.

He ordered him to go to Thrace to [join] his troops. He took his leave from the king and departed. But while he was still on his way he decided to rebel and go to the Persian king. Turning aside from the road, he made his way to the coast, and encountering a ship, he said to the sailors: 'Take me across to the other side, because I have been sent on an important task by the king.' He duped the sailors, who took him across. [105] He immediately set out and travelled rapidly to Armenia. No one knew the route he had taken until he was many days' journey from the coast. Then from some source they learned of his departure, and troops of various cities went out to encounter him. But they were unable to oppose him. In eight or ten places he fought a battle on the way and was victorious in them all, although his force gradually diminished. In this way he quickly reached Nakhchawan. The Persians received him, and he secured himself in the fortress.<sup>346</sup> Then the *stratelat*<sup>347</sup> gathered all his troops, came up, and completely surrounded the fortress.

King Khosrov was informed of these events, and he sent against them the *Parsayenpet*<sup>348</sup> with an army. When the army had approached, they [the Greeks] left the city and departed. He rapidly went to the Persian king, who received him in a friendly way, greatly honoured him, gave him treasures, and authorized a stipend<sup>144</sup> from the treasury.

345 Cf. 87-88 above, and Goubert 206-8. The emperor had bestowed honours on Atat, but Sebeos does not refer earlier to the title *ofpatrik*.

346 Cf. 87-88 for Nakhchawan marking the frontier. Secured himself: *amranayr*; cf. n.222 above.

347 The Greek title *stratelat*, AG 382, is used for both Byzantine commanders and Armenian generals, EH 561-2. Macler identifies this general with the Nerses, *stratelat* of Syria, sent by Maurice to aid Khosrov - as above 77.

348 This title is only found in Sebeos; AG 59, 507. Cf. *shahrayanpet*, 111, n.397 below.

349 Stipend: *fochik*, as above, n.190.

338 You have done your duty: *vastakets'ar*. *Vastak*, 'service, task', is the standard term for the military obligations of Armenian nobles to the shah, e.g. Elishe 19, tazar 137; and cf. above 77, n. 147.

One year later Maurice died and Phocas became king.<sup>350</sup> He [Atat] decided to rebel and go to the Greek king. He began to organize Arabian horses and to prepare arms, and brought over brigands.<sup>351</sup> News of this reached the king's ears, and he ordered him to be bound feet and hands, and to be killed by cudgels.<sup>352</sup>

These are the governors<sup>353</sup> for the Persian kingdom during the years of that treaty in Armenia and in the city of Dvin: Vndatakan Nikhorakan - the Persian troops killed him in Dvin and went in rebellion to Gelumk'. Then Merkut; then Yazden; then Butmah; then Yemann. But on the Greek side: first Yovhanpatrik; then Herakl; the general Sormen, until thirteen years<sup>354</sup> of the treaty were up.

An order came from the emperor: 'Thirty thousand cavalry,' it said, 'are my levy<sup>355</sup> on the country of Armenia. So let 30,000 households<sup>356</sup> be gathered thence for me and settled in the land of Thrace.' He sent Priscus to Armenia for that task. Meanwhile news of a great disturbance arrived, and Priscus set out with the greatest urgency.<sup>357</sup>

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350 Maurice was killed on 23 November 602, and Phocas proclaimed the same day. Atat's shift of allegiance is connected with the rebellion of the army in Thrace which put Phocas on the throne, **106** below. As just explained, Atat's troops formed part of the Byzantine army in Thrace.

351 Brigands: *srikays*, as in M.X. II 8, of brigands in Mokk'. The word comes from the Latin *sicarius*, 'assassin', via Greek.

352 Cudgels: *birk'*, frequently mentioned as a form of torture, e.g. Aa 74.

353 Governors: *sahmanakal*, see above **71**, for the list with divergent spelling of some names, and n.86, for the meaning of the word.

354 Thirteen years: The treaty did not specify 13 years, but was open-ended; cf. **76** above for the terms. The period involved is from Khosrov's first regnal year, 589/590, and his agreement with Maurice in return for help against Vahram. For the Greek generals cf. **74** [John], 88 [Heraclius]; but this is the first reference in Sebeos to Sormen [i.e. Suren, *PLRE* III, 1208]. He appears in the *Book of Letters* 90-8, where he is called *stratelat* and *Hayots' zawravar*, 'general of Armenia'. See further Garitte, *Narratio* 230.

355 Levy: *vzenakal*, a hapax, from *vzean*, 'fine'.

356 Households: the adj. *erdawor*; for the noun *erd* see the description of deportations by 'families' in *Buzandaran* IV 55.

357 I.e. Priscus rushed back to Constantinople on Maurice's death. He is not mentioned again in Sebeos.

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1106]

**[CHAPTER 311<sup>358</sup>**

*[The murder of the emperor Maurice and the reign of Phocas. Rebellion of the generals Heraclius and Nerses from Phocas. The siege of Urha by the army of Phocas, and of Dara by the army of Khosrov. Arrival of Khosrov to assist Urha; he captures the city and returns with Theodosius, son of Maurice. The capture and destruction of Dara by Khosrov. Capture of JIrrha by the army of Phocas, and the murder of Nerses.]*

In the 14th year of king Khosrov, the 20th year<sup>359</sup> of the reign of Maurice, the Greek army in the region of Thrace rebelled from the emperor and installed as their king a certain man called Phocas. They went in unison to Constantinople, killed the king Maurice and his sons, and installed Phocas on the throne of the kingdom. Then they returned to the regions of Thrace against the enemy. The emperor Maurice had a son named Theodos. A rumour spread over the whole country that Theodos had escaped and gone to the Persian king.<sup>360</sup> Then there was no little turmoil in the Roman empire - there in the royal capital, and in the city of Alexandria in Egypt, and in Jerusalem and Antioch. In all regions of the land they took up the sword and slaughtered each other.

The king Phocas ordered all the rebels who were disloyal to his reign to be slaughtered. Many were put to the sword in the royal capital. He sent a certain prince Bonos with an army against Antioch and Jerusalem and all regions of that land. He came, attacked Antioch and Jerusalem with the sword, and exterminated the large population of the cities of that land.<sup>361</sup>

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358 Macler, ch.21.

359 Fourteenth year: corrected by Abgaryan from the '23rd' of the MSS on the basis of T.A. 88. The 14th year of Khosrov is 602/603, the 20th of Maurice is 14 August 602/603. Maurice was killed on 23 November 602.

360 Theodosius was co-regent from 26 March 590. Theophylact Simocatta ends his History with the tale [which he believes to be false] that Theodosius was still alive and that Khosrov pretended to uphold the pious memory of Maurice: 'In this way the Persian war was allotted its birth', T.S. VIII 15.7.

361 The large population: lit. 'all the multitude'. It is not clear whether this means he exterminated the population, or destroyed all the cities. Bonos - i.e. Bonosus, *Comes Orientis* 609-610 [PLRE III,

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s.v. no.2, 239-40] - is not mentioned again in Sebeos; the title *ishkhan*, 'prince' is very vague in Armenian.



Then the general Heraclius with his army, who was in the regions of Alexandria, rebelled against Phocas and forcibly took over the land of Egypt. In the area of Syria the general Nerses rebelled in Mesopotamia, and with his army seized control of the city of Urha.<sup>362</sup> An army came to attack him, and they kept the city and his army besieged.

[107] Now when king Khosrov heard news of this, he gathered all the host of his army and marched westwards. On reaching the city of Dara, he besieged and attacked it. In the area of Armenia he assembled troops and [appointed] a certain great prince Juan Veh as their commander.<sup>363</sup> Then king Khosrov divided [his forces] into two parts. One part he left there around the city; with the other part he himself marched against the army which was besieging Urha. Attacking them unexpectedly at dawn, some he put to the sword, some he turned to flight. Some jumped into the river Euphrates and perished;<sup>364</sup> the others were scattered in flight. Then king Khosrov approached the gate of the city so that they might open it for him to enter inside; and they opened the gate. But Nerses dressed a youth in royal garb, placed a crown on his head, and sent him to him, saying: 'This is the son of king Maurice, Teodos; do you have pity on him, just as his father had on you.'

With great joy king Khosrov received him, then returned to the city of Dara. He kept [the youth] with him with royal honour. He besieged Dara for a year and a half.<sup>365</sup> They mined the foundations of the city below the wall; and having destroyed the wall, they captured the city and put all [the inhabitants] to the sword. Taking the booty and plunder of the city they returned to Ctesiphon,<sup>366</sup> because his army was weary and exhausted from the battle for the city. Another army from Greek territory reached Urha, attacked and captured the city. Arresting Nerses, they killed him and shed blood.<sup>36</sup>

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362 Heraclius is the father of the future emperor Heraclius. Who was: the relative pronoun could refer either to Heraclius or to the army, 'which was'. Nerses, here called *za-wravar* is the *stratelat* mentioned on 77, see n.138. Urha, Syriac Urhay, is the most usual name for Edessa in Armenian, though *Edesia* is found in Movses Khorenats'i and Koriwn.

363 Juan Veh: for the name see AG 69. Justi, 123, notes no other references to him other than Sebeos. Here the name is spelled *Jovanan* in the MSS.

364 The Euphrates proper does not flow past Edessa; the river round the walls is the Daisan. If the Euphrates is really intended, it was a long pursuit.

365 I.e. 603 into 604.

366 For the Armenian forms of Ctesiphon see above 76. n. 126.

[CHAPTER 32]<sup>367</sup>

*[Battle on the plain of Elevard and the Persian defeat. Another battle on the plain of Shirak and the Greek defeat. A third battle in Tsalkotn. Feodos Khorkhoruni surrenders to the Persian general; he goes to the royal court and then is killed.]*

Now Juan Veh, whom he had sent with his army to Armenian territory, **reached** the province of Ayrarat and the city of Dvin in the wintertime. [108] **He** stayed there, resting his troops, until springtime arrived.<sup>368</sup>

Then the Greek army assembled in the *komopolis* Elevard.<sup>369</sup> The Persian army attacked them and a battle took place on the plain of Elevard. They defeated the Persian army and destroyed them with great slaughter. They slew the general in the battle, put the survivors to flight, and pursued them. After plundering the Persian camp, they returned to their own encampment which was on the river bank called Horomots'

<sup>371</sup>  
marg.

When the next year came round, while king Khosrov was still attacking the city of Dara, another Persian army assembled in Armenian territory, with Datoyeon as their general.<sup>172</sup> The Greek army assembled at the plain of Shirak, at the village called Shirakawan/<sup>73</sup> There they stayed for a few days, being themselves alarmed at the internal conflict<sup>370</sup> and terrified of an assault by a foreign enemy. The Persian army rushed upon them like the swooping of an eagle.<sup>371</sup> Then they abandoned the site of their camp and crossed to the other side of the river onto the

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367 Macler, ch.22.

368 The date is unclear: Sebeos implies that this occurred while Khosrov was besieging Dara; but see Historical Commentary.

369 Elevard is in the region of Ejmiatsin; see *HHSTB*, s.v. It is only mentioned by Sebeos. For the term *k'alak'agiwt*, 'komopolis', see n.314.

370 Internal conflict: the turmoil following Maurice's murder. 'Internal' renders *entani*, 'domestic'.

371 Shirakawan was mentioned above, 71. For the province of Shirak see Hewsen, *ASX* 214-15, map 69.

367 Not the blood of Nerses, but a general slaughter.

371 I.e. 'meadow of the Romans'; 4CW445. Y.D., XXIV 27, states that it belonged to the Catholicosate.

372 This occurred before the events described on **102**, when Datoyeon was put to death. That occurred in the 19th year of Khosrov, i.e. 607/608, whereas the siege of Dara took place five years earlier.

375 This is a very common simile in Armenian historians; cf. n. 123 above.

plain called Akank',<sup>376</sup> while the Persian army came up on them in pursuit. There was a battle in the village called Getik.<sup>377</sup> While these [armies] were drawing up their lines to confront and approach each other, the inhabitants of the province had gathered in the fortress of Erginay.<sup>378</sup> A multitude of young men came out from there and fell upon their rear with scythes and sickles. They caused great losses, left [many] wounded,<sup>374</sup> seized plunder and booty, and returned to their own fortress.

Defeated in battle, the Greek army fled before them. The latter, in pursuit, slew many and left them scattered over the plains and roads. The few survivors fled. Then they took the booty and returned to their own camp. When they saw the losses that had occurred, they attacked the fortress in unison, captured it, and slaughtered many with the sword. Many jumped down [from the wall] out of fear, while some went out by the gate which opened on the side of the river, and fled. All the others they led into captivity. On that day [the population of] 33 villages were captured from that fortress; and in like fashion they took them all into captivity. They gathered [109] all the booty of the province, and their army returned to Atrpatakan.

Then Senitam Khosrov came.<sup>379</sup> The Greek army assembled and settled in Tsalkotn, near to the village called Angl by which the river Aratsani passes.<sup>380</sup> Destroying the village on the other side, they made a fortification around themselves. Their general was T'eodos Khor- khoruni.<sup>381</sup> The Persian army came and camped near them to their rear. The former [the Greeks], in fright, at first parleyed with them for peace. They proposed that battle be avoided, and they would give up the fortress

376 Plain of Akank': *Akanits' dashi*, near the junction of the Akhurean and Araxes; *HHSTB*, s.v., and *A ON* 395.

377 There are several villages of this name, which means 'rivulet'; 4CW418.

378 More usually spelled Arginay, famous later as the seat of the Catholicos; see *HHSTB*, s.v. and *Yovhannesean*, s.v.

379 This Persian general is also mentioned by Tabari; see *A G* 73. *Justi*, s.v., gives no other references.

380 For the village of Angl see *A ON* 399, and for the province of Tsalkotn, 435-6. The Aratsani is a tributary of the Euphrates; *AON* 404. The Armenian version of Pseudo- Callisthenes, the *Alexander Romance*, at 199 notes that the Aratsani has its source at Angl; but there is no verbal parallel with Sebeos.

381 This is the only reference in Armenian sources to this T'eodos, *HAnjB*, no.3.

and go away peacefully. But then they agreed [among themselves], and the proposal was not confirmed. Trusting in their fortification, they thought that they could accomplish something. The next day the Persian army attacked them. Not a single one of them had put on his arms or saddled his horse. And if anyone had armed himself or saddled his horse, the retainers<sup>382</sup> of the princes came up, stripped off the arms, greatly hurting the men, and cut the horses' girths with the sword.

The Persian army came up and formed their opposing line near to them on the side of the plain. The multitude of their force of archers drew [their bows] and emptied their quivers on them, piercing with their arrows all the men and horses alike. The horses, who were tied up at their boxes at the door of each tent, all became agitated; they trampled the tents and the whole camp. The enemy pierced the fortification and poured into the camp; there was a terrible slaughter. [The Greeks] broke down one section [of the wall] and escaped in flight, some on foot and others on horseback.<sup>383</sup> T'eodos Khorkhoruni took refuge and entrenched himself in the fortress.

[The Persians] remained there that night in the others' encampment. In the morning they sent a message that they should abandon the fortress and depart with their baggage and all their equipment. They [the Greeks] agreed to do so. On the third day they opened the gate of the town, and they all departed according to the terms of the agreement. But the Persian general summoned T'eodos Khorkhoruni and said to him: 'I do not have authority to let you go without royal permission, but I shall have you taken to court. However, I shall write only kind words regarding you to the king - how you acted sincerely and loyally, for you delivered their army into our hands in that fashion; and then how you delivered the fortress without trouble and the land [110] into subjection of your own will.' He wrote according to that promise and had him taken to court. King Khosrov received him in friendly fashion, and appointed a stipend for him and a clothing allowance<sup>384</sup> from the

382 Retainers: *mankunk'*, 'young men', often used of youths or soldiers. It is used of clerics, at **91**, n.233.

383 On horseback: *hetsealk' yankumuli dii. Ankumuli* is obscure; see Abgaryan n.346, for various emendations and suggestions. Gugerotti translates: 'su cavalli non allenati'; Macler: 'a poil sur des chevaux'.

384 Stipend: *rochik*, as above, n.190. Clothing allowance: *handerdzagin*, not attested in the *NBHL* but gifts of elaborate clothing are frequently mentioned, e.g. **101** to Khosrov Shum.

379 Or 'abandoned the wounded'. Only the next paragraph indicates which army was attacked.

treasury. But in later times a suspicion of treachery arose, and he ordered him to be killed. In the fortress of Angl he<sup>386</sup> installed a commander; then gathering his forces he himself marched to the interior and subjected the land.

After this there was once more a battle in the region of Basean.<sup>387</sup> He defeated and expelled the Greeks, and putting them to flight he pursued them into their own territory. He captured the cities of Angl, Gaylatuk', Erginay, and at Dara the city of Tskhnakert.<sup>388</sup> When a command came from the king, he departed.

[CHAPTER 33]<sup>389</sup>

*[Khosrov sends Khofeam with a large force to Asorestan, and Ashtat with T'eodos son of Maurice to Armenia. All Asorestan and Mesopotamia are subjected to the Persians. Ashtat defeats the Greeks and attacks Karin. T'eodos reveals himself to the inhabitants of Karin. Karin is surrendered. The general Shaken comes to Karin; emigration of the population of Karin to Ahmatan. Death of the Catholicoi Yovhan and Abraham; Komitas is installed on the throne. Capture of Caesarea of Cappadocia by Shaken, and the killing of Vasak Artsruni.]*

Then king Khosrov returned from Dara and rested his army once more.<sup>390</sup> He gathered yet another host of troops; and sent across the territory of Asorestan a large and very powerful force with Khofeam, called Erazman, as their general.<sup>341</sup> He gave them the following order: 'Receive in a friendly way those who will submit, and keep them in peace and prosperity. But put to the sword those who may offer resis-

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386 Not Khosrov, who was at Dara; Sebeos returns to the Persian general.

387 On the upper Araxes, close to the frontier; *A ON* 362-3.

388 Cities: these places are all called *k'atak'*, which means a *waited* site; to envisage these sites as 'cities' in the sense of being substantial centres would be misleading; cf. n.400 below. Angl and Erginay were mentioned above, nn.381,378; Gaylatuk', *AON*416. This is the only reference to Tskhnakert according to the *HHSTB* s.v.

389 Macler, ch.23.

390 After the fall of Dara, probably at the beginning of the campaigning season in the spring of 607.

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tance and make war.' To the regions of Armenia he sent Ashtat Yeztayar with a large army,<sup>391</sup> and included with him the caesar T'eodos, the so-called son of Maurice.

Taking the host of his troops, Khoream went to the territory of Asorestan; on reaching Syrian Mesopotamia, they besieged the city of Urha, [111] and attacked it. But the [Edessans], because of the multitude of the [Persian] troops and their victory in the engagements, and since they had no expectation of salvation from anywhere, parleyed for peace, and requested an oath that they would not destroy the city. Then, having opened the city gate, they submitted. Similarly Amida, and T'ela, and Rashayenay, and all the cities of Syrian Mesopotamia willingly submitted and were preserved in peace and prosperity. They went to the city of Antioch, and these too willingly submitted with all the cities and their inhabitants, fleeing from the sword of Phocas.

Ashtat Yeztayar came to the borders of Armenia in the eighteenth year of the reign [of Khosrov].<sup>392</sup> The Greek army assembled in the province of Basean, and in even more fearful manner attacked him. There was a great battle at Du and Ordru.<sup>393</sup> They defeated the Greek army and crushed them with great slaughter. Many died in the battle, and the number of those slain on the plain could not be counted. He pursued them as far as the city of Satala; then collecting [his forces] he camped around the city of Karin and initiated military action against it. They were opposed from within for a while, and not insignificant was the slaughter caused by those outside. Then the caesar T'eodos came forward, saying: 'I am your king.' They then acquiesced and opened [the gate]. The chief men of the city came out and presented themselves to him. On returning they persuaded the city that he really was T'eodos, son of Maurice. Then, having opened the gate, they submitted. He posted guards there, then went and seized Dzit'arich, the city in Hash-teank', and Satala and Arastiy and Nicopolis, and departed.<sup>394</sup>

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391 Ashtat Yeztayar; see *AG* 20, 55. Justi, 47, gives no references except Sebeos and AsoKk [quoting Sebeos]; in Vardan, 60, he is called Ashot! Caesar: cf. n.201 above.

392 I.e. 606/607.

393 Two villages in Basean on the Persian / Roman border, *A ON* 245. The second is more usually spelled 'Ordoru'.

394 Dzit'arich: i.e. Citharizon; see Howard-Johnston, 'Procopius' 221, and *AON* 446. 'The city' here means perhaps 'the [chief] city'. For the province of Hashteank' see Hewsens, *ASX*155, n.31. Arastiy, between Sataia and Nicopolis, is not mentioned in other Armenian sources.



391 For the name Khofeam, 'happy, glorious', see *AG* 42-3; firazman is a title, *AG* 69. He was also called Shahr Varaz, cf. **125** below. For many references to this famous general, who captured Jerusalem in 614 and usurped the throne in 630, see *Justi* 95, s.v. *Ferruhan*, no.9.

Then came Shahen Patgosapan,<sup>396</sup> passing by the city of Karin. To the capital Dvin as *marzpan* came Shahrayeranpet.<sup>397</sup> Shahen encountered the Greek army in the province of Karin. Engaging battle, he smote them with the sword, and expelled them from the country in flight.

Now in the twenty-first year of king Khosrov<sup>398</sup> he ordered [112] him to remove the inhabitants from the city of Karin and to settle them in the capital Ahmatan.<sup>399</sup> With them was forcibly taken into captivity the blessed and aged Catholicos Yovhan with all the vessels of the church. After he died there, his body was brought to the village of Awan, to the church which he had built himself.<sup>400</sup> In that same year the blessed Catholicos Abraham also died.<sup>401</sup> After the latter Komitas bishop of Taron, who was from the village of Alts'its'awan, succeeded to the patriarchal throne; and in his time the construction of the church of St Gregory was completed.<sup>402</sup>

In the 20th year of king Khosrov<sup>403</sup> Shahen made an incursion, raiding the regions of the west and reaching Caesarea of Cappadocia. Then the Christian inhabitants of the city left the city and departed. But the Jews went out to meet him and submitted. He stayed in that city for a year. They seized<sup>404</sup> Vasak Artsruni, son of Sahak the prince of the

396 Then: *apa*. Probably in Khosrov's 19th year. Shahen Patgosapan: see AG 59 and Justi 274, no.6 for further references to this general. In Greek, Saitos. See also Flusin, *St Anastase* II, 84-5.

397 Capital: *ostan*; see EH 551, for this term as 'royal' domain. It was then used for the centre of political administration. *Marzpan*: see n.18 above. Shahrayeranpet is a title, not a personal name; see AG 59, and cf. Parseanpet above 105. The second part of these titles, *Ayenbed*, is a title for a high official in charge of a province or religious institution; see Gyselen, *Geographie* 34. *Shahr* is 'country' or 'city'; Pars is the region of that name.

398 Sebeos here jumps to 609/610 before returning to the previous year in the next paragraph.

399 Capital: *shahastan* cf. n.105. For these events cf. Y D. XVII 21-22.

400 For the captivity of Yovhan [John] see 91 above, and Garitte, *Narratio* 263-5. Awan - which means 'town' but here is defined as a *givf*, 'village' - was on the Roman side of the border after the division of 591 and the seat of the pro-Chalcedonian Catholicos. See 91 for the division. It is now a suburb of Erevan. For the church see *Architettura Armena*, no.39.

401 Abraham: see above 100.

402 Komitas: Catholicos 609/610-628; for his career, see Garitte, *Narratio* 266-77,431. The name is variously spelled in Sebeos. Alts'k' in Aragatsotn, province of Ayrarat [AON 397], was famous as the site of the royal Arsacid necropolis, EH 437. For the church of St Gregory in Dvin see 68, 91 and 100.

403 I.e. 608/609.

404 A year. They seized: the text in Abgaryan's edition is spoilt here. The reading *z'tari mi. kalan z Vasakn* is from Patkanean's edition.

Artsrunik<sup>405</sup> and killed him opposite the gate of the city on a cross. Although he had caused many losses to the Persian army, yet all the Persian troops mourned him for his valour and bravery; as he was a powerful and tall youth, and especially because he had been raised among them, and had been trained by them in their ways.<sup>406</sup> So it happens.<sup>407</sup>

### [CHAPTER 34]<sup>407</sup>

*[Khosrov refuses to make a treaty; a battle near Caesarea; flight of the Greeks. Shaken takes Melitene. Persian generals in Armenia. P'ilippikos makes a foray into Ayrarat and returns in flight. Heraclius establishes his own son Constantine on the throne of the kingdom and goes to Asorestan. His defeat by the city of Antioch. The land of Palestine submits to Persian sovereignty. Rebellion of the city of Jerusalem, its capture and a fearful slaughter. Captivity of the Cross. Command from king Khosrov to rebuild Jerusalem.]*

22 [nd year J of Khosrov; first of Heraclius]<sup>408</sup>

It happened at that time that Heraclius gathered the troops who were in the regions of Egypt, in the 22nd year of the reign of Khosrov.<sup>409</sup> Sailing across the sea, they reached Constantinople. [113] Having slain king Phocas, Heraclius seated his own son on the throne of the kingdom, and made peace in the whole land.

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405 Vasak and Sahak are only mentioned here, and do not appear in the *History* of T'ovma Artsruni; see *HAnjB*, s.v. Vasak, no. 14, Sahak, no.28. Note that 'prince' here renders *nahapef*, see Index of Technical Terms. Cross: *p'ayt*, 'wood', used of a cross for crucifixion or a gibbet for hanging; cf. 123.

406 Raised [among them]: *sneal*, see n.297 above for this custom. Ways: *hrahang*, which can refer both to military and physical training and to scholarly education.

407 Macler, ch.24.

408 This phrase is in the MSS, unlike the headings to the chapters; but it may not go back to the author.

409 Heraclius was proclaimed on 5 October, 610, which was the 22nd year of Khosrov [610/611]. Sebeos does not consistently distinguish the emperor from his father, the general Heraclius. Here he implies that Heraclius *pere*, the general, installed his son Heraclius as emperor. But Nikephoros, ch. 1, indicates that Heraclius *fits* was sent by his father, who did not come to Constantinople himself.

407 *Ayspesevsa*. It is unclear whether this refers to Vasak's death, or Sebeosis saying 'so much for that' before proceeding.

When Heraclius became king he sent messengers with splendid treasures and letters to king Khosrov to request peace in a most solicitous manner. King Khosrov was quite unwilling to heed him, saying: 'That kingdom is mine, and I established<sup>411</sup> Teodos, son of Maurice, as king. But this one has become king without our permission and offers us our own treasure as a gift. However, I shall not desist until I have taken him in my grasp.' Taking the treasure, he ordered his messengers to be killed, and made no response to his proposals.

Then Heraclius gathered his troops, camped around the city, and prevented them from raiding. Putting his army under the command of a certain *curator*, he ordered him to act defensively, and went himself to his own place.<sup>412</sup>

They besieged the city of Caesarea for one year; the Persian army was pressed for food, nor was there forage for the multitude of their horses. When they reached the warm days of summer and the countryside was filled with fresh green vegetation,<sup>413</sup> they set the city on fire, and coming out in force defeated the Greeks, put them to flight and pursued them. Then they entered Armenian territory, and the Persian army wintered in Armenia.

Shahen was summoned in haste to the court of the Persian king. The king ordered him to go immediately back to the west. Taking his army, he reached the city of Karin in the days of summer. Then marching on Melitene, he captured it and brought it into subjection. He went on and joined the army of Khoream, who was in the region of Pisidia<sup>414</sup>

To the capital Dvin there came to replace Shahrāyēnpet, Parseanpet Parshēnazdat; then Namdar Vshnasp; then Shahrāplakan. He fought a battle in Persia and won. Then Ēročb Vehan.<sup>415</sup> It was he who pursued

411 I established: the aorist tense, as in all the MSS and in T.A. 88; a future [*nstuts'its' for nstuts'i*] would make better sense.

412 *Curator*: as also n.577. An administrative official in charge of imperial property, see Lampe, s.v. Here Priscus is intended; but see the Historical Commentary for his actual title and position at the time. The city would be Caesarea in Cappadocia; see the previous page for Shahen's attack.

413 Fresh: *sernets'an*. See *ser'n* in the *NBHL* for similar uses. The imagery of spring is a popular Armenian theme, cf. *Teaching* 641-57.

414 For the problems of dating the events in this paragraph see the Historical Commentary.

415 Parseanpet is a title; see **105** above. Parshēnazdat: *AG* 67; *Justi* 244. Namdar Vshnasp: *AG* 56; *Justi* 220, with further references. Shahrāplakan: *AG* 59, with further references; *Justi* 276. Eroch Vehan: Ēročb is a correction for the Chroch of the MSS; see Abgar-yan n.378. For the name, 'fortunate', see *AG* 70, with further references, and *Justi* 267; he is mentioned again below, **126** n.518.

king Heraclius into Armenia as far as the borders of Asorestan, until there was a great battle at Nineveh, in which he himself fell and all his army.<sup>416</sup>

[114] Then king Heraclius appointed a certain priest P'ilippikos as general. This P'ilippikos had been the son-in-law of the emperor Maurice,<sup>416</sup> and having exercised command over a long time he was accustomed to gaining the victory in battle. But suddenly he had decided in the days of Maurice to cut the hair of his head,<sup>417</sup> take on the priesthood, and become a soldier in the clergy of the church. By compulsion Heraclius appointed him general and sent him to the east with a large army. Marching via Caesarea of Cappadocia he reached the land of Armenia, the province of Ayrarat, and camped on the plain of the city of Valarshapat.

With rapid speed through very fast messengers the king's order arrived.<sup>418</sup> With great urgency he urged his army to pursue him and to exterminate the army without a trace. Marching very rapidly they reached the province of Ayrarat and camped on the bank of the Araxes, intending to join battle the next day. At the same time, during the night, P'ilippos<sup>419</sup> took the initiative in the province of Nig: skirting the back of Mount Aragats, he passed through Shirak and Vanand near the city of Karin, and reached his own frontier<sup>420</sup> But the Persian army was unable to pursue them with any speed, because it was fatigued from the long and so dangerous journey - for many of the troops had perished on the way, and since the horses of many had been killed they had to march on foot. But they stopped for a few days, then proceeded gently and

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416 Then: for the chronology see the Historical Commentary. Son-in-law: *p'esay*, as 76, n.137; brother-in-law is intended.

417 For clerical tonsure see Lampe, s.v. *keiro*. Clergy: *ukht*, lit. 'covenant', but widely used for 'clergy'. Cf. the role of T'ornik, a Georgian monk in the Lavra on Mount Athos, who was recalled to lead the Byzantine army against Bardas Skleros.

418 I.e. Khosrov's order; Sebeos returns to the narrative of the previous page. Messengers: *surhandak*, which renders the Greek *tachydromos*; cf. Thomson, *Moses Khorenats'i* II 30, n.5.

419 The spelling of the name is not consistent in Sebeos.

420 Nig is north-east of Aragats, see Hewsens, *ASX10*, 217 and map 69. Vanand is west of Shirak.

416 The battle at Nineveh occurred on 12 December 627; see **126** below.

reached Asorestan. They camped at the same place where they had been previously; and spreading out to right and left, they seized and occupied the whole land.

At that time Heraclius made his son Constantine king; he put him in the charge of the senate, entrusted him to all the magnates of the palace, and confirmed him on the throne of his kingdom.<sup>422</sup> He himself, having adopted the title of general, with his brother Teodos gathered the multitude of his troops and set out for Asorestan, to the region of Antioch. There was a great battle in Asia, and the blood of the soldiers<sup>423</sup> flowed copiously by the city of Antioch. There was a terrible tumult and conflict, and limitless slaughter in the confusion. Both sides succumbed to exhaustion. However, the Persians gained strength, put the Greeks to flight and pursued them, and valiantly gained the victory. [115] A further battle occurred near the pass of the entrance to Cilicia. The Greeks smote the Persian force of 8,000 fully-armed men in the conflict, but then themselves turned in flight. The Persian army, strengthened, seized the city of Tarsus and all the inhabitants of the province of Cilicia.<sup>424</sup>

Then all the land of Palestine willingly submitted to subjection to the Persian king; especially the survivors of the race of Hebrews, rebelling<sup>425</sup> against the Christians and embracing ancestral rancour, caused great harm among the multitude of the faithful. They went to them [the Persians] and made close union with them. At that time the army of the Persian king was encamped at Caesarea of Palestine; their general, called Razmiozan, that is Khoream,<sup>426</sup> parleyed with Jerusalem that they should willingly submit and be left in peace and prosperity.

At first they [the inhabitants of Jerusalem] agreed and submitted. They offered to the general and the [Persian] princes splendid gifts. They requested reliable officers,<sup>427</sup> whom they installed in their midst to

422 Sebeos returns to the theme of 113. The date is 22 January 613. Constantine was also called Heraclius; see Nikephoros, ch.5. *Teodos*: Theodosius, not Theodore, as in Abgaryan n.382.

423 Soldiers: Abgaryan, n.385, emends the *zawravarats'n*, 'generals', of the MSS to *zawranats'n*.

424 Sebeos fills his narrative with cliches. For these events see the Historical Commentary.

425 Rebelling: *apstambealk'*, as of the Jews at Rom. 11.30-31.

426 For Khoream see above 110; for the title Razmiozan, AG 69. Cf. the comments by M.D. on what he calls 'these fancy names', III0, where he describes the fall of Jerusalem.

427 Officers: *ostikans*, as n. 180 above.



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guard the city. But after some months had passed, while all the mass of ordinary people were complaisant,<sup>428</sup> the youths of the city killed the officers of the Persian king, and themselves rebelled against his authority. Then there was warfare between the inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem, Jewish and Christian. The larger number of Christians had the upper hand and slew many of the Jews. The surviving Jews jumped from the walls and went to the Persian army. Then Khoream, that is Erazmiozan, gathered his troops, went and camped around Jerusalem, and besieged it. He attacked it for 19 days. Having mined the foundations of the city from below, they brought down the wall.

On the 19th day [of the siege], in the month Margats', which was the 28th of the month, in the 25th year of the reign of Apruez Khosrov, ten days after Easter, the Persian army captured Jerusalem.<sup>429</sup> For three days they put to the sword and slew all the populace of the city. And they stayed within the city for 21 days. Then they came out and camped outside the city<sup>430</sup> and burnt the city with fire. [116] They added up the number of fallen corpses, and the total of those killed was 17,000 people; and the living whom they captured were 35,000 people. They also arrested the patriarch, whose name was Zak'aria, and the custodian of the Cross<sup>431</sup> In their search for the Life-bearing Cross, they began to torture them; and many of the clergy they decapitated at that time. Then they showed them the place where it lay hidden, and they took it

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428 All the mass of ordinary people: *amenayn ramik kachafats'n*. *Ramik* means the common people, neither noble [*azat*], nor clergy, see *EH* 554; *kachar* is 'group or assembly'. Youths: *mankunk'*; cf. n.383 above. The sentence could possibly be read: 'While the youths of all the common people of the city were united, they killed...' but this would be rather tortuous.

429 The 25th year of Khosrov is 613/614. In 614 the 28th of Margats' would be 19 May; but in that year Easter was on 30 March. It would appear that Sebeos is reckoning from Ascension day, not Easter; in 614 Ascension day was 8 May. Flusin, *St Anastase II* 156, notes that Jerusalem was captured between 17 and 20 May. but that 'ten days after Easter' remains problematic. According to the Georgian text of Antiochus Strategius, VIII 5, Jerusalem was captured 21 days after 15 April. Y.D., XVII 25-6, gives no date, while Asolik omits the fall of Jerusalem. T'.A., 89, depends on Sebeos.

430 For 21 days... outside the city: added by Abgaryan from the version in T'.A. 89.

431 See below 149, for Zak'aria (Zacharias) in captivity. Custodian of the Cross: *kha- ch'apan*, not attested in the *NBHL* but it is an exact rendering of the Greek *staurophylax*, the keeper of the Cross in Jerusalem; see Lampe, s.v. Clergy Oust below]: *pashtoneayk'*, lit. 'ministers', often used of deacons.

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away into captivity. The silver and gold of the city they melted down and brought to the king's court.

Then a command arrived from the king to have mercy on those who had fallen prisoner, to rebuild the city, and to re-establish [its inhabitants] there in each one's rank. He ordered the Jews to be expelled from the city. And they promptly carried out the king's command with great alacrity. They appointed a certain arch-priest<sup>432</sup> over the city by the name of Modestos, who wrote to the land of Armenia as follows.

### [CHAPTER 35]<sup>433</sup>

#### *To Lord Komitas*

To my Lord Komitas, most good, blessed, and spiritual, archbishop and metropolitan of the land of Armenia, Modestos, a humble priest and locum-tenens of Jerusalem.<sup>434</sup>

'Blessed is God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Father of mercies and God of all consolations, who consoled us in his great compassion for all our afflictions'<sup>435</sup> in the coming of your flock. For did he not console us in their arrival? First, by recalling to us the previous journeys which they made to the venerable sites of Jerusalem<sup>436</sup> Secondly, because he

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432 Arch-priest: *erits'apet* [rendering exactly *archiereus*], as of St Basil before his consecration in *Buzandaran* IV 7. Modestos is spelled *Mogestos* in all MSS of Sebeos, but confusion between *g* and *d* in Armenian script is common. Modestos served as locum-tenens for Zacharias, who had been taken into captivity; see 116. The date of Zacharias' death is unknown; Modestos served as patriarch only briefly, and died on 17 December 630. See Flusin, *St Anastase* II, 170, n.77 and 316, n.90.

433 Macler, ch.25. The title 'To Lord Komitas' is in A. These letters are not included in the collection known as *The Book of Letters*, but those letters are concerned with doctrinal matters, while Modestos' letter is a request for financial assistance. In his response Komitas studiously ignores this point. Y.D., XVII27-9, does not mention this exchange, despite his interest in ecclesiastical affairs. Asolik, II 3, notes the letter of Modestos, but not any reply.

434 Komitas: see 112 above. The letter was sent in Greek; *ark'episkopos* and *metropawlit* are not standard Armenian titles for their supreme bishop, but are applied to Leontius of Caesarea in Aa 820. The Greek 'metropolitan' is normally rendered *kat'olikos* in the Book of Armenian Canons [*Kanonagirk'*]; cf. Aa 804 where Leontius is also so described. Locum-tenens: *telapah*, often used in the sense of 'legate, deputy'; cf. 133 below, of emperors as 'vicars' of God.

435 II Cor. 1.3-4.

436 For Armenian pilgrimage to the Holy Land see the works of Stone, Hunt, and Maraval in the Bibliography. Garitte, *Narratio* 140, notes a late source to the effect that

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gratified our mind at their coming, and we recognized that God had not completely abandoned us. But truly, that same God of ours is among us, showing us through these things his great works which he has accomplished [from] before ages until now. Blessing his power and his wonders, we shall repeat the saying of Paul: 'How magnificent are your works, Lord. Everything you have done with wisdom. Inscrutable indeed are his judgments, and his paths unsearchable. For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor; or who has given him a loan and he will repay [117] him? For all things are from him and through him and in him. To him be glory for ever, Amen.'<sup>437</sup>

Now because he made our opponents friendly and bestowed on us pity and mercy in front of all our captors, slayers of the Lord and Jews, who thought that by tormenting this one<sup>438</sup> they would again insult the one who was tormented for our sake, our Lord Jesus Christ and true God, and who audaciously waged war and burnt these honourable places - God's philanthropy was pleased to expel<sup>439</sup> them from his own holy city, Jerusalem. Those who wished to make it their own habitation are ordered not to dwell there at all, nor are they reckoned worthy to see it. They realize that the [site of the] honourable and worshipful passion and his holy and life-receiving tomb and the holy Golgotha have been gloriously renewed, each one's splendour restored.<sup>440</sup> On learning through many inscriptions that the divine cult and the mother of churches, Sion, and [the site of] his Ascension and - to say in a word - all the worshipful places have been renewed, they are envious, not for the good but with the natural envy of their ancestor Cain.<sup>441</sup> For often they tried; with many bribes they sought permission to enter the holy

after the second council of Dvin in 555 Nerses II had forbidden Armenians to visit Jerusalem.

437 Rom. 11.33-36; the first verse is adapted from Ps. 103.24.

438 This one: *sora*. Since Armenian has no distinction of grammatical gender, it is not clear whether Modestos is referring to his own torments, or those of Jerusalem, as being an image of Christ's. After 'captors' the Armenian has the relative pronoun, *or*, 'who', and puts the next two nouns in the accusative case. But there is no verb for the action of the Persians against the Jews.

439 Expel: Abgaryan, n.399, follows the correction of *awarats'uts'anel*, 'ravage', made by Malkhasean and others, to *awarats'uts'anel*.

440 This last phrase is unclear. Modestos' rebuilding is described in Antiochus, XXIV 10, but in vague terms.

441 For the curse on Cain see Gen. ch.4.

city. But they were not made worthy, being prevented by God who punished us, 'not in accordance with our deeds',<sup>442</sup> but through his fatherly pity in order to restore us to regeneration.

By describing this miracle we make you rejoice. The reconstruction of these worshipful places occurs not from injustice or ruin but through his mercy, whereby he raised up this world and granted it knowledge of himself.

So, as you said,<sup>443</sup> by the grace of God through your holy prayers all the churches of Jerusalem were re-established and are in use. There is peace in this city of God and its surroundings, as they will inform you face to face, just as your Christ-loving people have seen. For all this [depends] on its author; the deeds are only in the body, but the power derives not from human hands, iest everybody boast<sup>444</sup> before him. 'Since he is our peace',<sup>445</sup> he who creates everything, as you said, and renews it as in the present struggle - may he make us happy through your holy prayers, by preaching his peace to the holy churches and by granting us pastors and prelates for his churches. May he persuade you to pray unceasingly for us, and not desist at all in remembering and recalling us [118] and the poor of Jerusalem, and in fulfilling whatever is needful. If it is possible, to extend your pious zeal to the assistance of rebuilding the [sites of his] life-giving Passion, so that we may attain this good end and the desired gifts. But I also beg your fatherly holiness and the saintly bishops with you, to read this letter before them.<sup>446</sup>

### [CHAPTER 36]

*This is a copy of the letter which the Armenians wrote to the emperor in Jerusalem*<sup>447</sup>

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442 Cf. II Tim. 1.9.

443 Modestos seems to refer to a letter sent to him from Komitas with the latest group of Armenian pilgrims; to that he now replies asking for help in the rebuilding. The Armenian visitors will have given Komitas further details 'face to face'. For the restoration of Jerusalem under Modestos see Flusin, *St Anastase II*, 175-9.

444 Eph. 2.9; but Modestos reads 'everybody', *amenayn marmin*, for the 'anyone', *ok'*, *tis* of the Armenian and Greek biblical text.

445 Eph. 2.14.

446 Them: presumably the congregations of Armenia.

447 This title is in the MSS, but all editors have followed Mhrdtean's emendation of 'to Modestos' in place of 'to the emperor'. However, this brief paragraph is not part of the response to Modestos, but a fragment of a letter of triumphant character, misplaced here and quite inappropriate to the content of Modestos' letter! See the Historical Commentary.

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The sound of the great evangelical trumpet [blown] by the angel summons us through this letter that has arrived from the divinely-built city, 'which announces great joy to us.'<sup>448</sup> Therefore 'the heavens rejoice, and let the earth exult';<sup>444</sup> let the church and its children delight in their glory. So let us all with united voice sing the angelic praises, repeating: 'Glory in the highest to God, and peace to earth, goodwill to mankind.'<sup>449</sup>

*The Response of Lord Komitas*

By the grace of God, from me the chief-bishop,<sup>449</sup> and from all the orthodox bishops and priests, deacons and readers, and from all the congregations of this land of Armenia, to you 'who have been afflicted and oppressed, beaten and punished',<sup>450</sup> but protected and caressed, consoled and loved by the heavenly Father. Venerable brother Modestos, for you and all the churches in Jerusalem 'may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and peace be multiplied.'<sup>451</sup>

First, we thank God for the consolations with 'which he consoled you, so that you too might be able to console those who are in all afflictions.'<sup>452</sup> For behold we too, through [119] your consolation which reached us, were consoled from the many troubles and grievous afflictions and cruel torments which were oppressing us. But 'God is faithful',<sup>453</sup> who comforted with his fatherly pity all the flocks of believers through that [letter] of yours, and made us forget our sadness through the joy of this news and the report of the rebuilding and peace

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448 Ps. 95.11. Divinely-built, *astuatsakert*, a common adjective, used even of the human body.

449 Chief-bishop: *episkoposapet*, a traditional title, see *EH* 523. Note that Sebeos spells the name Komitas in various ways.

450 There are Pauline reminiscences here, but no exact quotation.

451 A conflation of Rom. 1.7, II Cor. 13.13, and I Pet. 1.2.

452 II Cor. 1.4. All MSS, and Paul, have 'us' for the first 'you'. The emendation, which makes better sense of the context, goes back to Zaminyan; see Abgaryan n.403.

453 I Cor. 1.9, and elsewhere.

449 Ps. 95.11.

450 Lk. 2.14. The following title is also in<sup>4</sup>.

of Jerusalem.<sup>441</sup> But the prophet calls out to us, saying: 'Console, console my people, says God; you priests, speak to the heart of Jerusalem and console her, because she was full of distress.'<sup>456</sup> God has approached you as sons, because: 'Whom the Lord loves, he admonishes.'<sup>457</sup> Who would be a son whom his father would not admonish? 'For through his wounds we were healed, and the chastisement of our peace was in him.'<sup>458</sup>

But know this, O beloved brother, no little consolation was conveyed to our people by the coming and going of those journeys<sup>459</sup> First, because they forgot all the troubles and sadness of this country. Secondly, because they cleansed their sins through repentance, fasts and mercy, through sleepless and unresting travelling by day and night. Thirdly, because they baptized their bodies in the water of holiness, in the fiery currents of the Jordan,<sup>460</sup> whence the divine grace flowed to all the universe. For in the desire of their heart [the pilgrims] travelled around Mount Sinai,<sup>461</sup> which in the times of Moses was close to God, [repeating] friend to friend the prophetic saying: 'Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord and to the house of the God of Jacob.'<sup>462</sup> But even more significantly, let us repeat the apostolic saying: 'To approach Mount Sion and the city of the living God, the Jerusalem in heaven, and [to] the myriad hosts of angels and the churches of the first-born inscribed in heaven';<sup>463</sup> to see the throne of God above the earth, observing 'God the judge of all' sitting in the heavenly tabernacle and on the base that received God<sup>464</sup>

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456 Is. 40.1-2.

457 Heb. 12.6.

458 Is. 53.5, but with inversion of the clauses; the first part here is echoed in I Pet. 2.24.

459 Coming and going: *ert'ewek*, i.e. of the Armenian pilgrims, for which see above n.436.

460 Christ's baptism kindled fire in the Jordan; see Lampe, s.v. *baptisma*, F. Cf. also *Teaching*, Aa 544.

461 Lit: 'they spread the desire of their heart around Mount Sinai'. Repeating: a verb is necessary here. Abgaryan, n.405, suggests *aselov*, parallel to the *asasts'nk'*, 'let us repeat, just below.

462 Is. 2.3; Micah, 4.2.

463 Heb. 12.22-23; Komitas does not identify Paul specifically as the author of Hebrews. 'God the judge of all' continues this quotation.

464 Base: *khariskh*; the reference is to the tabernacle in Ex. chs26-7.

Now since the One on high 'turned his face from us',<sup>465</sup> and 'the sun looked on us askance',<sup>466</sup> our souls have indeed been disobedient and troubled. 'Justice [belongs] to the Lord our God, and to us shame of face.'<sup>467</sup> But when the kindness of God wished in his beneficence to bestow sweetness on those who had been cast down by his severity,<sup>468</sup> we were submerged in its great profundity. **(120)** For this image of the Gospel, with unceasing mouths and unresting tongues let us bless our Lord Jesus Christ, the doer of good, worker of wonders, and distributor of gifts.<sup>469</sup> For although that day of your judgment by sword and fire was so fearful and severe, yet the wise architect,<sup>470</sup> who chose and purified you like gold in the furnace, may the same once more renew his glory over you and work his wonderful consolation in you.

All this our Dear Friend<sup>471</sup> previously related to us in his description of the going down from Sion to Jericho - the one who fell into the hands of robbers who stripped him, and having inflicted many wounds left him half-dead and departed. Priests on their journey saw him and passed by; Jews and Levites and impious ones saw him and passed by<sup>472</sup> He himself journeyed, approached in pity, bound his wound, and bestowed on him mercy and his life-giving blood. He instructed oil and wine to be poured on him and [his wound] to be bound, so that he be healed. Behold, they saw him brought to that inn and cured; and as for the three *dahekans*<sup>473</sup> which he gave to the inn-keeper, behold you have in hand liberal provision. And whatever you will spend on him, in his coming again he will repay you.

Henceforth let not Sion lament nor Jerusalem mourn<sup>474</sup> For behold Christ the king has arrived to save and console them. But the crown of

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465 The Psalms, *passim*.

466 Adapted from Song 1.5.

467 Baruch 1.15.

468 For the contrast of sweetness and severity see Rom. 11.22.

469 Image: *nkaragir*, as Heb. 1.3. Christ's epithets are not biblical, but they are widely attested in Armenian theological writings.

470 Wise architect: I Cor. 3.10, Heb. 11.10.

471 Dear Friend: *sirelin*, the 'beloved [Son]' of the gospels.

472 But in Lk. 10.30-37 only a priest and a Levite are mentioned as passing by. Komitas continues by identifying Christ and the Good Samaritan.

473 Lk. 10.35 refers to 'two dahekans'. There are no variants in the text of Sebeos; perhaps Komitas had in mind the 'three loaves' of Lk. 11.5 in the context of a friend's request.

474 Cf. Zech. 1.17; not an exact quotation.



456 Report of... of: 'rebuilding', and 'peace' have been assimilated to the instrumental case.

your consolation is completed<sup>476</sup> by the flowers of his passion. And his death will be a diadem of consolation on your head. The evil sons of the Jews were greatly pining and wasting away, my friend, because the Christian trees - which in their madness they cut down with axes through senseless wood-cutters<sup>477</sup> - behold have given forth shoots and multiplied. And the One on high has filled [Jerusalem] with olive-trees and palm-trees, which the children of the crucifiers will not again be worthy to see.

But do you, 'brethren', according to the apostolic saying, 'rejoice in the Lord, [121] stand firm, be consoled, be united, make peace. And may the God of peace and love be with you.'<sup>478</sup> Amen.

### [CHAPTER 37]

*[Building of the church of Hrip'sime]*

In the 28th year of the reign of Apruez Khosrov<sup>479</sup> the Catholicos Kunitas demolished the chapel<sup>480</sup> of St Hrip'sime in the city of Valar-shapat, because the building was too low and dark which St Sahak had built, the patriarch and Catholicos of Armenia, son of St Nerses.

Now while they were taking down the wall of the chapel, unexpectedly there was revealed a luminous and incomparable royal pearl, that is, the virginal body of the holy lady Hrip'sime. Because they had dismembered it limb from limb,<sup>481</sup> St Gregory had sealed it with his

476 Completed: *bolori*. Since *bolor* can mean 'circle', the image of a diadem is intensified. Flowers of: *tsatkats'u*, lit. 'flowering'. This adjective seems to be a hapax, though the ending *-ats'u* is common. Christ's crown of thorns is often likened to flowers; see Lampe, s.v. *stephanos*.

477 Cf. Mt. 3.10, Lk. 3.9 for the 'axe laid to the tree'. The Shepherd of Hermas, *Similitudes* III IV, draws a parallel between trees blossoming and losing their leaves and the righteous and sinners; but no relation to Jerusalem is there adduced. See below 162. for a repetition of the theme in light of the Arab raids.

478 II Cor. 13.11.

479 I.e. 616/617.

480 Chapel: *maturn*, 'martyrion, shrine'; AG 363-4. The 'church' in the title is *tachar*, 'temple' but the title does not appear in the oldest MSS. For the history of this shrine and church, with references to other Armenian texts, see Khatchatrian, *L'Architecture Armeni- enne* 32-3 [to which Y.D. XVII27-30 could be added], Sahak, Catholicos 387-439, is only mentioned here in Sebeos; see Garitte, *Narratio* 87-94. For Nerses, himself patriarch 353- 373, see EH 395-6.

481 Sebeos quotes Aa 198 for the dismemberment of Hrip'sime. According to Aa 760 Gregory wrapped each of the martyrs in her clothing, placed them in separate caskets, and sealed them with the seal of Christ. The sealing by Sahak is not mentioned before Sebeos.

ring; as had also with his ring the blessed Sahak Catholicos of Armenia, not daring to open it. He [Komitas] too sealed it with his own ring, who was worthy to seal such a pearl with the third ring of three faithful [prelates].

O pearl, not born from the sea, but a pearl born of royal descent, raised in the bosom of holiness and dedicated to God. 'The just had desired to see you',<sup>1</sup> and the blessed Komitas 'was devoted to love for you.<sup>483</sup>

The height of the blessed one was nine palms and four fingers.<sup>2</sup> The whole northern region,<sup>3</sup> stirred [by the discovery], came to worship; and healing of all [kinds of] illnesses was effected for many sick people. He built the church and left the blessed one in the open, because of the humidity of the walls, until the mortar dried. Then she was enclosed in her resting-place.

He also raised the wooden roof of the holy cathedral,<sup>4</sup> and renewed the unstable wall. He built the stone roof. This occurred in the years of Yovhanik, priest of the monastery of the holy cathedral.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Mt. 13.17.

2 Y D., XVII28, and Asolik, II 3, follow Sebeos. But Vardan, 61, says that Hrip'sime was ten palms and four fingers tall; he adds that St Gregory was nine palms, and king Trdat eleven palms! Palm: *t'iz*, usually measured from tip of thumb to tip of outstretched index finger.

3 Armenian authors often refer to Armenia as the 'northern' region.

4 Cathedral: *kat 'olike*. For this term see Khatchatrian, *L'Architecture Armenienne* 85, and for the cathedral at Valarshapat, 86-92. He points out that the dome was of stone from the beginning, although the Letter which concludes the History of tazar, 186, refers in vague terms to the 'wooden structure' of the church [not necessarily the dome] which had been damaged by fire in the fifth century. Perhaps 'he built the stone roof: *shineats' zk'ar- ayarksn*, refers to a rebuilding or restoration.

5 Yovhanik is not otherwise attested, save by Asolik quoting this passage, *HAnjB*, no.2. Priest of the monastery: *vanats' erets'*, which refers not to the abbot, but to a senior rank; see *NBHL*, s.v.

St Gregory ... ring: Abgaryan, n.412, notes old fragments and later quotations of this phrase to substantiate his printed text. The MSS read: *ew eranelisrboyn Grigoriknk'elma- taneaw iwrov*, 'and the blessed saint Gregory had sealed [it] with his own ring'. Cf. the separate text, 'Discovery of St Hrip'sime's Relics', printed in Abgaryan 419-20 which has a more elaborate description of the state of the corpse.

483 Song. 2.5. For a translation of hymns composed by Komitas in honour of Hrip'sime see Tommaseo, *Agatangelo* 209-22.

[122]

[CHAPTER 38]<sup>488</sup>

*[Khoream comes to take Constantinople; supplication of Heraclius; order from Khosrov to take the city. In a naval battle the Persian force is destroyed. Insolent letter of Khosrov to Heraclius. Heraclius installs Constantine on the throne of the kingdom and goes to Caesarea. From there he invades Armenia and takes Dvin, Nakhchawan, and Gandzak. Khoream attacks Heraclius. Adroit manoeuvres of Heraclius; he destroys the Persians bit by bit.]*

At that time<sup>489</sup> Khoream marched with his army to Chalcedon and camped facing Byzantium; his intention was to cross over and capture the capital city.

Now when the emperor Heraclius saw the brigands who had come to destroy his kingdom, unwillingly he befriended and honoured them like meritorious and dear guests. He went to meet him with gifts, and gave magnificent presents to the general and princes. He distributed donatives<sup>490</sup> to the army, and food and provisions to all the troops for seven days. He himself embarked on a ship, stood off at sea, and parleyed with them as follows: 'What do you wish to do, and why have you come to this place? Surely you do not reckon the sea as dry land, to wage war on it? God is able, should he wish, to dry it up before you.<sup>491</sup> But take care lest perchance God be not pleased, and the depths of the sea seek vengeance from you. For he did not give you victory because of your piety, but because of our impiety. Our sins have brought this about, and not your valour. What does your king seek from me, who does not make peace with me? Does he wish to abolish my empire? Let him not try, because God established it and no one is able to destroy it - save that if it so seems good to God, let the will of God be done.

If he should say: I shall install a king for you, let him install whom he

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488 Macler, ch.26.

489 Ch. 34 had ended with the capture of Jerusalem in 614. The intervening chapters deal with the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and the construction of the church of St Hripsime in 618. For the date see the Historical Commentary.

490 Donatives: *hrogs*, the Greek *roga*; *AG* 362.

491 Cf. Josh. 2.10. Nikephoros, ch.6, describes the parley on boats and gives the speech of Shahan, but does not quote the words of Heraclius. *Chron. Pasch.*, s.a. 615, gives no speeches.

## HISTORY

wishes, and we shall accept him. But does he seek vengeance for the blood of Maurice? God sought that from the hands of Phocas through my father Heraclius.<sup>492</sup> But he is still thirsting for blood. For how long will he not be sated with blood? Were not the Romans able to kill him and destroy the empire of the Persians when God gave him into our hands? But he [Maurice] had [123] mercy on him. I request the same from him: reconciliation and friendship. I also request from you three things; so heed me. Remove from my land fire and sword and captivity; and from these three things you will find profit, because you will not suffer from famine, nor will the royal taxes be lost. Behold, I shall send to your king a letter with gifts, to seek from him conciliation and peace with me.' They received the gifts and agreed to act in accordance with his request.

The Persian king accepted the presents brought from the emperor, but he did not send back the messengers. He commanded his army to cross by ships to Byzantium. Having equipped [ships] he began to prepare for a naval battle with Byzantium. Naval forces came out from Byzantium to oppose him, and there was a battle at sea from which the Persian army returned in shame. They had lost 4,000 men with their ships, and did not venture to undertake a similar enterprise.

In the 34th year of king Khosrov he wrote a letter to Heraclius as follows: 'Khosrov, honoured among the gods, lord and king of all the earth, and offspring of the great Aramazd, to Heraclius our senseless and insignificant servant.'<sup>444</sup>

You have not wished to submit yourself to us, but you call yourself

492 As on **113** above. Sebeos states that Heraclius *pere* slew Phocas. The version of these events in T'.A., 90, adds here: 'And if he seeks land, here is the land before you. Whether we so wish or not, God has taken it from us and delivered it into your hands. If he seeks cities, here are great walled cities. [If] other treasures, let him say and I shall give as many as his hand may grasp. Yet he did not wish to listen, but is [still thirsting for blood...]' Since T'.A. generally quotes Sebeos closely, it is more likely that this has fallen from the text of Sebeos than that T'.A. here expanded his source.

493 T'.A. adds, 91: 'Then the army left and wintered in Syria.' Nikephoros, chs6-7, says that Khosrov was angry at Shahen's conduct and killed him; but this is a fable, see Mango's note ad loc.

494 34th year: 622/623. T'.A., 91, follows Sebeos. It is uncommon to have such elaborate titles in Armenian histories. Those given here to Khosrov are not similar to those of Shaphuh in M.X. III 17 and 26 [and there 'the son of Aramazd' is Julian]. Nor is there a parallel with the titles of Darius in his letter to Alexander [in the Armenian Pseudo-Callisthenes, 143], save that Alexander is called 'my servant'.

lord and king. My treasure which is with you, you spend; my servants you defraud; and having collected an army of brigands, you give me no rest. So did I not destroy the Greeks? But you claim to trust in your God. Why did he not save Caesarea and Jerusalem and the great Alexandria from my hands?<sup>495</sup> Do you not now know that I have subjected to myself the sea and the dry land? So is it only Constantinople that I shall not be able to erase? However, I shall forgive you all your trespasses. "Arise, take your wife and children and come here. I shall give you estates, vineyards and olive-trees whereby you may make a living."<sup>496</sup> And we shall look upon you with friendship. Let not your vain hope deceive you. For that Christ who was not able to save himself from the Jews - but they killed him by hanging him on a cross<sup>497</sup> - how can the same save you from my hands?<sup>498</sup> "For if you descend into the depths of the sea",<sup>499</sup> I shall stretch out my hand and seize you. And then you will see me in a manner you will not desire.'

[124] When the emperor Heraclius received this epistle, he ordered it to be read before the patriarch and the magnates. Entering the house of God, they spread the letter before the holy altar. They fell on their faces to the ground before the Lord and wept bitterly, so that he might see the insults which his enemies had inflicted upon him.<sup>500</sup>

Heraclius and all the senators decided to install Constantine, son of Heraclius, on the throne of the kingdom; he was a young child. Heraclius made preparations to take his wife and go to the east. At that time<sup>501</sup> they

495 The capture of Alexandria was not mentioned above; for Caesarea see 112, Tarsus and Jerusalem, 115. The version in T'. A., 92, expands this list of towns, and also the message generally. T'.A. has a singular verb: 'Why did he [i.e. God] not save...' but the MSS of Sebeos have a plural, which must refer to the Greeks. T'.A.'s reading fits the context better.

496 Arise ... living: as the message of Sennacherib, Is. 36.16-17, there without 'wife and children.' *Ordis*, here rendered 'children', could be 'sons'.

497 Cross:*p'ayt*, 'wood', as n.405 above. Hanging: *kakheal*. Abgaryan, n.423, prints Zaminean's emendation for *thekapeal*, 'binding', of the MSS.

498 Sebeos continues to adapt Sennacherib's message, Is. 36.19-20.

499 Cf. Ps. 138.7-10, for the theme. T'.A., 92, has 'nets' for 'hand', reminiscent of Ezech. 12.13.

500 Sebeos continues to adapt Isaiah, 37.1, 14. Cf. also the description of the Muslim attack on Constantinople, 170 below, when Constans was emperor.

501 At that time: presumably the regnal year 622/623 [the 34th of Khosrov] mentioned above. The spelling of Constantine in Armenian is easily confused with that of Constans: here *Kostandos*, but on 114 and 140 *Kostandin*. See above 114, for Constantine as co-ruler in 613. Heraclius' first wife and the mother of Constantine was Eudocia. Cf. M.D. II 10-13 for the campaigns of Heraclius.

confirmed even more [securely] Constantine in the royal dignity according to the previous agreement.

So Heraclius made preparations with his wife and the eunuchs and princes of the court. He celebrated Easter in Constantinople, and on the morning after Easter day sailed to Chalcedon. He ordered his army to assemble in Caesarea of Cappadocia. He himself travelled from Chalcedon, reached Caesarea, and pitched his tent in the middle of the camp. He ordered all the troops to be summoned and the letter to be read before them, and he described his coming out to join them. Although the army was disturbed at the words,<sup>502</sup> nonetheless they were very joyful at his arrival. They wished him victory and said: 'Wherever you may go, we are with you to stand and die.<sup>503</sup> May all your enemies become dust beneath your feet, as the Lord our God obliterates them from the face of the earth and removes the insults paid him by men.' Heraclius marched on with 120,000 to go<sup>504</sup> to the court of the Persian king. He travelled through the regions of the north, making directly for the city of Karin; and having reached Dvin in Ayrarat, he ravaged it and Nakhchawan. Proceeding to Gandzak in Atrpatakan, he also destroyed the altars of the great Fire which they called Vshnasp.<sup>505</sup>

King Khosrov hastily recalled his army which was in Greek territory to come to his help. For although they had equipped his horses and he had put them under the command of Shahen Patgosapan,<sup>506</sup> yet his army was small and they were unable to put up a resistance. He stored his treasures at Ctesiphon, and prepared himself for flight.

[125] Then the Persian army reached Nisibis at great speed. The emperor Heraclius was informed that Khoream had come to Nisibis;<sup>507</sup> he took his troops and captives, returned by the difficult terrain of

502 Presumably the words of Khosrov's letter.

503 Cf. Ruth, 1.16-17.

504 To go: *ert'al*, an infinitive of purpose. This is Zaminean's emendation for *ewert'ed*, 'and went', in the MSS; see Abgaryan n.425.

505 The list of places attacked by Heraclius is longer in T'. A. 92. This Gandzak in Media is to be distinguished from the Gandzak further north, the modern Elizabetpol/ Kirovabad; Hewsen, *ASX* 266. Other references to the Fire Vshnasp are all later, *AG* 85. It was one of the main shrines of the Sasanian empire and the particular fire of the king; EH 463-4 and Schippmann, *Feuerheilighlumer* 349-50. Cf. above 66,69, where it is described as Hrat and At'ash.

506 For Shahen see above 111, n.396.

507 Khoream is last mentioned returning 'with shame' from his unsuccessful attack on Constantinople, 123. Difficult terrain: *amur ashkharh*; for *amur* see above, n.222.



Media, and reached P'aytakaran. Khosrov was informed that Heraclius had retreated and had reached P'aytakaran, and was intending to pass into Iberia via Aluank'. He commanded his general Shahr Varaz<sup>508</sup> to block his way. He rapidly came to Ayrarat, crossed into Gardman to oppose him, and camped opposite him at the other Tigranakert.<sup>509</sup> Shahan with 30,000 troops arrived and camped behind Heraclius in the town of Tigranakert. So the latter were camped on this side, and the former on that side;<sup>510</sup> and the camp of Heraclius was between the two.

When Heraclius saw that they had put him between the two, he turned against the army to his rear. He struck promptly with force, and routed them. He marched through Tslukk',<sup>511</sup> and escaped through the mountainous terrain to the plain of Nakhchawan in the winter-time.

Shahr Varaz with his army, and Shahan with his survivors, pursued him. But he crossed the ford of the Araxes river at the town of Vrnjunik'<sup>512</sup> and camped in its fields. The Persian army came up, but were unable to cross the river that day. Heraclius reached Bagrewand, crossed into Apahunik', and camped at the village called Hrchmunk'.<sup>513</sup> Shahr Varaz scattered his troops over Aliovit. He himself, having selected 6,000 fully armed warriors, took up a position in the province of Archesh to lie in wait, so that he might fall on Heraclius' camp in the middle of the night.

By sending out scouts Heraclius learned that Khoream had come and was lying in wait for him. Then Heraclius, in the same manner, chose elite men and elite horses, and attacked him with 20,000. On reaching Ali he came across the vanguard of 500 men.<sup>514</sup> First he slaughtered them.

508 Shahr Varaz was a title of Khoream; see **110**, n.391.

509 Not to be confused with the ancient capital of Tigran the Great, the site of which [in the region of Martyropolis/Silvan] is still disputed; EH 494; Mango, 'L'inscription historique de Martyropolis' in 'Deux Etudes'; and Sinclair, 'The Site of Tigranokerta'. For Gardman, in Aluank', see Hewsens, /45X 260-1, map 60.

510 Since Sebeos is speaking from an Armenian perspective, Shahr Varaz was to the north, and Shahan to the south, 'behind' Heraclius.

511 Tslukk' is in Siwnik'; Hewsens, ASX 65, map 66A. So Heraclius marched due south, then south-west.

512 Vrnjunik', A ON 472; it is not mentioned in the *Ashkharhats'oyts'*.

513 Hrchmunk' is otherwise unattested. Apahunik', Aliovit, and Archesh are north of Lake Van; AON 329-30; Hewsens, ASX map 62A.

514 Ali, near Archesh: AON 396, not in the *Ashkharhats'oyts'*. Vanguard: *yarajmartik*, 'troops of the front line', as Elische 118. But four lines below, *peshopa*, in Persian - since a Persian is speaking; MacKenzie, *Pahlavi Dictionary* 6%, *peshobay*, 'leader, vanguard'.

But one of the cavalry escaped and brought the bad news to Khoream in Archesh: 'The enemy has attacked you; and they have slaughtered the vanguard at Ah.' Khoream was angry at the man, and ordered him to be bound feet and hands, saying: 'Up to now Heraclius was fleeing from me. I have now arrived with such an army, and will he not flee from me?' Such words were still in his mouth when they suddenly attacked them, surrounded the city<sup>515</sup> on three sides, set [126] it on fire, and burned the multitude of the soldiers. If anyone came out from it in flight, they immediately seized and slew him. None of them survived, because the terrible fire consumed them all. But Shahr Varaz escaped,<sup>516</sup> riding on a sorry horse. In that way he escaped to his troops whom he had gathered in the province of Aliovit.

Heraclius took the booty and plunder of their camp, and returning with a great victory reached the area of Caesarea. Shahr Varaz pursued him rapidly. But because his army was weary, he decided to interpose [between them] many provinces so that his army could rest and re-equip. Marching to the region of Asia,<sup>517</sup> they spread out and lingered there.

Then Heraclius took his army and returned to Armenia. Passing through Shirak, he reached the ford of the Araxes river; having crossed the river by the town of Vardanakert, he penetrated into the province of Gogovit.<sup>518</sup> Roch Vehan and the Persian army thought that they had fled away. But he continued his march to the province of Her and Zare-wand,<sup>519</sup> directly towards Ctesiphon in order to attack Khosrov. Only when he had penetrated the borders of Atrpatakan did the news reach Roch Vehan. He took his army and pursued him to the city of Nakh-chawan. In this way he marched rapidly day and night until he had come up close to him. The latter passed to the other side of Mt. Zarasp, into the land of Asorestan.<sup>520</sup> They pursued him closely. But they

515 Archesh is called a *k'atak'* since it was walled. Cf. nn.314,388 and 400 above.

516 That there were survivors of a battle in which everyone was killed is a common rhetorical motif; cf. n.292. For the formula of the king fleeing alone on a horse see EH 591-2.

517 I.e. Western Anatolia.

518 Vardanakert: there are two towns of this name, AON 471. Gogovit is due south of Shirak, south of the River Araxes and west of Mount Masis. For Roch Vehan see above 113, n.415.

519 Her and Zarewand in Parskahayk', north of Lake Urmia, are usually treated as one province in Armenian sources; A ON 338; Hewsén, ASX 63, map 64A.

520 Zarasp: cf. above, 78, n. 152.

turned to the west, and he went on to Nineveh.<sup>521</sup> Further troops came to the support of Roch Vehan from the royal court, men selected from the whole kingdom. Joining forces they pursued Heraclius. But Heraclius drew them on as far as the plain of Nineveh; then he turned to attack them with great force. There was mist on the plain, and the Persian army did not realize that Heraclius had turned against them until they encountered each other.

In this way the Lord strengthened his mercy<sup>522</sup> for Heraclius on that day, so that they massacred them to a man and slew their general in the battle. Surrounding the survivors,<sup>523</sup> they wished to slay them all. But they made an appeal: 'God-loving and beneficent lord, have mercy on us, although we are not worthy of mercy'. Then Heraclius ordered them to be let go. And Heraclius ordered raids to be made over the land.

[127]

[CHAPTER 39]<sup>524</sup>

*[Khosrov's flight to Vehkawat. Heraclius takes Ctesiphon and returns to Atrpatakan. Khosrov's return to Ctesiphon and his murder. His son Kawat reigns and makes a treaty with Heraclius, both of them keeping their old boundaries.]*

Then Khosrov the Persian king fled across the river Tigris at Vehkawat and cut the cables of the pontoon-bridge.<sup>525</sup> Heraclius arrived and camped nearby, outside the city of Ctesiphon; he burned all the royal palaces around the city. Then he went to Atrpatakan with all the baggage and the host of his army, for Heraclius was troubled by fear of Khoream. However, Khoream did not come to the aid of king Khosrov,

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521 The use of pronouns with no identification of the subject, common in Armenian writers, can be confusing in such passages. The sense emerges from the context. See *The Armenian Text*, lx.

522 Ps. 102.11.

523 Armenian historians often mention the survivors, although all the troops had been killed 'to a man' [Judg. 6.16], as above n.516. For such formulae describing the total rout of the enemy see EH 590-1. T'.A., 94, however, states that there were 4,000 survivors. Cf. the account of the battle in M.D. II 12; he gives no casualty figures, but says that the Persians 'were scattered like dust in a hurricane'.

524 Macler, ch.27.

525 For the pontoon-bridge at Vehkawat cf. above 74, n.l 17. The date is 27 December 627 (Theophanes 321).

but remained right where he was in the west. So king Khosrov returned home, and ordered the pontoon-bridge to be repaired. But the king's harem<sup>526</sup> and sons and the treasure and the stable of royal horses stayed at Vehkawat.

Khosrov began to gather the surviving nobles and addressed them with fearsome condemnations: 'Why did you not die on the battlefield rather than come to me? Did you really suppose Khosrov was dead?' Then they took counsel together and said: 'Although we escaped from the enemy, yet there is no escaping the hands of this man. But come, let us think of something.' Then they swore an oath with each other; and going by night across the bridge to Vehkawat, they seized control of it and posted guards over it. They made his son Kawat king,<sup>527</sup> and secretly removed the horses with which Khosrov had come to Ctesiphon.

Now when news of this affray reached Khosrov, he was shaken with fear and terrified. He sought a horse; but on entering the stable they found none. King Kawat came up and crossed with all his troops. Then king Khosrov, disguising himself, entered the royal garden; and going under a thick bush of flowers, he lay hidden. When king Kawat came, he ordered a search to be made. On entering the garden, they found him. They seized him and brought him to the hall.<sup>528</sup> King Kawat gave the order, and they killed him. As for Khosrov's sons, the nobles said: 'It is not right to spare them, because they will raise a rebellion.' Then king Kawat gave an order and they killed them all at the same time, 40 men. And he claimed for himself the women and treasures and royal stable.

Then king Kawat began to take counsel with the nobles of his kingdom: **[128]** 'It is necessary to make a treaty with the emperor and to give up all the territory of his empire.<sup>524</sup> Let us make peace over the whole region.' They agreed in unison to act thus. Then king Kawat ordered a letter of greeting to be written to Heraclius, and he gave up all his territory. He had an oath taken to him, salt-sealed and brought with

526 Harem: *kanays*, 'women'; see n. 124 for the distinction between harem and wives.

527 Kawat II: he acceded on the deposition of Khosrov on 24 or 25 February 628. The account of these events in T'.A. 95 is more detailed.

528 Brought him to the hall: *atsin i dahlich andr*. Abgaryan, n.440, corrects the MSS, *atsin dahich*, 'they brought an executioner', on the basis of T'.A. 95. See also M.D. II 13 and Dowsett's n.1 to 92. For *dahlich* see above 75, n.122. For differing accounts of Khosrov's death see the notes of Mango to Nikephoros ch.15.



the letter; and he sent a certain prince Rashnan<sup>530</sup> with magnificent presents to confirm this agreement with him.

Now when Rashnan arrived, gave him the good news, presented the letter, and offered the gifts, king Heraclius and all his army greatly thanked God. Then king Heraclius ordered the multitude of captives to be released and all the plunder to be left behind. He wrote a solemn covenant and confirmed peace with an oath. He despatched one of his senior nobles, who was called Eustathius,<sup>531</sup> with magnificent gifts. And he honoured Rashnan, showered him with precious treasures, and sent him back. He himself journeyed peacefully to his own place.

Eustathius came with the gifts into the presence of king Kawat; he presented the letter, and offered the gifts. King Kawat joyfully received him. Once more he confirmed with him the terms of peace and of the territories divided by the oath of the letters. He sealed salt with Eustathius as previously, according to the old [custom] of their kings.<sup>532</sup> In his presence he ordered [a letter] to be written to Shahr Varaz, that he should collect his troops, come back into Persia, and abandon Greek territory - although the latter did not wish to obey that order. They sent off Eustathius laden with treasures, and he departed.

#### [CHAPTER 40]<sup>533</sup>

*[Varaztirots' is appointed marzpan of Armenia. K'ristop'or is installed on the throne of the Catholicosate, and after him E:r. Death of Kawat; reign of the young Artashir. Khoream, at the request and with the help of Heraclius, takes Ctesiphon, kills Artashir, and rules himself. He returns the Lord's Cross to the Greeks. Murder of Khoream; reign of Bor, Khosrov's sister, of Azarmidukht, and of Ormizd for short periods, and then of Yazkert, Kawat's son. Fragmentation of the Persian empire.]*

Then king Kawat summoned Varaztirots', son of Smbat Bagratuni called Khosrov Shum, and gave him the office of *tanuter*.<sup>534</sup> [129] He

<sup>530</sup> Rashnan: For the name, *AG* 70. Justi, 259, notes other references. The exchange of letters is noted by Nikephoros, ch.15, and *Chron.Pasch.* s.a. 628.

<sup>531</sup> Eustathius: Yustat'. See PZJ?£III, s.v. no.12,472.

<sup>532</sup> Cf. 74, n.l 11. Custom: a word has probably fallen out after 'old', which is the last word off.525bin/l.

<sup>533</sup> Macler, ch.28.

<sup>534</sup> Cf. above **101**, where Sebeos equates the office of *tanuler* with that of Khosrov Shum; for *lanuter* see n.129. Y.D., XVII 32, merely refers to the office of *marzpan*.

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made him *marzpan*, and sent him to Armenia with [authority over] all his ancestral possessions in order to keep the country in prosperity. When he came to Armenia, all the land of the Armenians joyfully received him. But because the blessed Catholicos Komitas had died and that position was vacant,<sup>535</sup> he took counsel with them all to find someone worthy. Then, under the leadership of T'eodoros lord of the Rshtunik', they chose a certain hermit, from the house of Abraham, whose name was K'ristop'or.<sup>536</sup> They installed him as Catholicos, but he turned out to be a proud and haughty man whose tongue was like a sharp sword.<sup>537</sup> He stirred up much trouble and created strife between the *aspet*<sup>538</sup> and his brother by his slander.

He held the throne of the patriarchate for two years; and in the third year complaints were laid against him. They assembled all the bishops and princes and held an enquiry. Two men came from his own family and testified about him before the whole multitude. Then they sent some of the bishops and removed from him the hood<sup>538</sup> of the high-priestly rank, dismissed him from his position, and expelled him in dishonour. Then they promptly installed as Catholicos Ezzr from the province of Nig,<sup>539</sup> who in the time of the blessed Komitas had been custodian of [the church of] St Gregory. He was a humble and gentle man, who did not wish to provoke anyone to anger; and no indecorous word came from his mouth.

Now while king Kawat was planning for the prosperity of the country and wishing to make peace throughout all regions, having lived for six months he died. They installed as king his son Artashir; he was a young

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535 Komitas was dead by 628, cf. **112** above, and Garitte, *Narratio* 268. Vacant: *anhramanatar*, which seems to be a hapax. *Hram(an)atar* is common in both secular and religious contexts as 'ruler, commander', *EH* 532-3; cf. Mihnerseh as *hramatar* in Elische 24. For the etymology see Nyberg, *Manual of Pahlavi*, *sm.framatar*, and Gyselen, *Geographie yi-%framadar*. Y.D., XVII 33-8, abbreviates these church matters.

536 T'eodoros: *HAnjB*, no.6. For the Rshtuni house, *EH* 402, and Toumanoff, *Studies* 213. Abraham had been bishop of that family and then Catholicos, **100** above. K'ristop'or HI, Catholicos 628-630; see Garitte, *Narratio* 300-1.

537 Ps. 56.5.

538 The title of *aspet* belonged to the Bagratuni house [*EH* 509], hence here Varaztirots' is intended. Created strife: lit. 'cast a sword'.

539 Ezzr: 630 for ten years, Garitte, *Narratio* 301. For Nig see **114**, n.421 above. Custodian: *p'akakal*, lit. 'holder of the lock'; cf. the *Greekkleidophylax*.





boy.<sup>541</sup> Then Heraclius wrote to Khoream as follows: 'Your king Kawat has died, and the throne of the kingdom has come to you. I bestow it on you, and on your offspring after you. If an army is necessary, I shall send to your assistance as many [troops] as you may need. Let us make a pact between me and you with an oath, in writing and with a seal.'<sup>542</sup> Then Khoream was easily persuaded, and he abandoned Alexandria.<sup>543</sup> Taking all his troops he gathered them in one place. Then he left them and went in person with a few [soldiers] to the appointed place which Heraclius had proposed to him. On seeing each other they greatly rejoiced. Then Heraclius swore to him that he would give him that kingdom, and promised it likewise to his sons after him, and as large a force as might be necessary. He made as his prime request from him the Life-bearing Cross which he had taken into captivity from Jerusalem. Then Khoream swore to him, saying: 'When I reach the royal court, I shall immediately |130| make a search for the Cross and shall have it brought to you. I shall also make an agreement on the border, to where you may wish it. So make confirmation of this in writing, with a seal and with salt.' And he requested a small force from him. Then they took leave of each other.

Then Khoream, taking the host of his army, went to Ctesiphon. He ordered some people to kill the young king Artashir, and he himself sat on the royal throne. All the principal men at court or in the army in whom he could place no trust he commanded to be put to the sword, and others he had taken in bonds to Heraclius. Then the blessed<sup>544</sup> Heraclius sent reliable men to Khoream for the Lord's Cross. Having searched with great diligence, finally he gave it to the men who had come. They took it and promptly departed. He also gave them no few presents, and with great joy he sent them off with honour.<sup>545</sup>

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541 Six months: seven months according to M.D. II 13. See the Historical Commentary. Artashir reigned from late 628 to 27 April 630; further references in Justī 35, no.27.

542 For Heraclius' pact with Khoream [Shahrvaraz] see Mango, 'Deux Etudes' 111. T'.A., 96, abbreviates the account in Sebeos. [The English translation of the letter in T'.A. 96 by Thomson is faulty, since several lines have fallen out between 'shall' and 'agreed' on line 17 of 162.]

543 Instead of Alexandria, T'.A., 96, lists: Jerusalem, Caesarea in Palestine, all the regions of Antioch and the cities of those provinces, Tarsus in Cilicia, and the greater part of Armenia.

544 Blessed: cf. the description of Heraclius at the beginning of the next chapter.

545 The recovery of the Cross by Heraclius in person is described very differently in Thomson, 'Anonymous Story-teller' 186-8. T'.A., 97, states that the Cross was still 'in its original wrapping'. See also Nikephoros ch.17.

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Now one day Khoream put on a royal robe, and seated on a horse he was making a tour<sup>546</sup> of the army to show himself. Suddenly they attacked him from behind, struck him down and killed him. They installed as queen Bor, Khosrov's daughter, who was his wife;<sup>547</sup> and they appointed as chief minister at court Khorokh Ormizd, who was prince of the region of Atrpatakan.<sup>548</sup> Then this Khorokh sent [a message] to the queen<sup>549</sup>: 'Become my wife.' She agreed, saying: 'Come with a single man at midnight, and I shall fulfil your wish.' Arising at midnight, he went with a single aide. But when he entered the royal palace, the guards of the court fell on him, struck him down and killed him. The queen held the throne for two years and died. After her [reigned] a certain Khosrov from the family of Sasan;<sup>550</sup> and after Khosrov, Azarmidukht, Khosrov's daughter;<sup>551</sup> and after her, Ormizd, grandson of Khosrov, whom Khoream's army strangled.<sup>552</sup> Then reigned Yazkert, son of Kawat, grandson of Khosrov, who kept the kingdom in fear [of himself].<sup>553</sup> For the army of the Persian empire had been divided into three parts: one force in Persia and the east; one force was Khoream's in the area of Asorestan; and one force in Atrpatakan. But his rule was in Ctesiphon, and all honoured him in unison. Amen.<sup>554</sup>

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546 Lit. 'circulating among'.

547 I.e. Khoream's wife. For further references, Justi 70, no.1.

548 For the name Khorokh, AG 43, further references in Justi 96. Chief minister: *hrama- natar* in the printed text, but *hramatar* in the MSS. See further n.535 above.

549 Queen: *bambishn*, as n.50.

550 See Justi 135-6, no.24, with further sources. On the confusing succession see the Historical Commentary.

551 Azarmidukht: For the name, AG 38. She was the daughter of Khosrov II, not of the previous ruler, Justi 54.

552 Ormizd: Justi 9, no.32.

553 Yazkert III, 632-652; see Justi 148, no. 10, for further references.

554 Amen: Abgaryan, n.450, follows Mihrdetaan's emendation of the *use* or *ays ē* of the MSS. T'.A., 98, adds: 'Here the prophecy of Daniel is relevant' and he abbreviates Dan. 2.31^t5. T'ovma then jumps directly to his description of the origins of Islam and the beginning of Arab domination; cf. 134. Sebeos picks up the threefold division of the Persian army on 137.

*[Return of the Lord's Cross to Jerusalem. The Catholicos Ezr, compelled by Mzhez h Gnuni, accepts the council of Chalcedon and receives as a gift the salt [-mines] of Kolb. The quarrel of Varaztirots' with the princes of Atrpatakan; the plan of Mzhez h to kill him; his flight to Heraclius by whom he is honoured. The treachery of Athalarikos against his father Heraclius; Varaztirots' does not join the conspirators; his exile. Davit' Saharuni is appointed curopalates. T'eodoros Rshnunipreserves the land of Armenia in security.]*

When the blessed, pious, and late-lamented<sup>556</sup> king Heraclius had received the Lord's holy Cross, he gathered his army with ardent and happy heart. He set out with all the royal retinue, honouring the holy, wonderful, and heavenly discovery, and brought it to the holy city, with all the vessels of the church which been saved from the hands of the enemy in the city of Byzantium.<sup>557</sup> There was no little joy on that day as they entered Jerusalem. [There was] the sound of weeping and wailing; their tears flowed from the awesome fervour of the emotion of their hearts and from the rending of the entrails of the king, the princes, all the troops, and the inhabitants of the city. No one was able to sing the Lord's chants from the fearful and agonizing emotion of the king and the whole multitude. He set it back up in its place, and put all the vessels of the churches in their places, and distributed alms<sup>558</sup> and money for incense to all the churches and inhabitants of the city.

He himself continued his journey directly into Syrian Mesopotamia in order to secure his hold over the cities of the frontiers. The border was confirmed as that same which had been established in the time of

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555 Macler, ch.29.

556 Late-lamented: *erjanik*, 'blessed, happy', usually of the deceased. Sebeos now turns back to March 630.

557 Sebeos had not mentioned above that church vessels had been removed for safety to Constantinople; he refers to the Persians melting down the gold and silver they found in Jerusalem 116. Two later Armenian texts have Heraclius return with the Cross via Armenia: Pseudo-Yovhannes Mamikonean, 279-82, [of the Armenian text] with regard to the origin of the Cross and Tsitsarne; and Pseudo-Shapuh [*The Anonymous Story-teller*], 59-67, with regard to the Cross of Hats'iwn.

558 Alms: *awrhnut' iwn*, lit. 'blessing', but 'alms' in II Cor. 9.5., and cf. Lampe, s.v. *eulogia*, F. For the recovery of the Cross, cf. Frolow, 'La vraie croix'.

Khosrov and Maurice.<sup>559</sup> The Lord's Cross remained in the divinely- built city until the second capture of Jerusalem by the sons of Ismael. It then went in flight to the capital city with all the vessels of the church.<sup>560</sup> Then the Greek general Mzhez Gnu<sup>561</sup> came from Armenia,<sup>562</sup> and took control of all the land according to the agreed border. He told the Catholicos Ezr to go to him in the territory of the Greek borders, and to communicate with the emperor.<sup>563</sup> 'Otherwise, we shall make for ourselves another Catholicos, [132] and do you hold your authority on the Persian side.' Since the Catholicos was unable to leave the territory of his authority, he requested a statement of faith from the king.<sup>564</sup> Immediately a document was sent to him written in the king's hand, anathematizing Nestorius and all heretics; but it did not anathematize the council of Chalcedon. The Catholicos went to the land of Asorestan, visited the king, and communicated with him. He asked the king for the salt [-mines] of Kolb<sup>565</sup> as a gift; and receiving this gift, he returned home with great ceremony. Thereafter he resided in the Greek camp

559 See above 76,84.

560 See below 136. Cf. n.448 above for Jerusalem as 'divinely-built'. For the flight of the Cross cf. *The Anonymous Story-teller* 71: 'The Cross decided to go to Constantinople.' According to Nikephoros ch. 18, Heraclius sent the Cross to Constantinople immediately after it had been returned to Jerusalem and worshipped there.

561 Mzhez is a name found mostly in the Gnu<sup>561</sup> family; *HAnjB*, no.2 for this Mzhez, and also *PLREIII*, s.v. *Mezezius*, 887-8. For the Gnu<sup>561</sup> family, which moved from north of Lake Van to Byzantine territory see *EH* 374-5, ToumanofT, *Studies* 205.

562 Armenia: *Hayastan erkir*, i.e. Roman Armenia. In classical Armenian *Hayastan* is not used alone for 'Armenia' but in apposition with *erkir*, *ashkharh*, or some other noun.

563 For this forced act of communion see Garitte, *Narratio* 304-7. It was part of the continuing Roman pressure on the Armenians within their borders to conform to the imperial church. But no permanent success was achieved. Cf. the earlier division between pro- and anti-Chalcedonian Armenian Catholicos Movses and Yovhan, 91 above.

564 Statement of faith: *dzemark hawatoy*, a standard expression. The 'document' sent is called *tumar*, as of Leo's 'Tome.'

565 The famous Kolb is in Gugark', north-east of Ayrarat. Other sources do not refer to salt-mines there. But Hewsens, *ASX* 211, refers to a town Kolb in the district Tsakat' of Ayrarat [on the right bank of the Araxes just below the junction of the Axurean], now called 'Tuzluca'. Cf. Honigmann, *Ostgrenze* 192. Since *tuz* is Turkish for 'salt', this may be the place to which Sebeos refers. It was near Maurikopolis, which may have been the capital of Byzantine Lower Armenia [Hewsens, ^5^215, n.279], and would have been an appropriately protected spot for a pro-Chalcedonian Catholicos. Ezr clearly did not feel safe without a solid Byzantine presence. Y D., XVIII, adds a long rebuke of Ezr by Yovhan Mayrago- mets'. Vardan 61, turns Ezr's 'deceit' [according to Y.D.] into his 'ignorance'.

until the general satisfied his wishes and established detachments of soldiers and the distribution of stores over the whole land.

Now the *aspet* Varaztirots', called by the kings Jawitean Khosrov,<sup>566</sup> son of the great Khosrov Shum, brought complete prosperity to all the land of Armenia. But he did not submit or pay allegiance to the great prince in Atrpatakan who was called Khorokh Ormizd, nor likewise after him to his son Rostom, who was prince in the territory of Atrpatakan.<sup>567</sup> There was a great altercation between the two. Then the Greek general Mzhezheh began to slander concerning the *aspet* to prince Rostom who was in Atrpatakan. 'Let him not remain in Armenia; otherwise there will be great dissension between the two kings.' So he sent his brother as *darik* 'pet'<sup>568</sup> to go and winter at Dvin, and then arrest the *aspet* and bring him back. But because all the Persian army loved the *aspet*, one of the princes gave him a strong warning and said: 'Look out for yourself, because tomorrow they will arrest you.' So the *aspet*, taking his wife and children, fled by night and travelled to Taron.<sup>568</sup> Arriving there, he gathered his troops and requested an oath from king Heraclius that he would not remove him from his own land. Having received a reliable oath, he went to meet him in the land of Asorestan. Then king Heraclius swore to him and said: 'Remain with me a little time, then I shall send you with great honour to your country.' He honoured him more than all the *patriks* who were in his kingdom. On returning to the palace, he gave him royal residences, cushions of silver,<sup>569</sup> and very many treasures. And his son Smbat was dear to Heraclius' chamberlain.<sup>570</sup>

[133] This is the wicked deed, a great crime, attributed to<sup>571</sup> the son of the emperor Heraclius, whose name was Athalarikos, which stifled<sup>572</sup> the

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566 For this title see **103**, n.331; *aspet*, as n.538 above.

567 Khorokh: above **130**. For further references to Rostom see *AG* 71; *Justi* 263, no.11.

568 Sebeos implies that the Bagratunis were already in control of Taron, though Toumanoff, *Studies* 202, puts this later.

569 Cushions: *gahoyk'*, a common gift, cf. 101,144; for the term see n.163.

570 Chamberlain: *senekapet*, *EH* 557-8. For Smbat see Toumanoff, *Dynasties* 112, and *HAnJB*, no.16 with many references to other Armenian sources.

571 Attributed to: *eleal i* + acc. case, not 'committed by'.

572 Which stifled: Abgaryan, n.457, corrects the *i Khorkhoruneats'*, of the MSS to *or kholkholeats'*. Athalarikos was not a member of the Khorkhoruni family, but a bastard son of the emperor's! For the plot see Nikephoros, ch. 13 and ch.24.

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heart of his father and destroyed his splendid soul and the beauty of his face, and was the cause of his own [destruction]<sup>74</sup> and that of many. For he joined Theodore, the nephew of Heraclius called *Magistros*, and many of the magnates of the city and Vahan Khorkhoruni.<sup>573</sup> They all conspired to kill Heraclius and set his son Athalarikos on the throne of the kingdom. Varaztirots', son of Khosrov Shum Smbat, was involved in that plot, but he did not agree to the murder of the king and his sons. Rather, he said: 'You call them vicars of God;<sup>574</sup> so it is not right to participate in that act, and I will not join with you in that plot.'

The details of the plot were conveyed in full to the ear of the king by a certain *curator*,<sup>575</sup> who had been involved in the plot. When the king knew of it for certain, he ordered that the next morning his son and nephew and all their fellow-conspirators be arrested and the nose and right hand of them all be cut off. But to the *aspet* he sent a message: 'In return for your acting thus towards me, and not wishing to lay your hand on my life<sup>576</sup> and that of my sons, I shall not set my hand on you or your sons. But go and stay where I shall command you, and I shall have mercy upon you.' Although his supporters often cried out: 'Let him die', yet he did not wish to heed them. But he ordered him and his wife and children to be taken to an island and the city of constraint which they call 'Exile'.<sup>577</sup>

Also involved in that plot was Dawit' Saharuni,<sup>578</sup> whom Mzhezh arrested and sent to the palace. But on the way he cut his bonds and

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573 Theodore: son of Heraclius' brother Theodoros [for whom see *PLREIU*, s.v. no. 163, 1277-79, and whom Sebeos mistakenly calls Theodosius on 135]. Vahan Khorkhoruni is only attested in Sebeos, *HAnjB*. no.31.

574 Vicars: *telapah*, lit. 'locum-tenens,' as of Modestos, 116. For the concept cf. Dvornik, *Political Philosophy* II, 627: 'the emperor is the vicar of God'. Ibid. 616-20, for Eusebius of Caesarea's views regarding Constantine.

575 *Curator*, as n.412.

576 Life: lit. 'blood', a common Armenian usage.

577 Exile: *ak'sor*, *AG* 301; Sebeos uses the common noun as a place-name. Africa is intended, as is clear from 143: Varaztirots' returns from there. Cf. also 93, where his father is exiled. Nikephoros, ch.24, notes that Athalarikos was sent to the island of Prinkipos, and Theodore to Gozzo (Malta).

578 For Dawit' see *HAnjB*, no.16; for the Saharuni house, *EH* 404. and Toumanoff, *Studies* 214. Thierry, 'Heraclius', notes his role in the restoration of the Cross and the construction of the church at Mren. Toumanoff, *Studies* 214, notes that nothing is known of this family after Dawit'.

568 The MSS read *garik'pet* [see Abgaryan n.454], a form queried by Hiibschmann, *AG* 34. The correct form is given by Marquart, *Eransahr* 112 at n.6. See also MacKenzie, *Pahlavi Dictionary*, s.v. *darigbed*, 'palace superintendent'.

574 Destruction: *korusl*. The word is not in the MSS but has been added by Abgaryan, n.458, for the sake of the sense.

killed the men who were escorting him. He returned and united under his command the Armenian army. Attacking Mzhez Gnumi the Greek general, he defeated and killed both him and Varaz Gnel Gnumi.<sup>581</sup> Then he took for himself command of the army with the agreement and support of all the troops.

Then the king, at the request of the princes, made him prince over all the territories [of Armenia], bestowed on him the title of *curopalates*, and confirmed him in his service.<sup>42</sup> He held the office for three years with great magnificence; then, discredited by his soldiers, he was expelled. |134| Since all the nobles<sup>582</sup> were disunited, they ruined this land of Armenia. But only the pious and valiant prince of the province of Rshtunik', Teodoros, kept the troops of his region in continuous readiness, and by constant attention day and night in accordance with his noble wisdom he inflicted no few losses on his enemies. Building up the island of Alt'amar, from there he saved many provinces.<sup>583</sup>

[CHAPTER 42]<sup>584</sup>

*[The abolition of the Sasanian (line) which had held power for 542 years. The Jews betake themselves to the Ismaelites. The appearance of Mahmet and his uniting the Ismaelites. The first battle between the Greeks and Ismaelites in Arabia. Defeat of the Greeks; they take the Cross in flight to Constantinople. The Ismaelites rule over Egypt; another army of Ismaelites takes Ctesiphon. Eclipse of the kingdom of the Persians. Death of Heraclius and the reign of his son Constantine. Entry of the sons of Ismael into Armenia. Capture of Dvin and captivity*

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581 Varaz Gnel is not mentioned elsewhere, and this is the only attested person with that double name: *HAnjB*. s.v. Gnel is a common name in the Gnumi family.

582 Nobles: *azatk* (cf. nn. 162, 173 above. The term *nakharar* [*EH* 549-50]) is not used in the remaining section of this History [save on **137.144. 148. 149**].

583 Building up: *shineal*, not 'settling', because the prince of Rshtunik' had a castle there in the fourth century, *Buzandaran* III 8. From there: *and*, which implies 'there'. But Alt'amar is small and 'composed largely of grey limestone' [Hewsen, *ASX* 185, n.147], so could not support a large population. Presumably Teodoros made it a secure base. Y.D., XIX 4, is less positive.

584 Macler, ch.30. Hiibschmann's translation of Sebeos, *Zur Geschichte Armeniens* begins here. T.A.. 98, resumes his narrative based on Sebeos.



## HISTORY

*of 35,000 men from Dvin. Office of patrik of T'eodoros Rshtuni. The Ismaelites plunder many lands as far as the borders of India.]*

I shall speak of the stock of Abraham, not of the free one but of that born from the handmaiden, concerning which the unerring divine word was fulfilled: 'His hands on all, and the hands of all on him.'<sup>586</sup>

Then the twelve tribes of all the clans<sup>585</sup> of the Jews went and gathered at the city of Edessa. When they saw that the Persian army had departed from them and had left the city in peace, they shut the gate and fortified themselves within. They did not allow the army of the Roman empire to enter among them. Then the Greek king Heraclius ordered it to be besieged. When they realized that they were unable to resist him in battle,<sup>586</sup> they parleyed for peace with him. Opening the gates of the city, they went and stood before him. Then he ordered them to go and remain in each one's habitation, and they departed. Taking desert roads, they went to Tachkastan,<sup>587</sup> to the sons of Ismael, summoned them to their aid and informed them of their blood relationship through the testament of scripture.<sup>588</sup> But although the latter were persuaded of their close relationship, yet they were unable to bring about agreement within their great number, because their cults were divided from each other.

[135] At that time<sup>588</sup> a certain man from among those same sons of Ismael whose name was Mahmet, a merchant/<sup>589</sup> as if by God's command appeared to them as a preacher [and] the path of truth. He taught them to recognize the God of Abraham, especially because he was learned and informed in the history of Moses.<sup>590</sup> Now because the

585 Tribes, clans: *azgk\ ts'etk'*; for the names see below.

586 Lit. 'when *they* realized that *we are* unable'. It is common in Armenian to insert first person direct speech into the middle of a narrative or reported speech.

587 The land of the Tachiks, who are nomadic Arabs; see **74**, n.1 18 (Arabia).

588 Asolik. II 2, dates the appearance of Muhammad to the 12th year of Dawit' Sahar- uni, the 68th year of the Armenian era [which began 11 July 552], thus 619/620.

589 Merchant: *t'angar*, AG 303; Abgaryan corrects the MSS *t'ankangar* on the basis of the version in T'. A., 99.

590 History of Moses: *Movsisakanpatmut'iwñ*, as in Koriwn, ch.2, 24, the Pentateuch. For Armenian views about Muhammad and his teaching see the collected texts in

582 This is the first use of the title *ishkhan*, 'prince' of Armenia. For the title see Ter- Ghevondian, 'Prince d'Armenie'. Dawit', prince of Armenia 635-638(7), was also the first to be titled *europalates*, for which title see *ODB*, s.v.

586 Gen. 16.12b; according to v. 12a Ismael, son of Hagar the handmaid, would be a 'wild man', which is used in Pseudo-Methodius of the Ismaelites, XI3,17.

590 As being sons of Abraham, the Jews from Sarah, the Arabs from Ismael. Armenians also derived the Parthians from Abraham through his wife Ketura [Gen. 25.2]; M.X. II 68. This is stressed in *Yachakhapatum Chark'* XX 228, and in *tewond*, ch. 1.

command was from on high, at a single order they all came together in unity of religion. Abandoning their vain cults, they turned to the living God who had appeared to their father Abraham. So Mahmet legislated<sup>544</sup> for them: not to eat carrion, not to drink wine, not to speak falsely, and not to engage in fornication. He said: 'With an oath God promised this land to Abraham and his seed after him for ever.<sup>395</sup> And he brought about as he promised during that time while he loved Israel. But now you are the sons of Abraham, and God is accomplishing his promise to Abraham and his seed for you. Love sincerely only the God of Abraham, and go and seize your land which God gave to your father Abraham. No one will be able to resist you in battle, because God is with you.'

Then they all gathered in unison 'from Ewila as far as Sur, which is opposite Egypt';<sup>600</sup> and they went from the desert of P'aran, 12 tribes according to the tribes of the families of their patriarchs. They divided the 12,000 men, like the sons of Israel,<sup>601</sup> into their tribes - a thousand men from each tribe - to lead them into the land of Israel. They set off, camp by camp according to each one's patriarchal line: 'Nabeut', Kedar, Abdiwl, Mabsam, Masmay, Iduma, Mase, K'oldad, T'eman, Yetur, Nap'es and Kedmay. These are the tribes of Ismael.<sup>602</sup> They reached Erabovt' of Moab in the territory of Ruben, for the Greek army had camped in Arabia<sup>99</sup> Falling on them unexpectedly, they put

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600 Gen. 25.18. P'aran is associated with Hagar, Ismael's mother, in Gen. 21.21, and with the 12 tribes of Israel in Num. 31.4.

601 Num. 31.4-5.

602 Gen. 25.13-16. This list is not found in Y.D., T.A. or Asohk; but Vardan, 63, copies Sebeos. Mabsam: The MSS have *Mosamb*, plus *Mast*, making 13 tribes! Abgaryan, n.469, suggests that *Mast* entered the text as a corruption of *Mase*, and that the correct form was later added. But this does not explain its position in the list.

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them to the sword, and put to flight Teodos the brother of the emperor Heraclius. Then they returned and camped in Arabia.

All the remnants of the people of the sons of Israel gathered and united together;<sup>603</sup> they formed a large army. Following that **[136]** they sent messages to the Greek king, saying: 'God gave that land to our father Abraham as a hereditary possession and to his seed after him. We are the sons of Abraham. You have occupied our land long enough. Abandon it peacefully and we shall not come into your territory. Otherwise, we shall demand that possession from you with interest.'<sup>604</sup>

But the emperor did not agree. He did not respond appropriately to their message, but said: 'This land is mine, your lot of inheritance is the desert.'<sup>605</sup> Go in peace to your land.' He began to collect troops, about 70,000, appointed as general over them one of his trusted eunuchs, and ordered them to go to Arabia. He commanded them not to fight with them, but to look to their own defence until he should have gathered other troops to send to their assistance. But when they reached the Jordan and crossed into Arabia, they left their camps on the river bank and went on foot to attack their army. The latter posted part of their force in ambush on either side, and arranged the multitude of their tents around their camp. Bringing up the herds of camels, they tethered them around the camp and their tents, and bound their feet with cords. This was the fortification of their camp. The others, though wearied from their march, were able at certain places to penetrate the fortification of the camp, and began to slaughter them. Unexpectedly, those lying in ambush rose up from their places and attacked them. Fear of the Lord fell on the Greek army, and they turned in flight before them. But they could not flee, because of the density of the sand, since their feet sank in up to their shins; and there was great distress from the heat of the sun, and the enemy's sword pursued them. So all the generals fell and were slain. The number of the fallen was more than 2,000. A few of them escaped and fled to a place of refuge.

They [the Ismaelites]<sup>606</sup> crossed the Jordan and camped at Jericho.

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603 Although it is the sons of Ismael who send the following letter to Heraclius, T.A., 101, indicates that the Jews and Ismaelites united, 'forming a large army'. For this passage see Hoyland, 'Sebeos'. Cf. Rom. 9.27,11.5.

604 Interest: *tokos*, AG 384: for the theme, Mt. 25.27, Lk. 19.23.

605 The Ismaelites lived in the "wilderness", Gen. ch.37.

606 As often above, the subject is not clearly expressed. The term 'Ismaelite' is not actually used by Sebeos until **137** [disregarding the title to this chapter].

Thomson, 'Muhammad'. Sebeos is the first to describe Islam and the views presented are disparate.

594 Legislated: *awrinadre*. The most usual epithet for Muhammad in Armenian is *awrensdir*, 'legislator'; cf. the Greek *nomothetes*. Note also that 'religion' in the previous sentence is *awrenk*, 'laws', a standard expression for the Christian, and especially Armenian Christian, religion. It is a major theme in Elishe, based on the Maccabees. Carrion: *mereloti*, as Lev. 5.2, etc.

595 Cf. Gen. ch.15.

599 Rabbath Moab, east of the Dead Sea, belongs to Ruben: Josh. 13.14.

Then dread of them fell on all the inhabitants of the land, and they all submitted to them. That night the people of Jerusalem took in flight the Lord's Cross and all the vessels of the churches of God. Setting sail on the sea in ships, they brought them to the palace of Constantinople.<sup>604</sup> Then, having requested an oath from them, they submitted to them.

But the Greek king could raise no more troops to oppose them. So they divided their forces into three parts. One part went to Egypt and seized [the country] as far as Alexandria. One part was in the north, opposing the Greek empire. And in the twinkling [1371] of an eye they occupied [the land] from the edge of the sea as far as the bank of the great river Euphrates;<sup>605</sup> and on the other side of the river [they occupied] Urha and all the cities of Mesopotamia. The third part [went] to the east, against the kingdom of Persia.

The Persian kingdom was eclipsed at that time, and their army was divided into three parts.<sup>606</sup> Then the army of Ismael, which had gathered in the regions of the east, went and besieged Ctesiphon, because there the Persian king was residing. The army of the land of the Medes gathered under the command of their general Rostom,<sup>607</sup> 80,000 armed men, and marched to do battle with them. Then they left the city and crossed to the other side of the river Tigris. The others also crossed the river and pursued them closely, but the former did not stop until they reached their own borders, the village called Hert'ichan.<sup>61,x</sup> The latter pressed hard behind them, and they camped on the plain. The Armenian general Mushel Mamikonean<sup>608</sup>, son of Dawit', was also there with 3,000 fully-armed men; and prince Grigor, lord of Siwnik', with a thousand. A mutual attack ensued. The Persian army fled before them, but they pursued them and put them to the sword. All the leading nobles<sup>609</sup>

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604 Cf. the version of the flight of the Cross on 131 above, and n.560. tewond devotes his first chapter to this Greek defeat and the Muslim conquest of Palestine, whereas Y.D., XIX 7-8, dismisses these events in a few lines. T'.A., 102, abbreviates Sebeos.

605 The wording is reminiscent of lands promised to Joshua in Josh. 1.4.

606 See above 130.

607 Rostom was first mentioned above 132.

608 Mushel: *HAnjB*, no.14. Dawit': *HAnjB*, no.13. Grigor: *HAnjB*, no.29. He is also mentioned in later sources and the *Book of Letters*.

609 Nobles: *nakharar*, see n.583 above.

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were killed, and the general Rostom was also killed. They also slew Mushel with his two nephews, and Grigor lord of Siwnik' with one son. The others escaped in flight to their own country.

When the survivors of the Persian army reached Atrpatakan,<sup>610</sup> they gathered together in one place and installed Khorokhazat<sup>611</sup> as their general. He hastened to Ctesiphon, took all the treasures of the kingdom, the inhabitants of the cities, and their king, and made haste to bring them to Atrpatakan. After they had set out and had gone some distance, unexpectedly the Ismaelite army attacked them. Terrified, they abandoned the treasures and the inhabitants of the city,<sup>612</sup> and fled. Their king also fled and took refuge with the army of the south. But these [the Ismaelites] took all the treasure and returned to Ctesiphon, taking also the inhabitants of the cities, and they ravaged the whole land.

Then the blessed Heraclius completed his life at a good old age. The days of his reign were 30 years.<sup>613</sup> He made his son Constantine swear to exercise [mercy]<sup>614</sup> on all the transgressors whom he had ordered to be exiled, and to restore them [138] to each one's place. He also made him swear regarding the *aspet* that he would bring him and his wife and children back, and establish him in his former rank.<sup>615</sup> 'If he should wish to go to his own country, I have [so] sworn to him. Let not my oath be false. Release him, and let him go in peace.'

Heraclius died, and his son Constantine reigned. And no one was chosen as general in the land of Armenia,<sup>616</sup> because the princes were disunited and had separated from each other.

610 Marquart, *Eransahr* 113, renders 'when the survivors of the Persian troops from Atrpatakan gathered..but the text is clear as it stands.

611 Khorokhazat: *AG* 43; Khorazat in M.D. II18. Justi, 97, gives many Islamic sources.

612 City: singular here, plural above and below.

613 Heraclius died on 11 February 641, 30 years from October 610. Cf. Nikephoros ch.27: Heraclius was 66 years old; he reigned for 30 years, 4 months, and 6 days. Constantine III reigned 11 February to 24 May 641. The entry concerning Heraclius and Constantine interrupts the chronological order of the narrative; the attack on Dvin which follows occurred in 640.

614 Mercy: *olormut'iwñ*. This word is not in the MSS, though the sense requires it. Ab- garyan, n.472, adds this emendation of Malkhasean's, which is based on the same phrase at **143**, line 12 [of the Armenian text].

615 For the exile of Varaztirots' see above **133**.

616 General: the title of *sparapel*, 'commander-in-chief,' had originally been the privilege of the Mamikonean family; *EH* 560-1; cf. n.18 above. But here and just above Sebeos uses the broader term *zawravar*.

608 This is in the region of al-Hira, *Eransahr* 113, n.l, where al-Qadisiyya was situated. Sebeos is describing the famous battle of 6 January 638. See also M.D. II18. For this decisive battle see the Historical Commentary.



A destructive army came from Asorestan along the road of Dzor<sup>618</sup> to the land of Taron; they seized it and Bznunik' and Aliovit. Continuing their march to the valley of Berkri<sup>619</sup> through Ordspoy and Gogovit, they debouched in Ayarat. None of the Armenian troops was able to bring the grievous news to the town of Dvin,<sup>620</sup> save three of the princes who went to gather the scattered army - T'eodoros Vahewuni, Khach'ean Arawelean, and Shapuh Amatuni.<sup>621</sup> They fled to Dvin, and on reaching the bridge of the Metsamawr<sup>622</sup> destroyed it, having crossed to spread the news in the town. They brought together in the citadel all the people of the province who had come for the vintage of the vineyards. But T'eodoros went on to the city of Nakhchawan.

When the enemy<sup>623</sup> reached the Metsamawr bridge, he was unable to cross. But they had as their guide Vardik, prince of Mokk', who was called Aknik.<sup>624</sup> Then crossing by the bridge of the Metsamawr they inflicted the whole land with raiding, and gathered very much booty and many captives. They came and camped at the edge of the forest of Khos-rovakert.<sup>625</sup>

On the fifth day they attacked the city. It was delivered into their

618 There is more than one Dzor. 'valley'. This is perhaps the pass of Bitlis, the Dzor of the *Buzandaran*, *EH* 469.

619 Berkri is just north-east of Lake Van, *A ON* 341, not in the text of the *ASX*. Ordspoy is a hapax, perhaps identical with the Ordspu mentioned below **145**.

620 Here Dvin, the administrative capital, is surprisingly described as an *awan*. Since it was walled it qualifies as a *k'alak'* [for which see n.314], as just below. See also Historical Commentary.

621 These three are mentioned only in Sebeos. T'eodoros: *HAnjB*, no.7, Shapuh: *HAnjB*, no.4. This is the only example of the name Khach'ean. For the Arawelean house, see Toumanoff, *Studies* 199.

622 The Metsamawr is a wide marshy river flowing into the Araxes from the north which changed its course over the centuries; Hewsens, *ASX* 70. This famous bridge is first mentioned in *Aa* 33, 206.

623 The enemy, *t'shnamin*, which is followed in the *MSS* by the meaningless *B us hay*, see Abgaryan n.475. He supposes this to be dittography of *t'shnamin*, misunderstood by later scribes.

624 Vardik, *HAnjB*, no. 1, is mentioned only here. For the house of Mokk' see Toumanoff, *Studies* 182. Sebeos does not make it clear why the Muslims could cross the broken bridge only with his guidance. *Aknik*, 'little eye', must be a nick-name [cf. *Karmir* of Vardan, **65** above]; it is not attested elsewhere. *Akn* can also mean 'precious stone, gem' and various derived forms for female names are attested from the thirteenth century.

625 This famous hunting preserve in the Metsamawr plain was created by king Khosrov in the fourth century; *Buzandaran* III 8; *EH* 502.

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hands because they surrounded it with smoke. By means of the smoke and the shooting of arrows they pushed back the defenders of the wall. Having set up ladders, they mounted the wall, entered inside, and opened the city gate. The enemy army rushed within and put the multitude of the city's population to the sword. Having plundered the city, they came out and camped in the same encampment. It was the 20th of the month Tre, a Friday.<sup>626</sup> After staying a few days, they left by the same route that they had come, leading away the host of their captives, 35,000 souls.<sup>627</sup> Now the prince of Armenia, the lord of Rshtunik', was lying in ambush in the province of Gogovit, and he attacked them with a few men. But he was unable [139] to resist them and fled before them. They pursued him and slew most of them. Then they proceeded to Asore- stan. This happened in the years of the Catholicos Ezer.<sup>628</sup>

On account of this battle a command came from the emperor [bestowing] the command of the army on Teodoros, lord of Rshtunik', with the rank of *patrik*.<sup>629</sup> This all was brought about through the Catholicos Nerses, who in that same year succeeded to the throne of the Catholicosate in place of the Catholicos Ezer.<sup>630</sup>

Now when the sons of Ismael went to the east from the desert of Sin,<sup>631</sup> their king Amr<sup>632</sup> did not go with them. Being victorious in

626 The 20th of Tre was equivalent to 6 October in the years 640-643. But only in 640 was 6 October a Friday.

627 Souls: *ogi*. In the title to this chapter [a later addition] the masculine noun *ark* 'men', was used. The number 35,000 is identical with that of those taken captive from Jerusalem, 116 above! For the captives cf. Y.D. XIX 10; tewondch.3. But Asolik. II2, associates the 35,000 with the second attack on Dvin in 95 [646/647]; the first attack, in which Teodoros Rshtuni was involved, he dates to 86 [637/638]. The seventh canon of the third council of Dvin [held in 645] deals with the question of second marriages contracted by those whose original spouses had been taken captive on this occasion. It gives no number, merely referring to 'many men and women'. See Book of Armenian Canons, *Kanonagirk' Hayots'* II 205-6.

628 See above 129. He was Catholicos for ten years from 630; see n.540.

629 Command of the army: *zawravarut' iwn* cf. n.138 for *rawravar*.

630 Nerses III, known as *shinol*, 'the builder'. Garitte, *Narratio* 339, dates his period of office 642-662, accepting the year 642 for the raid on Dvin.

631 Desert of Sin: north of the Red Sea, not to be confused with Sinai. See the many references to Sin in Exodus and Numbers during the 40 years' wandering of the 'children *odsraer*. Since *ordi* means both 'son' and 'child', Sebeos may here be deliberately drawing a parallel between the 'children' of Israel and of Ismael.

632 I.e. 'Umar, caliph 634-644. Here Sebeos uses the term *t'agawor*, usually applied to the Roman emperor [or *kaysr*]. Just below he calls the caliph *ark'ay*, which is more commonly used for the Sasanian shah.

battle, they defeated both kingdoms; they occupied [the land] from Egypt as far as the great Taurus mountain, and from the western sea as far as Media and Khuzhastan. Then they penetrated with royal armies into the original borders of the territory of Ismael. The king commanded ships and many sailors to be gathered, to cross the sea to the south-east: to Pars, Sakastan, Sind, Krman, [and] the land of Kuran and Makuran<sup>633</sup> as far as the borders of India. So the troops rapidly made preparations and carried out their orders. They burned the whole land; and taking booty and plunder they returned. After making raids over the waves of the sea, they came back to their own places.

This we heard from men who had been taken as captives to Khuzhastan, [from] Tachkastan.<sup>634</sup> Having been themselves eyewitnesses of these events, they gave this account to us.

#### CHAPTER 43]<sup>635</sup>

*[Concerning the Jews and their wicked plots]*

I shall also speak about the plots of the rebellious Jews, who after gaining help from the Hagarenes for a brief while,<sup>636</sup> decided to rebuild the temple of Solomon. Finding the spot called Holy of Holies, they rebuilt it with base and construction<sup>637</sup> as a place for their prayers. But the Ismaelites, being envious of them, expelled them from that place and called the same house of prayer their own. Then the former built in another spot, right at the base of the temple, another place for their

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633 Kuran and Makuran are often found in Armenian for a distant region, e.g. Elishe 159; see *Eransahr* 31-3 for further details. Makuran is east of Krman on the shore of the Indian Sea; Hewsen, ASX map 73. The MSS read: *Srman* and *Turan*. Abgaryan, n.479, follows the correction of Hiibschmann.

634 To Khuzhastan [from] Tachkastan: *i Khuzhastan Tachkastan?* The lack of a preposition before Tachkastan has prompted various explanations; see Abgaryan n.480. These two sentences seem to come from Sebeos' source.

#### **635 Macler.ch.31.**

636 This is the first use by Sebeos of 'Hagarenes' for the Muslims, whom he usually calls 'Ismaelites', or 'sons of Ismael'. Sebeos does not use the term 'Saracens', popular in later texts, or *aylazgik'*, 'foreigners', adopted from the term used in the Armenian Old Testament to describe Philistines.

637 Base and construction: *khariskh, shinuats*, which seem to imply a building constructed on a platform. Sebeos is referring to the building of the mosque of al-Aksa in the time of Umar. For the impact on Christians of the later Dome of the Rock [begun or ended in 691/692], see Reinink, *Pseudo-Methodius*, Introduction to translation, xx-xxii.

prayer. [140] There they proposed their evil plot, desiring to fill Jerusalem from end to end with blood and to exterminate all the Christians from Jerusalem.

Now a certain man from among the great ones of Ismael came to worship at the place of their prayer alone. Three of the leading Jews encountered him; they had killed two pigs which they had brought to the place of prayer, and whose blood they had scattered on the walls and floor of the building. When the man saw them, he stopped and said something to them. They responded, passed by him, and departed. As soon as he had entered inside to pray, he saw the wicked deed, and immediately turned back to seize the men. Since he could not find them, he kept silent and went home. Then many people entered, saw the crime, and broke the news to the city. The Jews informed the prince that Christians had defiled the place of prayer. The prince gave an order, and they assembled all the Christians. While they were intending to put them to the sword, the man came, stood before them and said: 'Why would you shed so much blood unjustly? Order all the Jews to be gathered, and I shall point out the guilty ones.' When they had assembled them all, he went into their midst and identified the three men who had met him. Having seized them, they condemned them with fearful penalties until they revealed the plot. Because their prince was from among the Jews, he ordered six men to be killed, the ring-leaders of the plot. The others he let go to their own homes.

[CHAPTER 44]<sup>638</sup>

*[The death of Constantine and reign of Heraclius, son of Heraclius by his second wife. Valentinus comes to Constantinople and installs as king Constans, son of Constantine. War between Persians and Ismaelites in the province of Media, and defeat of the Persians. The Ismaelite brigand in accordance with the prediction of the prophet Daniel. Wicked plot of Valentinus and his death. Return from exile of the aspet, son of Shum Khosrov. T'umas seizes Teodoros by deceit, and sends him in bonds to Constantinople. Teodoros is vindicated and returns to Armenia with the rank of general. The aspet flees from Constantinople, but submits again to the Greeks with the title of curopalates; his death. Division of the army*

*of Ismael into three sections and their invasion of Ayrarat, the region of Sefhakangund, and Aluank'.]*

On the death of Heraclius his son Constantine reigned, and he appointed as general over his army Valentinus, who was called Arsacid.<sup>639</sup> He ordered his troops to go to the east.

[141] Constantine reigned for [only] a few days. He was put to death in a plot of his own step-mother Martine, wife of Heraclius.<sup>640</sup> Then Heraclius reigned, son of Heraclius by Martine Augusta, because Constantine was [born] from his first wife.<sup>641</sup> When Valentinus [heard] what had happened, he attacked him with his army in Constantinople. Having seized Martine, he cut out her tongue and then killed her with her two sons. He installed as king Constans, son of Constantine, and called him Constantine after the name of his father.<sup>642</sup> Then he himself assembled his troops and went to the east.

It happened in the first year of Constans king of the Greeks, and in the tenth year of Yazkert king of the Persians,<sup>643</sup> that the Persian army of 60,000 fully armed men assembled to oppose Ismael. The Ismaelites put in the field against them 40,000 armed with swords;<sup>644</sup> and they joined battle with each other in the province of Media. For three days the battle continued, while the infantry of both sides diminished. Suddenly the Persian army was informed that an army had come to the support of the Ismaelites. The Persian troops fled from their camp all through the

639 Toumanoff accepts his Arsacid origin; *Dynasties* 89, and *PLRE* III, s.v. no.5, 1354-55, for Valentinus, pretender to the empire who died in 644.

640 Constantine III reigned 11 February-24 May 641. His mother was Heraclius' first wife, Eudocia. Step-mother: the MSS have *mawre*, 'mother', which Abgaryan emends to *mawrue*, 'step-mother', following Y.D. XIX 22, and later Armenian historians. Martine: the second reference to the name is a correction by Patkanean for the *Mawrineay* of the MSS, Abgaryan n.483. She was the niece of Heraclius; Nikephoros, ch. 11, calls the marriage incestuous.

641 Heraklonas, Heraclius II, reigned from May to the end of September 641. The following 'heard', *lueal*, is Abgaryan's emendation; see his n.484.

642 Constans II Pogonatos reigned September 641 September 668.

643 The tenth year of Yazkert III [632-652] corresponds to 641 /642.

644 Armed with swords: *suseramerksats*, 'with drawn swords'. It is common in the Old Testament, but not found in the classic Armenian historians. M.D., II 18, describes the battle of Nihawand in 642, and calls its site Beklal. In the province of Media: *I Marss gawari*, a curious form, which has led to the supposition that there is a province of Iran called Mars, not identical with *Mark*, the Armenian name for Media.

night. The survivors of the Ismaelite army attacked them in the morning, but they found no one in the camp. Spreading forays across the whole land, they put man and

beast to the sword. Capturing 22 fortresses, they slaughtered all the living beings in them.

Who could describe the fearful calamity of the Ismaelite brigand who set fire to sea and land? However, the blessed Daniel had earlier prophesied such a disaster which befell the land. Through four beasts he indicated the four kingdoms which would arise on earth.<sup>645</sup> First of all the kingdom of the west, the beast in human form, which is that of the Greeks. This is clear from his saying: 'The thick wings were plucked, and it was exterminated from the earth.'<sup>646</sup> He speaks about the extermination of devilish idolatry: 'And it stood as on the feet of a man, and the heart of a man was given it.'<sup>647</sup> 'And behold the second beast was like a bear, and it stood to one side',<sup>648</sup> to the east; [142] he means the Sasanian kingdom. 'Having three ribs in its mouth',<sup>649</sup> the kingdoms of the Persians, Medes and Parthians. This is clear from what they were saying to him: 'Arise, eat the flesh of many',<sup>650</sup> just as it ate, as all know. 'Now the third beast was like a leopard; there were four wings of a bird on it, and the beast had four heads.'<sup>651</sup> He means the kingdom of the north, Gog and Magog and their two companions, to which was given authority to fly powerfully in their time in the northern regions. 'The fourth beast was fearful and amazing, and its teeth were of iron, and its claws of bronze. It ate and broke in pieces, and crushed the remnants under foot.'<sup>652</sup> This fourth, arising from the south, is the kingdom of Ismael, just as the archangel explained: 'The fourth beast, the fourth kingdom, shall arise, which shall be greater than all [other] kingdoms; and it will

645 The following is based on Daniel, ch.7, though there the kingdoms are not identified. In ch.8, Daniel identifies the Medes, Persians, and Greeks. In the *Life of Nerses* 94, the four kingdoms are: that of the eagle - the Medes; that of the bear - the Babylonians; that of the leopard - the Persians; the fourth one - the Romans.

646 Dan. 7.4a.

647 7.4b.

648 7.5a.

649 7.5b.

650 7.5b contd.

651 7.6.

652 7.7. Claws of bronze: as in the critical text of Cowe, *Daniel*, not in Zohrab; further discussion in Cowe, 396-9. See also 177 for the same quotation.

consume the whole earth.<sup>653</sup> 'And the ten horns, the ten kings, shall arise. And after them will rise up another who is greater in evil than all the previous ones';<sup>654</sup> and what follows in order.

In the second year of Constans,<sup>655</sup> grandson of the blessed Heraclius, Valentinus planned to deceive the senate by sophistry<sup>656</sup> and to elevate himself to royal rank, so that having crowned himself he might thus exercise his military command. He increased the burden of subjection on the inhabitants of the city; and joining many other troops to the 3,000 armed men he had brought with him, he secured his defence. Then the men of the city gathered in the holy church of God around the patriarch, and told him to remove the burden of subjection. They sent [word] to Valentinus to remove that oppression, but he did not wish to heed them. One of the princes was there, called Antoninus; he said to Valentinus: 'What is this union and plot of theirs? How did they dare to send such audacious proposals to you? But if you give me permission, I shall go and destroy their union and plot. And I shall chase them off each to his own place, so that your will may be accomplished.' He said: 'Go and do as you have proposed.' He arose and went with a thousand men.

When he had entered the church he began to punish their leaders with the bastinado. [143] The patriarch stood up and said: 'It is inappropriate and wrong to do such a thing in this place.' Antoninus attacked him and struck him a blow on the jaw, saying: 'Keep your place.' Then the crowd was aroused, and they fell on him. They forcibly dragged him by the foot into the middle of the city and burned him with fire. Valentinus was informed, and trembling gripped him. Immediately the crowd descended on him, and dragging him out of his house cut off his head. Taking him to the spot where they had burned Antoninus, they burned him too in the same place. They confirmed Constans on the throne of the kingdom;

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653 7.23. The fourth beast, the fourth kingdom: Corrected by Abgaryan, n.492, on the basis of Daniel, for 'the beast of the fourth kingdom' in the MSS. This interpretation of the four kingdoms, ending with Islam, is not attested prior to Sebeos. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It* 535, draws attention to the fact that the four kingdoms are not successive but are associated with the four quarters of the earth.

654 7.24. Pseudo-Methodius, X-XI, indicates that the sons of Hagar will fight with the Romans after the destruction of Persia. This text is later than Sebeos, dating from the last decade of the seventh century.

655 I.e. 642/643.

656 Sophistry: *chartarut'iwn*, 'art or skill', especially rhetorical.

## HISTORY

and they made general a certain Teodoros, one of the loyal Armenian princes among those from the Greek sector.<sup>6:17</sup>

When the latter took the command he begged the king as a personal favour to have mercy on those whom he had exiled to Africa, especially as regards the *aspet*, son of Smbat called Khosrov Shum.<sup>657</sup> God softened the king's heart, and he ordered them to be brought to the royal city. He received them as friends of the kingdom, and appointed his son Smbat as first *spat'ar* among all the *spat'ars* and *kandidat*,<sup>658</sup> And then he re-established him in his former rank in the fifth year of his reign. Likewise [he promoted] Vahan Khorkhoruni and still others.<sup>659</sup> He sent to Armenia a certain prince called T'umas.<sup>660</sup> When the latter arrived, he did not wish to break the pact between the emperor and the prince of the Medes. He brought all the princes into agreement with himself, went to the prince of the Medes and made peace proposals to him. He received from him many gifts, and promised him with an oath that he would have Teodoros brought in bonds to the palace, because he was the prince of Armenia.<sup>661</sup> Then he returned to the Armenian army.

When he [Teodoros] reached the land of Kotayk',<sup>662</sup> suddenly they attacked him, seized and bound him, and had him taken before the king. But when king Constans<sup>663</sup> heard of this, he was greatly troubled, because it had not been by his command that he was bound. So he ordered him to be released from his bonds and that the writ of accusation

657 See above 133, for the exile of Varaztirots'.

658 For Smbat, grandson of Smbat, see the family line in Toumanoff, *Dynasties* 112, and *HAnJB*, no.16. *Spat'ar*: *forspatharios* and *kandidatos* see the *ODB*, s.v.; they both refer to members of the imperial bodyguard. The fifth year is 645/646. The chronology here is confused; for an interpretation see the Historical Commentary.

659 Vahan was mentioned above 133.

660 T'umas is not mentioned in other Armenian sources. The title 'prince', *ishkhan*, could refer either to office or to status; perhaps here it renders the Greek *archon*. The 'prince of the Medes' is distinguished from the caliph, the 'king of Ismael'. Cf. 172 below. For a suggested identification of this prince of the Medes see the Historical Commentary.

661 This is Teodoros Rshtuni, not the Armenian mentioned earlier on this page. For his appointment as patrician and general see 139.

662 Kotayk' is in central Ararat, the region of the modern capital Erevan; Hewsen, ЛИГ map 69.

663 Here Constans is called *ark'ay*, not *t'agawor*, as in the previous sentence; see n.632. Cf. n.201 for the title 'Caesar'.

657 This Teodoros is to be distinguished from the lord of Rshtunik'; he does not seem to be otherwise attested in Armenian sources. Loyal: *hawatarim*, 'trustworthy' or 'trusting'.



be read. When he realized the deceit, he commanded him to be summoned to his presence; he received him in a friendly way and with the honour due his princely title. He appointed for him a stipend and sustenance<sup>665</sup> from the treasury. Then he ordered T'umas to be summoned; he did not permit him to enter the palace, but had an enquiry held outside. They acquitted T'eodoros, lord of Rshtunik', on his own words, and justice was done in his regard. As for T'umas, they stripped him of his rank in dishonour. Then the *aspet* and T'eodoros, lord of Rshtunik', met each other and shed tears on each other's neck, for they had been raised together<sup>666</sup> at the court of Khosrov, king of Persia.

[144] However, the *aspet* was not able to submit to the authority of the Greeks, but thought of a trick. He requested permission from king Constans to send four men of his family to Armenia to bring him his possessions. The king ordered him to be given permission. But he disguised himself, took three men with him, and on reaching the seashore showed the royal permit. He boarded a ship and crossed the sea. Travelling rapidly like a bird he quickly reached Tayk', and entrenched himself there, because the people of Tayk'<sup>667</sup> received him with joy.

Then no little disturbance occurred in the land of Armenia. For immediately the royal command reached the Armenian general to secure all the roads and to search all the fortresses of the country. Then it became known that he had come to Armenia and entrenched himself in Tayk'.

Then the Greek general T'eodoros, with [the support of) the princes of the army and the nobles of Armenia, ordered the Catholicos Nerses to be sent to the *aspet*, to bring him an oath of good faith that they would request for him the rank of prince of the country,<sup>668</sup> and that his wife and children be brought to him.

The Catholicos went and confirmed the oath with him that he would not travel anywhere else. Then he returned; and they wrote to king

665 Stipend: *rochik*, as above, n.190. Sustenance: *endunelut'iwn*, not a technical term, 'upkeep'.

666 Raised together: *smdakits'* cf. the habit of raising young nobles at another's house or court, n.297.

667 Tayk' was originally Mamikonean land, but had come to the Bagratunik' by the eighth century; *EH* 493. See *AON* 276-8; Hewsen, *JLST* map 68A.

668 The rank of prince, *ishkhan*, of Armenia was then held by T'eodoros Rshtuni, who was removed from office at the insistence of the 'prince of Media'.

Constans [asking him] to do what he had promised in accordance with the oath. For the *aspet* had written to the king as follows: 'I am your servant, and I am not at all abandoning your service. But because some people told me: "You are to return whence you came",<sup>669</sup> therefore I was frightened and fled. But now, if you reckon me worthy, I shall serve loyally and live and die for your Piety.' Then king Constans ordered him to be made *curopalates* and to be given a crown of that rank and the rank of prince of the country. And he ordered his wife and children to be sent with great eclat; and he had taken to him silver cushions with other magnificent gifts.<sup>670</sup>

Now while the edict giving him the rank of *curopalates* was on its way, suddenly an illness struck him and he died. They took his body and brought it for burial beside his father in Dariwnk'.<sup>671</sup> The king appointed his elder son, whose name was Smbat, to the rank of his father, giving him his ancestral position of *tanuter* and *aspet*, and he made him *drungar* of his army.<sup>672</sup> He gave him [145] a wife from the house of the Arsacids, from among his own relatives,<sup>673</sup> and sent him to the camp to his army. After this he despatched Teodoros, lord of Rshtunik', to Armenia with great honour, and bestowed on him the same authority of general, whether or not the princes of Armenia should so wish. He came and was re-established in the same post.

When the next year came round<sup>674</sup> the Ismaelite army came to Atrpa-takan and split into three. One division [went] to Ayrarat, one division to the region of *Sephakan gund*,<sup>675</sup> and one division to Aluank'. Now those in *Sephakan gund* spread raids over that entire region with the sword,

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669 I.e. back to exile in Africa; see 133, n.579.

670 Silver cushions: for such presents cf. 79, n.163, 101, n.308 and 132, n.570.

671 See above 104, n.341.

672 Ancestral: *bnik*, 'his own', i.e. his by ancestral right. For *tanuter* see n. 129, *aspet* n.80, and for the Byzantine title *Drungarius*, a high military rank, *ODB*, s.v.

673 This implies an Arsacid connection in the house of Heraclius; see Toumanoff, *Studies* 192-3, and idem, 'The Heraclids'. After 'Arsacids' the MSS read 'and'. Abgaryan, n.509, thinks that this 'and' lies awkwardly with the next 'and', and supposes that something has fallen out before 'sent'.

674 Sebeos returns to his narrative of Muslim raids. This is September 642-August 643, not the year after the death of Varaztirots' in 645. See above 141 for the attack in Constans' first year.

675 *Sephakan gund*: This expression originally denoted the 'special [royal military] contingent', EH 529. It came to be applied to a geographical area in the province of Turuberan; *AON*253-4. See also 166.

and took plunder and captives. They gathered in Herewan<sup>676</sup> and attacked the fortress, but were unable to take it. They came to Ordspu,<sup>677</sup> and it too they were unable to take. They left there and camped in Artsap'k', facing the fortress beside the water. They began to attack the fortress, but suffered many losses from the fortress. These [defenders of the fortress] had at their rear an exit at the top on the side of the summit which is called Kakhanaktuts'.<sup>678</sup> So some men descended through this down from the fortress to seek from the fortress of Darawnk' a force in their support. Smbat Bagratuni, son of Varaz Sahak,<sup>679</sup> gave them 40 men. Departing at night they entered the fortress, but did not guard the spot. When the Ismaelites discovered the place of entry] they followed the same path and entered the fortress. They held the place until the morning. They seized ten guards of the place while they slept, and slew them.<sup>680</sup>

[146]

[CHAPTER 45]<sup>681</sup>

*[Teodoros Rshtuni smites the Ismaelites, and releases the booty and captives which they had taken in Artsap'k'. Another army of Ismaelites strikes with the sword from Ayrarat to the borders of Tayk', Iberia, and Aluank'. Naval battle by Constantinople and disastrous defeat of the Ismaelites. The emperor Constans makes peace with Muawiya. Building of the church in the name of the Angels. Accusation by the Greek army against the Armenians concerning matters of faith. Command from*

676 This does not appear to be Erevan, too far to the east. Abgaryan, n.512, suggests *Her ew and*, i.e. '[They gathered in] Her, and there...'

677 Probably identical with Ordspoy, 138, n.619. The Muslims are moving in the area north of Lake Van. Artsap'k' is in Kogovit, north-east of Turuberan; Hewsens, *ASX* 218, n.296. See the account of this same raid in *tewond* ch.3.

678 This place-name is otherwise unattested. Abgaryan, n.515, suggests 'summit', *saroyñ* for the *Asorenay* of the MSS. The phrase is not at all clear. Darawnk' is Dariwnk', as above at n.341, in the centre of Kogovit; Hewsens, *ASX* 211.

679 No other Varaz Sahak is attested. This Smbat is probably not the same Smbat Bagratuni just mentioned as burying his father Varaztirots' in Dariwnk' [at a later date],

680 Sebeos' narrative is unclear. He seems to imply that the Muslims held the place of entry overnight and captured the main fortress at first light. The account in *tewond*, ch.3, states that they seized the whole fortress during the night.

681 Macler, ch.33. The following chapter heading completely breaks the narrative sequence.

## HISTORY

*Constans to make union of faith with the Romans. Church council concerning the question of union.]*

In the second year of Constans, in the month Hori on the 23rd day of the month, on a Sunday at dawn,<sup>682</sup> the Ismaelites raised a yell in the fortress from one end to the other, and put them to the sword. Many jumped down and were killed. They brought the women and children down from the fortress, intending to slaughter them. The captives could not be counted, and there were very many cattle. The next morning the general of Armenia, Teodoros, attacked them with his army; falling on them<sup>683</sup> he inflicted an enormous slaughter. There were 3,000 fully armed men, the elite of all the Ismaelite troops, and none survived save a few who escaped on foot and found safety in the fen.<sup>684</sup> The Lord rescued on that day the multitude of prisoners from the hands of the Ismaelites, and he crushed Ismael with a great slaughter. Two princes of Ismael were killed, Ot'man and Ogbay,<sup>685</sup> and it was a great victory for the Armenian general. The Armenian general had taken to Constans from the battle 100 select horses as a gift. When the king received them, he and all the palace were very happy, and he returned great thanks.

Then the army which was in the region of Ayrarat struck with the sword as far as Tayk', Iberia, and Aluank', taking booty and prisoners. It moved on to Nakhchawan to [join] the army which was attacking the fortress of Nakhchawan. However, they were unable to take it. They did take the fortress of Khram;<sup>686</sup> [147] they slaughtered [its garrison] with the sword, and they took captive the women and children.

Then the [general] in the territory of Palestine<sup>687</sup> ordered many fleets to be prepared. He boarded a ship and undertook an attack on Constantinople. The naval battle was not successful for him, because the host of

682 In 643 the 23 Hori was 10 August, a Sunday.

683 Teodoros ... them: not in the MSS, but supplied by Abgaryan, n.521, from a sixteenth-century fragment in Mat 1343.

684 Fen: *Shamb*; no such place name is found in the *A ON* or *A SX*. There is a fen not far north of Dariwnk'; Abgaryan, n.522, notes the 'Fen of Kogovit' in the map G6 of Eremyan. *Hayastane*.

685 Ogbay: Ogomay in the MSS; corrected by Abgaryan, n.523, on the basis of tewond, ch.3, who mentions together Ot'man and Ogbay.

686 Khram: *AON435*; on the Araxes below Nakhchawan.

687 I.e. Muawiya, 'Mawias' in Armenian, named later in the paragraph. Fleets: *nawa-tormits* in the plural.

their army opposed him with ships and destroyed them on the high seas. They repelled many by fire, and drove off many in flight. However, king Constans was terrified, and he reckoned it better to give tribute and make peace through ambassadors, and bide his time that perchance through God's propitiation he might look on the earth and have mercy on them. He began to parley for peace through ambassadors,<sup>688</sup> and the Ismaelites encouraged the Greeks to complete the terms of the treaty. But the Greek king Constans, because he was young,<sup>689</sup> did not have the authority to carry this out without the agreement of the army. He wrote to Procopius that he should go with it to Damascus to meet Muawiya, prince of the Ismaelite army, and conclude the terms of the treaty in accordance with the army's wishes. So when Procopius saw the royal command and had heard the opinion of the army, he went with them to Damascus, to Muawiya the prince of the Ismaelite army. He indicated the amount of tribute and discussed the border. He received the treaty and departed.<sup>690</sup> At that time Nerses the Catholicos of Armenia decided to build his residence near to the holy churches in the city of Valarshapat, on the road on which - they say - king Trdat had met St Gregory.<sup>691</sup> There he built a church in the name of the Heavenly Angels,<sup>692</sup> who had appeared as a multitude of heavenly hosts in the vision of St Gregory. He built the church as a tall edifice,<sup>693</sup> incomparably wonderful, worthy of the divine honour to which he dedicated it. He brought water, directed [a channel] of the river,<sup>694</sup> and put to cultivation all the rough ground. He planted vines and trees, and surrounded his residence with a high wall, beautifully constructed, to the glory of God.

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688 And bide ... ambassadors: Not in the MSS, but added from the fragment in Mat 1343; see Abgaryan n.526.

689 Constans was born on 7 November 630.

690 Sebeos does not specify the length of the treaty: But see **164**, 'after three years of the peace treaty had fully passed he [Muawiya] no longer wished to make peace...' and **169** for a second reference to this.

691 Aa 817, where Trdat waits to meet Gregory on the latter's return from Caesarea as first bishop of Armenia. For Gregory's vision, see Aa 731-55.

692 Angels: *zart 'nots* | lit. 'of the vigilant ones'. For this as a name for angels see Lampe, s.v. *egregoros*; cf. the Syriac 'ira. See Khatchatrian, *L'Architecture Armenienne* 68-9,84, for this famous church, and the monograph in Armenian by Mnats'akyan. The construction of the church was begun in 644, but not completed until the late 650s; see below **175**.

693 As a tall edifice: *bard: shinuatsov* 'Jit. 'with high constructions (pi.); cf. n.637.

694 From the K'asakh, a tributary of the Araxes which flows by Valarshapat; see Y.D. XIX 47-8.

But that rebellious dragon did not delay.<sup>695</sup> Desiring through his deceit to fight with God, he travailed to raise persecutions on the churches of the land of Armenia. [ 148] For in the years of king Constans, grandson of Heraclius, he brought into play his wicked guile,<sup>696</sup> making the Greek troops in Armenia<sup>697</sup> his accomplices, since the Armenians never did receive the Romans in communion in the body and blood of the Lord. So they wrote a complaint<sup>698</sup> to Constans, the Greek king and to the patriarch: 'We are considered as impious in this country, because they reckon the council of Chalcedon and the Tome of Leo to be an insult to Jesus Christ, and they anathematize them.'<sup>699</sup> Then the king, with the patriarch, gave a command, and they wrote an edict to the Armenians that they should effect a union of faith with Rome and should not scorn the council and that Tome.

There was a man there from the province of Bagrewand, from the village of Bagawan, who was learned in the art of philosophy, called Dawit'.<sup>700</sup> He ordered him to be sent to Armenia, so that they might abandon their opposition. All the bishops and nobles of Armenia gathered at Dvin in the presence of the Christ-loving Catholicos Nerses and the pious Armenian general T'eodoros, lord of Rshtunik'. They saw the king's orders and heard the arguments of the philosopher, who upheld the doctrine of the Trinity with the distinction according to Leo's Tome. When they had heard it, they did not agree to change the true teaching

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695 I.e. Satan; cf. Rev. 12.9, Lampe, s.v. *drakon*, and *Teaching*, Aa 280.

696 Cf. II Cor. 11.3.

697 Armenia: Patkanean's emendation, based on Asolik II 2, for the 'land of the Greeks', *i Yunats' ashkharhin*, of the MSS; see Abgaryan n.531.

698 Complaint: *ambastanut'awn*, 'a formal charge, accusation'.

699 For the Armenian rejection of Chalcedon and the Tome of Leo see the *Book of Letters*, esp. 53, the Syrian letter to Nerses II; 56, his response, and 60, 67, Abdisho's letters to Nerses II at the time of the second council of Dvin in 556. See also Garitte, *Narra- tio* 130-75. For general background, Sarkissian, *The Council of Chalcedon*, and for detailed investigation of the Armenian involvement in the council of Chalcedon itself the more recent articles of Garso'ian, 'Separation'. 'Rome' just below is Constantinople.

700 Bagawan: Bagrawan in the MSS, but corrected by Malkhasean on the basis of Asolik II 2; see Abgaryan n.534. This had been an important pagan site, *F.H* 452. For Dawit', *HAnjB*, no. 19; Asolik, II 2, attributes various works to him. Whether this David lived permanently in Constantinople, or was visiting for study, like many Armenians, is not known; he clearly belonged to the pro-Chalcedonian party.

of St Gregory to conform with the Tome of Leo. They all decided to make a response to the letter.<sup>701</sup>

[CHAPTER 46J

*Copy of the response to the letter brought to Armenia from Constans king of the Romans, which the Armenian bishops and Catholicos Nerses wrote, with the nobles and the general Teodoros, lord of Rshtunik'.*

*The true and orthodox Letter of Nicaea I beg*

you who hold the Christian faith, read, O lover of God.

We have a commandment from the inspired prophets and Christ's apostles to pray with supplications for your pious rule, [149] and for all the princes and troops, and especially all your divinely protected palace, in which the love of God has reposed and the grace of the divine gifts clearly rests on you.<sup>702</sup>

For behold, that kingdom is greater and more powerful than all kingdoms which is not under the control of men, but crowned by the right hand of God, which no one is able to supplant save the kingdom of Christ. Likewise too the holy high-priesthood, [upheld] by the grace of God, the nobles<sup>703</sup> and the Christ-loving army. We, glorying in the light of your pious rule, have remained unmoved in the midst of the evil and impious kings of Persia. For when they removed the kingdom and destroyed all the army of the land of Armenia, and took into captivity men and women, laying their bright sword on the survivors, they

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701 This gathering at Dvin in 649 [four years before the visit of Constans II to Armenia in his twelfth year, September 652-September 653] is not mentioned in the pro-Chalcedonian *Narratio*. Mahe, 'L'eglise' 473, points out that the Armenian response was not sent to Constans, because the original sealed copy was still with Nerses in 653 - as Sebeos states **168** below. Asolik, II2, gives a resume of this letter as far as the end of **151** of Abgaryan's text. It is not quoted by other Armenian writers. Abgaryan notes that the following title is in the MS.

702 Cf. I Tim. 2.2, I Pet. 2.17. The flattering tone of this letter is intensified below 151-152. It is noteworthy that in his desire to mollify the emperor, the author avoids divisive issues of ritual - which figure prominently in other such letters of this period. On the letter in general see Thomson, 'The Defence'.

703 Nobles: here *nakharar* see n.583.

## HISTORY

attempted to convert us to their error.<sup>704</sup> But they were unable to move us; rather, 'the impious were ashamed in their own vanity'.<sup>705</sup> Eventually Kawat and his son Khosrov commanded: 'Let each hold his own faith, and let no one oppress the Armenians. They are all our subjects. Let them serve us with their body; but as for their souls, only He knows who judges souls.'<sup>706</sup> Furthermore, Khosrov [son] of Ormizd after the capture of Jerusalem commanded all the bishops of the regions of the East and of Asorestan to gather at the royal court, and he said: 'I hear that there are two sides to the Christians, and the one excommunicates the other because they do not reckon him righteous. So let them gather in unison at the royal court, in order that they may confirm what is orthodox and reject what is erroneous.'<sup>707</sup> All the bishops and priests and all the believers of those regions assembled; and he appointed over them as prefects Smbat Bagratuni, called Khosrov Shum, and the royal chief-doctor.<sup>708\*</sup> There was there in captivity also Zak'arias the patriarch of Jerusalem,<sup>709</sup> and many other philosophers whom he had taken captive from the city of Alexandria. These king Khosrov commanded to elucidate [the matter] justly, and to inform the king of the truth.

They all gathered in the royal hall, and there was an outcry. For some were orthodox in faith by the record and seal of the old kings;<sup>710</sup> while

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704 Sebeos had mentioned above **64 65**, the end of the Arsacid monarchy and the Sasanian persecutions.

705 Ps. 24.4; this is not quoted in the classic accounts of Sasanian oppression by Elishe and tazar.

706 For the agreement between Kawat I and Vahan see 67. Khosrov Anushervan's supposed baptism is described on 69 above.

707 Such a debate has not been mentioned by Sebeos above. For the theme of debates cf. Etishc 15, of Yazkert, and in general terms Cameron, 'Disputations' and Lewis/Niewohner, *Religionsgesprache*.

708 Prefect: *ostikan*, as above, n.180. Chief-doctor: *bzhshkapef*, AG 120-1. Gabriel of Singar is probably intended, a noted Monophysite and the *drostbed* [Mackenzie, *Pahlavi Dictionary*, s.v. *drostabed*, chief physician]. He instigated a theological debate in the presence of Khosrov; see the *Synodicon Orientate*, 562-98, *Histoire Nestorienne*, 528-9, and the *Chronicon Anonymum*, 23. But this was held in 612, i.e. before the capture of Jerusalem. See Flusin, *St Anastase II*, 114-18 for a discussion of this passage; for general background, Flusin, *St Anastase II*, ch.4, 'Chosroes et les Chretiens'.

709 See **116** for the captivity of Zacharias [after the capture of Jerusalem in 614]. See M.D. II 14 for the captivity of the Catholicos of Aluank', Viroy, at Khosrov's court where he enjoyed queen Shirin's favour.

710 Orthodox: *Ullap'arut 'ean*, a caique on *orthodoxia*, where *doxa* is read as 'glory'; cf. the Syriac *tris subha*. Record: *gir*, 'document', i.e. a certificate sealed by a previous shah.



others were Nestorians, and many others of a profusion of sects. [ISO] Furthermore, the chief-rabbi<sup>711</sup> came forward and said: 'Let that man not be called God.' And they reported his words to the king.

The king responded and said: 'By whose command did he come to that place? Let him be beaten and depart.' Likewise he ordered another multitude of sects to be expelled from the tribunal. He commanded that only [the councils of] Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon should be examined.

There happened to be there two bishops from Armenia, trustworthy men who had been sent to inform the king about the oppression of the country - Komitas, bishop of the Mamikoneik,<sup>711</sup> and Matt'eos of the Amatunik'. They had ready there with them the *Book of Saint Gregory*.<sup>712,3</sup> The king commanded them to be asked: 'In the times of which kings did these councils occur?' They replied: 'The council of Nicaea took place in the time of Constantine; that of Constantinople in the time of Theodosius the Great; that of Ephesus in the time of Theodosius the Less; and that of Chalcedon in the time of Marcian.' The king responded and said: 'The commands of three kings appear to be more correct than those of one.' When the king understood concerning Nestorius, who he was and whence, and at which council, and what he had said, he ordered the Nestorians to be expelled from the tribunal. He likewise asked about the council of Chalcedon: 'Who were the leaders?' They informed him about everything, and said: 'At Nicaea and Constantinople the kings Constantine and Theodosius the Great themselves; but at Ephesus, Cyril bishop of Alexandria; and at Chalcedon the bishop Theodoret, who was of the opinion of Nestorius.'<sup>713</sup>

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711 Komitas became Catholicos in 609/610 after Abraham; see 112. For the various spellings of his name see the *HAnjB*, s.v. no. 1. At the time of this debate - i.e. before 609 - he was bishop of Taron, which was Mamikonean land, into which the Bagratids were now moving. Matt'eos is only mentioned here and in Asolik's recapitulation, *HAnjB*, no.6.

712 This would appear to be a version of Agat'angelos, in which only the council of Nicaea is mentioned.

713 Theodoret is often anathematized in the *Book of Letters*, e.g. 48. But for his being leader at Chalcedon see Timothy Aelurus, 200, and the *Book of Letters*, 119, Movses Tsur-tavi, 'Causes of the Fourth Council of the Dyophysites'. The same point is emphasized by Zachariah Rhetor in his *Ecclesiastical History* III 1.

Present also were the Catholicos called Eran<sup>714</sup> and other bishops from Asorestan, Aruastan, Khuzhastan, and other lands; for which reason king Khosrov ordered the churches of them all to be demolished and that they should be put to the sword, unless they would abandon their error and follow the royal path.

Those who [supported] Chalcedon included Viroy, Catholicos of Aluank', and many other bishops from Greek territory,<sup>715</sup> and the princes who had submitted to the Persian king. [151] Hence he commanded a disputation<sup>716</sup> to be held, and requested an account from both sides concerning Nicaea under Constantine, Constantinople under Theodosius the Great, Ephesus under Theodosius the Less, and Chalcedon under Marcian, and that everything should be investigated and made intelligible. When he knew everything reliably and had truly understood, he questioned them, saying: 'Why did the former three not say two natures with distinction<sup>714</sup> like the latter? It is clear that we must divide ourself into two and say two kings, not one. For I am from two natures - whether from my father and mother, or from soul and body. But the Godhead, if it is not in every place and cannot be or cause whatever it wishes, what sort of divinity is it?'

Then he ordered Zak'arias, the patriarch of Jerusalem, and the philosopher from the city of Alexandria<sup>717</sup> to be questioned, so that they might declare the truth with an oath. They responded, saying: 'If we had not turned aside from God, then he in anger would not have turned aside

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714 Le. the 'Nestorian' Catholicos of Iran; cf. **70**, n.63. Asolik calls him 'Anna', the Syriac Hanan. In his discussion of this letter Flusin, *Si Anastase II*. 115, notes that there was a vacancy in the Catholicosate from 609 until the death of Khosrov.

715 Le. those who had been taken into captivity after the Persian invasions of the early seventh century. For Viroy see M.D. II 14; *HAnjB*, no.2. He spent 25 years under arrest at the Persian court [603-628], but retained his title of Catholicos. Asolik adds 'the Catholicos of Iberia' before Viroy.

716 Disputation: *p'ayk'ar*, cf. Elishe 170, 175, before a martyrdom. See idem, 15, for an 'examination', *handes*, of different religions. For such disputations in the time of Khosrov I see John of Ephesus VI 20.

717 On **149** Sebeos mentioned several 'philosophers' from Alexandria. But Alexandria was not captured until 619; Flusin, *Si Anastase II*. 116.

711 Chief-rabbi: *hreapet*, lit. 'chief Jew', a correction by Malkhasean for the *hayrapet*, 'patriarch', of the MSS; see Abgaryan n.544. The only reference to this term in the *NBHL* is to Asolik II2, who is repeating this account by Sebeos. Asolik adds 'and Severians' after 'Nestorians'.

718 With distinction: *bazhanmamb*, lit. 'by division'. The Armenian term renders the Greek *diairesis*, for the importance of which in the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius, see Lampe, s.v., II. A2. For Armenian opposition to division of the natures, cf. *Book of Letters* 39; the *Demonstration* attributed to John Mandakuni; and the many entries in Timothy Aelurus and the *Knik' Hawatoy* [Seal of Faith],

from us. But now in fear of God we shall declare the truth before you. The true faith is that which they declared in Nicaea in the time of the blessed Constantine. In agreement with that were [the councils] of Constantinople and Ephesus. In conformity with these is the true faith of the Armenians. But what was declared at Chalcedon is not in agreement with them, as Your Benevolence has learned.<sup>720</sup>

The king commanded a search to be made in the treasury. They found the true faith of Nicaea written down, which had been sealed with the ring of king Kawat and his son Khosrov, and they realized the conformity with it of the faith of Armenia.<sup>721</sup> In this regard king Khosrov ordered: 'All Christians who are under my authority should hold the faith of Armenia.' Those who conformed to the faith of Armenia in the regions of Asorestan were Kamyishov the metropolitan<sup>722</sup> and ten other bishops, and the pious queen Shirin, and the valiant Smbat, and the great chief-doctor. Then king Khosrov ordered a copy of the orthodox faith to be sealed with his own ring and deposited in the royal treasury.

So now, 'because God has delivered us from servitude to the empire of darkness',<sup>723</sup> and made us worthy of the rule of your heavenly city, how much the more is it right for us to enjoy that peace regarding which we must request from Christ God for your pious and God-loving rule that it remain unmoved for ever, like the days of heaven upon earth<sup>724</sup> with great victory, [ 152] ruling over the whole universe, sea and land. Although you are in the body from the human race, yet you hold the place of the divine throne. And the light of the glory of your God-loving rule has suffused everything below - you who are crowned from heaven,

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720 This is the standard Armenian argument, often repeated in the *Book of Letters* and first expressed in Babgen's letter, 48-51, at the time of the first council of Dvin in 506. See also Mahe, *L'eglise* 460.

721 Although Sebeos had noted Khosrov's baptism. 69-70, he did not earlier refer to this document.

722 Kamyishov, bishop of Beth Dasen; *AG* 294, for the name. He died in 609, Flusin, *St Anastase II*, 116. He appears in the *Book of Letters* 218, in a list of bishops at whose request Komitas wrote his letter 'On Faith'. There eight other bishops are named plus 'many others', and also Smbat. For Shirin, Christian wife of Khosrov II, see 85 [though it is not suggested there that she held the faith of the Armenians]; for the 'chief-doctor', see 149, n.708.

723 Col. 1.13. Sebeos turns away from his narrative to address Constans. The epithet 'heavenly city', *erknak'atak'*, for Constantinople is not attested in the *NBHL*.

724 Here ends the citation of this document in Asolik.

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you the boast of all Christians by the power of the divine sign of the Cross, you who resemble the pious servant of God, the divinely gracious, the valiant and victorious, the blessed saviour Heraclius, your grandfather, who rescued from the cruel executioner<sup>72^</sup> the whole world - which may Christ God now bless through Your Piety.

As for the investigation which you ordered to be made concerning the unity of the faith, and the statement of profession of piety which you sent to us your unworthy servants, when we saw it we offered obeisance<sup>725</sup> and with great joy glorified Christ and blessed his beneficence. Now in the following fashion we have learned the truth of the faith. The evangelist John says: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the word was with God, and the Word was God.'<sup>726</sup> And the same again in his catholic [epistle] says: 'Who was from the beginning, of whom we have heard, to whom we were indeed eyewitnesses, on whom we looked; and our hands<sup>700</sup> touched the word of life.'<sup>700</sup> 'Behold the word became flesh.' 'And the life was revealed; and we saw and bear witness and describe for you the eternal life which was with the Father and appeared to us.'<sup>727</sup> The same John says in his gospel: 'No one has seen God.'<sup>728</sup> And Paul says: 'Whom none of mankind has seen, nor is able to see.'<sup>729</sup> Why then does he say: 'We were indeed eye-witnesses', and: 'On whom we looked; and our hands touched the word of life', and: 'Who was with the Father and appeared to us'? This is very awesome, as indeed it must be with regard to the divinity; yet this is very humble and benevolent with regard to human nature. Now it is clear that he is describing the incarnation of God, as the saying of the Lord declares: 'Who has seen me has seen the Father'.<sup>730</sup> 'Me', he said, as one, and not 'us', as two. There he only speaks about the divinity: 'Who alone possesses immortality, dwelling

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725 Obeisance: *erkrapagul'iwn*; see n.177.

726 Jn. 1.1. The following quotations from the New Testament are not taken *as a block* from earlier Armenian letters.

727 Jn. 1.2.

728 Jn. 1.18.

729 1 Tim. 6.16b.

730 Jn. 14.9.

725 Saviour: *p'rkul'enagorts*, lit. 'salvific'. It is only attested elsewhere in Armenian of the salvific body and blood of Christ. Grandfather: *hawun*, a correction by Abgaryan, n.559, for the *hawrn*, 'father', of the MSS. Executioner: *dahich*, often used of the Persians in the context of martyrdoms.

728 1Jn. 1.1.

729 Jn. 1.14.

in awesome and unapproachable light'.<sup>734</sup> Whereas here [he speaks] about the humanity and the divinity, because the invisible did not appear, but in the visible we saw the invisible; since in the visible [was] the divine paternal nature and the human maternal nature. [153] For the paternal nature was united to the human nature in an immutable union.<sup>735</sup> One form was begotten, God and man, like a lamp.<sup>734</sup> [Paul] of Tarsus declares: 'There is one God, and one mediator between God and mankind.'<sup>735</sup> 'Now there is no mediator of a single person',<sup>736</sup> because the unity is from the two - as by the union of Abraham and Sarah Isaac was born. So too Christ was born from the holy Spirit and Mary, one nature by a distinct and unconfused union,<sup>737</sup> ineffable according to God from the Father, and because her virginity was not lost.

So the Lord Jesus Christ is one, God and man. The life hung on the cross<sup>738</sup> before [people's] eyes according to the prophetic declaration: 'By whose wounds we were all healed'.<sup>739</sup> In this fashion too the blessed John declares the union in his catholic [epistle], saying: 'It is he who came with fire and Spirit and blood, Jesus Christ. Not only with water, but with blood and water. And it is the Spirit which bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. These are the three which testify: Spirit and water and blood. And the three are one. [Even if] we were to have any testimony of mankind, surely the witness of God is greater which he testified concerning his Son.'<sup>740</sup> 'He is my beloved Son in whom I am pleased. Heed him.'<sup>741</sup> He did not divide [the Son] into two natures and two persons and two minds.<sup>742</sup> But by saying 'he' and 'him' he made the unity clear. Just as the same evangelist demonstrates by saying: 'The

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734 Lamp: *chrag*, see Lampe, s.v. *lyxnos*, for this image. Form: *lesak*, rendering *eidōs* or *morphe*.

735 I Tim. 2.5.

736 Gal. 3.20.

737 Unconfused: *anzang*, see Lampe, s.v. *asygxytos*.

738 Cross: /r'ay», as n.405.

739 Is. 53.5; I Pet. 2.24.

740 I Jn. 5.6-9; note the textual variants of this passage in Metzger, *Textual Commentary*.

741 Mk. 9.7; cf. Mt. 3.17, Mk. 1.11.

742 Minds: *mitk* \ for references to this theological dispute, see Lampe, s.v. *nous*.

Spirit and the water and the blood, and the three are one.' And elsewhere he says: 'The blood of Jesus his Son purifies us from all sin.'<sup>743</sup> Behold, Jesus Christ is Son of God and of man,<sup>744</sup> and the two together [are] one nature. Now, that the Godhead is incorporeal and immortal is clear to all. But this is more filled with wonder and beneficence, a marvel and sign of great love for men - that the incorporeal was made incarnate, and the invisible was seen, the untouchable was touched, the timeless had a beginning,<sup>745</sup> the Son of God became a son of man and joined his humanity to the grandeur of his divinity.

Now the apostle of God mentioned his humbling himself 'as far as to death and the death of the Cross'.<sup>746</sup> 'While we were enemies, we were reconciled with God [154] through the death of his Son'.<sup>744</sup> Again he says: 'Who did not spare his own Son, but for the sake of us all handed him over'.<sup>747</sup> And again: 'If they had known, they would certainly not have crucified the lord of glory'.<sup>748</sup> Furthermore: 'God sent his Son in the likeness of a body of sin for the sake of sin; and he condemned sin in the body'.<sup>749</sup> What is this 'he condemned'? It means that 'he restrained the one who had the power of death, that is, Satan'.<sup>750</sup> What then would the Lord say to the labourers of the vineyard? 'When the time of harvest had approached, he sent his servants to the labourers to receive his produce. But the labourers seized his servants; some they tortured, some they stoned, and some they slew. Then he sent his own son, saying: Perhaps they will be put to shame by my son. But the labourers, when they saw the son, said: "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours." And casting him out of the vineyard, they killed him'.<sup>751</sup> Not only is the Son of God the word, [he is] both the word and the flesh, and the flesh of the word together. For although the flesh is man, yet it is also God. So those who from the beginning were

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743 I Jn. 1.7.

744 Of man: *marдой*, as in Mihrdatean's text. There is a misprint in Abgaryan [*anmar-doy*], two consecutive lines ending *ew an-*.

745 That the ... beginning: the theme, but not exact wording, of I Jn. 1; cf. *Teaching*, 377-9. The term 'join', *khafnel* is basic to the *Teaching*.

746 Phil. 2.8.

747 Rom. 8.32.

748 I Cor. 2.8.

749 Rom. 8.3.

750 Heb. 2.14.

751 Matt. 21.34-39.



734 I Tim. 6.16a.

735 **Immutable:** *anp'op'okheli*, a caique on *atreptos*. The usual Greek adjective qualifying the union is *asygxytos*; see n.739 below.

749 Rom. 5.10.

eye-witnesses and servants of the word, taught their disciples clearly. And they in turn transmitted the same to their disciples, and furthermore confirmed that same tradition in writing.<sup>755</sup>

Many of the apostles received ordination to the episcopate: like Justin, Enanklitos, and Clement in Rome;<sup>756</sup> Ananias in Alexandria; Simon Cleophas in Jerusalem; Dionysius the Areopagite in Athens; and the other Dionysius in Corinth; and the other Timothy in Ephesus; and Titus in Crete; and Polycarp in Smyrna of Asia; and Euodia, that is Peter, in Antioch; and Irenaeus of Gaul, disciple of Polycarp, in the church of Lyons. Plus a further numberless multitude of wonderful bishops and priests and inspired orators, philosophers, and admirable clergy<sup>757</sup> of the church, who sealed in writing the true faith of the church in their respective churches with the apostolic exposition.

It is clear from the Nicaean council that they were all fully disciples, who had received [the faith] from the apostles and confirmed the same at Nicaea. [155] For they said concerning the Son: The same nature of the Father, through whom everything was created in heaven and on earth; who for our sake and for our salvation was made man.<sup>758,8</sup> So too St Gregory learned from his predecessors and taught to us: 'Who believed in the body, to them he made known his divinity; and those who stumbled because of the flesh denied the nature. For he was incarnate in one nature, and he joined and united this humanity with his own divinity, the immortal with the mortal, so that he might link all men indissolubly to his immortal divinity.'<sup>759</sup>

So we hold our faith, not as being defined by very recent people, but as we have received it from the holy apostles through our patriarch St Gregory, who instructed king Trdat and the princes of Armenia almost

755 But the *Teaching*, 699-700, attributes the gospels to the very first generation, the 'eye-witnesses'.

756 The apostles and their bishoprics are mostly taken from the Armenian version of Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*. For these three see III 21. Ananias: II 24; Simon: III 32; Dionysius the Areopagite: Acts 17.34; Dionysius in Corinth: III 32; Timothy and Titus: III 4; Polycarp: III 36; Euodias: III 22 [the addition of Peter is an error derived from a misunderstanding of the Syriac text; the Armenian was not translated directly from Greek]; Irenaeus: V 5.8. Of Gaul: read *gallians'i*, for th *egalileats'i* 'of Galilee', in the text.

757 Clergy: *mankunk'*; cf. n.233 above. It is noteworthy that the author makes no reference to the origins of Christianity in Armenia.

758 The wording is not exactly identical to that of the Creed on 156 below.

759 Sebeos quotes the *Teaching* 369,385, but adds: 'For he was incarnate in one nature'.

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30 years before Constantine.<sup>760</sup> Likewise St teward, the great archbishop of Caesarea, where St Grigorios was raised and educated, who indeed ordained him to the priesthood<sup>761</sup> - he too confirmed the same tradition. A second time [the faith was confirmed, when] the holy and true fathers assembled at Nicaea at the command of the God-loving king Constantine;<sup>762</sup> and they removed all the raving of the impious sect and sowed the true faith throughout the whole world. Present there was St Rstakes, son of St Gregory, who received the precepts of the faith from the holy council and the great king Constantine, which he brought and presented to the Christ-loving king Trdat and the holy patriarch Gregory, together with the precepts of the blessed Constantine.<sup>763</sup> On this we stand firm, and we reckon the same sufficient for the teaching of the right faith according to the saying: 'Do not change the boundaries of the faith which your fathers established.'<sup>764</sup>

Again a third<sup>765</sup> time [the faith was confirmed] when king Trdat made ready and took with him the holy bishop Grigorios, and his son bishop Rstakes, and on the military side the four most senior-ranking of his palace, and with 70,000 men, elite leaders from all his provinces, went to Rome to see Constantine. When they saw each other, he presented St Gregory to Constantine; and he prostrated himself at the feet of St Gregory in order to be blessed by him. Then they accepted as intermediary the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And with an oath the two kings joined together, keeping a sure mutual peace for ever between

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760 Agat'angelos does not date Constantine's conversion. He merely states that Gregory became bishop in Trdat's 17th year, after 15 years in prison. M.X., II 91, dates Trdat's reign to the third year of Diocletian, i.e. 286/287. According to Aa 872, Trdat and Gregory met Constantine long after the latter's conversion, but before Nicaea.

761 Gregory was raised at Caesarea: Aa 37, where the Greek spelling Grigorios is used. For Gregory's ordination, see Aa 800-5, where Agat'angelos adds 'episcopacy' after 'priesthood'.

762 The text does not refer to the second council of Nicaea, but is awkwardly phrased. The meaning 'a second time [the faith was confirmed, when] the holy fathers assembled...' emerges from the next paragraph, where the adverb 'when' makes the sense quite clear.

763 For Aristakes at Nicaea, see Aa 884-5; after he brought back the faith, says Agat'angelos, Gregory 'made additions to these illuminating canons, rendering still more glorious his own see of Armenia'. Agat'angelos does not refer to Constantine's precepts; the emperor merely confessed the faith.

764 Prov. 22.28, with 'of the faith' added!

765 Third: a correction by Abgaryan, n.566, for the 'second' of the MSS which repeat the 'second' of the previous paragraph.

their two royal persons. They confirmed once more for us the truth of the faith which the holy spirit had founded in us.<sup>766</sup>

[156] We do not recognize other councils held elsewhere. And we consider as follows: that your God-loving palace holds the foundation of your faith from the blessed Constantine and the council of Nicaea. Let everyone who accepts more than that - even if he be an angel from heaven<sup>767</sup> - be anathema. So all teachers of the church who excelled in philosophical skill and comprehended the divine vision, have received a true foundation from the holy apostles, [that is] from you.<sup>768</sup> have spread the gospel throughout the whole world. Our holy and true Catholicos Gregory, raised and educated in Caesarea of Cappadocia, taught us this doctrine, in which we have remained immovable until now.<sup>769</sup> In addition to him we have as teachers the holy fathers, speakers of the truth, who all professed Nicaea: Justin, Dionysius, Victor, bishops of Rome, and Dionysius of Alexandria, Peter the martyr, Theophilus, Athanasius, Cyril bishop of Alexandria, Basil bishop of Caesarea, Gregory Nazianzenus, Gregory of Neocaesarea the wonderworker, Gregory of Nyssa the brother of Basil, and numberless other pastors of orthodoxy in harmony with these, whose lives are well known.<sup>770</sup>

Now because the enemies of piety have often attacked and ruined our land, just as they destroyed the population of our country, so too did they exterminate the testaments and *vardapets* of the church. Now our

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766 For this visit, which is often recalled throughout Armenian literature, see Aa 873-7, and Thomson, 'Constantine and Trdat'. But according to all the recensions of Agat'angelos, the journey to Rome preceded the council of Nicaea [though one of the Greek versions, called Vg, omits Nicaea; see Garitte, *Agathange* 270 for a synopsis of the variants]. The progression: Caesarea, Nicaea, Rome, belongs to Sebeos, not his source. But on **160** below, the visit to Rome is said to precede Nicaea.

767 Gal. 1.8.

768 The sense of 'from you' is not clear. Sebeos seems to imply that the emperor, representing the capital of the empire, is the source of true doctrine.

769 For Sebeos the doctrine of St Gregory is that part of the *History* attributed to Agat'angelos known as *The Teaching of St Gregory*.

770 The origin of this list is obscure. The persons named do not appear as a collection in the *Book of Letters* or in standard catenae such as *The Seal of Faith*, the *Root of Faith*, or the translation of Timothy Aelurus. Victor and Dionysius were popes before Nicaea. Lives: *patmut'iwk'*, lit. 'histories'.

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testaments and *vardapets* are no more. We are ignorant of books<sup>771</sup> and literature. But in so far as there have remained in various places instructive histories, they teach us the truths of the faith in the same way — the light which was preached at Nicaea, to which Rstakes, son of St Gregory, promptly assented. And in the following way the declaration of the synodical council was proclaimed:

*Symbol of the Nicene Creed*<sup>772</sup>

'We believe in one God, almighty Father, creator of heaven and earth, of things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, only-begotten born of God the Father, that is from the being of the Father. God from God, light from light, true God from true God, born and not created. The same nature of the Father, through whom everything visible and invisible was made in heaven and earth. Who for the sake of us men and for our salvation, descended, was incarnate, was made man, was born completely [157] from the holy virgin Mary through the holy Spirit. He took<sup>773</sup> soul and body and mind and everything which pertains to man, truly and not seemingly. He was tormented, that is, crucified, was buried and rose on the third day. He ascended into heaven, with the same body he sat at the right hand of the Father. He will come with the same body and<sup>774</sup> in the glory of the Father to judge the living and the dead, of whose kingdom there is no end. We believe also in the holy Spirit, uncreated and perfect, who spoke in the law and the prophets and the gospels, who descended to the Jordan, preached in

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771 Books: *girs*, hardly 'scripture'. This argument seems to presage the later Armenian claim that they could not attend Chalcedon because of their involvement in 'Persian raids'; see T.A. 82; Vardan 83 specifies the war of the Vardanank'.

772 This title is not found in the early MSS. The following creed has minor variations from the standard Armenian Creed, which is closely related to the Pseudo-Athanasian *Her- meneia eis to symbolon*, and the second Creed of Epiphanius; see Denzinger. *Enchiridion* 37-42, for the Greek texts of these three creeds (items 44-49), and for a general discussion Winkler, 'Armenian Anaphoras' and Kelly, *Creeds*. In *Seal of Faith* 366-9, the text is found with a commentary on the various clauses listing the heresies which they confute; cf. also Akinean and Casey, 'Two Armenian Creeds'. The credal statement of Komitas, *Book of Letters* 212-13, which he attributes to St Gregory, is totally different.

773 He took: omitted in MSS and added by all editors; see Abgaryan n.570.

774 He sat... same body and: omitted in all MSS and added by Abgaryan from the standard Armenian Creed.

the apostles,<sup>775</sup> and dwelt in the saints. We also believe in one sole catholic church, in one baptism, in repentance and forgiveness of sins, in the resurrection of the dead, in the eternal judgment of souls and bodies, in the kingdom of heaven and in the life everlasting.

As for those who say: there was once when the Son was not, or there was once when the holy Spirit was not, or that they were created from nothing, or say that the Son of God or the holy Spirit are from a different being or existence, or are mutable or changeable, such persons we anathematize, because the catholic apostolic church also anathematizes them.

So let us glorify [the one] who is before eternity, worshipping the holy Trinity and the consubstantial divinity of Father and Son and holy Spirit, now and always and for ages of ages. Amen.'

Then they were summoned to Rome and met king Constantine; and they taught him the true faith, and by [their] testimony confirmed the foundation of the faith.<sup>776</sup>

In the thirteenth year of the giver of life and our Saviour Jesus Christ, Diocletian reigned with his three colleagues over the Roman empire.<sup>777</sup> They stirred up persecution against the Christians and destroyed all the churches in their entire realm. In the 75th year of his life Constantius died, and his son Constantine reigned in Gaul and Spain.<sup>778</sup> He was a true Christian. He confronted Maximianos and Maximintos his son, and Likianos and Markianos, and defeated and slew them. For he

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775 In the Apostles: For this phrase see Winkler, 'Eine bemerkenswerte Stelle'.

776 This sentence is clearly out of place, see Abgaryan, n.572. The reference is to the visit of Trdat and Gregory to Constantine on **155** above, the 'third' time when the faith was confirmed. It is particularly interesting that the 'summons' reflects the version of this journey as found in the V recension of Agat'angelos, not the version previously described by Sebeos which is in line with the A recension. For a comparison of the versions see Garitte, *Agathange* 327-31, and Thomson. *Agathangelos* lxxi-lxxiii.

777 Diocletian came to the throne in 284. All MSS have 'in the 13th year...' for which no plausible emendation has been suggested, even if the years are those of Philip's new era which was known to some Armenian historians [see Grumel 146]. Everywhere else Sebeos gives dates in the form of regnal years. Here he seems to be quoting from a chronicle.

778 Constantius Chlorus died on 25 July, 306. 'Gaul and Spain' are from Aa 867. Aa 868 gives the same four opponents of Constantine, adding Diocletian! For 'Maximintos, his son' see the Armenian *Anonymous Chronicle* [of the seventh century, an adaptation of Hippolytus] 50.

believed in one God lord of all, and in his son Jesus Christ; and he knew that he gave him the victory. He commanded the Christians to build churches and to clear the places where martyrs had been laid;<sup>779</sup> and he treated the Christians with great honour. [158] He commanded all the bishops to gather at the city of Nicaea,<sup>780</sup> so the bishops and many holy men convened. They were there for 15 days. Then he brought them into the palace. And while they were gathered together in a gilded portico,<sup>781</sup> he came into their midst and confessed: 'I am a Christian and a servant of the Lord God omnipotent, and of Jesus Christ his beloved Son.' The bishops all conducted an investigation concerning the faith in the presence of king Constantine. They examined the scriptures, and wrote down the true faith, which was proclaimed to us at Nicaea.

Now from the emperor Nero until the blessed Constantine, and from Constantine to king Marcian, all *vardapets*, principal leaders of the church, [beginning] from the excellent Theophilus the orator,<sup>782</sup> of the learned cities of Egypt, Alexandria, Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, Caesarea, Athens, Cilicia, and altogether all the *vardapets* of the church...<sup>783</sup> in the days of Marcian through the Tome of Leo Theodoret, head of the council of Chalcedon, which he established heretically.

But let us not boast 'save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ'.<sup>783</sup> Likewise David glories in the Cross of his son, and did not reckon it a dishonour for the deity.<sup>784</sup> But once he called the Lord 'chariot of God', and once 'Mount Sinai', and once 'height of heaven'. For he says: 'The myriad chariots of God, thousands of drivers, and the Lord among them in holy Sion. He ascended to the heights and took captivity captive.'<sup>785</sup>

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779 Aa 869 and the *Anonymous Chronicle* refer to the building of churches, but not to martyrs' shrines. To clear: *azatel*; this could mean 'to free [from taxation]' or 'to clear [the site from debris]'.

780 He commanded ... Nicaea: a verbal quotation from Aa 884. But '15 days' does not appear in *Agat'angelos* or the *Anonymous Chronicle*.

781 Portico: *patshgam*, see AG 225; and cf. Elishe 124, with Thomson, n.14 ad loc.

782 The excellent Theophilus: *κ'aj T'eoip'ile*, as of Luke's correspondent. [Lk. 1.3].

783 Gal. 6.14.

784 Cf. Ps. 33.3, where David boasts in the Lord; but there is no direct quotation in David referring to the Cross.

785 Ps. 67.18-19.

783 All teachers ... all the teachers of the church: these nouns are in the genitive case, perhaps the subject of a participle as verb, which has been lost. For Theodoret as leader at Chalcedon see above **150**, n.714.



Furthermore, [he said] 'myriad chariots of God, thousands of drivers, and the Lord among them', because myriad-fold is the power and glory of the Cross of Christ, which held raised up the creator of heaven and earth. And thousands of Jews erected it.<sup>787</sup> 'And the Lord among them in holy Sion'. Amongst whom then is 'among them'? Clearly, in the heights to which the Son of God ascended, to the myriad-fold power and glory of the Cross, whereby he released captivity. Therefore we are not ashamed to say to the Son of God: 'Holy God, holy and powerful, holy and immortal, who was crucified for us, have mercy upon us.'<sup>789</sup>

[159] As for the Lord's sacrament<sup>74</sup> which we distribute with great discretion, it is as follows. We do not have authority to serve what is pure to the impure.<sup>788</sup> For we have universal canons for rites and sacraments for men and women, that those who have married as virgins may freely participate in the Lord's body according to the saying: 'Marriage is altogether honourable, and beds are pure.'<sup>789</sup> But as for those [married] a second time, even if one is a virgin and the other [married] for the second time, the [canon] enjoins both to repent together for three years, and then to participate in the sacrament.<sup>790</sup> But the church does not accept those [married] for the third or fourth time; nor are they allowed to mention communion, according to the saying: 'Who eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgment for himself, because he

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787 Thousands of Jews: implying collective Jewish responsibility for the Crucifixion?

788 Cf. the complaint of the Greek soldiers that the Armenians regarded them as 'impious', 148 above.

789 Heb. 13.4.

790 In the *Kanonagirk' Hayots'* 1,182 [Canons of Neocaesarea, no.9] and 337 [Canons of Basil to Amphilocius, no.4], those embarking on a second marriage are required to spend 15 years with the catechumens. In Canon 10 of Second Nicaean Canons, *Kanonagirk' Hayots'* II 74, this period is reduced to three years. None of these canons mentions the second marriage of one partner to a virgin.

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does not discern the Lord's body.<sup>744</sup> And the divine voice proclaims: 'Not to give the holy to dogs'.<sup>791</sup> Likewise on the stone tables, with his own hand he wrote one of the ten commandments: 'Do not commit adultery'.<sup>792</sup>

Now we see that among the old and early philosophers fornication was considered very impure and loathsome. For Solon the Athenian laid down laws for the Athenians: to refrain from fornication, and not to accept a bastard as heir. Lycurgus the Lacedaemonian laid down laws for the Lacedaemonians: to refrain from fornication, and not to bury a bastard.<sup>793</sup>

Someone asked Theano, a female disciple of Pythagoras, after how many days from approaching a woman it was allowed to enter the palace. She said: 'From one's own [wife] on the same day; from another's, never'.<sup>794</sup>

So if the former embraced temperance in this way, how much the more is it right for us to carry out the apostle's saying with reverence: 'Flee from fornication'.<sup>794</sup> For although 'no one is just, not even one'<sup>795</sup> - yet it would not be right through arrogance to insult the divine body. |160| How could the impure mouth approach, or how would trembling not seize the one who tastes, if approaching the living fire fearlessly? Which not even the seraph dared to approach with his hands, but with tongs; nor was the prophet worthy to taste it. But only by bringing it close to his lips did he receive the pure object.<sup>801</sup>

So then would it be right for the impure and unclean among us earthly [creatures] to dare [to enter] the palace? Would one not be forbidden

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791 Mt. 7.6.

792 Ex. 20.14. The wording seems to imply that the other nine commandments were not written by God's hand!

793 Solon, but not Lycurgus, is mentioned in the book of rhetoric, *Girk' Pitoyits'*, but not with reference to fornication. The *Girk' Pitoyits'* is dated to the fifth century by its latest editor [G. Muradyan], but this is not universally accepted. Bastard (bis): *pornkordi*, lit. 'child of fornication'; cf. Deut. 23.2.

794 Theano is also mentioned in the *Girk' Pitoyits'*, but for this saying see Theon's *Pro-gymnasmata* see Abgaryan nn.583-5. Palace: *ark'unik'* but *terunish* in the *Girk' Pitoyits'* I 5.2. For Solon and Theano see the discussion in Dashian, *Leben und Sentenzen* 26-7.

795 Rom. 3.10.

788 Cf. Eph. 4.8. The reference here is to the Harrowing of Hell, a popular Armenian theme. Amongst whom: *y-oys*, not *yoys*, 'hope', as Macler.

789 The Trisagion was an important theme at the Council of Dvin in 555, which put the seal of approval on its use; see Garitte, *Narratio* 140-2,167-70. Cyril of Scythopolis notes that ca.500/501, Armenians chanted the Trisagion with the addition 'who was crucified for us'; the addition was made by Peter the Fuller, patriarch of Antioch, ca.480. Holy God, holy and powerful: not in the MSS of the full text of Sebeos, but added by Abgaryan, n.581, from the fragmentary Mat 2679 [AD 981].

790 Sacrament: *khordurd*. Just below it is rendered by *awrenk'*, which refers expressly to the species of communion.

794 I Cor. 11.29.

799 I Cor. 6.18.

801 Which ... object: based on Is. 6.6-7. The words 'Which ... hands' are added by Abgaryan, n.586, from the fragment in Mat 2679 dated to 981.

entrance, and would one not be expelled and flee? Especially if one were to wish to enjoy the royal table. How much more audacity would one have to enter the court of the heavenly king not possessing a clean garment,<sup>802</sup> or with fearless insolence to approach the living fire and taste of the royal and heavenly table. But would one not be expelled and cast out, in accordance with the saying: 'Stand away from me all you who work impiety'?<sup>803</sup>

We received [this faith] from St Gregory and the God-loving kings Constantine and Trdat; and afterwards the light of Nicaea was established for us through that same blessed Constantine. On that same tradition we stand firm,<sup>804</sup> and we shall not deviate from it, neither to the right nor to the left.

Concerning other councils, as we said above,<sup>805</sup> we do not know anything for sure. But as the old teachers have said, they defined as holy and true the council convened in Constantinople for the interdiction of Nestorius.<sup>806</sup> They did not say the council of Chalcedon was true, because they said that the leaders of the council in Ephesus held the opinion of Nestorius, but they were unable to extirpate it. Although they had convened the council for the heresy of Eutyches, it was [in a manner] similar to that distortion that they confirmed their own heresy.<sup>807</sup> For that Eutyches in error said: 'Christ brought his body from heaven.'<sup>808</sup> Then they divided into two natures the one Christ after the union of Word and body; and they professed the Trinity a quaternity by addition.<sup>809</sup> They found the Tome of Leo to be a pillar of support for their heresy. On it they established their own enormity and said: One

802 Cf. Mt. 22.12-13.

803 Ps. 6.9.

804 Cf. I Cor. 15.1. The following phrase is a commonplace of the Old Testament. It is noteworthy that here Sebeos puts the visit to Rome before Nicaea [as Agat'angelos], in contrast to the order presented above 155.

805 See above 156.

806 Nestorius was not the topic of the council of 381 in Constantinople, but of the council of Ephesus in 431 - as Komitas correctly notes in his 'Letter on Faith', *Book of Letters* 215. Such an error suggests that the present text is not identical with one signed by the learned Nerses III.

807 Heresy: *ch'arap'arut'iwn* see Lampe, s.v. *kakodoxia*.

808 Eutyches is often anathematized in the *Book of Letters*, but this phrase is not quoted directly; for his saying that Christ was an 'appearance', see *ibid.* 66, etc.

809 The 'Quaternity' is a standard charge against the supporters of Chalcedon; see examples in Thomson, 'Transformation of Athanasius'.

Lord Jesus Christ from two natures, not suppressing the differences of the natures, but [saying that] because of the union the power of both natures was more soundly preserved. And uniting them both into one person, they did not ascribe to the divine nature the humility of the human nature, [161] or the nobility of the divine nature to the human nature. [They said] it is unworthy and impossible to consider God becoming man and being born of a woman, and enduring all human passions, and being nailed to the cross and dying.

So if all this were impossible to happen to the Word of God according to his flesh, then it would be impossible for a virgin to conceive without a man, and uncorrupted to bring forth God made man. And it would be impossible for that man to feed the five thousand from five loaves, and to change water into wine, and to open the eyes of the blind with spittle, and to walk on the water, and to cast out the demons, and to raise the dead, and so on. But we and all who confess the right [faith], [declare] that the body was not simply human, but the divinity was in the body. Those who separate by division after the union we condemn and anathematize in accordance with the blessed Cyril of Alexandria, who says:<sup>810</sup> 'If anyone will not confess that God is truly Emmanuel, and for that reason the Virgin Mary as Theotokos, [who] bore according to the flesh the incarnate Word of God, let him be anathema.' 'If anyone will not confess the Word of God united in the body by nature, and one Christ the same with the body'<sup>811</sup> God and at the same time man, let him be anathema.' 'If anyone should divide the one Christ into two persons'<sup>812</sup> after the union, and merely speak of proximity and adherence, as if he gained his hypostasis by honour or by nobility, and not unity by nature, let him be anathema.' To us the Lord's voice proclaims; 'Let your light so shine before men', that is, the truth of the faith, 'so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.'<sup>813</sup>

Now as we have received the commands of your pious majesty

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810 These quotations from Cyril are his first three Anathemas. Cf. *Book of Letters* 214: 'We accept the 12 chapters of the blessed Cyril'. The text of these three anathemas is also given in the catena *Seal of Faith* 229,231,232.

811 With the body: not in the *Seal of Faith* 231.

812 Persons: *demk'*, as above in Sebeos 160.1.37; but *eresk'* in the *Seal of Faith*. Hypostasis: *zawrut'awn*, lit. 'power'. For these expressions see the Introduction to Thomson, *Teaching*. And adherence ... nobility: 'and honour and nobility' in the *Seal of Faith*.

813 Mt. 5.16.

inhabitant of the heavenly city,<sup>814</sup> O most valiant of men,<sup>815</sup> king Constans, we reckoned it best through this declaration to inform in writing<sup>816</sup> your God-loving and pious majesty of the definition of the orthodox faith which our fathers received from the very first *vardapets*. May God grant our unworthiness to seek knowledge of the good from God worthily, and to bless your God-loving and beneficent lordship, so that you may reign for ever over all the earth, sea and land, very victoriously.<sup>817</sup>

#### CHAPTER 47]<sup>818</sup>

*[Invasion of the Ismaelites in accordance with Daniel's vision. Disturbances in Constantinople; the murder of eminent men.]*

Returning to my narrative I shall describe the calamity which beset our time, the rupture of the veil of the old south<sup>819</sup> [162] and the blowing on us of the mortal hot wind<sup>820</sup> which burned the great, leafy, beautiful, newly-planted trees of the orchards. This [happened] rightly, because we sinned against the Lord and we angered the Holy One of Israel. 'If you are pleased to heed me', he says, 'You will eat the blessings of the earth. But if you do not wish to heed me, a sword will consume you; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken this.'<sup>821</sup> The same tempest was visible over Babylon, but has overtaken the whole earth; because Babylon is

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814 For Constantinople as a 'heavenly city,' cf. above 151.

815 O most valiant of men: *k'aj arants'*, cf. Aa 17 of Trdat, or M.X. III 48, of king Khosrov.

816 In writing: *grov*. Abgaryan, n.591, prints Zaminean's emendation for *thegortsov*, 'in deed', of the MSS.

817 So that ... victoriously: similar phrasing at 168 below, of the Armenian bishop addressing Constans to his face. This letter, or at least the original sealed copy, was not sent; see 168.

818 Macler, ch.34.

819 South: Abgaryan prints *hawatoy*, 'faith'; but Y.D., XIX 27, has *harawoy*, 'south'. Here Sebeos repeats an earlier theme, the scourge from the south, that is, the raids of Arabs from the desert; see 72, n.94.

820 Hot wind: *khoshak*, as of the scourge sent by God in Jer. 51.1; cf. also Jonah 4.8. For the theme of Christian trees see above 120. It is curious that Sebeos refers to such trees as 'newly-planted', as if the Christians of the east were 'neophytes'. But perhaps *matalatunk* here means simply 'delicate'.

821 Is. 19.20.

the mother of all nations, and its kingdom is the kingdom of the regions of the north.<sup>822</sup>

Now south of these are the Indians, and in that direction the nations dwelling in the great desert who are the sons of Abraham born from Hagar and K'etura:<sup>823</sup> Ismael, Amram, Madan, Madiam, Yek'san, Yesbok, Melisawe; and the sons of Lot, Amon and Moab;<sup>824</sup> and the sons of Esau, that is Edom;<sup>825</sup> and still more who were to the south of the Indians, north of these,<sup>825</sup> from the great and fearsome desert where Movses and the sons of Israel dwelt, whom the prophet described: 'Like a tempest it shall run from the south, coming from the desert, an awesome place.'<sup>826</sup> That is the great and fearsome desert whence the tempest of those nations emerged in a storm and occupied all the land, trampled and smote it. So the saying was fulfilled: 'The fourth beast, the fourth kingdom will stand on the earth, which surpasses in evil all kingdoms',<sup>827</sup> which made the whole earth a desert.

What more shall I say about the disorder of the Roman empire, and the disasters of the slaughter from which the civil war was never free, and the flowing of the blood of the slaughter of prominent men and counsellors<sup>828</sup> in the kingdom who were accused of plotting the emperor's death? For this reason they slew all the leading men; and there did not remain in the kingdom a single counsellor, since all the inhabitants of the country and the princes in the kingdom were totally exterminated. They also killed Georg *Magistros*, and Manuel, the virtuous man who was father-in-law of Smbat the *aspet* [son of Varaztirots'], son of the

822 For Babylon ruling the north cf. M.X. 110-11. For the kingdoms of the north attacking Jerusalem, see Jer. 1.15.

823 For the sons of Hagar see above, **134-135**. Sebeos mentions Ketura only here, but see M.X., II 1 and 68, for the Parthians as descended from ICetura via Amran ['Amram' here]. Both M.X. and Sebeos follow the Armenian biblical text, which takes the initial r of Zemran to be the prefix marking a definite accusative. For the names of the tribes, see Gen. 25.2 [cf. I Chron. 1.32], though 'Melisawe' is a curious corruption of the biblical *Sovue*. Abgaryan, n.597, suggests confusion with Melk'isawe, son of Saul, in I Kingdoms 14.49.

824 Gen. 19.37-8 for the sons of Lot.

825 'India' is the area towards the Red Sea, as also on **170**.

826 Based on Is. 21.1, but not an exact quotation.

827 Dan. 7.23; cf above **142**, n.653.

828 Counsellors: *khorhrdakans*; though in Armenian this is a general term, it could perhaps here mean 'senators'.

825 See Gen. 36.1.



great Smbat called Khosrov Shum.<sup>830</sup> Concerning him [Manuel] some people said that they saw in the night lamps lit at the site of his murder. Smbat they exiled because their army condemned him [163] in the rebellion after these events had happened, since they said of him to the king: 'He said that it is necessary to avenge the blood of [Georg] *Magistros*'.

*Magistros* was the prince of the army in that region and dear to all the troops; Smbat was the prince of the army of the Thracian princes; and Manuel exercised in Constantinople the function of *magister*. The king did not openly and with authority summon the *Magistros*, fearing a rebellion of the army. But he called to himself the *aspet* Smbat and made him swear on the Lord's Cross, which he had on his person, that he would never divulge to anyone their conversation. Then he sent him to his army in order to parley for peace with the *Magistros* and bring him by a ruse [to Constantinople], He went, but was unable to trick him, especially because the plan was not hidden from him. Then he spoke with all the princes of the army, and passed on the royal command. They and all the army, since they were unable to oppose the royal order, gave him [the *Magistros*] into their [Smbat and his party's] hands. Having seized him, they bound him and brought him before the king. For that reason the army of the Thracian princes plotted death against him; they accused him of being the cause of the planned rebellion, so that he might be killed. But the king pardoned him; and removing him from their clutches, spared him.

#### ICCHAPTER481<sup>831</sup>

*[War of the Ismaelites against the Persians. Death of Yazkert. Extinction of Sasanian rule. The Armenians submit to the Ismaelites under the command of T'eodoros Rshtuni. The emperor Constans comes to Armenia; many of the Armenian princes come to him and demonstrate their loyalty.]*

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830 This Georg is not mentioned in other Armenian sources. For Manuel see *HAnJB*, no. 12; according to Toumanoff, *Dynasties* 89, he was an Arsacid. He was Prefect of Egypt in 634, see *PLRE* III, 811, s.v. Manuel, no.3. Smbat the grandson of Smbat was first mentioned on 132, n.571 above; for the marriage see 145. After '*aspet*' Abgaryan adds 'Son of Varaztirots', n.600, following the emendation of Adontz. The omission in the MSS makes it appear that Smbat was the son of Smbat Khosrov Shum; but he was his grandson.

831 Macler, ch.35.

## HISTORY

In the twentieth year of Yazkert, king of Persia, in the eleventh year of the emperor Constans who was called after the name of his father Constantine, in the 19th year of the dominion of the Ismaelites,<sup>832</sup> the army of the Ismaelites which was in the land of Persia and of Khuzhastan marched eastwards to the region of the land called Pahlaw, which is the land of the Parthians, against Yazkert king of Persia. Yazkert fled before them, but was unable to escape. For they caught up with him near the boundaries of the K'ushans and slew all his troops. He fled and sought refuge among the troops of the T'etalk', who had come to his support from those regions.<sup>833</sup> 1164| The prince of the Medes - of whom I said above that he had gone to the east to their king and, having rebelled, had fortified himself in some place<sup>834</sup> - sought an oath from the Ismaelites and went into the desert in submission to the Ismaelites. Then the army of the T'etalk' seized Yazkert and slew him; he had governed the kingdom for 20 years. So was extinguished the rule of the Persians and of the race of Sasan, which had held sway for 542 years.<sup>835</sup> Now when the king of Ismael<sup>836</sup> saw the success of this victory and that the Persian kingdom had been destroyed, after three years of the peace treaty had fully passed he no longer wished to make peace with the king of the Greeks. But he commanded his troops to conduct war by sea and land in order to efface from the earth that kingdom as well, in the 12th year of the reign of Constans.<sup>837</sup>

In that same year the Armenians rebelled and removed themselves

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832 Twentieth year of Yazkert: 651/652; 11th of Constans, 651/652; 19th of the conquest implies an era dating from 633, not the death of Muhammad in 632 or the *hijra* in 622. Hijra dates are rare in Armenian authors. Y.D., XXI 16, refers to the beginning of the reign of Abd-al-Malik [685-705] in the '85th year of their era', *t'uakanin*. But 85 hijra corresponds to 705 AD, the last year of that caliph, not the first.

833 For the T'etalk' and K'ushans see 73. These terms are often used loosely.

834 See above 143, n.661 for the prince of the Medes. Sebeos has not mentioned above his later rebellion nor his travel eastwards; see Historical Commentary.

835 542, as also T\*. A., 104, who copies this paragraph beginning 'which is the land of the Parthians'. Kewond, ch.2, has 481. From Artashir I in 226 to Yazkert III in 651 is 425 years. For various numbers in different Armenian historians see Abgaryan n.609. The closest to the real figure is the Armenian version of Michael with 418.

836 The 'king', *ark'ay* is the caliph Othman [644-656]; Muawiya is called prince, *'ishkhan'*. Sebeos clarifies the distinction below 176. For the peace treaty see 147. On 169 below Sebeos makes it clear that the treaty was 'broken', implying that it had not originally been fixed for a three-year term.

837 I.e. 652/653.

from [allegiance to] the Greek kingdom and submitted to the king of Ismael. Teodoros, lord of Rshtunik', with all the Armenian princes made a pact with death and contracted an alliance with hell, abandoning the divine covenant.<sup>838</sup> Now the prince of Ismael spoke with them and said: 'Let this be the pact of my treaty between me and you for as many years as you may wish. I shall not take tribute from you for a three-year period.<sup>839</sup> Then you will pay [tribute] with an oath, as much as you may wish. You will keep in your country 15,000 cavalry, and provide sustenance<sup>840</sup> from your country; and I shall reckon it in the royal tax. I shall not request the cavalry for Syria; but wherever else I command they shall be ready for duty. I shall not send amirs<sup>841</sup> to [your] fortresses, nor an Arab army - neither many, nor even down to a single cavalryman. An enemy shall not enter Armenia; and if the Romans attack you I shall send you troops in support, as many as you may wish. I swear by the great God<sup>842</sup> that I shall not be false.'

In this manner the servant of Anti-Christ<sup>843</sup> split them away from the Romans. For although the emperor wrote many intercessions and supplications to them and summoned them to himself, they did not wish to heed him. Then he said: 'I am coming to the city of Karin. Do you come to me.' Or: 'I am coming to you, and I shall give you a subsidy as assistance;<sup>844</sup> and we shall decide together what is best to do.' Yet even so they did not wish to heed him.

11651 The complaint and murmuring of all the Roman troops

838 Cf. Is. 28.15, 18. Y.D. XIX 27, echoes these sentiments; T'.A. does not refer to the pact, or even mention Teodoros at all.

839 Tribute: *sak*, as **170** below, of the demand from the emperor; but there it is 'as much as you are able [not. 'willing'] to give'. It is a standard term for the tribute required by the Sasanians; e.g. Elishe 23. Cf. *AG* 234, and Adontz/Garsoian 363-4. A three-year period: *zeream mi*. Abgaryan, n.613, notes that the MSS all have corrupted readings here. The emendation goes back to Patkanean. t ewond, ch.4, states that the tribute was 500 *dahekan*.

840 Sustenance: *hats'*, lit. 'bread', t ewond, ch.21, states that [at a later date] the Muslims paid 100.000 *dahekan* as an allowance.

841 Amirs: *amirays*; cf. *AG* 300. This seems to be the first occurrence of the word in Armenian. Arab: *tachik*, see n.1 18.

842 The great God: see also the letter of Othman, **169** below.

843 Anti-Christ: *nefn*, as I Jn. 2.18, etc. It is noteworthy that Elishe, tazar and M X. do not use the term for the Persians. For the theme in Armenian see Pseudo-Epiphanius, Introduction.

844 A subsidy: The oldest MS has *hrogi*. This may be interpreted in two ways: the Greek *roga*, 'subsidy, donative', as above, n.490; or as *hr-ogi*, where *li* = 70, *r* = 1,000, *ogi* = souls - i.e. 70,000 troops - which Abgaryan, n.618, regards as preferable in the context of military assistance. But see the Historical Commentary. Assistance: *awgnut'awn*, a correction by Mihrdatean for *awrhnut iwn*, 'blessing', in A.

## HISTORY

concerning the lord of Rshtunik' and the Armenians reached the king with regard to the defeats which had occurred in Mardots'ek'.<sup>845</sup> They said: They have united with the Ismaelites. They reassured us, but had their troops dispersed in an invasion into Atrpatakan. Then they brought them upon us unexpectedly and caused them to defeat us. Everything we had was there lost. But let us go to Armenia and investigate our affairs.'

Then king Constans agreed to carry out the army's wishes. He took his army and went to Armenia with 100,000 [troops]. When he reached Derjan,<sup>846</sup> some Ismaelite men met him and presented to him a letter from their prince, which was written in the following terms: 'Armenia is mine; do not go there. But if you do go, I shall attack you, and I shall ensure that you will be unable to flee from there.' King Constans responded: 'That land is mine, and I am going there. If you attack me, God is a righteous judge.'<sup>847</sup> He left there and came to the city of Karin in the 12th year of his reign and the 20th year of the rule of the Ismaelites.

King Constans remained in the city of Karin for a few days. The princes and troops of the so-called Fourth Armenia<sup>848</sup> presented themselves, and also all the other troops and princes who had left the Rshtuni territory. There met him the men of Sper, the princes of the Bagratunik', the men of Mananali, of Daranali, those from the province of Ekeleats',<sup>849</sup> and all the troops of those places, and the men of Karin, and Tayk', and Basean. There also came to meet him the princes of Vanand with their army, the men of Shirak, the Khorkhorunik',<sup>850</sup> and

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845 Mardots'ek': This particular form is not otherwise attested; cf. the Marduts'ayk' in tewond, ch.2, the site of a Greek defeat where T'eodoros Rshtuni abandoned the Greeks under Procopius. The area is Mardastan, see Adontz/Garsoian 323,492-3, n.57.

846 Derjan is in north-western Armenia on the road to Karin, *AON* 287; Hewsens, *ASX* map 61.

847 Ps. 9.5, and many parallels.

848 Fourth Armenia, i.e. Tsopk' in the south-west. See Hewsens, */ISA'* 154, for the changes in this border.

849 For these places, see *A ON* 283-7, and Hewsens, *ASX* map 61. Sper was Bagratid land; *EH* 491-2.

850 Basean, in Turuberan, is just south of Tayk'; Vanand and Shirak adjoin each other in Ayrarat. See Hewsens, *JIST* map 69. Only one of the three lines of the Dimak'sean family was located in Shirak; *EH* 369. But the Khorkhorunik' were further south in Turuberan;

the men of the house of the Dimak'seank'. Also presenting themselves were Mushel Mamikonean with his clansmen and certain other princes, and the army from the region of Ayrarat; the Araweleank', the Araneank', the Varazhunik', the Gnt'unik', the Spandunik', and others with them.<sup>855</sup> The Catholicos Nerses, who had come from Tayk', also met him.

All the princes explained to the king the intention and plan for rebellion of the lord of Rshtunik', and the frequent coming and going to him of the messengers of Ismael. Then the king and all his army cursed the lord of Rshtunik', deprived him of the title of his authority, and sent another person to replace him, accompanied by 40 men. But when they reached him, he arrested and bound them, and had [some] taken to the fortress of Balesh and others to the islands of Bznunik'.<sup>856</sup> **[166]** He himself went to the island of Alt'amar; and he commanded the troops of those regions to fortify themselves in each one's province. There were with him as allies the Iberians, Aluank', and Siwnik', who in accordance with his order went to their respective countries and fortified themselves there. But T'eodoros, lord of Vahewunik', took control of the fortress of Arp'ayk'.<sup>857</sup> His son Grigor, who was son-in-law of the lord of the Rshtunik', and Varaz Nerseh of Dashtkar, took up positions outside.<sup>858</sup>

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855 For this Mushel Mamikonean [not the same as the Mushel of **77**, n.144 or of **137**, n.609] see *HAnjB*, no.17, and Toumanoff, *Dynasties* 333. These families, all from the region of Ayrarat, have been studied in Toumanoff, *Studies* 199-222. For Nerses the Catholicos, see **139**, n.630; he was originally from Tayk', **166**, n.857 and later took refuge there, **175**.

856 Balesh is Bitlis, *AON* 324. A, which was written at that town, spells the name 'Balalesh', as does the oldest MS of T'. A., 110; likewise the Greek name for the nearby pass is *kleisoura Balaleison*. Lake Van was called the lake of Bznunik'. For Alt'amar see **134**.

857 This T'eodoros was mentioned on **138** above in connection with a Muslim attack on Dvin. The *HHSTB*, s.v., notes that Arp'ayk' is on the river Arp'a in Ayrarat [where the Vahewunik' had territory, Toumanoff, *Studies* 215]. It is curious that if it had merchants and treasures it is not mentioned elsewhere.

858 The *HAnjB*, s.v. Grigor no.35, gives no references for Grigor Vahewuni other than Sebeos; see also 169 for his marriage. Varaz Nerseh, *HAnjB*, no.4, is only mentioned here; nor is Dashtkar mentioned elsewhere. According to the *HHSTB*, s.v. *Dashtakaran*, its site is unknown. But Abgaryan, n.624, takes *Dashtkarin* to be a corruption of *dashtakolmann* [as in the next paragraph, line 21 cf Abgaryan's text]. The meaning would then be: 'Grigor... and Varaz Nerseh took up positions outside in the direction of the plain.'

And they seized the treasures, for all the treasures of the land were there - of the church, of the princes, and of the merchants.

King Constans, when he heard this, desired the multitude of his army to engage in plunder and go to winter in Armenia, so that he might destroy the country. Then the Catholicos and Mushel with all the Armenian princes fell on their faces, and with great supplications and tearful entreaties requested mercy, lest on account of their trespasses he be totally angered and ruin the country. The king heeded their entreaties and sent away the larger part of his army. He himself went to Ayrarat with 20,000 men. Coming to Dvin, he stayed in the residence of the Catholicos. The king appointed Mushel, lord of the Mamikoneank', prince of the Armenian cavalry,<sup>859</sup> and sent him to the region of *Sephakan Gund* with 3,000 men. He likewise sent some of his troops to Iberia, Aluank', and Siwnik' to separate them from union [with T'eodoros]. Another army besieged Arp'ayk' from both the mountain side and the plain. Although the Iberians<sup>859</sup> for a while did not wish to submit, yet later they capitulated; but Aluank' and Siwnik' and *Sephakan Gund* did not submit. They pillaged their lands, took away whatever they found, and returned to the king.

#### [CHAPTER 49]

*[Concerning the Catholicos of Armenia, Nerses; he and other bishops communicate with the Romans out of fear. One of the bishops is forced by the emperor to communicate with the Catholicos. Return of Constans to Constantinople. Flight of Nerses from the Armenian princes. T'eodoros Rshtuni defeats the Greek army, takes Trebizond, goes to Muawiya, and receives office of prince over Armenia, Iberia, Aluank' and Siwnik'. Preparation of the Ismaelites to capture Constantinople.]*

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<sup>859</sup> Iberians: *Virk'*, an emendation by Abgaryan, n.629, for the *isk*, 'then, indeed', of the MSS. He bases this on the version in Y.D. XIX 29, which refers to the submission of Iberia alone, all other lands refusing obedience to Constans. Aluank' and Siwnik' are in the singular; see n.850 just above.

Hewsen. *ASX* map 62A. In the text here Khorkhoruni is in the singular; cf. **172**, n.899, for the use of a singular where a plural noun is intended.

855 Prince of the Armenian cavalry: *ishkhan Hayots' hetsetlots'*. The control of the cavalry, with the title of *aspet* [71. n.80 above], belonged by hereditary right to the Bagratids. On the other hand, the title *ishkhan*, 'prince', was given to the governors of Armenia and Iberia appointed by the Byzantine emperors from the time of Maurice; Toumanoff. *Studies* 384-5, and cf. **133**, n.582. By the seventh century the Mamikonean house was more closely associated with the Byzantine court than the Bagratids, but it was the latter who soon rose to pre-eminence in Armenia. For *Sephakan Gund* see **145**, n.675.

I shall now speak briefly about the Armenian Catholicos Nerses, for he was by origin from Tayk', from the village called Ishkhan.<sup>K:17</sup> [167] He was raised from his youth in the territory of the Greeks, had studied the language and literature of the Romans, and travelled through those lands with the army in a military capacity. He firmly agreed with the council of Chalcedon and the Tome of Leo. But he revealed his impious thoughts to no one until he reached the episcopate in that land,<sup>857</sup> from which he was called to the throne of the Catholicosate. He was a man virtuous in conduct, fasting, and prayer. But he kept the bitter poison hidden in his heart, and he planned to convert Armenia to the council of Chalcedon. Yet he did not dare to reveal his intention until king Constans came and stayed in the residence of the Catholicos, and the council of Chalcedon was proclaimed in the church of St Gregory on a Sunday. The liturgy was celebrated in Greek by a Roman priest;<sup>858</sup> and the king, Catholicos, and all the bishops took communion, some willingly, some unwillingly. In this way the Catholicos perverted the true faith of St Gregory which all the Catholicoi had preserved on a solid foundation in the holy church from St Gregory down to today. He muddied the pure and clean and crystalline waters of the springs<sup>859</sup> - which the Catholicos from early on had intended, but had not been able to reveal until that day. Then, when he found an opportunity, he carried out his desire. He betrayed one by one the bishops, and demoralized them through fear, so that from terror of death they all carried out the orders to communicate; especially because the blessed ones who were more firmly based,<sup>860</sup> had died.

However, he was confuted by a certain bishop in front of the king and had to keep silent. For he [Nerses] and all the bishops had previously

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857 Land: *ashkharh*, i.e. Tayk'.

858 For the church of St Gregory in Dvin, see 68,91,100, n.299 and 112. In Greek: *hor- omeren*, 'in the Roman language'. Roman: *hor'om*.

859 He muddied ... springs: This is reminiscent of the saying in Eznik 358 concerning Marcion: 'the water of the spring is muddied from its source'.

860 More firmly based: *himnaworagoyñ*. This seems to be a hapax. but the verb *himna- worel*, 'to place on a foundation', is quite common. It is not clear to which bishops, whose faith did not waver, Sebeos is referring: perhaps Yovhan Mayragomets'i and his anti-Chalcedonian colleagues, for whom see Garitte, *Narratio* 346-8.



## HISTORY

composed [a declaration];<sup>861</sup> he had anathematized the council of Chalcedon and the Tome of Leo, and had refused communion with the Romans. The Catholicos had sealed it with his ring and with the rings of all the bishops and greatest princes; and they had given it to him to preserve in the church. But when the liturgy was offered and all the bishops had communicated, that bishop whom I mentioned above did not communicate, but he descended from the bema<sup>H6y</sup> and hid himself in the crowd.

When they had finished the act of communion and the king had entered his chamber, the Catholicos and the Roman priests came forward and made a complaint against that bishop: 'He did not sit on his episcopal seat, nor did he communicate with us. He reckoned us and you unworthy, went down from the *bema*, and hid in the crowd.' The king was troubled and ordered two men to arrest him and bring him before him in his chamber.

[168] The king addressed him: 'Are you a priest?' The bishop said: 'If God wills and your majesty.' The king said: 'What are you? I am your king, and he is your Catholicos and our father. Yet you reckon me unworthy of communicating with you, but not him.' The bishop said: 'I am a sinful man and unworthy; I do not merit communion with you. But if God were to make me worthy, I would consider that [by communicating] with you I would enjoy [communion] with Christ from the altar and his hands.' The king said: 'Enough of that. Tell me this. Is this man Catholicos of Armenia, or not?' The bishop said: 'In the same way as St Gregory.' The king said: 'Do you recognize him as Catholicos?' He said: 'Yes.' The king said: 'Do you communicate with him?' He said: 'As with St Gregory.' The king said: 'Then why did you not communicate today?' He said: 'Beneficent king, while we used to see you painted on the walls,<sup>862</sup> trembling possessed us - let alone now that we see you face to face and speak mouth to mouth. We are ignorant and foolish men; we know neither language nor literature unless we first study and comprehend. But who can counter your beneficent commands? As for this

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861 Composed: *dzern arkeal*, lit. 'undertaken'. Sebeos is referring to the council held at Dvin four years earlier, when the Catholicos and bishops had all sealed a joint declaration rejecting Chalcedon; see 148 above.

862 For early Armenian frescoes see Der Nersessian, *Armenian Art* 71-2.

857 For the installation of Nerses see 139. n.630. After 591 Tayk' was within the Byzantine border; for the village Ishkhan see *A ON* 360.

863 Bema: *bemb*, *AG* 343, the raised chancel. The following is often taken to be a personal reminiscence - i.e. the author of this History was the bishop concerned. Cf. the versions in *Y.D.* XIX 34-40; *Vardan* 68-9.

country, all orders of ritual<sup>860</sup> emanate from this place and this man. Four years before this he convened a council and summoned to it all the bishops. He had a document composed concerning the faith, and sealed it with his own ring, and then with ours, and then with the rings of all the princes. That document is now with him.<sup>865</sup> Order a search made to see.' Then he remained silent. When the king realized his [Nerses'] deceit, he reproached him with many words in his own tongue. Then the king ordered [the bishop] to communicate with the Catholicos. When the bishop had carried out the king's orders, he said: 'May God bless your beneficent and pious reign for ever, as you rule over all sea and land very victoriously.'<sup>866</sup> The king blessed the bishop and said: 'May God bless you. You acted in the way that befits your wisdom, and I am grateful.'

With extreme urgency the king was pressed to come quickly to Constantinople, and he departed immediately. He appointed a certain Morianos prince of Armenia with the Armenian army in their territory.<sup>867</sup>

When king Constans left Dvin the Catholicos departed with him. Then he went and stayed in Tayk', and returned no more to his own position.<sup>868</sup> For the prince of Rshtunik' and the other princes with him had swollen up against him in tremendous anger.

[169] So T'eodoros, lord of Rshtunik', remained in his lair on the island of Alt'amar, he and his son-in-law Hamazasp, lord of the Mami- koneank'.<sup>869</sup> He requested for himself troops from the Ismaelites, and 7,000 men came to his support. He installed them in Aliovit and Bznunik',<sup>870</sup> and went himself to join them and remained among them.

When the days of winter had passed and it was near to the great

865 I.e. the letter was not sent; see **148**, n.701 above.

866 Cf. the ending of Nerses' letter to Constans, **161** - the document that was sealed with the bishops' rings but never sent to the emperor.

867 Morianos [i.e. Maurianus, *PLRE* III, s.v. no.2, 853-4] is not mentioned in other Armenian sources. Prince of Armenia, *ishkhan Hayots'*, the standard title for the governors appointed by the emperor or the Muslims; see above, **133**, n.582 and **166**, n.855.

868 But six years later Nerses did return to his position; see **175**, n.922. Cf. Y.D. XIX 41-5.

869 Hamazasp: *HAnjB*, no.17, the son of Dawit', see also **174**. For the family tree, Tou- manoff. *Dynasties* 332. Another son-in-law of T'eodoros, Grigor, was mentioned on **166**.

870 On the northern side of Lake Van.

## HISTORY

Easter,\*<sup>72</sup> the Romans fled and entered Tayk'. They were driven from there, and were unable to halt anywhere but went in their flight close to the seashore. They ravaged all the land, captured the city of Trebizond, and took away very large quantities of booty, plunder, and captives.<sup>871</sup>

After this Teodoros, the lord of Rshtunik', went to Muawiya the prince of Ismael in Damascus, and visited him with grand presents. The prince of Ismael gave him robes of gold embroidered with gold and a banner of his own pattern.<sup>872</sup> He gave him the rank of prince of Armenia, Iberia, Aluank', and Siwnik', as far as the Caucasus mountain and the Pass of Chor.<sup>873</sup> Then he dismissed him with honour. He had made a pact with him to bring that land into subjection.

In the 11th year of Constans the treaty between Constans and Muawiya, prince of Ismael, was broken.\*<sup>874</sup> The king of Ismael ordered all his troops to assemble in the west and to wage war against the Roman empire, so that they might take Constantinople and exterminate that kingdom as well.

(CHAPTER 50)<sup>875</sup>

*[Letter of the king of Ismael to Constans, king of the Greeks. Muawiya comes to Chalcedon. A tempest destroys and scatters the fleet of the Ismaelites; the Ismaelite army abandons Chalcedon. Another army of Ismaelites, which invades Iberia, is repelled by a winter storm. The*

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871 The subjects of the successive sentences are not clear; for such ambiguities cf. The Armenian Text, lx. Here 'they ravaged' may well refer to Teodoros and his Ismaelite troops.

872 Banner of his own pattern: *varnorin awrinakaw*; cf. *Buzandaran* V 38, for *var*, 'standard'. *Norin*, 'of the same [person]', could refer to Muawiya, but it is more likely that Sebeos means that Teodoros received a standard of Rshtuni colours officially from Muawiya as a token of his submission and official appointment. Prince of Armenia: see n.868.

873 Caucasus mountain: *Kapkoh*, see 78. n.149; the Chor pass is by Darband, see 69, n.57, 104.

874 If this figure is correct, Sebeos returns to 651/652. On 164 he mentioned the end of the treaty in the 12th year of Constans after three years. On 170 Sebeos states that the Muslim army reached Constantinople in the 13th year of Constans, after three years, but he does not say how long the elaborate preparations took. 'The king' is the caliph Othman, as 164, n.836.

875 Macler, ch.36.

865 Of ritual: *karg* can mean 'ritual' or 'rank' [as **97**. n.276 above],

872 The year after Constans' visit to Dvin would be 654. The 'Romans' are the troops left in Armenia.

*princes of Armenia unite and divide Armenia among themselves.  
Distress of the people.]*

If you wish, he said, to preserve your life in safety, abandon that vain cult which you learned from childhood. Deny that Jesus and turn to the great God whom I worship, the God of our father Abraham.<sup>878</sup> Dismiss from your presence the multitude of your troops to their respective lands. And I shall make you a great prince in your regions and send prefects<sup>874</sup> to your cities. I shall make an inventory of the treasures and order them to be divided into four parts: three for me, and one for you. [170] I shall provide you with as many soldiers as you may wish, and take tribute<sup>879</sup> from you, as much as you are able to give. But if you do not, that Jesus whom you call Christ, since he was unable to save himself from the Jews, how can he save you from my hands?'

All the troops who were in the east assembled: from Persia, Khuz- hastan,<sup>880</sup> from the region of India, Aruastan, and from the region of Egypt [they came] to Muawiya, the prince of the army who resided in Damascus.<sup>881</sup> They prepared warships in Alexandria and in all the coastal cities. They filled the ships with arms and artillery<sup>882</sup> - 300 great ships with a thousand elite cavalry for each ship. He ordered 5,000 light ships to be built, and he put in them [only] a few men for the sake of speed, 100 men for each ship, so that they might rapidly dart to and fro<sup>883</sup> over the waves of the sea around the very large ships. These he sent over the sea, while he himself took his troops with him and marched to Chalcedon. When he penetrated the whole land, all the inhabitants of the country submitted to him, those on the coast and in the mountains and on the plains. On the other hand, the host of the Roman army entered Constantinople to guard the city. The

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878 For the 'great' God cf. above 164, n.842. For Abraham as the common father of Jews and Arabs see 134-136.

879 Tribute: *sak*\ see 164, n.839.

880 Khuzhastan: see 85, n.188. 'India' is an ambiguous term; cf. 162, n.826. Aruastan, 76, n.128.

881 Who resided: *or nster*. Since Armenian has no grammatical gender, it is not certain whether this refers to Muawiya, or to the army 'which was stationed [in Damascus]!'

882 Artillery: *mek'enayk*', as above, 74, n. 113. More precise details of these siege machines, based on I Macc. 6.51, are given on 171, n.889.

883 Dart to and fro: *chakhrests'en slanalov*\ both verbs are commonly used of birds 'wheeling or soaring', but I have not found any parallel for their use as nautical metaphors.

destroyer reached Chalcedon in the 13th year of Constans.<sup>884</sup> He kept the many light ships ready at the seashore, so that when the very heavy ships might arrive at Chalcedon he could rapidly go to their support. And he had the letter of their king taken into the city to Constans.

The king received the letter, went into the house of God, fell on his face and said: 'See, Lord, the insults which these Hagarenes have inflicted upon you. "May your pity, Lord, be upon us, as we hope in you."<sup>885</sup> "Fill their faces with indignity, and they will seek your name, Lord. They will be put to shame and disquieted for ever and ever; and they will perish full of shame. They will know that your name is Lord, and you only are raised on high over all the earth."<sup>886</sup> He lifted the crown from his head, stripped off his purple [robes] and put on sackcloth, sat on ashes, and ordered a fast to be proclaimed in Constantinople in the manner of Nineveh.<sup>887</sup>

[1711 Behold the great ships arrived at Chalcedon from Alexandria with all the small ships and all their equipment. For they had stowed on board the ships mangonels, and machines to throw fire, and machines to hurl stones, archers and slingers,<sup>888</sup> so that when they reached the wall of the city they might easily descend onto the wall from the top of towers, and break into the city. He ordered the ships to be deployed in lines<sup>889</sup> and to attack the city.

When they were about two stades<sup>841</sup> distance from the dry land, then one could see the awesome power of the Lord. For the Lord looked down from heaven with the violence of a fierce wind, and there arose a storm, a great tempest, and the sea was stirred up from the depths below. Its waves piled up high like the summits of very high mountains, and the wind whirled around over them; it crashed and roared like the clouds,

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884 I.e. 653/654. Destroyer: *apakanich'*, common in the Old Testament; cf. the 'spoilers' of I Kingdoms 13.17, 14.15, etc.

885 Ps. 32.22.

886 Ps. 82.17-19.

887 Jonah 3.5-6: fast, sackcloth, ashes. See Is. ch.37 for the reaction of Hezekiah 'in the house of the Lord' to the letter of Sennacherib.

888 Mangonels... slingers: This is taken from I Maccabees 6.51, where the siege of Jerusalem is described. See Thomson, 'Maccabees' for a brief review of the impact of these books on early Armenian historians. Mangonel: the Greek *magganon*, AG 363. For *mek 'enay*, 'machine', see above, nn. 113,883.

889 In lines: *chakat ar chakat*, as of battle lines confronting each other; see 66, n.20.

- 879 Prefects: *ostikans*, see 83. n.180.  
891 Stade: *asparez*, as above, **86**, n. 199.



and there were gurglings from the depths. The towers collapsed, the machines were destroyed, the ships broke up, and the host of soldiers were drowned in the depths of the sea. The survivors were dispersed on planks over the waves of the sea. Cast hither and thither in the tossing of the waves, they perished; for the sea opened its mouth and swallowed them. There remained not a single one of them. On that day by his upraised arm God saved the city through the prayers of the pious king Constans.<sup>892</sup> For six days the violence of the wind and the turbulence of the sea did not cease.

When the Ismaelites saw the fearsome hand of the Lord, their hearts broke. Leaving Chalcedon by night, they went to their own land. The other army, which was quartered in Cappadocia, attacked the Greek army. But the Greeks defeated them, and it fled to Aruastan pillaging Fourth Armenia.<sup>893</sup>

After the autumn had passed and winter was approaching, the army of Ismael came and took up quarters at Dvin. It was planning to put Iberia to the sword. It parleyed with them in a threatening message, that they should either submit to them, or abandon their country and depart.<sup>844</sup> However, they did not agree to do so, but prepared to oppose them in battle. So the Ismaelites moved against them in war, to go and exterminate them completely. As they were setting out on their way, cold and winter snow beset them.<sup>894</sup> Therefore they departed rapidly for Asorestan, and caused no harm to Armenia.

Now the Armenian princes, from both Greek and Arab territory, Hamazasp and Mushel,<sup>895</sup> and all the others, came together at one place and **1172]** made a pact with each other that there should be no sword and shedding of blood among them, and that they should pass in peace the days of winter, so that they might safeguard the peasants.<sup>896</sup>

892 Pious: *astuatsaser*, 'God-loving', or 'loved by God'. The same word is used in the address to Constans at the end of the letter, 161, which was written in a conciliatory tone. Here a pro-Greek source may be suspected.

893 Fourth Armenia; see 165, n.848.

894 Cf. the winter weather which disrupted Corbulo's campaign, Tacitus, *Annals* XIII 35, or Plutarch describing the campaign of Lucullus.

895 See 169. n.870 and 165. n.851 for these two related members of the Mamikonean house; their relationship is set out by Toumanoff, *Dynasties* 332-3.

896 Peasants: *shinakansn*. This is the first reference in Sebeos to the 'third estate' in Armenia, after the nobles and clergy; see EH 559 for a resume of their condition.

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For the lord of Rshtunik' had fallen ill and withdrawn to the island of Alt'amar. He was quite unable to come out or form any plans. They divided the land according to the number of each one's cavalry,<sup>897</sup> and they appointed tax-gatherers for gold and silver.

Here one could see the anguished affliction like that of the sick when illness seizes them and they are deprived of speech. Something of that sort happened. For there was no place for flight or refuge for the populace, nor mercy from above; but it was as if one might fall into the sea and be unable to find a way out.

Now when the lord of Rshtunik' saw this, he requested for himself troops from the Ismaelites in order to strike the Armenian [troops]<sup>849</sup> and expel them, and to put the Iberians to the sword.

[CHAPTER 51]<sup>898</sup>

*[Rebellion of the Medes from the Ismaelites. Collapse of the power of the Ismaelites beyond the Chor Pass, and flight of the survivors across the difficult (terrain) of the Caucasus mountain.]*

In that year<sup>899</sup> the Medes rebelled from submission to Ismael and killed the chief of the tax-collectors of the king of Ismael. They made their refuge and retreat the fastnesses of the land of Media, the deep forested valleys, the precipices, the rocks, the rugged, difficult terrain along the river Gaz<sup>900</sup> and the mountain range of Media, and the strength of those active and intrepid peoples who inhabited them, Gel and Delum.<sup>901</sup>

They were unable to endure their cruel and oppressive subjection and the burden of the tax imposed on them. For they took from them each

897 See Toumanoff, *Studies* 234-41 for estimates of the 'Military Potential' in the different noble houses of Armenia. Tax-gatherers: *harkapahanj*, a common term.

898 Macler, ch.37.

899 The last date given was the 13th of Constans [653/654], **170**, n.885. Chief tax-collector: *ishkhan harkapahanj*, lit. 'the prince who demands tribute'.

900 This is the Gah-rah, south-west of the mountains of Gelmank'. A town Gaza or Gandzak was the summer capital of Media; Hewsens, *ASX* 266.

901 Gel: correcting the reading *Del* of all MSS. For these two peoples on the south-west of the Caspian, see Hewsens, *ASX* 45A, 87-8, and Barthold, *Historical Geography* 230-3.

894 Sebeos does not specify the subjects of the verbs, as often above. For this unsuccessful Arab offensive, see the Historical Commentary.

899 The Armenian: *zHayn*. Although Sebeos frequently uses a singular for the plural - e.g. 'the Greek' for the East Romans [Byzantines] - here the singular probably means the Armenian army under Roman control, which Teodoros intended to expel from Iberia.

year 365 sacks of *drams*.<sup>904</sup> As for those who could not pay, they took for each *dram* one man, and they abolished the cavalry and the office of prince of the country.<sup>905</sup> Therefore, preferring death to life, they weighed their situation in the balance to attain one of two alternatives - either to die or to be freed from cruel servitude. They began to bring together the surviving militia and to organize battalions, in the hope that they might be able to escape from the teeth of the dragon and from the cruel beast.<sup>904</sup>

The host of the army of Ismael saw that their enterprise was not succeeding in the difficult mountains of Media, because the Ket'rus and Scythians, who are the Gelk' and Delumk',<sup>905</sup> [173] had not submitted to them, with all the multitude of the mountain dwellers.<sup>906</sup> Many had perished in the rough terrain and deep valleys by falling down from precipices, while many had been wounded by arrows in the impenetrable fens by the valiant and brave warriors. So they hastened away from those regions and made for the north, towards the people by the Caspian Gates.<sup>907</sup> They reached the Pass of Chor, and crossing within the pass, they ravaged all the country along the foot of the mountain. There came out against them a small army [from the place]<sup>908</sup> which they call the Gate of the Huns - for they were the guards of that place - and defeated them.

There came another army from the territory of the T'etalk'. They

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904 Cruel: *darnashunch'*, as of the Sasanians. 64, n.4. The 'teeth of the dragon' is a common biblical motif.

905 The Ket'rus are probably the Kadousioi, who lived on the Caspian shore; see Bart- hold, *Historical Geography* 230. But the Scythians, a term loosely used in Armenian, were normally placed further north, beyond the Caucasus. Abgaryan, n.656, takes 'Ket'rus and Scythians' as a later addition. This makes better sense than supposing 'who... Delumk' to be a later gloss, since the identification is incorrect.

906 Mountain dwellers: *amrabnak*, 'those who dwelt in inaccessible places'.

907 Caspian Gates: *Kaspiakan drunk'*, only here in Armenian, though it is common in Greek. See Historical Commentary, which identifies the Caspian Gates, in this notice, as the whole coastal passage running north from Sumgait past Darband to its northern outlet at Makhachkala; Hewsens, ASX122-3, has no hesitation in locating Chor at Darband.

908 The text of Sebeos implies that the guards were called 'Gate of the Huns' - sic!

joined battle with a great shock, and the Ismaelite army suffered defeat from the army of the T'etalk'.<sup>911</sup> They smote them and put them to the sword. The fleeing survivors were unable to escape through the pass, because another army of theirs came up behind them. So they 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. Only a few, escaping by the skin of their teeth.<sup>909</sup> naked and unshod, on foot and wounded, reached the area of Ctesiphon, their own homeland.

### CHAPTER 52<sup>910</sup>

*[M us he I Mamikonean submits to the Ismaelites. TT>odoros Rshtuni and other princes submit to the Ismaelites. Battle between Greeks and Ismaelites at Nakhchawan, and destruction of the Greeks. Capture of Karin; ravaging of the lands of Armenia, Ahiank', and Siwnik' by the Ismaelites, and the giving of hostages. Death of TT'odoros Rshtuni. Hamazasp Mamikonean is appointed prince of Armenia. The Catholicos Nerses returns to the throne of the Catholicosate and completes the construction of the church of Zuart'-nots'. The Armenians rebel from the Ismaelites; slaughter of the hostages. Mushel Mamikonean abandons his submission to the Ismaelites and is summoned to the palace. Disturbance among the Ismaelite army; their division into four parts and mutual slaughter. The victory of Muawiya over his opponents, his sole rule and making of peace. Conclusion.]*

Then Mushel, lord of the Mamikoneank', rebelled from the Greeks and submitted to Ismael. In the same year<sup>911</sup> the army of Ismael that was quartered in Armenia took control of the whole land from end to end. T'eodoros, lord of Rshtunik', and all the princes of the country submitted in unison, and in every way hastened to carry out their desires, because fear of a dreadful death hung over them.

In that year through the envy of his brother the blessed [174] and pious Artavazd Dimak'sean was betrayed and handed over to the merci-

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909 See 68, n.48, for this metaphor.

910 Macler ch.38.

911 The last date given was the 13th year of Constans [653/654]. Muslim hold over Armenia seems to have been re-affirmed after their withdrawal during the winter, as 171.

904 Sacks: *payusak*, as in Micah 6.11; see AG 220. *Dram*, AG 145-6, is used for 'drachma' or 'dirhem'. Abgaryan, n.654, quotes Manandyan, who drew on Anania Sirakats'i, equating one bag with 50 litres [= 1,000 saters] and 16.32 kg; see the French version of Manandyan. 'Les poids' 340.

905 For this office see just above, n.874. In other words, the Muslims were appointing their own governors; see the Historical Commentary.

911 This name is used of peoples living in the north. But more usually the T'etalk' are placed to the east and associated with the K'ushans, as 73, n.98; cf. also Elishe 18.

less executioner, the general called Habib who resided in Aruch of Ashnak.<sup>915</sup> He put him to death in an exceedingly cruel fashion.

It was the days of piercing winter cold, and the Greeks were pressing hard on them. From the cold they could not come out to offer them battle, but unexpectedly crossed the river and went and fortified themselves in Zarehawan.<sup>916</sup> When the Greeks saw that, they paid no attention to them, but sacked the fortress of Dvin and went on to Nakhchawan. They attacked the fortress in order to pillage it too. The general of the Greek army was a certain Mawrianos,<sup>917</sup> who they said was a trustworthy man.

Now when the springtime arrived.<sup>918</sup> he made preparations for battle with the army of Ismael. Mawrianos obstinately planned to finish his own undertaking. The Arabs attacked the Greeks who were assaulting the fortress of Nakhchawan. They defeated them, slew them with the sword, and put the survivors to flight. Mawrianos fled and took refuge in Iberia. Then the army of Ismael turned back from them, besieged the city of Karin, and attacked its [inhabitants]. The latter, unable to offer military resistance, opened the gates of the city and submitted. Having entered the city, they collected gold and silver and all the large amount of the city's wealth. They ravaged all the land of Armenia, Aluank', and Siwnik', and stripped all the churches. They seized as hostages the leading princes of the country, and the wives, sons, and daughters of many people.

T'eodoros, lord of Rshtunik', with his relatives, departed with them. They took them down to Asorestan. There T'eodoros, lord of Rshtunik', died. His body was brought to his own province and buried in the tomb of his fathers.<sup>919</sup>

Hamazasp, lord of the Mamikoneank', son of Dawit', held the posi-

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915 This Artavazd is not mentioned in other Armenian sources, *HAnjB*, no. 19. Habib is only mentioned here in Sebeos; he is Habib b. Maslama, no.4 in the list of Arab governors, *ostikans*, in Laurent-Canard 409-10. This Aruch is in Aragatsotn, *A ON* 364.

916 If the Muslims withdrew from Dvin to Zarehawan they would cross the river Araxes. There are two places named Zarehawan, *AON* 427-8; the one intended here is in Parska-hayk'; Hewsens, *ASX*179, n.140, map 64A.

917 Mawrianos: a variant spelling of Morianos, for whom 168, n.868.

918 655; see next note.

919 Laurent-Canard 261 and Toumanoff, *Dynasties* 507 date T'eodoros' captivity to 655. It is not clear whether he died in the same year; but he was certainly dead by 659, see n.922. The lands of the Rshtunik' were in Vaspurakan, south and east of Lake Van. T'eodoros had made the island of Alt'amar his base; but the tomb of his ancestors was presumably on the mainland, at the capital of the province, Ostan.

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tion of prince of Armenia, a virtuous man in all respects.<sup>920</sup> He was a domesticated man, a lover of reading and study. But he was not trained and experienced in the details of military skill in the fashion of his ancestral family; he had not engaged in combat or seen the faces of the enemy. So he began to be zealous for the valiant character of his ancestral house, to carry out with fervent haste acts of bravery in accordance with the abilities of his ancestors, seeking from On High leadership and success for his own valour.

Then the Armenian Catholicos Nerses departed with the king, 1175] as I said above,<sup>920</sup> and went with him to Constantinople. He [Constans] received him with great honour; and they gave him gifts and sent him back to his own place. He came and stayed in Tayk' until the lord of Rshtunik' died and the Arab invasion had come to an end. Then after the sixth year of expulsion he returned to his position and was reestablished on the throne of the Catholicosate.<sup>921</sup> He hastened to complete the building of the church which he had constructed on the road to the city of Valarshapat.<sup>922</sup>

[176, line 22] Now although in my insignificant tale I may have

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920 See 168; but there Sebeos had merely stated that Nerses went to Tayk', omitting any reference to his visit to Constantinople.

921 Constans and Nerses left Dvin in 653/654, Constans' 13th year, so 659/660 is intended. Cf. Y.D. XIX 45-8; Vardan 69.

922 I.e. the church of Zuart'nots', 147, n.692.

The order of the final section has been changed by Abgaryan, n.661, following Akinean. The MSS continue here with the text as translated. But this next paragraph, 'Now although . . . its own time', which in *A* completes f.547a, Abgaryan places at the very end. Folio 547b begins: 'In the same year...' and ends: '... made peace with all.' If the MSS are correct, Sebeos originally ended with his doomsday prophecy of Muslim devastation, which is expressed in very general terms. He later returned to the History and added a brief description of the Muslim civil war, ending with the triumph of Muawiya in 661. Sebeos thus modified the pessimistic tone of the original ending, accepting the imposition of a new regime as bringing a *defacto* settlement.

If Akinean and Abgaryan are correct, Sebeos regarded Muawiya's victory, not as bringing peace, but as the harbinger of terrible disasters. Yet *tewond* indicates that conditions in Armenia were not so bad during the seventh century. There was peace in the reign of Muawiya; not until the time of Abd-al-Malik [685-705] did the Armenians refuse to pay taxes; and only in his 16th year was there ruthless suppression [*tewond*, chs 4-7, confirmed by Y.D. XXI]. If the paragraph with prophecies of doom is by Sebeos, and not a later addi-



920 For Hamazasp see above, 169, n.870 and for the title 'Prince of Armenia' 168. n.868. Domesticated: *endanesun*, as of Jacob, Gen. 25.27. There are few references in Armenian sources to lay persons being devoted to 'reading and study', the most notable exception being Anania of Shirak.

arranged the details of this history in accordance with the unintelligent thought of my own mind, and not in accordance with the worthy grace of knowledge, nonetheless, looking to the ranks of those who love study I shall confirm [my account] through the prophetic statement spoken at the Lord's command. For even if it was fulfilled earlier in those first [times], yet also in these later [times] down to eternity it will be fulfilled according to the Lord's word: 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass.'<sup>424</sup> 'For fire will flame up,' he says, 'from my anger; it will burn down and descend to the lowest hell.'<sup>425</sup> That he speaks about them<sup>933</sup> is clear, because he says: 'They will be consumed by fire; the foundations of their mountains will burst into flames,'<sup>934</sup> that is, the tyrannies of their great princes. And: 'I shall heap all evils upon them, and with my arrows I shall exterminate them.' For just as arrows fly from the breast of a powerful man, from a fully-extended bow to the target,<sup>935</sup> so too did these [speed] from the desert of Sin, who over the whole earth [177] exterminated through famine and sword and great fear.<sup>936</sup> He clearly indicates that the fire was kindled in the desert, by saying: 'You shall send nooses upon them, the wild beasts of the desert, who will drag them hither and thither across the earth.'<sup>937</sup> Concerning this the prophet Daniel cried out: 'The fourth wild beast, fearsome and astonishing and very powerful; its teeth are iron and its claws bronze. It ate and tore in pieces, and the remnants it trampled under foot,'<sup>938</sup> and so on. Then at the end of his account he says:<sup>939</sup> 'The day of their destruction is close;

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933 It is not entirely clear to whom Sebeos here refers. It seems, however, that the Romans will be destroyed by the Ismaelites from the desert.

934 Deut. 32.22b, but not an exact quotation. Tyrannies: *brnut'iwms*, since Muslim [and Persian] rulers who persecuted Christians were often called 'tyrants', *brnawor*.

935 Just a s . . . target: based on Wis. 5.22.

936 Famine and sword: many parallels in Jeremiah.

937 This is based on Deut. 32.24.

938 Dan. 7.7; for the Armenian text of Daniel here see above, **142**, n.652.

939 At the end of his account: *yels banits 'n*. Abgaryan, n.671, emends the *els* of the MSS to *yels*, 'at the end'. *Banits'n* means 'of the [his] words'; but the following quotation is a combination of Is. 13.6 and Jer. 46.21, not something from the end of Daniel.

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the Lord has arrived upon them in readiness.' And that too will be fulfilled in its own time. [177, line 9]

[175, line 8] In the same year the Armenians abandoned their submission to the Ismaelites and turned their allegiance to the king of the Greeks.<sup>4 1</sup> King Constans made Hamazasp, lord of the Mamikoneank', *curopalates*, and gave him silver cushions and the rank of prince of Armenia. To the other princes [he gave] honours, and treasures to the soldiers.

Then when the king of Ismael saw that the Armenians had withdrawn from submission to them, they put to the sword all the hostages whom they had brought from that land, about 1,775 people.<sup>914</sup> A few were left, in number about 22, who had not happened to be at that spot; they alone survived.

But Mushel, lord of the Mamikoneank', because he had four sons among the hostages with the Ismaelites, was therefore unable to withdraw from their service.<sup>940</sup> And Hamazasp had a brother among the hostages. So [the Ismaelites] requested him and still others from among the princes [to go] to them in Syria with their wives. Therefore, reckoning death better than life,<sup>941</sup> they withdrew from submission to them, and through precipitate negotiations submitted to the king of the Greeks in unison with the prince and the army of Aluank' and the princes of Siwnik' with their country. These had previously been included in the census of Atrpatakan, until the kingdom of the Persians had been destroyed and the Ismaelites ruled. These were then subdued and included with Armenia.<sup>942</sup> They<sup>943</sup> took prisoner Mushel and others of the princes who were with him. The king ordered them to release the other princes those who had been made captive; but Mushel he requested [to be sent] to himself.

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940 This Mushel, earlier Prince of Armenia, **165**, n.851, was the nephew of Hamazasp; Toumanoff, *Dynasties* 332-3. And [Hamazasp] had: *ew er*, corrected by Abgaryan, n.663, from the *erek'*, 'three', of the MSS.

941 I.e. expecting martyrdom; similar phrasing on **65**.

942 For the special status given to Siwnik' by the Sasanians. see **67 68**. Census: here *ash-kharhagir*, the most usual term, but *shahrmar* there; cf. n.36.

943 They: i.e. the Armenian rebels who had turned to the Greeks.

tion picking up his earlier use of Daniel, then it seems more plausible to keep the order of the MSS.

924 Mt. 24.35.

925 Deut. 32.22a; cf. Jer. 15.14.

933 In the same year: Sebeos returns to Hamazasp's appointment, mentioned before his excursus on Nerses. That is dated by Asotik, II 2, to the year 104 (655). For silver cushions and the rank of *curopalates*, cf. **144**, n.670.

934 For the hostages see above **174**. Y.D., XIX 50, gives the same number, but Asolik gives 777.

## SEBEOS

Now God sent a disturbance amongst the armies of the sons of Ismael, and their unity was split. They fell into mutual conflict and divided into four sections. One part [was composed of] those in the direction of India; one 154part, those who occupied Asorestan and the north; [176] one part, those in Egypt and in the regions of the T'etalk'; one part in the territory of the Arabs and the place called Askarawn.<sup>939</sup> They began to fight with each other and to kill each other with enormous slaughter. The [army] in Egypt and that in the area of the Arabs united; they killed their king, plundered the multitude of treasures, and installed another king.<sup>940</sup> Then they went to their respective areas.

That prince who was in the region of Asorestan, their prince called Muawiya, was the second after their king.<sup>941</sup> When he saw what had occurred, he brought together his troops, went himself as well into the desert, slew that other king whom they had installed,<sup>942</sup> waged war with the army in the region of the Arabs, and inflicted great slaughter on them. He returned very victoriously to Asorestan. But the army which was in Egypt united with the king of the Greeks, made a treaty, and joined him. The host of troops, about 15,000, believed in Christ and were baptized.<sup>943</sup> The blood of the slaughter of immense multitudes flowed thickly among the armies of Ismael. Warfare afflicted them as they engaged in mutual carnage. They were unable to refrain for the least moment from the sword and captivity and fierce battles by sea and by land, until Muawiya prevailed and conquered. Having brought them into submission to himself, he rules over the possessions of the sons of Ismael and makes peace with all.<sup>944</sup> [176, line 21]

939 Askarawn: See the Historical Commentary. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It* 128, n.43 suggests a possible connection with *askaran*, 'A'isha's camel at the Battle of the Camel. As above, **162**. 'India' is a vague term and can refer to lands by the Red Sea.

940 Sebeos refers to the death of 'Uthman in 656 and the succession of Ali.

941 See above, n.836, for the distinction between 'king', i.e. 'caliph', and 'prince'.

942 I.e. Ali. For the date of his assassination, see the Historical Commentary. T'.A., 104, refers to a fierce war between Muawiya and 'Ali which lasted for five years and three months.

943 This claim is repeated by Y.D., XIX 52, and Asolik, II2.

944 The last two verbs are in the present tense. Do they reflect the situation at the time of writing, or are they in the 'historic present' for stylistic effect?

THE HISTORY ATTRIBUTED TO SEBEOS is one of the major works of early Armenian historiography. Although anonymous, it was written in the middle of the seventh century, a time when comparable chronicles in Greek and Syriac are sparse. Sebeos traces the fortunes of Armenia in the sixth and seventh centuries within the broader framework of the Byzantine-Sasanian conflict. His main theme covers the reign of Khosrov II (589-628) and the early Muslim expansion, emphasizing Armenian participation in the international scene.

This is the first English translation of the 1979 critical edition of the classical Armenian text. Notes to the translation elucidate persons and dates, and explain difficulties in the original Armenian. The detailed Historical Commentary compares Sebeos' account with other available sources and highlights the particular value of this Armenian witness to the momentous events of his time.

This book will be of interest to all those involved in the study of Armenia, the Caucasus, the Eastern Roman Empire and the Middle East in late antiquity. It will be of particular value to Islamicists, since Sebeos not only sets the scene for the coming of Islam but provides the only substantial non-Muslim account of the initial period of expansion. The notes are specifically aimed at the reader unfamiliar with Armenian; with the maps and appendices they will guide the non-specialist through the complexities of Armenian society and the intricacies of family politics. Specialists too will find the book challenging. The historical commentary makes an original contribution to modern scholarship on the period, and assesses the accuracy and value of this Armenian text.

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# **The Armenian History attributed to Sebeos**

translated, with notes, by R. W. THOMSON

Historical commentary by JAMES

HOWARD-JOHNSTON Assistance from TIM

GREENWOOD

PART II. HISTORICAL COMMENTARY

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# **HISTORICAL COMMENTARY**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The basic annotation necessary for understanding Sebeos' text is presented in footnotes to the translation. Persons are identified, places located, titles explained. Ambiguous or obscure expressions are elucidated. Biblical citations and allusions are identified.

The historical commentary is intended to complement the footnotes. The text has been broken down into passages which deal with a single episode or with closely interrelated matters. These passages vary greatly in length, from a single, short paragraph to several pages. The historical commentary takes the form of extended notes on individual passages. This arrangement is intended to limit the number of times the reader will need to oscillate between the two parts of the book, as well as to impart a degree of independence and coherence to the individual notes. All citations of notes in this historical commentary are to individual historical notes.

A swift glance will already have shown the reader that a good deal may be said by way of commentary on a text with a high specific gravity which has not hitherto attracted the close, critical historical scrutiny which it deserves. I have striven to keep the notes within manageable bounds but subject always to the overriding need for clarity. They are by no means comprehensive in their coverage. Very little is said about the domestic history of Armenia, secular and ecclesiastical, or about its social order and institutional development at the end of antiquity. This will only be possible after a new round of sustained research, in which Sebeos' evidence is examined in association with that of other sources covering the same or adjacent periods. Instead, attention is directed primarily at Armenia's relations with the outside world (Persian, Roman and Arab) and the dramatic events in that wider world which had a major impact on Armenia. These are the principal themes of Sebeos' history and modern scholarship can provide the materials necessary for commentary. Here too, though, there has been some discrimination: the quantity and quality of Sebeos' material on the last and greatest of the wars between the East Roman and Sasanian empires



obtains the full treatment which it demands; so too does his detailed account of Arab expansion and the crisis in the Caliphate which was gathering force at the time of writing; but somewhat less is said of his patchier history of international relations in the late sixth century, which have been covered with exemplary thoroughness by Whitby, *Emperor Maurice*.

For the convenience of readers, the historical notes have been grouped together in three sections corresponding to three distinct phases in the period covered: I (64-105) introductory matter, Khosrov II's formal accession (590) and actual seizure of power with Roman backing (591), and the unpleasant consequences for Armenia of this Roman-Persian *rapprochement* (591-602); II (106-134) the last and greatest war between the East Roman and Sasanian empires in late antiquity, beginning with the *putsch* of Phocas (November 602) which sparked it off and ending with the deposition and execution of Khosrov (February 628) and Heraclius' triumphal entry into Jerusalem with the fragments of the True Cross which he had recovered from the Persians (March 630); III (134-177) a brief account of the life and doctrines of Muhammad followed by a narrative of the Arab conquests which becomes fuller as the author approaches the time of writing (spring- early summer 655), together with some additional material on the first Islamic civil war and its immediate context (added apparently in 661).

The historical commentary cannot entirely eschew philological matters. For a large amount of material is recycled from Sebeos in the chapters (ii.3-4) dealing with the end of the Sasanian empire and the rise of the Arabs in T'ovma Artsruni's *History of the House of the Artsrunik*, completed at the beginning of the tenth century. The existence of this material is recorded at the head of notes dealing with the corresponding passages in Sebeos.

T'ovma undoubtedly made direct use of a manuscript of Sebeos, since a considerable amount of the recycled material is extracted *verbatim*. He was very selective, however, in his use of it. From sections I and II he confined himself to passages dealing with Sasanian dynastic history, high-level diplomacy, and the main episodes of warfare between the great powers. He was even more sparing in what he extracted from Sebeos' account of the origins of Islam. Apart from excising a great deal of other material, T'ovma seems to have limited his editorial intervention to abridgement of some passages and the addition of a prophecy

of doom of his own composition, which he placed just before the decisive battle of Nineveh and the fall of Khosrov. There are very few places where T'ovma may be seen or may be suspected of tampering with the text (and then only in minor ways). So T'ovma's version of selected passages of Sebeos may be used, with reasonable confidence, as a means of controlling the very late manuscript on which the critical edition of Sebeos is based.

Considerable interest therefore attaches to a number of short passages (noted in Robert Thomson's translation of T'ovma) which have no parallels in the extant manuscript of Sebeos. Some of these passages supply important items of information (additional place-names, for example, or details about negotiations). They are well integrated into the material demonstrably taken from Sebeos. It therefore seems likely that the additional material presented by T'ovma was taken from his manuscript of Sebeos, which was, not unexpectedly, superior to that available to modern scholars. Note is therefore taken of all significant additional items of information which may have belonged to the original text of Sebeos.

The second issue confronted in the historical notes is that of chronology. Sebeos provides a solid framework of regnal dates, chiefly Persian until the fall of the Sasanian dynasty, then Roman and Islamic. Once the starting-point adopted for his calculation of Khosrov II's regnal years is established at June 589, there is no difficulty in fixing a rough location in time for most of the reported events. But a fair amount of investigation is needed to establish precise dates for a number of episodes (for example, for some of the campaigns fought in Armenia between 603 and 610). Some forays must also be made into Armenian domestic history, in order to establish key chronological points (notably, in the career of Smbat Bagratuni in Section I or those of his son Varaztirots' and of T'eodoros Rshtuni in Sections II and III) and to draw up *fasti* of Persian and Roman governors in Armenia.

A third task, the most important, is that of elucidating the text. However elliptical, disjointed or obscure individual passages may be, it is important to try to understand the editorial processes to which they were subjected and to extract sense from the text. However surprising pieces of information or indications gained may be, they should be registered as evidence and treated as potentially useful for the reconstruction of history. Only after completing this process of interpreting and making sense of the text as we have it in the critical edition, can a fourth

task be undertaken, that of calling on evidence supplied by other sources, with the twin objectives of assessing the strengths and weaknesses of Sebeos' History as history, and of identifying connections (perhaps taking the form of dependence on a common source) with other texts.

Fifth and finally, although it would save space simply to present Sebeos' evidence side by side with that of other sources, together with a necessary minimum of bibliographical references to the secondary literature, leaving judgements, historiographical and historical, to the reader, this would be an abnegation of duty on the part of the commentator privileged to subject Sebeos' text to critical historical examination for the first time. For it is important to demonstrate the many ways in which Sebeos' history contributes to a fuller understanding of the end of antiquity in the Near East. The wider readership whose attention is being drawn to the text, by its inclusion in the TTH series, is entitled to such a demonstration. A multitude of specific probes into the text should induce in readers, as in this commentator, considerable respect for Sebeos as scholar and historian.

## I. SECTION I (64 105)

### Introduction

Sebeos' coverage of the years 572-602 is patchy. He is mainly concerned with political upheavals in Sasanian Persia, along with some key episodes in the local politics of Armenia. He may touch lightly on other matters (for example Roman campaigns in the Balkans). Much else he simply passes by. Since there is a steady and variegated stream of information coming from two late sixth-century Roman sources, the *Ecclesiastical Histories* of John of Ephesus and Evagrius, and from a major work of secular history written a generation later by Theophylact Simocatta, Sebeos' contribution is, in the main, subsidiary on such aspects of Roman history as he covers. On Armenian and Sasanian matters, however, he provides much unique and valuable information.

Considerable difficulties confront the commentator who strives to establish something of the domestic history of the Sasanian empire (and of Sasanian policy towards Armenia) in this period. For there is a dearth of reliable information with which to compare and supplement Sebeos' account. Material from the *Khwadaynamag*, 'Book of the Lords', a Persian chronicle compiled in the reign of Yazkert III (632-

652), made its way via intermediaries into both the *Annals* of Tabari (completed in the early tenth century) and a huge verse epic, the *Shahnama* of Firdawsi (completed in 1010). Full account is taken of Tabari's work in the notes which follow, but the *Shahnama* (VII, 1-216 on Khosrov, Vahram and Vstam) is largely disregarded since it shows too much evidence of a fertile poetic imagination at work to inspire confidence in its value as a historical record. The only other useful sources of information drew their material from Christian milieux within the Sasanian empire - the near-contemporary *Khuzistan Chronicle*, and three later chronicles which incorporate earlier material, the *Seert Chronicle* (an eleventh-century Arabic translation of a Syriac ecclesiastical history written in the second half of the ninth century), *The History of the Caucasian Albanians* by Movses Daskhurants'i (tenth-century) and the *Georgian Chronicles* (a composite work originating in the late eighth century which received several subsequent accretions). In this first section (as in the two which follow), little attention is paid to a relatively copious but unreliable west Syrian historical tradition, deriving ultimately from a mid eighth-century chronicle which has been plausibly attributed to Theophilus of Edessa. A reconstitution (in translation) of part of a revised and amplified version written by Dionysius of Tel- Mahre in the first half of the ninth century may be consulted conveniently in A. Palmer, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles* [TTH 15].

The chief aims of the historical notes are to elucidate what Sebeos says and to evaluate his material by comparing it with evidence supplied by these other sources. For the wider context and a soundly based reconstruction of the history of the East Roman empire and of its relations with Sasanian Persia in the late sixth century, the reader should turn to Whitby, *Emperor Maurice*. This has largely superseded the important earlier works of Stein, *Studien*, Higgins, *Chronology* and Goubert. They will only be cited exceptionally.

Literature: Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 222-49; Rubin, 'Reforms' 234-6, 264-5; Howard-Johnston, 'The Great Powers' 171; Robinson, 'Conquest of Khuzistan'; Nautin, 'L'auteur'; Fiey, 'Icho'denah'; M.D., tr. Dowsett, xi-xx; Toumanoff, *Studies* 20-7; Conrad, 'Conquest of Arwad' 325-32, 346-8; *West-Syrian Chronicles* 85-104.

1: ch.7, **65-66**, *table of contents*. Sebeos gives a very odd account of his own work. It is uneven, suddenly switching from a bald list of major

headings to a detailed enumeration of individual operations undertaken during Heraclius' two counter-offensives of 624-626 and 627-628. Then comes a second change of gear and change of manner, to the impressionistic and emotive, in the concluding reference to the Arab conquests. There is a second peculiarity: this table of contents does not, for the most part, tally with the actual contents of the text: thus it skips over events in the 590s which are treated in considerable detail in Section I; similarly there is no reference to the first two phases of Khosrov II's war against the Romans, although they loom large in Section II, the early campaigns, especially those fought in Armenia, receiving thorough coverage together with the fall of Jerusalem in 614 and Persian-Roman negotiations in the following year; the impression is also given that the text halts with the end of the initial phase of Arab expansion, after victory at Nihawand in 642 opened the way onto the Iranian plateau, whereas, in reality, it goes on to give an increasingly detailed account of international relations up to early summer 655; finally, there are allusions to episodes *which are not treated* in the extant text - namely the Persian conquest of Egypt and capture of Alexandria (619), Heraclius' dealings with the Turks (625-627), and a first Arab invasion of Atrpatakan (immediately after the battle of Nihawand).

Two partial explanations may be offered. First, Sebeos appears, unusually, to have written his introduction first rather than last, and not to have revised it subsequently. He makes it plain in his final sentence that he is presenting a plan, an account of the work which he wants to write. As happens to many authors' plans, it changed radically in the course of writing. Two important changes were probably deliberate - the extension of the chronological range to the time of writing and reduction of the geographical frame to Armenia and adjoining lands (which entailed excision of material pertaining to Egypt and the Turks). Second, it may be conjectured that Sebeos' original plan was largely shaped by the materials which he had to hand *at that stage*. The anomalous inclusion of a full summary of Heraclius' Persian campaigns is best explained on the hypothesis that Sebeos had acquired, at an early stage, a copy or a translation of the official history of those campaigns for which Heraclius had sought a wide circulation. The converse, lack of material, at that initial stage, on the 590s and much of the fighting over the following two decades, would explain the absence of those topics from his table of contents.

2: ch.8,67, *Peroz's defeat and death in 484*. The significance of this event is discussed above in Historical Background. The best account is that of tazar P'arpets'i 154-7. For its significance and baleful consequences, see Greatrex 47-52.

3: ch.8,61, *forty-first regnal year of Khosrov I*. Until the death of the last Sasanian ruler Yazkert III in 652, Sebeos gives chronological definition to his history mainly by intermittent references to numbered regnal years of Sasanian kings. A reign was reckoned from the beginning of the calendar year in which a new ruler was formally installed. From the introduction of a new calendar modelled on that of Egypt in the first half of the fifth century BC, the Persian year consisted of twelve months, each comprising 30 named (but not numbered) days with five additional days tacked onto the end of the 12th month. These last were the solemn days of Farwardagin, on which the spirits of the departed were commemorated. No allowance was made for leap years, so that the calendar year slipped back from its original starting-point in spring one month every 120 years.

By the beginning of the sixth century, the calendar year, which began immediately after the commemoration of the dead with the Nawruz festival celebrating the reassertion of power by the forces of good in the visible world, was running eight months behind the seasonal year. At that time, in a single, surgical act of reform, the five additional days were transferred to the end of the eighth month, and the Nawruz festival was rescheduled to the first day of the ninth month. This brought about an appropriate but, in the long run, temporary, rough synchronization with the vernal equinox. The start of the calendar year was unaffected (save for the detachment of the Nawruz festival from its traditional place on the first day of the first month) and continued to fall in summer (July or June) throughout the sixth and early seventh century.

It was therefore from a date in the July or June preceding their actual accession to the throne that the reigns of Khosrov I and his successors were measured. The precise dates for accessions and notional starts of reigns falling within the scope of Sebeos' first section were as follows: Khosrov I, 13 September 531 (actual), 12 July 531 (notional); Ormizd IV, 7 March 579 (actual), 30 June 578 (notional); Khosrov II, 15 February 590 (actual), 27 June 589 (notional). Khosrov I's 41st year ran from 2 July 571 to 1 July 572.

Literature: Tabari, tr. Noldeke 400-36; Higgins, *Chronology* 1-31; de Blois, 'Calendar'.

4: ch.8,67-68 and ch.9,70, *opening of the Roman-Persian war of 572-591*. The circumstances leading to the outbreak of war in 572 and the disastrous failure of the Roman offensive in northern Mesopotamia in 573 are summarized above in Historical Background. Sebeos' coverage is narrowly focused on Armenia. Information unique to him is supplied on the Persian military response to the initially successful uprising in 572, but without reference to the wider context, namely the conclusion of two successive truces (for one year from the end of March 574 and, after a short gap, for three years from not earlier than July 575) which halted the fighting in the southern, Mesopotamian theatre of war but excluded Armenia. He also fails to report Roman offensive actions after 572, namely raids to Albania and the Caucasus in 575 and to the Caspian coast in winter 576-577, which complicated the situation for the Persian authorities as they sought to re-establish and secure their control over Armenia.

Sebeos' material deals with three subjects: (i) the initial rebellion of Persarmenia; (ii) Persian counter-measures; (iii) the role of the prince of Siwnik'.

(i) Roman sources confirm that the Emperor Justin II gave active encouragement to the Armenian insurgents with whom he was in contact from 569/570, and that he was ready to intervene in force in support of the rebels (an army, under the command of the Patrician Justinian [*PLRE* III, Iustinianus 3] was encamped at Theodosiopolis (Karin), close to the frontier, in winter 571-572). A context is also given for the assassination, by Vardan (and Vard), of the *marzpan* Suren, who was under orders to construct a fire-temple at Dvin, capital of Persarmenia: he was opposed by the Catholicos, who mobilized 10,000 armed men against the project and led a deputation of nobles to protest to the *marzpan*; he, with only 2,000 troops, backed down, but returned with a much larger army, 15,000 strong, only to be confronted by twice as many Armenian soldiers as before; an armed clash ensued in which he was killed (probably in February 572). His death was the signal for a general uprising to begin. Sebeos is the only source to describe the fall of Dvin, capital of Persarmenia, to the rebels and their Roman allies, and the evacuation of the Persian garrison which had evidently surrendered on terms. The peoples of the Black Sea coast - Laz, Abasgians and

Alans - gave active support to the rebels, and the Iberians are reported to have gone over to the Roman side.

(ii) The immediate Persian response must be pieced together from snatches of information included later in a list of commanders and governors of Persarmenia (ch.9,70) as well as what is reported in ch.8, supplemented by scattered notices in Roman sources. Suren's successor, Vardan Vshnasp, could do nothing more than try to contain the rebellion in 572. His successor, Mihran Mihrewandak (called Golon Mihran in ch.9), probably remained equally on the defensive in 573, when Persian forces were concentrated in northern Mesopotamia. He is reported to have been in action there, losing a small engagement outside Nisibis in the spring. It was only after the collapse of the Roman offensive in the south and the fall of Dara later that year, and the subsequent agreement to confine the fighting in 574 to Armenia, that Mihran could set about restoring Persian authority in Persarmenia with a large force of Persian troops and Sabir Hun allies. Combining material from Sebeos' two chapters, we obtain the following sequence of events: (1) Mihran's entry into Armenia, prompting the civilian population to take refuge in castles and remote fastnesses (574); (2) advance into Iberia (probably late 574), where, in the plain of Khalamakhik', Mihran's army was intercepted and decisively defeated by the Armenian rebel army; (3) Mihran's second, cautious advance into southern Armenia and seizure of Angl, in Bagrewand, a campaign probably to be dated to 575 which, it may be conjectured, inaugurated a programme of piecemeal pacification. On this conjectural chronology, the Roman raid transecting Transcaucasia in 575 may be interpreted as exploiting Mihran's defeat in Iberia late in the previous year.

(iii) The Persians had a committed local supporter in Philip prince of Siwnik'. The political disengagement of Siwnik' from the rest of Persarmenia originated in the fifth century. During the rebellions of 450-451 and 482<sup>^</sup>84, the then princes of Siwnik' sided actively with the Persians (Lazar P'arpets'i 57-68, 73-78, 83-86, 128, 140, 146, 149-153, 156, 159). The administrative transfer of Siwnik' from Persarmenia to Atrpatakan was a delayed consequence. It may perhaps be dated to the 530s when Khosrov I was engaged in wide-ranging administrative reforms. Philip prince of Siwnik' was evidently as active a supporter of the Persians as his forebears: the first of the two campaigns (*kriw*) in the course of which he fought two engagements (an attack on an unnamed city, the battle at Khalamakhik') took place in 574 under the command



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of Mihran Mihrewandak who lost the battle (see above); the second may be placed in 579 during Varaz Vzur's brief tenure of the command when an evenly-balanced battle at the village of Ut'mus in Vanand ended in a Persian victory (ch.9,71).

Sources: T.S. III 9.3-11; Menander fr.16.1, 18.5; John of Ephesus II 20-22; Evagrius V 7; Theophanes Byzantius fr.3-4.

Literature: Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 250-62; Rubin, 'Reforms'.

5: ch.8, 68-69 (with ch.9, 70), *Khosrov I's expedition in 576*. After the renewal of the truce for a further three years from summer 575, Khosrov decided to speed up the process of restoring Persian authority in Armenia by taking personal command of a large expeditionary force. Sebeos gives an abbreviated account of the campaign, concentrating on his encounter with a Roman field army near Melitene, a subsequent crossing of the Euphrates and the loss of the royal baggage-train and travelling sacred fire. He supposes, mistakenly, that the encounter led to a full engagement of the two armies, and grossly exaggerates the scale of Persian losses on the campaign. He does, however, supply one nugget of information about Khosrov's route into Armenia, which involved his veering north from Bagrewand to Theodosiopolis instead of taking a direct route down the Arsianias (Aratsani) valley - perhaps an attempt (which failed) to take the city by surprise.

Much additional material is to hand in the Roman sources. Khosrov halted for a month near Theodosiopolis, then marched west, aiming for Caesarea in Cappadocia. The Roman general, Justinian (now *Magister Militum per Orientem*), conducted a brilliant defensive campaign. He blocked the road through mountainous terrain to Caesarea, forcing Khosrov to turn away into the north-east sector of the Anatolian plateau around Sebastea, which had been emptied of its inhabitants and their chattels (including, presumably, livestock). He thus drew the Persian army into a position where it could be encircled. Khosrov managed to escape but only by cutting loose from the road-system and taking to the hills, which entailed his jettisoning the royal baggage-train. He was not yet out of danger, since there was still the Euphrates to cross with a large Roman army ready to pounce as he did so. After a day-long confrontation with the Roman army in the plain of Melitene, he succeeded in carrying out this difficult operation under cover of darkness - attacking and disordering the more northerly of the two Roman

corps facing him and setting fire to Melitene as a diversion before crossing the river.

Sebeos is not alone in exaggerating the scale of Persian casualties nor in associating the loss of the baggage-train with the confrontation/battle. Theophylact Simocatta and Evagrius both do so, although there are traces of conflation of two separate engagements in the latter's account. The distortion should probably be attributed to Roman propaganda.

Sources: Menander fr.18.6; John of Ephesus II 24, VI 8-9; T.S. III 12.6-14.11; Evagrius V 14.

Literature: Whitby, *Emperor Maurice 262-7* (establishing 576 as the incontrovertible date of the campaign).

6: ch.9,69-70, *obituary of Khosrov I*. Khosrov enjoyed a very high reputation after his death, both for his feats of arms and for his domestic reforms. The following specific achievements are picked out: fortification of two Caucasus passes (independently documented in the case of the Pass of Chor at modern Darband); the occupation of Lazica in 541 (the misrepresentation of the voluntary submission of the king Goubazes as his capture may reflect Persian propaganda); the capture in 540 of Antioch-on-the-Orontes, the capital of the Roman Near East (which Sebeos has confused with Antioch-in-Pisidia); the subsequent construction of a new city near Ctesiphon, Veh-Antioch-Khosrov, where the captured population of Antioch was resettled; the capture of Dara in 573; the capture of Callinicum in 542; and an otherwise unreported raid into Cilicia, which, if it occurred, should probably be placed immediately after the fall of Antioch in 540, when it is known that the high command and senior clergy escaped to Cilicia. It is a rag-bag list of deeds, put in no particular order but corresponding in general to the truth. The tale of Khosrov's deathbed conversion, however, is fanciful. Other traces of wishful thinking on the part of Christians are to be found in John of Ephesus V 20 (wide reading about different religions led Khosrov to prize Christian writing and to show tolerance to his Christian subjects).

Literature: Hewsens, *ASX* 122; E. Kettenhofen, 'Darband', *E. Ir.* VII 15-16; Christensen, *L'Iran* 363-440; Rubin, 'Reforms'; Howard- Johnston, 'The Great Powers' 191-2; Stein, *Bas-Empire* 485-94, 496-7; Morony, *Iraq* 139; Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 257-8.

7: ch.9, **70-71**, *governors/generals of Persarmenia, 572-602*.

Sebeos seems to have incorporated a pre-existing list into his text, fleshing it out with brief additional notices. The following/flit; may be constructed:

(i) Vardan Vshnasp, appointed after the assassination of Sure n and in post for a year, February 572- winter 572/573.

(ii) Golon Mihran (= Mihran Mihrewandak), probably already in post when he fought and lost an engagement near Nisibis in spring 573 (Theophanes Byzantius fr.4); his campaigns in Transcaucasia in 574 and 575 are discussed in n.4 above. His term of office was three years since Khosrov took over command of the northern theatre in 576 (n.5 above).

(iii) Tam Khosrov, one of the principal Persian generals in the first half of the war, was assigned to the Armenian theatre in 577 and 578 (Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 267-9). His two campaigns are described more fully in Roman sources. In 577 Tam Khosrov won a decisive victory over a large Roman field army, under Justinian's command, which was operating in Armenia (John of Ephesus VI 10; T.S. III 15.8— 9). Sebeos supplies a general location for the battle, in the plain of Basean on the upper Araxes (the most exposed frontier district of Persarmenia). By this victory Tam Khosrov secured the Sasanian position in the north for the rest of the war. In 578 he took to the offensive, advancing west through the basin of Bagrewand (where the Arsaniae gathers its headwaters), then cutting south across the Armenian Taurus and attacking the region of Amida. A diversionary raid into Roman Mesopotamia succeeded in removing the Roman army, commanded by Justinian's successor the future emperor Maurice, from his path in south-west Armenia (Menander fr.23.6; John of Ephesus VI 14; T.S. III 15.12-13).

(iv) Varaz Vzür, in post for one year, 579 (Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 272). The close-fought battle which he finally won was probably part of a local cross-border conflict (Vanand, the district around modern Kars, was within easy striking distance of the Roman frontier), which took place in a year when serious diplomatic efforts were being made to bring the war to an end (Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 271-2).

(v) The great Parthian and Pahlaw *aspet* or *asparapet* (as at ch. 10, **73, 75**), seven years, 580-586. He was executed, after his recall, on the orders of Ormizd (ch.10, **73**). He was the father of Khosrov II's mother and two sons, Vndoy and Vstam (see nn.9,11,18,19 below). The victory which he won at Shirakawan (principal town of the district immediately to the east of Vanand) was probably of more than local significance. For

in 581, Maurice, then *Magister Militum per Orientem*, launched a grand (but unsuccessful) offensive south of the Taurus, targeted on Ctesiphon, which was supported by a deep-probing attack in the north, to Dvin and Iberia (T.S. III 16.3-4; Menander fr.23.11 - see Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 272-4). The northern operation ended in defeat, a defeat which may be equated with that reported by Sebeos.

(vi) Hrahat (Aphraates at T.S. II 3.3, III 5.15, 6.3 and 6), whose term probably began in 586 and ended with his death in 589 in command of one of two relief armies (his presumably being the Persarmenian) sent to Martyropolis which had been betrayed to the Persians soon after Easter that year. The campaign south of the Taurus in which he was involved may provisionally be identified with that of 586 described in detail by T.S. II 1-9: Hrahat commanded the left wing at the battle of Solachon, south of the Tur Abdin, which resulted in a serious Persian defeat; the countervailing success in which he was involved subsequently was probably the frustration of a Roman attack on Chlomarion, capital of Arzanene/Aldznik' (Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 280-4, 289). His victory in Bznunik' probably came in a cross-border raid.

(vii) Hratrin Datan, two years, 589-591, since he was in post at the time of Ormizd's deposition (February 590) and Khosrov II's restoration (summer 591) -contra Higgins, *Chronology* 35 who has his tenure end in March 590 on the questionable assumption that all appointees of Ormizd were replaced by Vahram on his seizure of power.

(viii) Vndatakan Khorakan, who may have held the post for several years, if the mutinous troops who killed him and went off to Gelum were joining in Vstam's 594 rebellion against Khosrov, which was centred on Gelum (**94-95** and nn.18-19 below).

(ix-xii) Merakbut, Yazden, Butmah and Hoyiman, none attested otherwise unless Yazden may be identified with the famous Yazdin (for whom see Flusin, *St Anastase II*, 246-52) who held high office under Khosrov II and was, from around 600, the chief patron at court of Nestorian Christians. However, the only provincial governorship which Yazdin is known to have held (*Chron. Seert* 458, 524-5) was that of Beth Aramaye (Lower Mesopotamia) and the Mountain (the northern Zagros). These four names, together with Vndatakan Khorakan, reappear with variations in their spelling in a near-duplicate notice at **105** (discussed in n.23 below).

Literature: Stein, *Studien* 49-50; Higgins, *Chronology* 34-5; Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* (references incorporated above).

8: ch. 10,73-74, *the campaigns and rebellion of Vahram Ch 'obin*, 587-589 (cf. T'.A. 85). The Turks (here as often elsewhere loosely designated by the name of their predecessors as Persia's principal nomad adversaries in the east, the T'etals, Hephthalites) eventually entered the fray against the Persians towards the end of the reign of Ormizd IV (579-590). Vahram Ch'obin, who was a member of one of the leading magnate families of Persia, the Mihran, and whose estates and local connections were centred on the region of Reyy (near modern Tehran), was appointed commander-in-chief of the Persian forces opposing them. Sebeos, in tandem with other extant sources (principally Tabari), gives the impression that the operations in which Vahram drove the Turks beyond the Vehrot (Oxus) were carried out in a single campaigning season (dated by Tabari to Ormizd's 11th regnal year, 588/589). However, since emphasis is put on the gravity of the crisis facing Persia after the Turkish intervention in force, it is likely that it took at least two years (587-588) for Vahram both to mobilize a field army strong enough to face the Turks in open combat and then, as Sebeos alone reports in any detail, to reverse the initial gains which they had made in the region of Balkh and Herat.

Some damage appears to have been done to Sebeos' text, in the course of its transmission to the seventeenth-century manuscript, since a second victorious campaign by Vahram (589), into the eastern Caucasus, has been telescoped into the first, the Mazk'ut'k' have thereby been wafted far to the east beyond the Oxus from their actual Transcaucasian homeland (Hewsen, *ASX* 121-2). Vahram appears to have been responding to an attack in force on Albania by an Iberian-led coalition of Caucasus peoples which the Romans had sponsored. At some stage, probably after Vahram's thrust north (which seems to have included an attack on Suania in the central Caucasus), a Roman army, subsequently reinforced from Lazica, intervened and succeeded in luring Vahram west and inflicting a defeat on him (its scale is evidently exaggerated by Theophylact Simocatta).

These two generally successful campaigns must have greatly enhanced the reputation of Vahram and are likely to have induced a certain trepidation in Ormizd. Ormizd, whose own posthumous reputation was that of an over-zealous upholder of justice and determined protector of the rights of the poor and the weak against the nobility, was in a relatively weak position *vis a vis* Vahram since he had not commanded Persian armies in the field. The eastern sources, Sebeos

among them, show that mutual suspicion soured relations between the king and his great general. Vahram was nervous of the reaction of so autocratic a ruler. Ormizd's thanks for the share of the booty which Vahram sent him were far from effusive. Sebeos adds the interesting detail that Vahram had distributed the rest of the booty among his troops, so that Ormizd's demand for a larger share antagonized the whole army.

Such was the context for Vahram's decision to rebel, according to the eastern sources, and their version should be preferred to that of T.S. III 8.1-3, 10, who has Ormizd seize on Vahram's defeat at the hands of the Romans as a pretext for dismissing him from his command (although there is an echo of the eastern version in his later summary of Vahram's career, at III 18.12-14). Vahram now sought to divide his opponents. By introducing coins minted at Rey in the name of Ormizd's son, Khosrov, into circulation in the capital, he succeeded in casting suspicion on Khosrov, who fled from his father's court, at that time outside the capital, probably in the southern fringes of Media. He advanced with his army across the Zagros and took up a position on the Great Zab, thus separating the capital and the troops based there from the main army base on the Roman front, Nisibis. When the troops at Nisibis declared for the rebel, the regime of Ormizd was doomed. Before long the royal army holding the Great Zab ford and barring Vahram's way to Ctesiphon broke up in disorder when its commander was assassinated. All of this is passed over in silence by Sebeos who turns immediately from the inception of the rebellion to reactions in the court. He does, however, provide a unique notice about one consequence of the rebellion, namely an offensive launched by John Mystacon, the Roman commander in the north (*PLRE* III, Ioannes 101) who besieged Dvin (without success) and then invaded Atrpatakan.

Sources: T.S. III 6.6-8.3, III 8.9-8.12, III 18.4-IV 3.1; Tabari, tr. Noldeke 268-73, 276; *Georgian Chronicles* 217-21; *Khuz.Chron.* 5; *Chron.Seert* 443-4.

Literature: Christensen, *L'Iran* 441-4; Toumanoff, *Studies* 382-6; Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 290-1, 293-4.

9: ch.10, 75-76, *overthrow of Ormizd, accession and flight of Khosrov II, 590* (cf. T'.A. 85). News of events on the Great Zab reached Ormizd and the court five days after their occurrence as they were travelling back to Ctesiphon. Three days later, on 6 February 590, a bloodless palace revo-

lution brought about Ormizd's deposition, soon to be followed by blinding and death. His son Khosrov was informed and hurried back to be proclaimed king on 15 February. His position, however, was very weak, since the army sent north-west to shield the metropolitan area had dissolved. He tried to negotiate a deal with Vahram, offering him the second position in the realm, only to meet with a brusque rejection. Vahram's army then advanced to the inner line of defence around the capital, the Nahrawan canal. Morale was low among the defenders, who were evidently heavily outnumbered, and within a few days it was decided that the young king and a small entourage should flee. Khosrov made his way to the Euphrates and then, closely pursued by troops of Vahram's (who captured his uncle, Vndoy), followed the river valley until he crossed the Roman frontier near Circesium. Meanwhile Vahram entered Ctesiphon and was crowned on 9 March.

Sebeos' succinct account clarifies some important points about the coup. It had two clear stages. It was initiated in military circles, among the troops accompanying Ormizd as he was travelling between Media and Ctesiphon; but its execution was then entrusted to court magnates opposed to Ormizd, led by Vndoy whom the conspirators had released from prison. Khosrov may be cleared from any complicity in his father's death (as he is by Whitby) despite the contrary testimony of Theophylact Simocatta and Tabari, since Sebeos who had every interest in blackening his reputation breathes not a word of it. Finally Sebeos alone reports that Ormizd contemplated flight, to the Lakhm of Hira, adding the interesting detail (which confirms that he was returning from Media) that his route to Hira would have taken him across the Tigris well to the south of Ctesiphon, by the Vehkawat pontoon-bridge (which features again in the story of Khosrov II's deposition in 628 [ch.39,127]).

Sources: T.S. IV 3.2-6.5,7.1-10.4,12.1-12.7; Tabari, tr. Noldeke 272- 82; *Khuz. Chron.* 5-6; *Chron.Seert* 444,465-6.

Literature: Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 292-7; Higgins, *Chronology* 26-31; Morony, *Iraq* 147-150; Gyselen, *Geographie* 62.

10: ch.II, 76, *Khosrov II's appeal for Roman aid, 590* (cf. T'.A. 85-6). Khosrov arrived on Roman territory after nightfall and camped ten miles from Circesium, from where he sent a message to the city-commandant announcing his arrival. He was admitted into the city at dawn the next day. From there he sent a letter to the emperor, which Theophylact

Simocatta claims to reproduce: he appealed to Maurice for help first as a fellow-ruler who would naturally be disturbed at the sight of a rebel destroying the established order in the neighbouring empire, and second on the grounds that the Romans needed the Persians to manage their sector of the outer world lest 'the fierce, malevolent tribes' might take control of Persia and 'thereby in the course of time gain irresistible might, which will not be without great injury to your tributary nations as well'. This letter, together with the commandant's report, was sent to Comentiolus, senior Roman general in the region, at Hierapolis in northern Syria, and forwarded thence to the capital. Khosrov was now received by Comentiolus with all due honour at Hierapolis (not nearby Khalab, modern Aleppo, as implied by Sebeos). Khosrov stayed at Hierapolis during the ensuing negotiations which reached a critical stage in early summer.

These were the circumstances (described in considerable detail by Theophylact Simocatta) in which Khosrov sent an embassy to Constantinople, probably in early summer 590, offering generous terms in order to secure Roman backing. Sebeos alone gives a detailed account of his terms, which he says were made in writing: by allowing himself to be designated Maurice's 'son', Khosrov acknowledged a degree of political subordination to the Roman empire; he agreed to return Persian gains in northern Mesopotamia, but his main territorial concessions were in Transcaucasia - the traditional balance of power in favour of the Persians would be redressed, Maurice being offered a roughly equal share both of Armenia and Iberia but Khosrov saving face by retaining the provincial capitals, Dvin and Tp'khis. Sebeos' information looks trustworthy. Corroboration is obtainable from Theophylact Simocatta who includes a vague reference to the territory offered by Khosrov towards the end of the speech which he concocts for the Persian ambassadors (the return of Martyropolis and Dara and 'bidding farewell to Armenia') and who has Khosrov designate himself Maurice's son at the end of his first letter. The cessions of territory were duly made after the defeat of Vahram (ch.12, 84).

Sebeos disagrees with Theophylact Simocatta in suggesting that the decision to back Khosrov was taken against serious opposition, but the time taken by the negotiations (over three months, as Whitby calculates) provides indirect confirmation, suggesting as it does that the final terms were hammered out in the course of several rounds of negotiation at a distance.



Sources: T.S. IV 10.5-11.11, 12.8, 13.2-14.4; *Khuz.Chron.* 6-7; *Chron. Seert* 444,466; Tabari, tr. Noldeke 275,282-4.

Literature: Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 297-9, 304.

11: ch.1 **1,76-80**, *restoration of Khosrov II, 591* (cf. T.A. 86-8). Khosrov moved to Constantina, one of the two main military bases in Roman Mesopotamia, when he received the emperor's favourable response, and began actively to undermine Vahram's regime. His uncles Vstam and Vndoy, the latter of whom managed to escape from prison, rallied support in Atrpatakan, under the watchful eye of John Mystacon, *Magister Militum per Armeniam*, who was mobilizing troops throughout Armenia. Towards the end of 590 the garrison of Nisibis changed sides and Martyropolis surrendered, events which gravely weakened the northern defences of Persian Mesopotamia. By spring 591, troops were massing against Vahram north and south of the Armenian Taurus.

Sebeos' figures for those in the northern theatre (15,000 from Armenia and 8,000 from Persia, all cavalry, from Atrpatakan) are plausible, but something is awry with the figure of 3,000 cavalry which he gives for Roman forces mobilized in the south. Apart from the testimony of several sources that Khosrov owed his restoration to the Roman troops backing him, there was no question of so small a force advancing into Persian territory and confronting Vahram's army. The figure may have been corrupted in transmission (say from 30,000 [infantry as well as cavalry] to 3,000) or, possibly, the troops in question may have been palace guards assigned to serve as Khosrov's retinue (T.S. V 3.7).

Of the strategy employed by the Roman commander-in-chief, Nerses (*PLREUI*, Narses 10), Sebeos says nothing, his attention being focused on the final stage of the campaign. It was, however, the preceding manoeuvres which determined the outcome. The main Roman army, under the nominal command of Khosrov, advanced slowly towards the Tigris, taking control of Mardin and Dara on the way, paused, then crossed the river and pushed on south-east at a slow and deliberate pace as far as the Lesser Zab. This was a feint on the grandest scale, intended to detain Vahram in Mesopotamia until the point at which the Roman army could strike north-east and reach Atrpatakan before him. It also distracted attention from the approach of a small force, despatched from Dara to Singara, which came down the Euphrates valley and took over the metropolitan region for Khosrov as soon as Vahram hurried north.

The southern and the northern armies joined forces near Lake Urmia, before Vahram could intercept Nerses. Vahram, who was now outnumbered 2:3 (Theophylact Simocatta's total of 60,000 for those backing Khosrov [T.S. V 9.4] is close to that which may be calculated from Sebeos with the emendation proposed above [15,000 + 8,000 + 30,000]), was forced to retreat south-east, deeper into Atrpatakan. Sebeos now supplies information unique to him: in a desperate last throw, Vahram tried to redress the numerical balance, by winning over Mushel Mamikonean, commander of the Armenian army, and the other Armenian nobles. He offered substantial inducements in a letter, which there is no need to reject as spurious: Armenia would become a semi-autonomous kingdom and it would be enlarged to embrace all the territory which it had included at its maximum extent, including northern Mesopotamia and the whole of the Roman sector of Armenia with part of Cappadocia; Mushel, who was to be the king of what was to be a large western buffer state, was being offered a junior partnership in the Sasanian empire (the 'kingdom of the Aryans'), with the possibility of receiving subvention from Vahram. It was an extraordinary and alluring offer, but Vahram's all too evident weakness, it may be surmised, led Mushel and the Armenian nobles to reject it.

Sebeos' account of the defeat of Vahram tallies in essentials with that of Theophylact Simocatta (T.S. V 10.4-11.4). The battle lasted all day. The Roman troops were responsible for breaking the resistance of Vahram's army. Late in the day, Vahram's force of elephants was surrounded and captured, the animals then being presented to Khosrov. A great deal of booty was captured with Vahram's camp. Vahram himself escaped (Tabari confirms that he made his way to Turkish territory and that he was later put to death there).

Sources: T.S. IV 12.9-13.1, IV 14.5-V 11.9; *Khuz.Chron.* 7; *Chron.Seert* 466; Tabari, tr. Noldeke 284-9; Garitte, *Narratio* chs93-95 (with commentary at 231-8).

Literature: Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 298-303; Hewsen, *ASX* 229-30.

**12: ch. 12. 80-84**, *growing antagonism between Mushel Mamikonean and Khosrov II* (cf. T.A. 88). Sebeos preserves the only account of this episode, although there may be an echo at T.S. V 11.7 (a fleeting reference to the 'utter disrespect' shown by Khosrov to his Roman allies). The underlying cause is probably to be sought in changing attitudes among

the Armenian nobility: expectations had probably been raised by Vahram's offer, initially in the inner circle around Mushel who were privy to it and then more widely, if, as seems probable, news of it leaked out; the map of Armenia was, in any case, about to be redrawn, under the terms of Khosrov's agreement with the Romans, and it was not unreasonable to hope or even to lobby for greater autonomy, especially within the reduced sector of the weakened Persian empire.

Relations between Romans and Persians remained good. John Mystacon, commander of the troops from Armenia, defused the crisis. The large share of the booty sent off under armed escort to Constantinople (83-84) probably more than covered the cost of funding the expedition (to which Khosrov referred. 80). The Roman troops were rewarded individually for their services by royal largesse. The promised territorial concessions were duly made. Corroboration may be obtained from the skimpier accounts of *Chron.Seert* 466 (on all three points but only mentioning the two principal cities south of the Taurus restored to Roman control), T.S. V 11.3-6 (a large quantity of booty and a celebratory feast) and Tabari, tr. Noldeke 287 (generous largesse). Mushel was given the honour of reporting the victory and delivering the booty gained to the emperor. He was not allowed to return. By this device restive elements in the Armenian nobility were deprived of their natural leader, and their efforts, described later in considerable detail, were easier to deal with.

13: ch.13. 85, *Shirin and the position of Christians in Persia*. Shirin looms large in the romanticized versions of the history of Khosrov II's reign incorporated into several versions of the *Khwadaynamag* (cf. *Shahnama* VII 239-49, 321-9). Sebeos' brief portrait corresponds to that presented by other sources. She exercised considerable influence at court (her son, Mardanshah, was a serious contender for the crown at the end of Khosrov's reign) and her patronage was important in church affairs. She secured the Nestorian Catholicosate for her candidate Gregory of Prat in 605 and then, at his death in 609, probably played a part in Khosrov's decision to leave the see vacant and to favour the Monophysites over the Nestorians. For she had been won over to the Monophysite confession, at the same time as the influential court doctor Gabriel. She outlived Khosrov.

It may be true that there was a certain laxness in enforcing the rule prohibiting the conversion of Zoroastrians to Christianity in the early

part of Khosrov's reign, especially if they were highly placed, but Shirin's influence is likely to have been less important than a desire to maintain good relations with the Romans. It was the severing of those relations at the end of 602 and the extraordinary series of Persian military successes over the following two decades which brought about a reversion to the strict enforcement of the prohibition. Macler was therefore surely right to identify the sentence in which a connection (false) is established between Shirin's death (misdated, since she was still alive in 628) and a number of martyrdoms (which preceded her death) as a later, ill-informed interpolation.

Literature: Christensen, *L'Iran* 475-6, 487-91, 493-4; Flusin, *St Anastase II*, 95-127.

14: ch.14, 85-86, *miracle at Shawsh (Susa)*. There was no biblical or rabbinical authority for the popular belief, evidently deep-rooted, that Daniel was buried at Susa. An emotionally charged demonstration, backed by the double miracle reported by Sebeos, forced Khosrov to rescind his decision, so that Daniel's relics stayed in Susa. They are housed in a shrine on the bank of the Karka river, which replaced a medieval shrine destroyed by flood in 1869. The tomb, a large rectangular structure of green glass and ornate silverwork, stands in a brightly lit chamber, beneath a dome faced with mirrorwork. It is flanked by prayer-halls to north and south and approached from a courtyard on the east. Although the tomb itself is empty (the grave, unmarked, lies in a crypt below), it is an object of intense devotion, involving both prayer and physical contact. The cult of saints flourishes in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

There is plenty of evidence in other sources to show that Maurice was a devout and active Christian. He is known to have acquired other relics (the meagre bedding of John the Faster, patriarch of Constantinople, which he used in Lent, and the cap of the Nestorian Catholicos Sabrisho). He was frustrated in another attempt to acquire a relic of a venerated civic saint (St Demetrius at Thessalonica).

Literature: A. Netzer, N. Sims-Williams, P. Varjavand, 'Danial-e Nabi', *E.Ir.* VI, 657-60; Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 21-3.

•5: chs15-17, 21, 86-90, 94, *the Vahewuni incident and its consequences, 594-595*. Sebeos devotes considerable space to what seems at first sight to be a set of relatively insignificant episodes. The Vahewunis and their

allies join Mushel Mamikonean and Smbat Bagratuni as central players in the first part of his history and ensure that it remains centred on Armenia and the fate of its nobility at home and abroad. There is little difficulty in following the story, despite the long digression towards its end on Roman recruitment and religious policy which provoked discontent among Armenians in the 590s. The incident itself may be placed in the period autumn 594-spring 595, since one of the consequential events, the mobilization of an Armenian force by the Persians (presumably at the beginning of the campaigning season) and Khosrov's invitation to its leaders (including some involved in the incident) to attend on him, is dated to his sixth regnal year (June 594-June 595).

The overriding concern of Maurice's regime, after 591, was to reverse the gains made by Avars and Slavs in the Balkans in the previous decade, by re-establishing Roman military pre-eminence and reasserting Roman authority over the Slavs who had colonized the northern and central Balkans. Regular troops were transferred to the west as soon as peace was restored in the east, with Khosrov securely installed on the Persian throne. More, though, were needed and the Roman authorities naturally looked to Armenia with its high reputation as a nursery of fighting-men. Precisely what system or systems of recruitment were introduced is unclear, save that they respected Armenian lordship and sought to raise troops in the form of noble-led contingents. There was evidently an element of compulsion which aroused resentment. Enlistment began at the moment of victory over Vahram, when Mushel Mamikonean led a first 400-strong contingent west, escorting the Roman share of booty to Constantinople (83-84). Before long an intensive recruiting drive was under way (the subject of ch.18,90-91) and the troops raised were deployed in the Balkans under the command of Mushel. By the second half of 594, after some three years of such recruitment, resentment had grown and was ready to express itself in action.

The Machiavellian scheme to gut Armenia of its manpower, attributed to Maurice, is, almost certainly, Sebeos' retrospective interpretation. Maurice's letter, unlike the majority of other documents quoted or summarized in the text, is evidently an editorial concoction. It cannot, however, be denied that the Romans would have found it easier to manage their much enlarged sector of Armenia if they were able to siphon off a significant percentage of its military manpower. But there was no question of tampering with the traditional social order. The nobility had to be *managed*, the Romans being forced (because of their need

for recruits) to adopt a tough stance. At a later stage, as part of this strict regime, they were ready to take considerable risks in their determination to root out any dissident element among the nobles in their sector (as is witnessed by their campaign deep into the mountain fastnesses south of Lake Van, to stamp out Vahewuni opposition).

The Persians adopted a different policy, encouraging Armenian nobles and their military followings to enlist by offering substantial cash inducements. It was the arrival of an official, the auditor (financial administrator) of Vaspurakan (a new term designating the rump of Persarmenia retained by the Persians after 591), with a large sum of money for distribution among potential Armenian recruits, some from the Roman sector, which sparked off the crisis. Sebeos hints that the decision to seize the money and to initiate a general rising against both empires was taken on the spur of the moment. This is confirmed by the leaders' subsequent indecision and disagreement. No preparations seem to have been made to obtain the help of the North Caucasus Huns for which they hoped. The solidarity shown by the two empires, which prevented the trouble spreading, also seems to have surprised them.

Sebeos traces their movements and actions as they reacted to circumstance: (i) a march north to Nakhchawan in the Araxes valley; (ii) at the appearance of the Roman army of Armenia under the command of Heraclius, father of the future emperor (*PRLE* III, Heraclius 3), who joined the Persian army operating against the rebels, three of the rebel leaders (Mamak Mamikonean, Kotit lord of the Amatunik' and Step'anos Siwni) and others unnamed submitted to Persian authority; (iii) the remaining three (Atat Khorkhoruni, Samuel Vahewuni together with Teodoros Trpatuni, who, like them, reappears later in the Roman sector) continued north with their contingents, aiming for the land of the Huns; (iv) the pursuing Roman and Persian force caught up with them, on the bank of the river Kur in Albania, and compelled them to submit to one or other great power - this was the stage at which Atat Khorkhoruni made his peace with the Romans, was summoned to court and assigned to the Balkan theatre; (v) the Vahewunis and Teodoros Trpatuni must also have submitted at this stage, but soon caused trouble again, attempting to assassinate a Roman *curator* near Karin (Theodosiopolis); (vi) when they failed, they took refuge in the formidable mountains south of Lake Van, but were hunted down and killed by <sup>a</sup> Roman force - Teodoros Trpatuni who managed to escape to the Persian court was handed back and tortured to death; (vii) meanwhile

those Armenian nobles who had answered the Persian call to arms, including the three rebel leaders who had submitted to the Persians, were awaiting royal instructions about their deployment; (viii) those instructions, received probably in spring 595, were for the nobles to go Khosrov's court, after which their contingents were sent off and stationed at Ispahan.

16: chsl7-18, **90-91**, *Mushel Mamikonean in the Balkans, 593-598*. The formidable striking power of the nomad Avars, in combination with the plentiful manpower of Slav tribesmen, posed a serious threat to the Balkans from the beginning of Maurice's reign. In two rounds of warfare the Avars devastated much of the middle and lower Danube valley (summer 583 and autumn 586), and went on to invade the plain of Thrace (south of the Haemus range) in 587 and 588 (Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 140-55). At the same time Slavs were beginning to settle in large numbers south of the Danube. Peace was made with the Avars at the end of 588, at considerable expense to the Roman treasury, but Slav raiding continued.

The Roman counter-offensive in which Mushel Mamikonean and the Armenian troops took part may be identified with that initiated in 593 under the supreme command of Priscus (temporarily replaced by Peter in 594). The aim was to deter Slavs from crossing the Danube by punitive raids across the river and to impose Roman authority on those who had settled to the south, working up the Danube from east to west. Considerable success was achieved in a series of campaigns, Sebeos' 'fierce war over the face of that land' (Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 158- 62). But the military balance swung against the Romans when the Avars intervened in force in autumn 597, once again sweeping down the Danube valley. The Roman army in which Mushel and his Armenians were serving was probably that commanded by Comentiolus which crossed the central Haemus in 598 to cut the Avars' line of retreat up the Danube but was then itself intercepted, after a rapid march, by the full Avar army. Heavy losses were suffered in the ensuing fighting retreat over the Haemus. These were the circumstances in which Mushel and many other Armenians died (Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 127-8,162-3).

17: ch.20, **91-93**, *career of Smbat Bagratuni I (the abortive rebellion against the Romans of 589)*. Sebeos includes a fair amount of biographical material about Smbat. This first chunk, like the three which

follow, is laudatory in tone. The most likely source, as has been suggested in Part I in 'Sebeos as Historian', is a lost encomiastic biography, which emphasized the physical strength, courage and piety of its subject.

This first extract, as Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 127,291 suggests, has been introduced at the wrong point in Sebeos' text. For the abortive rebellion in the Roman sector of Armenia in which Smbat took a leading part is independently dated by T.S. III 8.4-6 to 589, shortly before Vahram's march south across the Zagros. It follows that the first, urgent quest for troops to serve in the Balkan theatre long predates the recruiting drive of the 590s. Whitby (115-19, 145-8) places it in winter 586-587, after a disastrous autumn in the Balkans when the Avars swept down the Danube valley, capturing several important cities in their path, while Thessalonica was coming under intense pressure from a large force of Slavs. There was therefore an urgent need for reinforcements to be despatched 'in great haste' and Armenia surely joined Italy as one of the chief suppliers. This would provide the best explanation for the unexpected appearance in the Balkan theatre in 587 of John Mystacon, who is otherwise only known to have held commands in the east and in particular in Armenia. At that early stage, the Romans seem to have relied more on inducements and less on compulsion than in the 590s.

T.S. III 8.7-8 confirms that Smbat was put into the arena to face the wild beasts and that his life was then spared after appeals from the crowd. The Armenian biography has improved the story, and clearly indicates that, his ordeal over, Smbat was restored to imperial favour. Sebeos, who picks and chooses his material, now refers cursorily to Smbat's second disgrace and leaves him serving as a tribune in Africa. This incident and the next phase of Smbat's career, which saw him return to Armenia (where he appears in Sebeos' next extract), were probably covered fully in the lost life.

18: chs22-24, **94-96**, *rebellion of Vstam, 594-599/600*. Sebeos' chronology becomes rather flaccid in chapters 22-26, the events in each being placed loosely at the time of those recounted in the previous chapter. The start of Vstam's rebellion, however, can be fixed more precisely because of a connection established with the earlier set of notices dealing with the Vahewuni affair. Incidental remarks (in ch.22) reveal that the troops mobilized in Persarmenia in spring 595 and their noble leaders (**88. 94** with n.15 above) accompanied Khosrov on his campaign



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against the rebels. The campaign should therefore be dated to 595. This points to 594 as the year in which Vstam rebelled and gathered support. Corroboration is to hand in *Chron. Seert* which places the open warfare between royal and rebel forces in 594/595 (in the fifth year of Khosrov's reign, which, on its reckoning [erroneous], began in 590/591).

Sebeos' account of the origins of the rebellion parallels that of the most detailed surviving version of the *Khwadaynamag*, that of Dinawari, written in the ninth century. Additional material is supplied by a substantial but condensed notice in *Khuz. Chron.* and a passing reference in *Chron. Seert* (a *propos* of the future Nestorian Catholicos Sabrisho whose appearance in a vision encouraged Khosrov to engage Vstam's forces). Like Dinawari, Sebeos has Khosrov take (delayed) revenge on those responsible for his father's death, Vstam being warned in time and taking refuge in the western Elburz mountains (Gelum [Sebeos], Delum [Dinawari]). *Khuz. Chron.*, on the other hand, suggests that the young king was asserting himself against the uncles who had played a vital part both in bringing about his restoration and then consolidating his hold on Persia, and who had then been rewarded with high office, Vstam being posted to command the army on the Turkish frontier (i.e. in Khurasan), Vndoy becoming the senior minister at the centre. Too much criticism of Khosrov's policies by the latter leads to his arrest and execution.

The course of the rebellion may be pieced together from these four sources. Vstam gathered supporters from all over the empire (Dinawari) and assembled an army of which the core consisted of Elburz highlanders (Sebeos, *Khuz. Chron.*, Dinawari). Coming down onto the plateau, in the area of Rey (Sebeos, *Chron. Seert*), he sent out raiding forays, directing them through Media to the borders of Mesopotamia (Dinawari). Khosrov, however, mobilized a considerably larger army (which operated as three independent corps, in the opening phase of the campaign [Dinawari], and, according to Sebeos, included Roman as well as Armenian contingents), and forced Vstam to abandon open warfare after defeating him in battle. Sebeos' location of this battle near Rey should probably be preferred to Dinawari's (by Hamadan in Media, where Vstam retreats from Rey before the battle). The next phase of the rebellion lasted several years, since the death of Vstam is securely dated to 599/600 (n.19 below). Safe in the fastnesses of the western Elburz, Vstam set about broadening the territorial base of the rebellion. First, he won over the troops stationed in his home region of Komsh

('the land of the Parthians') on the south side of the eastern Elburz. Then, after receiving reinforcements in the form of rebel Armenian troops from Ispahan, he extended his authority over the whole length of the Elburz range. The rebellion of four Elburz provinces, which is reported separately by Sebeos, was surely not spontaneous but engineered by Vstam. Royean and Zrechan (Persian Royan and Zalexan) lay south of Gelum; Amal (Persian Amul) was further east, close to Taparastan (Persian Tabaristan) which lay on the north flank of the eastern Elburz and west of Vrkan.

Sources: *Khuz.Chron.* 8-9; *Chron.Seert* 481-2; Dinawari, summarized in Tabari, tr. Noldeke 478-82.

Literature: Marquart, *Eransahr* 124-5, 129-31, 136; Gyselen, *Geographie* 44,49-50, 58-9, 81-2; Tabari, tr. Noldeke 478-87.

19: chs24-27,**96-100**, *career of Smbat Bagratuni II (599/600-606/607) and the end of Vstam's rebellion (601)*. Sebeos' second extract from the postulated biography of Smbat has him in favour with Khosrov. How he achieved this position, whether or not he had Roman authorization to go to Persia, must remain uncertain since Sebeos has skipped over a decade of Smbat's life (589-599/600). His appointment as governor (*marzpan*) of Vrkan (Persian Gurgan), between the Elburz and Kopet mountains at the south-east corner of the Caspian, can be precisely dated to 599/600, since his retirement after eight years in the post is dated to Khosrov's 18th regnal year (606/607). By 599/600 Vstam was preparing to mount a second open challenge to Khosrov, and had obtained the backing of two Kushan client-rulers beyond the northeastern frontier (for which see n.21 below). Vrkan was of crucial strategic importance since it was wedged between the Elburz range and Khurasan ('the regions of the east'), which was now actively supporting Vstam. Smbat's appointment (partly directed, it may be suggested, at weakening the resolve of the rebel Armenian troops) was a signal mark of royal favour.

Vstam's death at the hands of one of his Kushan allies (designated a Turk in *Khuz.Chron.*) may be dated with reasonable confidence to Smbat's first year in post, probably in the first half of 600. The rare examples of the coins which he issued from the outbreak of his rebellion end in his seventh year (599/600 if 593/594 was the first). Further corroboration may be obtained from Dinawari. For if his chronology of Khosrov's reign lags one year behind the true reckoning, as does

Tabari's, the only date which he gives in his full account of Vstam's rebellion - Khosrov's tenth regnal year (598/599 +1) - would correspond exactly to the first year of Smbat's governorship (599/600). It should be noted, though, that Dinawari attaches it to the start rather than the end of the rebellion.

This was not the end of the rebellion, though. For although Smbat had previously won a victory over some of the rebel Elburz highlanders, he and his Persian colleague were now defeated in Komsh (despite having superior numbers) by the men of Gelum and their Armenian allies, as they made for the fastnesses of the western Elburz. He returned to the attack in the following year (601) in Taparastan. This time he was victorious, and it is implied by Sebeos that the rebels, even if some held out, were of little significance thereafter.

Sebeos' account of Vstam's rebellion is superior to those of the other sources. Whereas they compress a complex series of events apparently into a single year (the deaths of Vstam and Vndoy are reported side by side in *Khuz. Chron.*), focusing either on the 595 campaign (*Chron. Seert* and *Dinawari*) or 600 (*Khuz. Chron.*), Sebeos provides the crucial dating indications and distinguishes several phases in the rebellion.

Sources: *Khuz.Chron.* 8-9; *Dinawari*, summarized in Tabari, tr. Noldeke 479-80.

Literature: Marquart, *Eransahr* 71-4; Gyselen, *Geographie* 50, 53, 84; Tabari, tr. Noldeke 485; Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 305-6; Gobi 53, 80 and pi.13; Sellwood, Whitting and Williams 150-1 and ill.59.

20: ch.27, 100, *career of Smbat Bagratuni III (retirement in Armenia, 606/607-614)*. The life of Smbat quarried by Sebeos combined a secondary theme of piety with the primary theme of Smbat's heroic exploits and generalship. In the preceding episode, Smbat's acquisition of a piece of the True Cross is woven into the story of his conflict with the rebel forces after Vstam's death. Now religion comes to the fore, as Smbat uses his influence at court to get permission to rebuild the cathedral at Dvin, to have his candidate installed as Catholicos in 606/607, and to override the objections of the local Persian garrison commander and of the *marzpan* of Armenia to the siting of the cathedral. The cathedral which took many years to build (it was only completed in the Catholicosate of Komitas, 609/610-628 [112]) was built on the site of its predecessor, dating from the middle of the fifth century, which had been burned down in 572 (68). It had the same long three-aisled nave, but the

east apse was turned into a triconch and the surrounding porticoes were removed to make way for two side apses.

Literature: Khatchatrian, *L'Architecture Armenienne* 55-8; Garitte, *Narratio* 254-77.

21: chs28-29, **100-104**, *career of Smbat Bagratuni IV (supreme commander of Persian forces in the east, retirement at court and death, 614-616/617)*. This is the fourth, last and most substantial extract from the postulated biography of Smbat. A selective account of operations in the east, focusing on Smbat's personal role, is framed by detailed notices about his audiences with Khosrov before and after his tenure of the eastern command. Information unique to Sebeos and of great historical interest is supplied both about Sasanian court ceremonial and the geopolitical position of Persia in the second decade of the seventh century.

(i) *Smbat's two audiences at Great Dastakert*. No other extant source of demonstrable authority, in Armenian or any other language, can match these two notices of Sebeos' for the detail given about honours and powers granted by a Sasanian king to an individual (at the first audience) or the signal marks of favour shown towards him in the special protocol devised for his reception (on his return from the east). The honours took the form of two titles (the Armenian *tanuter* and the Persian honorific name, Khosrov-Shum) and investiture with insignia of five sorts: a hat, probably the low square cap which Khosrov II and his entourage wear in the reliefs of boar and stag hunts at Taq-i Bustan rather than the rounded tall hats worn by courtiers in early Sasanian reliefs; a robe, probably a caftan, richly decorated, of the sort illustrated on late Sasanian silver plates and in the Taq-i Bustan boar hunt; a bejewelled collar and a necklace, two traditional marks of status; finally several silver cushions, symbolic indications of a given degree of precedence at royal feasts and hence of court rank, evidently high in Smbat's case. Extraordinary powers were granted to him: together with the supreme command in the east, he was given delegated authority to appoint *marzpan*s (provincial governors with military powers), and was granted simultaneously a probably lucrative civilian office in charge of a central financial ministry. His special status was made manifest by the presence of royal guards in his entourage and by the use of royal trumpets.

Sebeos' Great Dastakert, where this investiture ceremony took place,

is called simply Dastakert by Theophanes, who describes it as Khosrov's main residence from the fall of Dara (in 604) until his precipitate flight to Ctesiphon-Veh Ardashir on 23 December 627 when Heraclius' army was approaching. Only part of the outer shell of the town has been found, 107 kilometres from Ctesiphon. Sarre and Herzfeld, who make the identification and ascribe its construction to Khosrov II, describe the extant stretch of its defences as 'the most powerful walls of baked bricks preserved in the Near East', the curtain wall being 16.6 metres thick with semi-circular towers at 17.7 metre intervals which project 10.2 metres. The outer hall of the palace, in which Smbat was received, was, it may be assumed, an *ay van*, a large vaulted hall, open on one side, a characteristic feature of Sasanian palaces.

It was presumably to Great Dastakert that Smbat returned in triumph after his second campaign. The whole court and the royal guards were sent out a day's journey to escort him to the palace. His mount was a horse from the royal stables 'with royal equipage'. It may be conjectured that he changed from the horse to the richly caparisoned elephant for the ceremonial entry into the town and the procession to the *ayvan* of the palace. There he greeted the king, kissing his hand *before* doing obeisance. The acme of his career came with his designation as the third-ranking noble of the court.

(ii) *Date*. There may have been some indication in the lost life of the time spent by Smbat in Armenia after his retirement in 606/607 (perhaps in the form of notes about the start of successive springs, like that heading this notice), but, if so, it has dropped out in the process of excerpting. The date of Smbat's recall may, however, be inferred from that given later for his death, the twenty-eighth year of Khosrov's reign (June 616-June 617). The operations conducted by Smbat in the east seem to have occupied two campaigning seasons, with a formal inquiry into what had gone wrong in the first taking place in the intervening winter. Turkish forces were involved in the first campaign but not in the second. Smbat then returned for his second audience and spent a short time at court before his death. The campaigns may then be dated either to 614 and 615, Smbat's death occurring probably soon after June 616, or, marginally less likely, to 615 and 616, with his death coming in winter 616-617 or the following spring. It follows that Smbat spent at least seven years in retirement (607-613).

(iii) *The campaigns and their context*. There had been a significant change in the geopolitical position of the Sasanian empire in the 550s,

when the Turks emerged as the dominant power in central Asia, east and west. Between 558 and 561 Persia's chief nomadic antagonists since the middle of the fifth century, the Hephthalites, were eliminated as an independent political entity in a joint Persian-Turkish campaign. Thenceforth the spheres of influence of the two powers abutted directly onto each other, and the Persians had to take as much account of the menacing presence of the Turks in the north as of the East Roman empire in the west. Sebeos, like Movses Daskhurants'i in his reports on episodes involving the Turks in the affairs of Transcaucasia 626-629, refers to the existence of a single supreme Turkish ruler, 'the great *Khak'an*, king of the regions of the north' (*contra* the consensus of modern scholarly opinion). He implies thereby that authority across the huge expanses of the Turkish empire was divided among several *khak'ans* but that one had acknowledged seniority or primacy. Chinese sources, which provide fuller coverage of events within China's horizon of vision, confirm that there was an overarching unity in the Turkish world, highlighting those episodes when the western *khak'an* intervened directly in China's steppe frontage (582-587 and 597-603). It follows that the formidable military resources of the central Asian steppes could be concentrated for major joint actions in east or west.

This is what seems to have happened in the second phase of the first campaign fought by Smbat as commander-in-chief of Persian forces in the north-east. So swift was the Turkish intervention and on such a scale that one must suppose that their forces were already mobilized and waiting in reserve, ready to pounce once the Kushans had provoked Persia into taking military action and had appealed for aid. If this hypothesis is correct, the army which Smbat had assembled, including a nucleus of Armenian cavalry removed from their regular station in Vrkan (where they had been serving since 599/600), was lured out into the north-east. Smbat and his immediate entourage of three hundred men, probably his staff and personal guards, were caught and trapped in an isolated fortified village in Khurasan. Smbat himself managed to escape only for a relief force, commanded by Datoyean, to suffer a crushing defeat during the evacuation of the trapped men. At this point Persian defences seem to have collapsed and Turkish forces swept over the Iranian plateau, coming close to Rey and Ispahan in the west. It <sup>was at</sup> a time of their choosing that the Turks withdrew, the great *Khak'an* issuing the order to the field commander, the *Chembukh*. The inquiry instituted by Khosrov after this *debacle* pinned the blame on

Datoyean and exonerated Smbat. He was able to salvage his reputation in the second campaign when the Turks were conspicuous for their absence. On their own the Kushans were no match for his army which had received substantial reinforcements, and, after a victory in the field (transformed by the biographer into the personal feat of Smbat), Persian forces were able to launch a grand counter-raid into Kushan territory west and north of the Hindu Kush.

Explanations for the Turkish act of aggression in 614 or 615 and for their disappearance from the scene in the following year are hard to find, for lack of evidence. Wider geopolitical circumstances may, however, provide part of the answer to the first question (on the assumption that news travelled at reasonable speed and reasonably accurately across Eurasia and hence that the great *Khak 'an* was aware of developments in the sedentary empires flanking the steppes). Khosrov's commitments in the west grew rather than diminished after his forces made the vital break through the inner line of Roman defence on the Euphrates in 610. By 614 the Roman Near East lay at his mercy, there being no prospect of serious orthodox counteraction from the Roman field army after its decisive defeat in 613. In 614 his forces occupied northern Palestine and captured Jerusalem. In 615 they struck through Asia Minor and reached the Bosphorus. The Turks, it may be suggested, took advantage of a thinning of Persian frontier forces in Khurasan, at a time when they judged there was no possibility of substantial troop transfers from the west. Khosrov had to resort to the desperate expedient of calling an old, experienced general out of retirement and sending him east with a scratch force.

Chinese sources provide the explanation for Turkish disengagement in the second campaigning season. The great *Khak'an* K'i-min died in the course of 614 and his son and successor, Shi-pi, reoriented Turkish foreign policy. His priority was to consolidate the Turks' position *vis a vis* China, now that the position of the Sui dynasty was weakening. The new policy was announced by a dramatic act - a surprise attack in force when the emperor was inspecting China's northern defences which almost succeeded in capturing the emperor and led to his being besieged for over a month in the city of Yen-men close to the frontier. This inaugurated several years of Turkish involvement in Chinese affairs. Smbat's second campaign, which seems to have benefited from the shift of Turkish forces from west to east consequent on this change of policy, should therefore be dated to 615 rather than 616. The need to do every-

thing he could to revive his prestige in the Iranian heartland of his empire after the *debacle* of 614 would also help to explain Khosrov's decision to launch a second offensive, in the west, aimed at the Roman capital, in 615.

(iv) *The Chembukh and Chepetukh*. This seems to be one and the same title, a mangled version of the title borne by the second-ranking Turkish *khak'an*, the *Yabgu Qagan*. It is rendered more accurately as *Jebu Khak'an* by Movses Daskhurants'i, who describes the holder as viceroy of the king of the north when, in 625, he welcomed Heraclius' proposal of a military alliance. Two years later, like Sebeos' *Chepetukh*, he led a large Turkish army through the Darband pass and invaded Transcaucasia. The degree of deformation to which the Turkish title has been subjected may be partly explained by its transmission across two language frontiers - from Turkish to Persian (the Persian forms are *Jepik*, *Jabbu* and *Sinjepuk*) and from Persian to Armenian.

(v) *The Kushans*. The inhabitants of a broad swathe of fractured country beyond the north-eastern frontier of the Sasanian empire, centring on the mountain ranges which splay out from the Hindu Kush, were called Kushans, after the name of the dynasty which had ruled an empire comprising those territories, a strip of land on the north bank of the Oxus and the north Indian plain, for nearly two centuries before the rise of the Sasanians. Sebeos mentions that several Kushan kings issued the appeal to the Turks during the 614 campaign, but then reports that a single king, at one point designated king of the Hephthalites, commanded their forces in 615. The temptation to emend Sebeos' text by deleting the plural from the first reference to kings should be resisted. For the first passage casts light on the political organization of the Kushans, the second on the military command during a particular campaign, which had to be in the hands of a single individual. In any case, two named Kushan kings feature in a previous episode (97).

Several valuable pieces of information are supplied about the Kushan lands in the period following the destruction of Hephthalite power. First, authority was dispersed (as was to be expected in what is now Afghanistan) among a number of local rulers. Second, one of them was the leader of the Hephthalites, at least some of whom had been allowed<sup>10</sup> stay, probably reduced to a status equal to their former subjects, in the lands which they had once ruled. Third, the Oxus formed the divide between that part of former Hephthalite territory which had been allocated to the Persians, after the destruction of the Hephthalite state by



joint Turkish-Persian action, and the larger share appropriated by the Turks. Fourth, although the Kushans were subordinated to Persian authority (hence their later 'rebellion' which Sebeos mentions in the postscript to this passage), they were not integrated into the Sasanian empire nor were their lands reorganized into provinces. The outermost region of directly governed Persian territory remained Khurasan, with Marg and Margrot (Persian Marv and Marv-rud) acting as isolated forward bases in the steppes. Fifth, the Turks were careful to observe constitutional niceties in 614, refraining from crossing the Oxus and entering Persia's Kushan protectorate until they had received the Kushans' appeal for help.

(vi) Appended to the account of the last phase of Smbat Bagratuni's career is an apparently free-floating notice about a later rebellion of the Kushans and their participation in a Turkish-led invasion of Transcaucasia. This attack (and the negotiations which led to it) is described in considerable detail by Movses Daskhurants'i. It took place in 627 and was indeed intended to aid the emperor Heraclius in his second northern counter-offensive against the Persians. The Turkish army invaded Albania, then turned west into Iberia and laid siege to the main town, Tpkhis. There it was joined by the Roman army commanded by Heraclius and a summit meeting was held between emperor and *Yabgu Qagan*, to plan future joint action. Turkish preoccupation with China in the preceding decade may be indicated in the epithet 'Chinese' used of the *Yabgu Qagan*.

This notice carries Sebeos' foray forward yet deeper into the future. Its positioning in his text is surely not accidental but to be explained by an origin in the lost life of Smbat. There it would have served an obvious function, supplying a coda to Smbat's final exploit, demonstrating that the campaign of 615 not only obtained very high honours for him but achieved a durable success in the east, since it compelled the Kushans to respect Persian authority for more than a decade to come.

Sources; Theophanes 321-3; M.D., tr. Dowsett 83-8; Liu Mau-tsai I 65,71.

Literature: E.H. Peck, 'Clothing IV. In the Sasanian Period', *E.Ir.* V, 745-52; Adontz/Garsoian 214-18 (cushions); Dentzer, 'L'iconographie iranienne'; Gignoux, 'L'organisation administrative sasanide'; Sarre and Herzfeld, *Archaologische Reise* 76-93; D. Huff, 'Architecture III- Sasanian', *E.Ir.* II, 329-333; Marquart, *Eransahr* 58-67, 71-4, 75-7, 80. 87-91; Stein, *Bas-Empire* 517-18; D. Sinor, 'The establishment and

dissolution of the Turk empire', *Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, Cambridge, 1990, 297-310; Barfield, *Perilous Frontier* 131-45; Golden, *Khazar Studies* 1,187-190; A.D.H. Bivar, 'The History of Eastern Iran', *C.H.Iran* III, 1, 191-217; E.V. Zeimal, 'The Political History of Transoxiana', *C.H.Iran* III, 1,247-9; Gyselen, *Geographic* 85, 88.

22: ch.30, **104-105**, *flight and death of Atat Khorkhoruni, 601/602*. Sebeos' narrative is clear but leaves us in the dark about Atat's motives. Some conjectures may, however, be offered on the basis of circumstantial evidence. Atat was serving with his troops in Thrace (his despatch there in 595 is reported at **88**) when he was summoned to the palace. It is unlikely that apprehension at what lay ahead in the Balkans deterred him from resuming his command, since, by the date of this episode (a year before Maurice's fall on 23 November 602, therefore late in 601 or, possibly, early in 602), the worst of the Balkan fighting was over and the Romans had inflicted a decisive defeat on the Avars (n.24 below). The importance evidently attached to his recapture (Maurice being ready to go to the brink of war to do so) suggests that the root cause was political, that he was involved in machinations against Maurice (this would also explain his subsequent eagerness to return, once Phocas had seized power).

A valuable glimpse is given into Roman internal security measures. Official authorization was required to cross from Europe to Asia (presumably across the Dardanelles), and movements within Asia Minor and western Armenia were monitored by road-blocks (the troops of various cities whom Atat encountered in eight or ten places). The **general** alert issued by the imperial authorities is unlikely to have outstripped Atat and his retinue who had a head start and were travelling at high speed. Hence there is no reason to suppose that special security **measures** were in force. Atat presumably remained in attendance at Khosrov's court, probably at Great Dastakert, once he had been **rescued** from Nakhchawan. Hence his procuring Arabian horses, for a **second** planned flight which would have taken him across the desert.

**Literature:** Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 306-7.

ch.30,**105**, *Persian and Roman governors of Armenia, 591-602*. This **>st of Persian governors** is a doublet of that given previously at **71**. To **J"dge** by the similar note included about the death of the first of them, **naatakan** (Ni)khorakan, it was taken from the same source - probably

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a list kept in the Catholicosate. It is hard to explain the divergences in the spelling of names, unless Sebeos was working fast and relying on memory when he slipped in this second notice. This would help account for the substitution of Dvin for Garni as the site of the mutiny and the wrong total (thirteen years) given for the period of peace.

The Roman governors, holding the command of *Magister Militum per Armeniam*, were John Mystacon (already in post during the Persian civil war, 589-591 [74, 77, **82, 83**]), Heraclius (in post in 594-595 when he concerted operations with the Persian authorities against the Vahewuni rebels and, jointly with Hamazasp Mamikonean, dealt effectively with their second rising in the Roman sector [**88-89** and n.15 above]; he was father of the emperor Heraclius) and Sormen (not attested otherwise).

Literature: *PLRE* III, s.v. Heraclius 3, Ioannes 101, Suren.

24: ch.30, **105**, *planned transfer of Armenians to the Balkans*, 602. The great disturbance which prompted Priscus to hasten back to Constantinople may safely be identified with the military revolution, led by Phocas, which overthrew Maurice. Priscus evidently supported the change of regime, since he prospered under Phocas, holding the key metropolitan command of *Comes Excubitorum* throughout the reign and marrying a daughter of Phocas. A date late in 602 is thus obtained for Maurice's plan to introduce Armenian colonists into Thrace. The military service to which the 30,000 households scheduled for relocation were to be liable was not likely to be as onerous as in the past. For concerted action by the field armies commanded by Priscus and Comentiolus in 599 had countered the successful Avar attack of 598 (n.16 above) with an offensive into the Avar heartland north of the Danube. With the Avars on the defensive and Roman power impressed on the Slavs who had settled south of the Danube by the campaigns of 593-596, Maurice was able to consolidate the Roman position in 600 and 601, and now planned to reinforce it by introducing the Armenian colonists, while simultaneously taking the war to the Slavs on the north bank of the Danube, in winter when they would be more vulnerable (the first campaign of this sort was ordered for winter 602-603).

It is likely that Maurice intended to disperse the Armenian households in a number of separate military colonies, perhaps to oversee important concentrations of Slav settlers, perhaps to control strategic points. The Byzantine historian may be tempted to view Maurice's

scheme as a precursor of a future general system under which estates were allocated to individual households on condition of hereditary cavalry service by one of their members. However, the terms under which the Armenians were resettled are not specified by Sebeos, and, even if individual households received individual land-grants, there is no reason to suppose that a new general principle of military recruitment was being established. The Armenians were probably viewed as latter-day *foederati* or *laeti*, foreigners who were subjected to special arrangements. In any case it is hard to find concrete evidence of a general system linking military service to tenure of particular estates before the tenth century.

Literature: *PLRE* III, s.v. Priscus 6; Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 164— 8; Haldon, *Seventh Century* 244-51.

## II. SECTION II (106-134)

### Introduction

Contemporaries, whether directly involved or far removed from the field of conflict, took a close interest in the last great war between the East Roman and Sasanian empires (I. Historical Background, above). A fair amount of what they saw and heard has survived in written form. The range of texts supplying information is impressive, although their quality is variable. At first sight, Sebeos should be ranked with the best of them. For his account is one of the longest and abounds with detailed information (above all precise chronological indications). It also fills a gaping hole left by other accounts concerning events in the Armenian theatre in the first phase of the fighting, and provides a Persian perspective to balance the Roman viewpoint which predominates otherwise. But no text should be used until it has been appraised properly. That is one of the principal tasks undertaken in this section of the historical commentary.

The process of appraisal is relatively simple, although in practice rather laborious. Information supplied by each notice in Sebeos' account can be compared with corresponding material in sources of demonstrable worth. Each successive test contributes to our understanding of Sebeos' working-methods and helps us reach a general view on his reliability. The principal sources which are taken as authoritative and used as external controls are the following:

(i) The *Chronicon Paschale*, a Greek text written by an official working in the Constantinopolitan patriarchate, concludes with a section covering a series of episodes of the war. This last section of contemporary history consists almost entirely of documents or extracts from documents, and as such is a source of inestimable value. It is one of two chronologically precise and accurate texts which can be used to check Sebeos' dates. It also reproduces a document, the Senate's letter to Khosrov written in 525, against which to test the accuracy of Sebeos' version of the Roman negotiating position that year (presented in the form of a speech from Heraclius to the general commanding the Persian army at Chalcedon).

(ii) Embedded in an apparently ill-organized universal chronicle which comes down to the year 724, written in Syriac and completed in 727, is a distinctive body of material taken from a source of high quality composed around 640 (excerpts translated, with discussion, in *West-Syrian Chronicles* 5-24). The *Chronicle to 724* is the second text packed with precious, trustworthy chronological indications, which can act as a control on Sebeos. It also provides an important item of information on the peace negotiations of 628-629.

(iii) The poet George of Pisidia watched the war from a privileged position. Like the anonymous author of the *Chronicon Paschale*, he was an official in the patriarchate at Constantinople. He was a protege of the patriarch Sergius, and at times benefited from the emperor's patronage. In his secular poems he deals with two episodes of the war in considerable detail, as well as presenting a general *encomium* of Heraclius (in the *Heraclias*). He provides valuable material for the reconstruction of events and enables us to breathe something of the atmosphere of the time. Although there is little overlap between the subject-matter of the two narrowly focused poems (the military exercises held in Bithynia in 622 and the siege of Constantinople in 626) and what is covered by Sebeos, the *Heraclias* supplies enough information to enable us to check Sebeos' information on the opening of Heraclius' first counter-offensive in 624.

(iv) The *Chronicle* put together by Theophanes, an abbot of aristocratic extraction, probably between 811 and 814, presents the fullest historical narrative of the war in Greek. Although much of the material on the first two phases derives, at two removes, from an unreliable west Syrian source (probably Theophilus of Edessa - see Introduction to Section I above) and Theophanes can be shown to have been an overbold compiler, all too often seeking spurious chronological precision by cavalier editorial decisions, he incorporates material of the highest quality on Heraclius' two counter-offensives in the third phase. This material, which, in my view (Howard-Johnston, 'Official History'), is taken from a history of the war commissioned by Heraclius soon after its end, can be used as a control on Sebeos' apparently disjointed notices. Even so there are difficulties in placing some of Sebeos' reports in a defined context and making sense of what he says. It should be noted that Theophanes' dating by years from Creation lags one year behind reality from some time in the reign of Phocas (after 603) until at least 659 (*The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, tr. C. Mango and R. Scott (Oxford,

1997), lxiv-lxvii). All his dates have been adjusted in this commentary to take account of this systematic discrepancy.

(v) The *History of the Caucasian Albanians* by Movses Daskhurants'i (already encountered in Section I) incorporates detailed information about the war taken from an early source of considerable value. With its attention focused on Caucasian Albania (what is now ex-Soviet Azerbaijan), it documents Heraclius' steppe diplomacy and the intervention of the Turks in the war. It can be used as a second point of comparison for judging Sebeos' account of the third phase.

These five texts, together with Sebeos, provide most of the material upon which any reconstruction of the war must be based. But a considerable amount of supplementary information can be garnered from a wide variety of other sources. As in the case of the five principal sources, they too can be used to check the quality and coverage of Sebeos' account. Most useful for this diagnostic purpose are the following: the *Life* of St Theodore of Sykeon (died 613), written by his disciple George; the *Life* of St Anastasius the Persian (martyred shortly before the fall of Khosrov in February 628), composed in 629-630 together with an account of the recovery of his relics from Mesopotamia, probably written by the same hand in 632 (Flusin, *St Anastase* I, 40-91, 98-107); a short, slight history covering the period from Phocas' *coup d'état* in 602 to 769 (with a gap from 641 to 668), written probably in his youth by the patriarch Nikephoros, which contains valuable material on international relations; the two east Syrian chronicles which have been exploited in Section I, the *Khuzistan Chronicle* (covering roughly the same period as Sebeos, with a taste for gossip and wide-ranging interests in both ecclesiastical and secular history) and the *Seert Chronicle* (largely but not entirely preoccupied with church and monastic history); the *Georgian Chronicles*, a set of texts on the siege and sack of Jerusalem in 614 and the deportations which followed, which bear the stamp of Roman propaganda (Strategius); the *Annals* of Tabari, the premier Abbasid historian, who quarried high quality material on the fall of Khosrov from the Persian *Khwadāynamag*, 'Book of Lords'; and, finally, the secular component of the history written by Dionysius of Tel-Mahre in the first half of the ninth century, a text in general of dubious value for the first half of the seventh century but with nuggets of reliable information (long extract translated, with discussion, in *West-Syrian Chronicles* 85-221).

Editions/translations: listed by author/title in Bibliography, I. Texts.

Literature: cited editions/translations; works cited in Introduction to Section I; Whitby, 'A New Image'; Flusin, *St Anastase II*, 131-40 (Strategius); Howard-Johnston, 'Al-Tabari'.

25: ch.31, **106**, *Phocas' coup, 602* (T.A. 88). Phocas' seizure of power (he was crowned on 23 November 602) is correctly placed in Khosrov's 14th year (which began in June 602) but occurred just after the end of Maurice's 20th (August 602). Sebeos is probably right to suggest that the mutinous Balkan troops not only chose Phocas as their leader but designated him their candidate for the throne from the first. For he was raised on a shield, a ceremony which had long since acquired clear imperial connotations. The rumour that Maurice's eldest son, Theodosius, managed to escape is registered by John of Antioch and Theophylact Simocatta, and taken to be true by both east Syrian chronicles. No tangible evidence of Theodosius' death was produced by Phocas' regime as in the case of Maurice and his five other sons (whose severed heads were put on public display outside Constantinople, according to *Chron.Pasch.*). The statement that the army returned to its station in Thrace, which is unique to Sebeos, indicates, if true, that Phocas remained committed to Maurice's Slav pacification programme.

Sources: J.A. 36-7; T.S. VIII 6-15; *Khuz.Chron.* 15-16; *Chron.Seert* 517-20; *Chron.Pasch.* 693-4; Dionysius 119-20.

Literature: Whitby, *Emperor Maurice* 24-7.

26: ch.31, **106**, *disturbances in the Roman empire, 608-610*. This is a muddled and misleading notice. Sebeos has leapt forward to the gathering political crisis of 608-610, and has reversed the true order of events. In reality the crisis was triggered by the rebellion of Heraclius senior (father of the future emperor) in 608 and culminated in an outbreak of rioting in the capital as it came under attack from a fleet led by Heraclius junior in October 610. The two key intermediate stages were the take-over of Egypt and widespread disturbances in the other provinces of the Near East. It looks as if Sebeos has decided to bunch together information which reached him about Roman domestic history in Phocas' reign, and has then taken liberties as he devised his own succinct presentation. There are also two errors of detail: (i) Heraclius senior's command has been changed from Africa to 'the regions of Alexandria'; apart from the oddness of this expression, the following statement that he took over the land of Egypt by force clearly



implies that it was not part of his allocated command; (ii) Bonus, a key figure in Heraclius' regime (*PLRE* III, s.v. Bonus 5), has been confused with Bonosus (*PLRE* III, s.v. Bonosus 2), whom Phocas sent to bring the Near East under control and whose brutal methods were denounced by the opposition; the evident exaggeration of the scale of the slaughter instituted by him in Sebeos' account derives ultimately from Heraclian propaganda.

Literature: Olster, *Usurpation* 101-138; Borkowski, *Alexandrie II* 23-43; Dagron/Deroche, 'Juifs et Chrétiens' 18-22.

27: ch.31, **106-107**, *Persian actions in Roman Mesopotamia in 603* (cf. T'.A., 88). Sebeos returns to the immediate consequences of Phocas' coup: Nerses, probably still *Magister Militum per Orientem* (*PLRE* III, s.v. Narses 10), rebelled against the new regime, installing himself and his troops in the heavily fortified city of Urha (Edessa), which was within striking distance of the Persian frontier; the following spring (603) the Persians invaded Roman Mesopotamia in force, laid siege to Dara and came to his aid. *Khuz.Chron.* and *Chron.Seert* confirm that Khosrov took personal charge of these operations, thus breaking with the recently established convention that the king should keep his distance from operations in the field. It signalled his public commitment to the cause of avenging his benefactor Maurice, as well as his confidence in the outcome, now that civil war was disrupting Roman defensive preparations. The scale of the operations, the evident high priority assigned to the capture of Dara and above all the presence of the king indicate that the main body of the Persian army was concentrated in the south. It follows that the force allocated to the Armenian theatre, whose fate is described in ch.32, had a subsidiary, probably diversionary function.

The account of Khosrov's victory outside Edessa, his subsequent entry into the city and Nerses' formal presentation of Theodosius as legitimate pretender to the imperial throne is unique to Sebeos. The rubbishing of the pretender as Nerses' stooge should not be taken too seriously. The story looks very much like a piece of black propaganda from Phocas' regime, putting its own gloss on a ceremony which did take place. There is an inherent implausibility in the suggestion that both Khosrov and the Edessan public were duped in this way by Nerses. Rather more credence should be attached to the Persian version, best represented in *Khuz.Chron.*, that Khosrov had crowned Theodosius,

whether genuine or impostor, in Ctesiphon before setting off for Nisibis and the frontier and had put the Persian forces nominally under his command. If this was closer to the truth, the ceremony in Edessa probably had a constitutional function: a high-ranking Roman field commander, appointed by the emperor Maurice and loyal to him, was placing his fugitive son or putative son formally and publicly under Khosrov's protection; he was thereby inviting Khosrov to intervene in Roman affairs and restore the legitimate pretender to the Roman throne.

Corroboration that the siege of Dara was protracted is provided by *Chron.724*, where its fall is dated to 604, as well as by the important chronological co-ordinate given at **108** below (Dara was still under siege at the opening of the second season of campaigning in Armenia). Sebeos' figure of one and half years may therefore be preferred to the dating of *Khuz.Chron.* (the city falls in Khosrov's 14th regnal year, i.e. before the end of June 603), and the contradictory indications of *Chron.Seert* (the siege lasts nine months, until shortly before the death of the Nestorian Catholicos Sabrisho [securely dated to summer 604]). For the most part Khosrov probably directed siege operations from the comfort of Nisibis nearby, where, according to *Khuz. Chron.*, he gave an audience to the aggrieved *rad*(judge) of Syarazur.

Theophanes supplies some more information on the circumstances of Nerses' death: 'the other army' which attacked and captured Edessa consisted largely of troops transferred from the Balkans in winter 603- 604 after Phocas negotiated a peace treaty with the Avars; Nerses managed to escape from Edessa to Hierapolis; later he gave himself up in return for a guarantee of safety which was soon disregarded.

Sources: Theophanes 291-3; Dionysius 120-2; *Khuz.Chron.* 16-18; *Chron.Seert* 498-504, 520; *Chron.724* 17.

Literature: Whitby, 'The Persian King'; Flusin, *St Anastase II*, 106—110, 120-1.

28: ch.32,**107-109**, *operations in Armenia in 603 and 604*. This notice, like those which follow on later Persian offensives in Armenia in the first phase of the war, is unique to Sebeos. Unless there are obvious signs of confusion in the story presented or elements which are hard to square with what is reported of events elsewhere in other sources, the information will be treated as trustworthy.

In the north Persian forces were mobilized soon after news came of Phocas' coup, in the difficult conditions of an Armenian winter, and

menacingly close to the Roman frontier, which now ran just to the west of Dvin. This looks like a move intended to deceive the Romans into expecting the main attack in spring 603 in the north, with the object of preventing them from sending reinforcements to Mesopotamia. The Roman regional field army duly mobilized in its turn, taking up a position in the western sector of the large alluvial plain of Dvin, on the frontier or very close to it. The decisive victory which it won demonstrated what Roman forces could achieve if they were not divided.

The strategic balance in Armenia shifted dramatically in the second campaigning season. The Romans were on the defensive from the first in 604. Their prime object seems to have been to protect, insofar as possible, the large plain in Vanand and Shirak, one of three rich agricultural areas in the sector of Persarmenia ceded to them in 591 (the other two, Bagrewand and Basean, were to come under attack in 605). The population of 33 villages was evacuated to the fortress of Erginay (modern Arkina) on the river Akhurean, the only natural line of defence in Shirak. The regional army, its numbers perhaps depleted (it may well have contributed to the reinforcements rushed to Mesopotamia that year), camped nearby, at first to the east of the river, then on its west bank. The Persians were evidently deploying a larger force in this theatre than in 603 (hence Nerses was left to fend for himself in the south), it being imperative to reverse the defeat of 603.

Literature: Hewsen, *ASX* 69 (map xxiv), 210-11, 214-15, 218-19; Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey* 1,425.

29: ch.32, **109-110**, *Senitam Khosrov's campaign in Armenia in 605*. The arrival of a new commander signals the start of a new campaigning season. There are two juxtaposed notices. The first covers operations which took place in southern Armenia, where a Roman force defended Bagrewand, the elongated plain where the Aratsani river (modern Murat Su) gathers its headwaters. These are treated in exceptional detail, probably because the Roman general at the centre of the story was an Armenian, Teodos Khorkhoruni, and his behaviour had a decisive influence on the outcome. Then comes a brief notice summarizing the main achievements of Senitam Khosrov that year: (i) defeat and expulsion of the Romans from Basean, the fertile plain through which flows the upper Araxes; and (ii) acquisition of four named places, each of which is designated a walled town (*k'alak'*) - Angl (captured in the course of operations in Bagrewand), Gaylatuk' (at the north-west extre-

mity of Gogovit, across the mountains to the north-east of Bagrewand), Erginay (captured but not garrisoned in 604), and Tskhnakert in Mesopotamia (near Dara). The succinct presentation of this notice is what might be expected of a government bulletin. Such a provenance would also account for the demonstrable exaggeration of the importance of the places captured: Erginay is classified as a fortress, *berd*, in the preceding fuller passage in which it features (108), while Angl is described four times as a fortress as against once as a town in the first of these two notices (109-110).

The second notice makes it clear that Senitam Khosrov was assigned the supreme command along the whole western frontier after Khosrov relinquished it at the end of the 604 campaigning season. His presence in the north shows that Armenia remained the main theatre of combat in 605. In the south the war appears to have subsided, the Persians only making one gain (Tskhnakert) which consolidated their position around Dara.

Senitam Khosrov launched a two-pronged offensive, along each of the natural lines of attack across Armenia. A clue to his strategy is supplied by the linking phrase which introduces the second notice: this places the battle in Basean after the invasion of Bagrewand, a sequence which is confirmed by the order in which the three Armenian gains of the year are then listed. The following reconstruction may be proposed. The initial thrust south of Mount Ararat into the Aratsani valley was a subsidiary operation entrusted to a subordinate commander (we would expect Senitam Khosrov to have been named had he been the general who detained Teodos Khorkhoruni after the capitulation of Angl). Apart from the rich prize of Bagrewand itself, this attack brought immediate military benefits: it diverted attention from the Araxes valley where the main blow was to be delivered, raised the disturbing possibility that the Roman forces in Basean might be outflanked, and cannot but have had a depressing effect on their morale. The main Persian army, presumably under the direct command of Senitam Khosrov, then advanced up the Araxes valley, defeated the Romans in Basean and drove them back over the Araxes-Euphrates watershed which had formed the pre-591 frontier. Victory in the field was followed up by the extension of Persian authority into the hinterland of Bagrewand and, probably, by the installation of garrisons at three key strongholds listed as the year's gains in Armenia. Bagrewand, Gogovit and Shirak were thus being brought under permanent Persian control.

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The detailed account of operations in Bagrewand calls for some additional comments. As in 604, the Romans took up two defended positions, which were not far apart, in the hope of catching the Persians between two fires. A village on the bank of the Aratsani was taken over, remodelled and incorporated into the perimeter of what became a heavily fortified camp. Nearby lay a fortress, which, it may be assumed, was secured by a detachment from the army. A clear distinction is drawn between the camp with its fortification (*amrut'iwn*) and the fortress (*berd*) which is also designated a city (at the time of its capitulation). In the event the Romans were easily overcome by a lethal combination of surprise and treachery in the high command.

It was naturally the permanent fortress which the Persians garrisoned after the departure of its Roman defenders. At this stage the fortress is at last given a name, Angl, and duly reappears in the list of gains given by the second notice as the walled town of Angl. It follows therefore that something is amiss in the opening sentence of the first notice which identifies the village where the fortified camp was established as Angl. It may be suggested that a few words have dropped out between 'the village' and 'called Angl', the phrase originally reading 'the village *called Xnear the fortress* called Angl'.

Literature: Hewsen, *ASX69* (mapxxiv), 210-11,213-14,215-16,218, 265; Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey I*, 398-401, II, 226-8.

30: ch.33,110-112, *renewal of Persian offensive operations in 607*. Sebeos supplies unique information (mainly about events in Armenia) and a general framework within which specific events reported by other sources may be arranged. A key date is given, the 18th regnal year of Khosrov (June 606-June 607), for the start of the second offensive (datable therefore to spring 607), which involved co-ordinated attacks in great force north and south of the Taurus. No other source reports the recruiting campaign, datable to the preceding year (606), which enabled the Persians to sustain action on this scale, or the last two battles fought in Armenia, the first in 607 at Du and Ordu on the old Persian-Roman frontier, the second probably in 608, which repelled a Roman counter-attack on the plain of Karin (Theodosiopolis). The "formation about Theodosiopolis' capitulation in 607 and the deportation of its population in 609/610 is also unique to Sebeos.

The account of military operations is highly selective, attention being °cused on the Persians' prime targets in each theatre, Urha (Edessa) in

Mesopotamia and Karin (Theodosiopolis) in Armenia. The capitulation of Edessa (dated to 609 by *Chron. Pasch.* and *Chron.* 724) was rapidly followed by that of the other cities of Mesopotamia, and, in August 610, by a military thrust into northern Syria. Two of the cities captured soon after Antioch are named in other sources (Apamea and Emesa). The Persian-sponsored pretender was deployed to good effect in Armenia, endorsement of his claims by a deputation of leading citizens providing the reason or pretext for Theodosiopolis' capitulation. Once Theodosiopolis was secured and a garrison installed, Persian forces were able to range far and wide over Roman Armenia, taking the key stronghold of Citharizon (Dzit'arich) in the south, which commanded the Arsaniyas valley and an important pass across the Armenian Taurus, and capturing three other strongholds as they advanced west into the north-east segment of the Anatolian plateau. The new general, Shahen, whose arrival in Armenia signals the start of the next campaigning season (608), probably concentrated at first on consolidating Persian control over western Armenia, before making a new forward thrust into Cappadocia (the fall of Caesarea is securely dated to summer 611).

Sebeos' presentation of events in Armenia may be faulted on two counts. He breaks up the chronological order by bunching together information concerning Theodosiopolis, and, by confining his coverage to notable gains, he gives the impression that the invasion of Cappadocia took place much earlier than it did.

Sources: *Chron. Pasch.* 699; *Chron.* 724 17; Dionysius 127 (cf. Theophanes 299); *Khuz. Chron.* 24; Garitte, *Narratio* ch.1 12 (with commentary 261-3); *Vie de Theodore* ch.153; Nikephoros ch.2.

Literature: Howard-Johnston, 'Procopius'; Bryer/Winfield, *Pontes* 1,20-39.

31: ch.34,112-113, *seizure of power by Heraclius (October 610), embassy to Khosrov and military action in 611-612* (cf. T.A. 88-89, including additional passage giving Heraclius' message to Khosrov in direct speech). A set of four well-ordered notices provides information, some of it unique to Sebeos, on key events, (i) Heraclius' enthronement (5 October 610) is placed, correctly, in Khosrov's 22nd regnal year (June 610-June 611). The constitutional position is reported correctly: the elder Heraclius, governor of Egypt as well as north Africa since 609 (n.26 above), was formal leader of the revolutionary forces; it was by virtue of the consulship which he had assumed when he first rebelled

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and with the backing of the Senate that he installed his son, the younger Heraclius, on the throne. Sebeos is wrong, however, to suggest that there was no resistance to the new regime (it centred on Phocas' brother Comentiolus [PLRE III, s.v. Comentiolus 2], army commander on the northern front, and was confined to Asia Minor in the following winter), (ii) The embassy sent to announce Heraclius' accession to the Persians with the customary gifts was evidently intended to put out peace feelers. Roman weakness was acknowledged in the solicitous tone adopted, as Sebeos notes, in Heraclius' letters. Khosrov severed diplomatic relations in the simplest and most brutal of ways, and reiterated (presumably to his own court) his backing for Theodosius. (iii) Heraclius supervised the operations, of summer 611, which penned Shahan's force back into Caesarea. The unnamed general to whom he delegated the subsequent blockade was Priscus, one of Maurice's senior generals who had been a pillar of Phocas' regime. He may have held the lucrative post of *curator* (head of a *domus divina* or group of imperial estates). But it is surprising to find him so designated in a military context. It is possible that the title assigned to him by Sebeos is a corruption of the grand court dignity *curopalate*, which Domniziolus, nephew of Phocas, is known to have held (PLRE III, s.v. Domniziolus 2) and which Heraclius bestowed on his brother Theodore (PLRE III, s.v. Theodorus 163) after Priscus' disgrace, (iv) The break-out of Shahan and his men from Caesarea after a year's blockade was a serious blow to the prestige of the new regime and led to the immediate disgrace of Priscus.

Sources: *Chron.Pasch.* 699-701; G.P., *In Heraclium ex Africa redeuntem*; J.A. 37-8; *Vie de Theodore* chsl53-154; Nikephoros chsl-2; Theophanes 295-9; Dionysius 126-7.

Literature: Grierson, 'Consular Coinage'; Kaegi, 'New Evidence'; PLRE III, s.v. Priscus 6; Kaplan, *Les hommes* 140-2.

22. ch.34,113, *Shahan's expedition to Pisidia (617) and a list of Persian governors of Armenia (612-627)*. The first of these two notices is out of Place.

While it may be tempting to associate the capture of Melitene Shahan's first thrust to the west (608-611), this cannot be true of<sup>e</sup> second stage of the campaign which saw him meet Shahrvaraz in ,<sup>a</sup> - So deep a double invasion of Asia Minor was only feasible once e Persians had reached the sea beyond Antioch (late in 610) and had<sup>a</sup> firm control of Cilicia (in 613). If the two senior commanders

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involved are tracked through the second phase of the war, a date may be conjectured.

The years 614 and 616 may be ruled out since Shahrvaraz was fully occupied in Syria and Palestine, dealing with inter-confessional violence in Jerusalem in 614 (n.34 below) and responsible, it may be surmised, for the restoration of order in Palestine in 616, which enabled the acting head of the Jerusalem patriarchate to authorize the reoccupation of monasteries in the Judaeian desert (n.35 below). Shahen, as will be seen in note 37 below, was in Asia Minor in 615 but in the north-west rather than the south-west, from where he was urgently recalled to deal with a Roman counter-attack in Armenia. The first year when both generals could have been present in Pisidia is therefore 617. This is a more likely date than 618 when the Persians were probably fully engaged in preparing for the invasion of Egypt which took place in 619 (*Chron.* 724 17). The double attack may perhaps be envisaged as a massive feint designed to draw Roman attention away from Egypt. Some corroboration for the earlier date is provided by the fire-damage observed at Sardis for which a *terminus post quem* of 615/616 can be obtained from coins sealed in the destruction layer.

Juxtaposition of this notice with a list of Persian governors of Armenia may suggest an explanation of this editorial error. Sebeos includes three such lists in his text, the first and longest covering the period 572-602 (**70-71** with n.7 above), the second a doublet for the years of peace 591-602 (**105** with n.23 above). The five senior commanders named in the course of the narrative of operations in the years 603- 612 in the northern theatre probably fill the gap before the tenure of Shahrāyēn-pet (first mentioned at **111**), who heads the third list. His immediate predecessor seems to have been Shahen (mentioned immediately beforehand at **111**), the hand-over perhaps taking place soon after Shahen's return from Caesarea in 612. Sebeos appears to have confused this with a later episode when Shahen was summoned to court from somewhere else and was given his orders for 617.

The hypothesis that active military commanders and governors of Armenia form a single series, if it is accepted, leads to an unsurprising further conclusion: at a time of war civil administrative powers and military command were combined in this important frontier region of the Sasanian empire. This was certainly true of the last two governors in the list, of whom something is known: Shahrāplakan (Sarablangas at Theophanes 308-10) took up his appointment in 625 and was



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engaged in the unsuccessful operations against Heraclius of that year (n.39 below); Eroch Vehan (Razates at Theophanes 317-19) was appointed in 627, pursued Heraclius across the Zagros in October and was killed at the battle of Nineveh on 12 December (**126** with n.42 below).

It is hard to know what to make of the enigmatic phrase about an engagement fought and won by Shahraplakan in Persia. It could refer to fighting in Atrpatakan in 625, but no Persian victory that year is recorded in any other source.

Literature: Foss, 'Persians' (proposing a different chronology for Persian attacks on Asia Minor and crediting them with causing lasting damage to urban life); Foss, 'Sardis'.

33: ch.34,**114**, *Philippicus' counter-thrust into Armenia, 615*. Philippicus (*PLRE* III, s.v. Philippicus 3), senior general and brother-in-law of Maurice, retired to the monastery which, together with his wife Gordia, he had founded at Chrysopolis in 594, *after*, not before, the death of Maurice. He was recalled to active service by Heraclius immediately after his seizure of power, and was sent to negotiate with Phocas' brother Comentiolus in Asia Minor in the winter of 610-611 (n.31 above). The counter-stroke described by Sebeos may be identified with that reported in the *Life* of St Anastasius: the saint served on Shahen's campaign to Chalcedon in 615 (n.37 below) and returned to the east with the Persian army, when Shahen was drawn back in pursuit of Philippicus who had entered Persian territory. Sebeos fills in the details missing from the brief notice in the *Life*: Philippicus' diversionary campaign was directed at the administrative heart of Persarmenia in the Araxes valley; he stayed put, close to Valarshapat, until the very last moment, when Shahen's army, after a long forced march, was poised to attack; then he slipped away to the north, passed round the back of Mount Aragats (a huge, relatively low volcano [4,090m], which is Mount Ararat's pendant to the north of the Araxes), and sped west over the plain of Vanand, past Karin (Theodosiopolis) and down the upper Euphrates valley. The Persian army was too exhausted to pursue him closely. Instead Shahen rested his men and then withdrew back to the base, south of the Taurus, from which he had set off on his expedition to Chalcedon.

The Roman viewpoint of Sebeos' notice points to use, direct <sup>or</sup> indirect, of a Roman source. Sebeos fails to relate it to his

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Armenian/Persian material and introduces the notice extracted from it at the wrong place in his account.

Flusin is ready, after some hesitation, to identify as one and the same the episodes reported by the *Life* and Sebeos. He is also ready to countenance *two* attacks by Shahen on Chalcedon in successive years, the second of which resulted in its capture - attaching too much weight to the presence of two notices to this effect in adjacent year-entries (615/ 616 and 616/617) in Theophanes' *Chronicle*. The notices are better interpreted as doublets referring to a single episode, that of 615.

Sources: *Chron.Pasch.* 695; *Vie de Theodore* ch.152; Flusin, *St Anastase* 1,48-9; Theophanes 301.

Literature: Hewsen, *ASX 69* (map xxiv), 214-15, 217-18; Flusin, *St Anastase II*, 83-93.

34: ch.34,114-116, *Persian occupation of Cilicia, submission of Palestine and fall of Jerusalem, 613-614* (cf. T'.A. 89 on the fall of Jerusalem). Events are reported in chronological order. Much of the information given is unique to Sebeos. Without it, the modern historian would be hard put to piece together a crucial military episode in the war and to make sense of Persian policy in Palestine:

(i) Heraclius' eight-month-old son, Heraclius Constantine, was crowned co-emperor on 22 January 613.

(ii) Later that year Heraclius took personal charge of a second major counter-offensive, intended to dislodge the Persians from their north Syrian bridgehead. It can be securely placed after the disappointing end of the Caesarea blockade in 612 and before the Persian advance into Palestine late in 613 (which took place, according to Sebeos, some months before the start of the Jerusalem crisis, itself securely datable to April/May 614 [see below]). Apart from an incidental reference in the *Life* of St Theodore, there is no other description of the Persians' victory outside Antioch and their subsequent advance into Cilicia despite a reverse suffered by the vanguard. Heraclius abandoned orthodox warfare for several years.

(iii) Sebeos' is the only connected and relatively dispassionate account of the Persians' entry into Palestine. He distinguishes between a military advance to the provincial capital, Caesarea, which was occupied, and a much wider extension of political authority. The latter was achieved bloodlessly. With no prospect of rescue by a Roman field army and with growing internal problems, as the Jews of Palestine came out openly in

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supp<sup>ort</sup> of the Persians and there were outbreaks of communal violence, the authorities in Palestine had no choice but to submit voluntarily. The arrangements made for the remote control of Jerusalem through a small <sup>military</sup>/political commission may have been replicated at other large population centres.

(iv) The Jerusalem crisis has been examined closely by Flusin. Sebeos is, <sup>as</sup> might be expected, more candid and more dispassionate than Strategius, a monk of the St Sabas lavra at the time, whose account, written originally in Greek, only survives in Georgian and Arabic translations. While Strategius blames the circus factions in general terms (Sebeos' 'the youths of the city'), Sebeos details the actions of theirs which provoked the crisis, first their killing of the members of the Persian commission in Jerusalem, then their instigation of a pogrom which led the Jews to appeal to Shahrvaraz at Caesarea for help. The principal disagreement between the texts is chronological, Strategius dating Shahrvaraz's capture of the city 20 days after the start of the siege on 13 or 15 April (i.e. 3 or 5 May), Sebeos offering two alternative dates, 19 May (28th Margats') and 9 April (ten days after Easter which fell on 30 March in 614). If Easter is taken to be a slip for Ascension (8 May in 614), as suggested by RWT (footnote 429 to 115), Sebeos' two dates almost coincide (18 and 19 May). Flusin hesitates between the two chronologies, but preference should probably be given to Sebeos', since it has the backing of the Palestine-Georgian liturgical calendar (commemorations of 'the fire of Jerusalem' on 17 May and 'the devastation of Jerusalem' on 20 May) and *Chron.Pasch.* (a notice of the author's own composition laments the fall of Jerusalem which is loosely dated to June 614, probably the time when the news reached him in Constantinople). It may perhaps be inferred from the relatively unemotional tone of Sebeos' notice that it derives from a Persian source, possibly a copy of a communique kept in the archives of the Catholicosate at Dvin.

(v) The following notice about Persian behaviour after the fall of the <sup>city</sup> probably had a different, Christian, provenance. Hence the stress <sup>on</sup> the 17,000 dead (apparently corrupted to 57,000 in T.A. and inflated to a body-count of over 60,000 in some versions of Strategius and 90,000 in Dionysius). The search for the fragments of the True Cross, <sup>involving</sup> the torture of clergy, is also reported by *Khuz.Chron.* and Tabari.

(vi) Sebeos is silent about events after the sacking of the city. The

screening of the surviving population outside the city, in which Jews sought out hitherto undiscovered ringleaders of the pogrom, and the deportation to Mesopotamia of a considerable number of people, including the patriarch Zacharias and those with useful trades, are reported by Strategius and the east and west Syrian sources. Whether Shahrvaraz reverted to his policy of managing Jerusalem and the rest of Palestine at a distance from his base at Caesarea or now introduced a garrison into Jerusalem is left unclear.

Sources: *Chron.Pasch.* 703-5; *Vie de Theodore* ch.166; Strategius; Garitte, *Calendrier* 67; *Khuz.Chron.* 24; Tabari, tr. Noldeke 290-1; Dionysius 128; Theophanes 300-1; Sophronius, *Anacreontica* xiv.

Literature: Mango, 'Temple Mount' 3-4; Dagron/Deroche, 'Juifs et Chretiens' 22-6; Flusin, *StAnastase* II, 78-9,129-71.

35: chs34-35, **116-118**, *reconstruction in Jerusalem 614-616/617* (cf. T'.A. 89). The change of policy on the part of the Persians, which also resulted in improved conditions for the deportees, was probably a response to pressure from the important Christian communities of Mesopotamia and their powerful patrons at court who included Shirin. Less value should be attached to the explanatory note introducing Modestos' letter to Komitas than to the text of the letter itself. For the letter looks like an authentic document, translated into Armenian from a Greek original (hence the transliteration of the Greek terms for archbishop and metropolitan rather than their Armenian equivalents in the heading). Its accuracy can be tested by reference to the specific sites where reconstruction is reported to have taken place: the list (Holy Sepulchre, Golgotha, the 'mother of churches' at Sion, and the church of the Ascension) tallies exactly with that given by Antiochus, another monk of the St Sabas lavra, in a letter written probably late in 616 (cf. also the commemoration of Modestos' building work in the Palestine- Georgian liturgical calendar). Modestos' letter is datable relatively early in the period of Persian occupation of Palestine: this is implied by the opening, with its reference to the arrival of a group of Armenian pilgrims (apparently the first to reach Jerusalem since the city's sack) and the consolation which they gave; hence there is no reason to doubt the date indicated by the positioning of the letter and Komitas' reply in Sebeos' text, between the fall of Jerusalem in 614 and the discovery of the relics of St Hripsime at Valarshapat in 616/617 (**121**).

The start of reconstruction in Jerusalem may probably be associated

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with the imposition of direct Persian rule over the whole of Palestine. This can tentatively be dated to the first half of 616 (on the hypothesis that it brought about the restoration of order in the vicinity of Jerusalem, which allowed Modestos to authorize the St Sabas monks to reoccupy their lavra two years and two months after the fall of the city). Modestos' letter is carefully phrased. The best possible gloss is put on Persian actions. The blame for setting fire to the holy places is transferred (rightly or wrongly) to the Jews and the impression is given that reconstruction of the named key sites was largely complete at the time of writing. This is highly unlikely, if the letter was written, as it appears to have been, within a year of the start of the work. It is also contradicted by Modestos' final plea for help in rebuilding the sites of the Passion, which implies that much remained to be done. There is also a studious vagueness about the measures taken against the Jews: Sebeos seems to have been misled into supposing and suggesting, in his introductory note, that all Jews were expelled from Jerusalem, whereas two sentences in the letter imply rather that it was Jews wishing to move into Jerusalem who were being banned from doing so and who then tried to bribe their way in.

The Persian authorities were, it seems, trying to strike a balance between Christians and Jews in Palestine. They had no choice but to strive their utmost to do so, since otherwise they ran the risk of alienating one of two important interest groups in Mesopotamia, either the Christians or Babylonian Jewry. Modestos' letter, which receives some corroboration from other, inferior sources, shows that their policy was to maintain the *status quo* in Jerusalem. There were two strands to their policy: in the first place, Jews with established residence were allowed to stay in Jerusalem but others were banned from migrating and settling in the city (the demolition was also ordered of a small synagogue which had been built on the esplanade of the Temple Mount); second, in an effort to regain the esteem of Christians in Palestine and elsewhere, a programme of rebuilding damaged Christian shrines was instituted and the news of it was disseminated through inscriptions.

Sources: Antiochus Monachus; Garitte, *Calendrier* 110-11.

Literature: Mango, 'Temple Mount' 4-6; Flusin, *St Anastase II*, 97-108, 171-80; Dagron/Deroche, 'Juifs et Chrétiens' 26-8.

36: ch.36, **118-121**, *Komitias' letter to Modestos*. There is no reason to doubt the authenticity of this letter, which picks up and elaborates the

theme of consolation running through Modestos' letter and touches on the two main items of news reported by him, the rebuilding programme (mentioned near the beginning) and the restrictions put on Jewish immigration into Jerusalem (alluded to at the end). There is nothing original in Komitas' general line that disaster is an admonition from God and therefore presupposes an underlying affection for mankind which will show itself in due course as forgiveness. It was indeed the principal theme of the sermon delivered by the patriarch Zacharias to the deportees from Jerusalem (Strategius XIII 21-76).

An important historical inference may be drawn from the reference to Mount Sinai: by the time the Armenian pilgrims made their journey (perhaps at Easter 617), the Persian authorities had succeeded in establishing good order in the desert beyond Palestine. This must have entailed instituting stable relations of clientage with Beduin tribes along the desert frontage of the sown lands. It is unclear whether the antecedent Roman system was reactivated or a new Persian scheme was put in its place.

The joy expressed in the introductory paragraph seems incommensurate with the news just received from Jerusalem. Indeed the status of the paragraph is rather puzzling: it is not a historical notice composed by Sebeos, like that introducing Modestos' letter, but looks like an extract from some other contemporary text. If this were so, it might be prudent to attend to the chapter heading (which is present in the manuscript) and to attribute the short extract to a quite separate letter addressed by Komitas to Heraclius when he was in Jerusalem - i.e. on the occasion, in March 630, when he restored the True Cross to the city. This would explain its exultant tone. Sebeos would, on this hypothesis, be guilty of a serious error, in associating two quite unrelated documents.

37: ch.38, **122-123**, *Persian advance to Chalcedon (615)*, *Roman peace proposals* (cf. T.A. 89-91, including an additional passage [quoted in footnotes 492 and 493 to **122-123**] in which Heraclius offers land, walled cities and treasures to the Persians, and some additional information [probably incorrect, see n.33 above] about subsequent events). This is an important and revealing notice. It deals in the main with an expedition led by Shahen which reached Chalcedon (it is unclear whether or not the city was occupied) and with the successful efforts of Heraclius to re-open diplomatic communications with Khosrov. The episode is securely dated to 615 by *Chron.Pasch*, which gives a brief summary of

nts and then appends the text of a letter subsequently sent by the Senate to open formal negotiations. A notice in the *Short History* of Nikephoros is embellished with direct speech (from Shahen) in the revised and stylistically upgraded version of the chapters. The episode also features in the *Life* of St Anastasius, since he took

part in the expedition serving in the cavalry. Little attention should be paid to **Theophanes'** two notices, which report the expedition, with different **outcomes**, under two years. On three key points of substance, Sebeos' **version** tallies with that of the other trustworthy sources: a Persian army **reached** Chalcedon; gifts were presented to the Persians; and Heraclius **negotiated** with the Persian general from a ship offshore.

Sebeos has, however, topped and tailed this notice with material relating to a later episode, the siege of Constantinople in 626, when the Persians and Avars made concerted attacks. For it was in 626 that Shahrvaraz (named as the commander by Sebeos) led a Persian army to the Bosphorus, with the intention of capturing Constantinople (as stated by Sebeos in the opening paragraph). That was also the occasion when the Persians were known to be eager to send a force across the straits - to link up with their Avar allies on the European shore. The contemporary documentary report reproduced in *Chron.Pasch*. leaves no doubt about the extent of Roman concern on this score, but then breaks off for three days, leaving the reader in the dark about what actually happened. This *lacuna* is partially filled by Sebeos' notice that an attempt was made by the Persians but that it failed and heavy losses were incurred.

Sebeos amplifies the bald statements of other sources about Heraclius' gift-giving, distinguishing between the presents given to Shahen and senior officers ('the princes') and largesse to the Persian troops, which took the form of a donative and seven days' provisions (presumably fresher and more alluring than their usual rations). The speech which Sebeos put into Heraclius' mouth provides important information about his negotiating stance, about the concessions which he was ready to make so as to open communications with Khosrov. Its value may be gauged by comparing it to the negotiating stance later adopted by the Senate when it wrote a carefully phrased letter of apology and introduction to accompany the Roman embassy, once Khosrov agreed to receive <sup>o</sup>ne. The full text of the letter is reproduced in *Chron. Pasch*.

According to Sebeos, Heraclius was ready to make extraordinary Political concessions. These are clearly indicated in a few key sentences.

On the one hand, he insisted on the right to existence of the Roman empire ('my empire'), which God had established, but, on the other, he stated unequivocally that Khosrov could install a candidate of his choice on the imperial throne. In effect, Heraclius was offering to stand down and to allow the Roman empire to become a Persian client-state. The very fact that it was the Senate, not Heraclius, which subsequently negotiated with Khosrov, confirms that Heraclius had not made his continuing tenure of office a precondition. Naturally he received backing from the Senate, which, in the key section of its letter, begged Khosrov 'to consider Heraclius, our most pious emperor, as a true son, one who is eager to perform the service of your serenity in all things'. Both concessions are made in this sentence: Khosrov is allocated the right of choosing the emperor (the Senate merely recommends Heraclius) and that emperor will be a client-ruler, a 'son' rather than a 'brother' of the Sasanian king, who will do his bidding.

The Senate also noted, in an earlier passage, that Heraclius had avenged Maurice and had rescued the empire from Phocas. What was an overt argument in favour of Heraclius' candidature, in the letter, reappears in the speech in Sebeos as an argument against prolongation of the war: Khosrov's expressed aim of seeking vengeance for the blood of Maurice has been achieved by Heraclius' father. This tell-tale detail, correctly representing the older Heraclius as the constitutional leader of the rebels (see n.31 above), argues strongly for the authenticity of the material conveyed in the speech. It is a point which is also noted in the Senate's letter (Phocas was ousted by Heraclius together with his late father). Finally the pleading tone of the speech (Heraclius requests mercy from Khosrov) corresponds to that running through the letter.

What then are we to make of this notice? Its core consists of material of high quality, deriving presumably from a well-informed Roman source, but a serious editorial error has occurred - the conflation of two distinct Persian thrusts into the Roman metropolitan area. This conflation or combination of episodes appears to be a rare instance of interventionist editing on Sebeos' part, which has gone horribly wrong. One can only suppose that he could not conceive of the Persians launching two major offensives on separate occasions against the metropolitan region. He could also have been misled by his source, *if* (but this takes us into the realm of pure conjecture) chronology were disregarded for dramatic effect and the two expeditions were juxtaposed as the two moments of gravest crisis for the Romans.

Sources: (i) (615) *Chron.Pasch.* 706-9; Nikephoros, chs6-7; Flusin, *St Anastase I*, 48-9; Theophanes 301; (ii) (626) *Chron.Pasch.* 716-26; gp *Bellum Avaricum*; Theodore Syncellus; Nikephoros, ch.13; Theophanes 316; Dionysius 135.

Literature: (i) *Chron.Pasch.*, nn. 442-4; Flusin, *St Anastase II*, 83-93; (ii) *Chron.Pasch.*, nn. 457-80; Howard-Johnston, 'Siege'.

**38:** ch.38,**123-124**, *Persian ultimatum, preparations for Heraclius' first counter-offensive* (cf. T'.A. 91-2). Distinct but related material has been combined in this section of text. A notice (**124**) about the installation of Heraclius' son Heraclius Constantine as co-emperor, at a time when he was a baby (securely dated to 22 January 613 by *Chron.Pasch.* 703-4), perhaps presented in a cast-back in Sebeos' source, introduces a fleeting and incomplete reference to the constitutional arrangements made for the period of Heraclius' absence from Constantinople. Formal power was vested in Heraclius Constantine, a ten-year-old boy in 622 (this must be the meaning of Sebeos' vague phrase about confirmation of his imperial status), but executive authority was delegated to two regents.

Heraclius' departures from Constantinople in 622 and 624 have also been confused. It was in 622 that he celebrated Easter in the city (it fell on 4 April) and left the next day, to supervise preliminary training manoeuvres in Bithynia and then to conduct operations against the Persians in Asia Minor (G.P., *Expeditio Persica*). That was the year when he appointed a regency council of two (the Patriarch Sergius and Bonus, *Magister Militum Praesentalis* [PLRE III, s.v. Bonus 5]) to run affairs in the name of Heraclius Constantine during his absence (Theophanes 302-303; cf. M.D., tr. Dowsett 78). There were eunuchs (but no wife) in his entourage: they joined in the rescue of a ship which had run aground during the sea-crossing to Pylae, on the south side of the Gulf of Nicomedia (G.P., *Expeditio Persica* 1205-8). After spending 623 preoccupied with western diplomacy, Heraclius next left the city by sea on 25 March 624, well before Easter (15 April) which he celebrated in Nicomedia with his family. He is very likely to have passed through Chalcedon since it lay on the most direct route, across the Bosphorus and then overland, to Nicomedia. This time he was accompanied by a <sup>w</sup>ife (Martina, whom he had married in autumn-winter 623-624, according to Nikephoros, ch.11) and his destination was indeed the east (*Chron.Pasch.* 713-14). Having combined elements from two different <sup>e</sup>pisodes, Sebeos seems to have solved the resulting chronological



problem by plumping arbitrarily and mistakenly for the 34th regnal year of Khosrov (622-623).

The main body of this section of text is concerned with preparations for Heraclius' first counter-offensive. It leads directly into Sebeos' account of operations in 624, and it deals with a connected series of events revolving around a Persian ultimatum - the ultimatum arrives, is made known to court and patriarch in Constantinople, is placed on the altar in St Sophia, and finally is used to stoke up anti-Persian feeling in the army. Shorn of the extraneous elements which Sebeos has included, the notice supplies two unique items of information about the preparations for war in 624: first that the army was mobilized in Cappadocia, at Caesarea; second that much play was made of a highly offensive Persian diplomatic note, received apparently not long before Heraclius left the capital. While there is no reason to reject either item, one may legitimately ask whether the diplomatic note was an authentic Persian document, since it was so eagerly publicized by Heraclius and its phrasing was well calculated to heighten anti-Persian sentiment. It is more plausible to view it as a successful piece of Roman disinformation, designed to bring about the effect it achieved: insults thrown at Heraclius (senseless, insignificant, leader of brigands) were gratuitous and likely to be counter-productive; anti-Christian invective came ill from a ruler who now governed most of the east Christian world; and Old Testament citations, from Isaiah and the Psalms, would seem to betray a Christian hand at work in the drafting.

Literature: Oikonomides, 'A Chronological Note'; Howard-Johnston, 'Heraclius' Persian Campaigns'.

39: ch.38, **124-125**, *operations in 624 and 625* (cf. T.A. 92-3). Sebeos' account, highly abridged though it be, provides considerably more topographical detail than any other extant source. There was yet more detail about the operations of 624 in Sebeos' original text, to judge by T'ovma Artsruni's version: this makes it clear that Gandzak was sacked, mentions three other places or areas which were attacked (Ormi, Hamadan and May [Media]), and adds that Heraclius, after overthrowing the great fire altar called Vshnasp, 'filled the lake opposite the pyraeum with corpses'. On key points, geographical and military, corroboration can be obtained from document-based material presented by Theophanes, from George of Pisidia's summary of Heraclius' achievements in the *Heraclias* and from Movses Daskhurants'i. There are, however, serious gaps in the

coverage of operations in 625, which make it hard to relate what is reported by Sebeos to the fuller version in Theophanes.

The main features of the 624 campaign have been caught: Heraclius did indeed take a northern route through Armenia, crossing the Euphrates, attacking and capturing Dvin (G.P., *Heraclius* II 160-6); the invasion and devastation of Atrpatakan and Media is likewise corroborated by M.D., tr. Dowsett 79 and Theophanes 307-8, the latter noting that he camped outside Gandzak before sacking a fire-temple at Thebarmais (called Dararstasis by G.P., *Heraclius* II 167-230); Sebeos correctly names the fire which was extinguished there - it was Adur Gushnasp, venerated in the fortified fire-temple complex at modern Takht-i Sulaiman, set in a bowl of mountains in a remote valley and holding within its *enceinte* a mysterious green-blue lake, deep, warm, mineral-rich. Confirmation is to hand for other key points in Sebeos' account: the recall of Shahrvaraz from Roman territory (Theophanes 306; M.D., tr. Dowsett 79); the appointment of Shahen to command a scratch defensive force (Theophanes 306); the flight of Khosrov (Theophanes 307; M.D., tr. Dowsett 79); Heraclius' withdrawal north to Albania (Theophanes 308 and M.D., tr. Dowsett 79-81 who add that he spent the winter there).

Heraclius' generalship showed to best advantage in the campaign of 625, in the course of which he succeeded in defeating three pursuing Persian armies in detail. Sebeos makes no mention of the first of these armies into the field, that commanded by Shahraplakan who was sent to keep watch on the Roman army in winter and who shadowed it in the opening operations of spring (Theophanes 308-9; M.D., tr. Dowsett 81). But he alone reports Khosrov's strategic dispositions for 625, which were apparently predicated on the assumption that Heraclius would be returning home: Shahrvaraz's army was sent north-east from Nisibis (where it had probably spent the winter) across Armenia (a movement also noted by Theophanes 309) to take up a position commanding a northern route of withdrawal from Albania; Shahen's was deployed far to the south, ready to strike across the Bitlis pass should Heraclius opt for a southern line of retreat through Armenia.

In the event, Heraclius opted to attack and, after a delay occasioned by the reluctance of his men, set off south from Albania. There was now <sup>a</sup> danger that the army of Shahraplakan behind him might unite with that of Shahrvaraz which was close at hand. The victory which Sebeos <sup>re</sup>ports was probably that won by Heraclius over Shahraplakan's

pursuing force which he harried day and night until its morale broke. After this, he resumed his march south, defeated first Shahrvaraz (who had now been joined by Shahrplakan) and then Shahan in major engagements, reversed the direction of his march, halted (probably in Albania) to cover the withdrawal of his Laz and Abasgian allies, marched south-west past Tslukk', crossed the Araxes not far from Nakhchawan (as reported by Sebeos), and finally turned west, making for Lake Van (Theophanes 309-11; M.D., tr. Dowsett 81).

Sebeos' coverage is very selective. He omits most of the year's action, leaping from the opening battle to the long march from Albania to the region of Lake Van at the end of the campaigning season. Persian troop numbers given in this and the following section of text (discussed in the next note) are more credible than those given for Heraclius' army or the detachment sent off on an operation in winter 625-626.

Literature: M. Boyce, 'Adur Gushnasp', *E.Ir.* 1,475-6; Schippmann, *Feuerheiligtimer* 309-57; Herrmann, *Iranian Revival* 113-18; Manandian, 'Marshruty' 134-46; Hewsens, *ASX* 60 (map x), 60A (map xi), 61 (map xii), 62 (map xiv), 66A (map xix), 67 (map xx), 67A (map xxi), 69 (map xxiv), 157-9 (Tigranakert), 193 (Tslukk'), 253-8 (P'aytakaran), 262 (Gardman); Howard-Johnston, 'Heraclius' Persian Campaigns'.

40: ch.38, **125-126**, *surprise attack on Shahrvaraz's headquarters in winter, 625-626*. This minor operation was of little military consequence but probably had a marked effect on the balance of prestige between Heraclius and Shahrvaraz and on the mood of their respective armies. Much is made of it by Theophanes as well as by Sebeos. There is a common storyline to the two accounts, although each has details missing from the other. Both begin by noting that the main body of the Persian army was dispersed for the winter, and then turn to the planning of a surprise night attack (the initiative lies with Heraclius from the first according to Theophanes, who may well be guilty of clumsy abridgement here). Both note that Heraclius selected the best men *and horses* for the operation. Sebeos gives more precise information about Shahrvaraz's dispositions (headquarters at Archesh, dispersed cantonment in Aliovit, vanguard at Ali). Theophanes, by contrast, only mentions the site of the first engagement (with the Persian vanguard), which he calls Salbanon. In both versions, the operation involves two actions: first the annihilation of the Persian vanguard, except for one man who manages to escape and

warn Shahrvaraz; then the attack on Shahrvaraz's headquarters, which results in a heavy death-toll (somewhat exaggerated by Sebeos), mainly because the Romans set fire to the buildings where the Persians were holding out. Both sources report that Shahrvaraz barely managed to escape, Sebeos commenting on the sorry state of the horse which he rode, Theophanes on his own sorry condition, undressed and unshod. Each includes a graphic scene missing from the other's account: in Sebeos' case it is that of the arrival of the lone survivor from the first engagement and Shahrvaraz's initial reaction of incredulity and anger; Theophanes gives a fuller account of Persian resistance at Archesh (from the rooftops) and the effects of the fire in the second engagement. Both end by noting the booty captured by Heraclius, Theophanes detailing some of the choicer items of Shahrvaraz's equipment which were netted.

The simplest and most plausible explanation for the marked similarities between Sebeos' and Theophanes' versions of this episode is that they drew directly or indirectly on a common source. Shared material would also help explain some of the parallels between their accounts of the later stages of Heraclius' second counter-offensive (see n.42 below). If there were such a common source, a conjecture may be offered as to its identity - namely, a history of Heraclius' Persian campaigns, commissioned from George of Pisidia and based in the main on Heraclius' war despatches. There would be nothing very remarkable in Heraclius' sponsoring a written memorial of his achievements and ensuring it a relatively wide dissemination.

Source: Theophanes 311-12.

Literature: Hewsen, *ASX* 62A (map xv), 165-7; Howard-Johnston, 'Heraclius' Persian Campaigns'; Howard-Johnston, 'Official History'.

41: ch.38,126, *Shahrvaraz's pursuit of Heraclius*, 626. Sebeos now leaps to the operations of spring 626. He is right to present Shahrvaraz as driving Heraclius west. Theophanes gives a detailed account of Heraclius' retreat, which took him through northern Mesopotamia (Past Amida) and Cilicia, across the Taurus and finally, veering north-<sup>ea</sup>st, to Sebastea. There is a glaring omission from this passage: nothing<sup>is</sup> said about the co-ordinated thrusts by Persians and Avars which culminated in a ten-day siege of Constantinople (29 July-7 August); it is<sup>no</sup>t made clear that Constantinople was Shahrvaraz's ultimate objective<sup>nor</sup> that a second Persian army, commanded by Shahen, invaded Asia

Minor from Armenia (it was intercepted and defeated by the expeditionary force, either under Heraclius' or, according to Theophanes, his brother Theodore's command). Mistakenly believing that the 615 and 626 Persian advances to the Bosphorus formed part of a single offensive (n.37 above), Sebeos has removed the second episode from its proper place and has combined it with the first. He plugs the resulting gap in 626 with a note, evidently displaced from the following autumn/winter (626/627), about measures taken to rest and re-equip a weary army (surely Heraclius') in a region safe from enemy attack.

A somewhat similar phrase (also probably dislodged from its proper place) is to be found much earlier in T'ovma Artsruni's version of Sebeos - at the end of the brief report about a naval attack on Constantinople (which took place, in reality, in 626), which is appended, as in the extant manuscript of Sebeos, to the account of Shahen's 615 campaign to Chalcedon. He notes that the Persians, after losing 4,000 men (specified as cavalrymen) in the naval engagement, 'had no more enthusiasm for that undertaking, but spread out and occupied the whole land'.

Sources: Theophanes 312-15; M.D., tr. Dowett 81; T.A. 91.

42: chs38-39,126-127, *Heraclius' invasion of Mesopotamia, 627-628* (cf. T.A. 93-4, who gives more detail about Khosrov's mobilization, naming two of the guards regiments sent as reinforcements before the battle of Nineveh, adds a figure [4,000] for the Persian survivors of the battle, and enumerates the booty gathered by Heraclius from Khosrov's palaces [passage quoted below]). Sebeos' account of this dramatic last episode of the war tallies in its key elements with that of Theophanes, which undoubtedly consists in the main of material excerpted and condensed from Heraclius' war despatches and reaching him in the form of an official history. Most other sources deal cursorily with it (M.D., *Georgian Chronicles*, *Chron.Seert*, *Khuz.Chron.*, Tabari, Dionysius). However, unlike Theophanes and Movses, Sebeos passes over the earlier operations of Heraclius and his Turkish allies which culminated in the siege of Tp'khis and picks up the story as Heraclius enters Armenia, marching south. Thenceforth the two accounts complement each other. Sebeos may not mention the Turkish force which accompanied the Romans as far as the Zagros mountains and guaranteed their safety, but he supplies valuable geographical detail about the line of Heraclius' march and notes that the Persian general Roch Vehan

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(Razates in Theophanes) only set off in pursuit when Heraclius entered Atrpatakan. The route which Sebeos specifies provides the explanation for this dilatoriness on Roch Vehan's part: it looked at first as if Heraclius was doing the sensible thing and returning to Roman territory, making a long detour to the south through Shirak to Gogovit where he could be expected to turn west, to reach the natural thoroughfare leading towards Asia Minor which is formed by the valley of the Aratsani. Instead Heraclius turned *south-east* when he reached Gogovit, crossed Her and Zarewand at the head of Lake Urmia, entered Atrpatakan and then struck south aiming for Mesopotamia. It seems to have taken as long for the news of Heraclius' change of direction to reach Roch Vehan as it took Heraclius and his men to cover the distance from Gogovit to the border of Atrpatakan. Roch Vehan then strove to make up the lost ground by forced marches; but he only succeeded in drawing close (reaching Gandzak) when Heraclius halted at Chamaetha on 9 October and rested his troops for a week.

The principal features of subsequent operations are presented in both texts: the march south to Mesopotamia which Heraclius had reached by 1 December when, Theophanes reports, he crossed the Great Zab; the decisive battle of Nineveh (dated to 12 December by Theophanes); the victorious advance of the Romans on Ctesiphon; the devastation of Khosrov's palaces (T.A.'s version adding that Heraclius 'seized the many stored treasures, an incalculable booty of gold, silver, and clothing, very many animals, and a multitude of prisoners as numberless as the sand of the sea', which amounts to a neat summary of the lengthy tale of booty-gathering told by Theophanes); and the final bold winter recrossing of the Zagros, back to Atrpatakan (its start is dated to 24 February in Heraclius' dispatch of 8 April which is reproduced in *Cliron. Pasch.*). There is considerably more detail about most operations <sup>m</sup> Mesopotamia in Theophanes' despatch-based account, but Sebeos provides some invaluable supplementary information.

With the help of details given by Theophanes about the crossing of the Great Zab, it is possible to elucidate an obscure, apparently corrupt, Passage in Sebeos according to which *they* (i.e. the Persians) turned west <sup>on<sup>re</sup></sup>aching Asorestan while *he* (i.e. Heraclius) went to Nineveh. Both Were actions of Heraclius, according to Theophanes. After reaching the 'gris valley below the Great Zab, he turned north-west (Sebeos' west), <sup>Cr</sup>ossed the river on 1 December and camped near Nineveh. His intention <sup>se</sup>ems to have been to hold the line of the river, but the Persians found and

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used another crossing. Nothing is reported about the movements of the main body of either army from this point until their engagement near Nineveh ten days or so later, but it may be conjectured that the Persians established a secure bridgehead on the west bank of the river, thereby forcing Heraclius to concentrate his troops closer to the river. Theophanes confirms that the Persians were awaiting reinforcements before engaging the Romans, puts the number of reinforcements at 3,000, but denies that they arrived before the battle.

Sebeos' account of the battle itself is superior to Theophanes', which simply focuses on episodes (doubtless improved in the writing) involving Heraclius and his horse. The sudden transformation of retreat into attack under the cover of mist is typical of Heraclius' generalship. The scale of Persian losses may be exaggerated by Sebeos, but he gives more detail about the treatment of Persians taken prisoner (numbering 4,000 according to T'ovma Artsruni) and places the battle and subsequent operations in their proper strategic context. The Persian army in the west, under the command of Shahrvaraz, did indeed remain a formidable fighting force and it was reasonable to be apprehensive about its intervening. Sebeos is surely right to suggest that anxiety on this score was the prime reason for Heraclius' decision to undertake a second, hazardous, mid-winter crossing of the Zagros.

Finally the two sources complement each other about Khosrov's movements, Theophanes reporting his hurried flight from his favourite palace of Dastakert to Ctesiphon, Sebeos his subsequent arrival at Vehkawat. This was a district in the central flood-plain south of Ctesiphon. Shielded by the formidable defences of the capital to the north and the Tigris to the east (once the pontoon-bridge had been dismantled), Khosrov was safely out of the Roman's army reach. This bridge, which appears to have crossed the Tigris into Vehkawat, should be distinguished from that linking the two halves of the capital, Veh- Artashir on the right bank and Ctesiphon on the left.

Sources: Theophanes 317-23, 324-5; *Chron.Pasch.* 729-30, 731-2; M.D., tr. Dowsett 85-6, 88-9; *Georgian Chronicles* 223-8; Nikephoros, chs12,14; *Chron.Seert* 541-2; *Khuz.Chron.* 28; Tabari, tr. Noldeke 293- 6; Dionysius 137-8; Flusin, *St Anastase* 1,86-91; Strategius xxiv.

Literature: Manandian, 'Marshruty' 146-53; Hewsen, *ASX* 64A (map xvii), 66 (map xviii), 69 (map xxiv), 176-9; Morony, *Iraq* 147-51; Flusin, *St Anastase II*, 265-81; Howard-Johnston, 'Heraclius' Persian Campaigns'.

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43: ch.39, **127**, *the deposition and death of Khosrov, February 628* (cf. T'.A. 94-5, adding some direct speech and three pieces of information [the royal household falls into the conspirators' hands as well as the royal stable, it is a thick myrtle bush under which Khosrov hides, and he is imprisoned and abused by some nobles before being executed]). Heraclius' victorious sweep through Mesopotamia exacerbated a growing internal crisis. War-weariness had set in. Resentment had been engendered by Khosrov's autocratic manner and the heavy taxation needed to fund the war. Kawat, Khosrov's eldest son, made contact with a leading disaffected magnate, the former supreme commander of Sasanian forces. The latter gathered support for a coup at court and in the higher echelons of the army, sent a deputation to inform Heraclius of the conspirators' plans, and put them into action on the night of 23- 24 February 628.

The coup is reported, in considerable detail, in extant sources of proven worth (*Chron.Pasch.*, Theophanes, M.D. and *Khuz.Chron.*, to which Tabari may be added since he is in general agreement with them). These corroborate all the key points in Sebeos' succinct account: (i) Khosrov had returned to the capital some time before the coup; (ii) Kawat had been left with the royal household in Vehkawat (at the palace of Aqr Babil, according to Tabari); (iii) Khosrov showed a callous disregard for the welfare of his troops; (iv) the conspirators' first open move was to seize by night the bridge linking the two halves of the capital (but the western half, Veh-Artashir, has been corrupted into Vehkawat); (v) it was by the bridge, in the night, that Kawat was formally proclaimed king; (vi) deserted by those around him, Khosrov hid in the garden beside the palace but was discovered and arrested; (vii) Khosrov and all his sons except Kawat were executed.

Surprisingly, Sebeos refrains from giving a date for what was a pivotal event in his history, but he supplies an interesting piece of information which is not recorded otherwise - the spiring of Khosrov's horses out of the royal stable. These may have been the mounts (mentioned by M.D.) used by the prisoners whom the conspirators released at the start of the coup.

Sources: Theophanes 325-7; *Chron.Pasch.* 727-9; M.D., tr. Dowsett <sup>89-92</sup>; *Khuz.Chron.* 29-30; Tabari, tr. Noldeke 296, 351-83. Cf. Strategius xxiv; *Chron.Seert* 551; Nikephoros ch.15.

Literature: Christensen, *L'Iran* 492-6; Howard-Johnston, Heraclius' Persian Campaigns'.



44: chs39^10,127-129, *reign of Kawat, February-October 628* (cf. T'.A. 95-6). Sebeos gives the fullest account of the new government's peace proposals. Key points can be corroborated from documents reproduced at the end of *Chron.Pasch.*, Heraclius' exultant despatch of 8 April 628, a copy, mutilated towards the end, of the letter he had received from Kawat, and the fragmentary start of Heraclius' reply. The Persian ambassador, Phaiak Chosdae, a secretary with the rank of Rashnan, only reached Heraclius' camp at Gandzak on 3 April, having been held up by heavy snowfalls in the Zagros mountains. No preconditions were put forward on the Persian side. In his letter, Kawat simply stated his determination to make peace with the Romans and other neighbouring peoples, announced his intention of releasing all prisoners and made it very plain, by repeated references to Heraclius as his brother and to the brotherhood of the Romans, that he intended to restore traditional relations of equality between the two powers. His offer to abandon Roman territory suggests that he envisaged a restoration of the traditional balance of power on the ground, presumably the arrangements which had prevailed from 387 (with one major modification, the allocation of Lazica to the Roman sphere, agreed under the terms of the treaty of 561) rather than those imposed by Maurice in 591 which had shifted the balance of power in Transcaucasia decisively in the Romans' favour.

While welcoming these proposals and returning prisoners and booty in his hands (a reciprocal gesture of goodwill not reported in other sources), Heraclius gave a clear sign that negotiations would be tough by calling Kawat his child in his formal reply (Nikephoros - cf. also Oikonomides, 'Correspondence', who conjectures that Heraclius used the term *huiotes*, sonship, in his letter, of which only a narrow, vertical strip survives). The return embassy was headed by Eustathius, as Sebeos reports (*PLRE* III, s.v. Eustathius 12). It was a measure of Kawat's trust (or weakness) that he allowed Eustathius to be present when he had a letter drafted instructing Shahrvaraz to evacuate Roman territory. This incident and Shahrvaraz's subsequent refusal to obey are only reported by Sebeos.

It is probable that Heraclius did return home, as noted by Sebeos, i.e. to Constantinople, since he announced, in his despatch of 8 April, that he was setting off through Armenia.

Kawat's reign is variously given as lasting six or eight (*Chron.Seert*), seven (*Chron.724*, M.D.), and eight months (*Kliuz.Chron.*, Tabari). 4

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the date of his son Artashir's assassination, 27 April 630, given later by Tabari, is accepted along with the 18 months generally agreed for Artashir's reign, the correct figure would be eight months. Kawat's plan for economic revival involved tax reductions (M.D. and *Chron.Seert*).

Sources: *Chron.Pasch.* 727-37; Nikephoros ch.15; M.D., tr. Dowsett 92; *Chron.Seert* 551-5; *Khuz.Chron.* 30-1; *Chron.724* 18; Tabari, tr. Noldeke 383-5; Dionysius 138.

Literature: Blockley, 'Division'; Stein, *Bas-Empire* 516-21; Oikonomides, 'Correspondence'; Flusin, *St Anastase II*, 282-5; Howard-Johnston, 'Heraclius' Persian Campaigns'; Sell wood, Whitting and Williams 159-63 and ill. 68-70.

45: ch.40,129-130, *Heraclius'agreement with Shahrvaraz, Shahrvaraz's putsch, 629-630* (cf. T.'A. 96-7, who rearranges Sebeos' material, placing Shahrvaraz's assassination [correctly] after the return of the True Cross to Jerusalem). There is no hint here of any earlier political understanding, such as that alleged to have been reached by Heraclius and Shahrvaraz in 626 by *Chron.Seert*, Tabari and Dionysius. The allegation should probably be rejected as a piece of deliberate disinformation, circulated to further Roman interests as the war reached a climax in 627-628. By 629, however, both Heraclius and Shahrvaraz had compelling reasons for reaching an accommodation: Heraclius had no choice but to deal directly with the commander-in-chief of the Persian occupation forces if he were to recover the lost provinces of the Near East, while Shahrvaraz needed to strengthen his position now that he was at odds with the government in Ctesiphon. The initiative therefore may have come equally well from either Heraclius as Sebeos claims or Shahrvaraz (the version of Nikephoros). Negotiations were evidently far advanced when the two parties met at Arabissus in the Anti-Taurus in July 629, since the Persian evacuation had begun in June.

The terms of the agreement may be pieced together from the principal sources. Here, as on several previous occasions, material once present in Sebeos, which appears to have dropped out of the extant manuscript, may be retrieved from T'ovma Artsruni's version (T.'A. 96). Heraclius in effect invested Shahrvaraz with the Sasanian crown and made his political support manifest by sending a small military force with him to Ctesiphon. Shahrvaraz, for his part, undertook to evacuate Roman terri-<sup>10r</sup>Y up to an agreed frontier and to return the fragments of the True

Cross, a symbol of victory which Heraclius would use to project himself as the sole effective defender of Christians of all confessions throughout the Near East (nn.47<sup>8</sup> below). War reparations are also mentioned by Nikephoros, who adds that the emperor and his candidate for the Sasanian throne bound themselves together by a marriage alliance. *Chron.*724 states unequivocally that 'the Euphrates was recognized as the frontier between them', implying thereby that Shahrvaraz had insisted on retaining some of the territory beyond the traditional post-387 frontier which he and his troops had conquered, i.e. the Roman provinces of Mesopotamia and Osroene which lay east of the Euphrates (with their principal cities, Amida and Edessa). Corroboration is obtainable from T.A., who enables us to restore Sebeos' sentence about the territorial agreement as follows: 'Khoream agreed and gave over to Heraclius, emperor of the Greeks, Jerusalem, Caesarea in Palestine, all the regions of Antioch, and all the cities of those provinces, and Tarsus in Cilicia, and the greater part of Armenia, and everything that Heraclius had ever desired'. There is no reference here to any province or city beyond the Euphrates south of the Taurus.

Events then went according to plan. The evacuation of Roman territory as defined in the agreement was completed. Shahrvaraz marched on Ctesiphon, which, after some initial resistance, admitted him, thereby allowing him to take power. He sought out and returned the fragments of the True Cross, which was in Heraclius' hands in time for him to stage its ceremonial reinstallation in Jerusalem on 21 March. A first tranche of reparations may have been handed over at the same time (Sebeos' 'no few presents'). As Flusin argues persuasively, Shahrvaraz must have exercised power initially as regent for the young Artashir, since his execution of the boy and his own ascent onto the throne took place on 27 April 630, after Artashir had reigned one year and six months (Tabari). It was therefore during the regency that he kept his part of his bargain with Heraclius.

Shahrvaraz's assassination 40 days after assuming power is also reported by *Khuz.Chron.*, *Chron.Seert* and Tabari, the last giving a precise date, 9 June 630.

Sources: *Chron.*724 13, 17-18; Nikephoros ch.17;*Khuz.Chron.* 31-2; *Chron.Seert* 540-1, 556; Tabari, tr. Noldeke 300-303, 386-90; Dionysius 135-7, 141-2; Theophanes 323-4, 329; Strategius xxiv.

Literature: Mango, 'Deux Etudes' 105-12; Flusin, *St Anastase II*, 285-97, 306-9; Howard-Johnston, 'Heraclius' Persian Campaigns'.

46- ch.40, 130, *Persian succession crisis, 632-634* (cf. T.A. 97-8). The more precise figure of 16 months for Boran's reign given by *Chron.Seert* and Tabari should probably be preferred to Sebeos' two years. The period of confusion following her death therefore began around October 632. Sebeos mistakenly supposes that her four successors, whom he lists correctly, ruled in sequence. This

cannot have been so. since the last-named of them, Yazkert III, dated his accession from the year of Boran's death (*Chron.Seert*, corroborated by the 16 June 632 start of the era of Yazkert used by Zoroastrians after the Arab conquest) and the reigns of both Azarmidukht (*Chron.Seert*) and Ormizd (coins from either side of a Persian new year) lasted a year or so. It follows that Sebeos is listing contemporary, rival claimants to the throne, who, we may infer, were backed by the rival regional armies which he mentions at the end of the notice. Supplementary information on alignments is provided mainly by *Chron.Seert*: the army of Mesopotamia, formerly commanded by Shahrvaraz, installed Azarmidukht, like Boran a daughter of Khosrov, in the capital; she was replaced after a year (so well into the latter half of 633) by Ormizd, a grandson of Khosrov's, whose control of Mesopotamia (as well as north-west Iran) is confirmed by the mints issuing coins in his name. Of the two non-metropolitan candidates, Yazkert was the better placed to move on the capital from his power-base in Persia proper than Mihr-Khosrov, child candidate of the army of Khurasan. The army of Atrpatakan seems to have stood aside, in spite of the execution of its former commander, Khorokh Ormizd, who had been Boran's chief minister.

There is more than a passing resemblance between Sebeos' and *Chron.Seert*'s accounts of the prolonged crisis following the death of Boran. The two lists of (rival) rulers tally, save that *Chron.Seert* leaves out Ormizd and Sebeos truncates Mihr-Khosrov's name. Both texts identify regional armies as the principal players in the struggle for power. It may be conjectured, hesitantly, that a common source underlies the two accounts, a source which focused on the military and political history of the Sasanian empire as it approached its end. The existence of such a source may also be postulated to account for the presence of similar material, likewise concerned with the military underpinning of Political power and major actions in which Sasanian forces were involved, at several places later in Sebeos' text (137,139,141,163-164). It will be designated, for convenience, the Persian Source.

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Sources: *Chron.Seert* 557, 579-80; *Khuz.Chron.* 32-3; Tabari, tr. Noldeke 390-9; Dionysius 143; Theophanes 329; Nikephoros ch.16.

Literature: Tabari, tr. Noldeke 433-4; Christensen, *L'Tran* 498-500; de Blois, 'Calendar' 39; Sellwood, Whitting and Williams 166-74 and ill. 71-73.

47: ch.41,131, *reinstallation of the True Cross in Jerusalem, 21 March 630* (cf. T'.A. 96-7 who supplies some details missing from the extant text). Sebeos gives the clearest and most evocative account of the ceremony and its context. He shows a special concern with the fate of Jerusalem's ecclesiastical plate, supplying unique items of information on this and some other matters. Heraclius went, 'with the host of his army' (T'.A.) as well as his retinue, to Hierapolis, on the Roman side of the Euphrates frontier agreed with Shahrvaraz. The True Cross was brought to him there by the delegation sent to fetch it, 'in its original wrapping' (T'.A.) - a reference to the stage-managed unlocking of the sealed container which authenticated the relic after its arrival in Jerusalem (Strategius, Nikephoros). Heraclius was both celebrating the victory of Christendom over Zoroastrian Persia and reimpresing Roman authority on the provinces evacuated by Shahrvaraz a few months earlier (hence the accompanying army). The ceremony itself took place on 21 March 630, on the exact anniversary of the creation of the sun and the moon at the beginning of time (and on the same day of the week, a Wednesday). Cosmic significance was thus added to an occasion already rich in political and religious meaning, and was itself amplified by eschatological expectations triggered by Christendom's spectacular victory. No wonder strong emotions were aroused during the ceremony, no wonder participants and onlookers were overwhelmed and silenced.

Sources: G.P., *In Restitutionem S. Crucis*; Strategius xxiv; Sophronius, *Anacreontica* xviii; Flusin, *St Anastase* I, 98-9; Theophanes 328; Nikephoros ch.18; Dionysius 142.

Literature: Mango, 'Deux Etudes', 112-14,117; *Chron.Pasch.*, introduction xi-xiii; Mango, 'Temple Mount', 6, 15-16; Flusin, *St Anastase* II, 293-306, 309-19; Beaucamp, *Temps et Histoire*'.

48: ch.41, 131, *Heraclius in the Near East, 630*. The ceremony at Jerusalem heightened awareness that God had intervened in earthly affairs in spectacular fashion to save the Christian empire, and, with it, the suspicion that the final phase of the war might well have been the

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first scene in the final act of history. These circumstances may go some way to explaining what looks like a grandiose scheme on Heraclius' part to extend and unify Christendom: (i) with his candidate Shahrvaraz in control of the Sasanian empire and with Shahrvaraz's son and heir a Christian convert, he could dream of an acceleration in the spread of Christianity in Iran; (ii) he inaugurated an empire-wide campaign of coercing Jews into the church on his way to Jerusalem; (iii) the most dramatic development came afterwards, when he received an embassy from the new Persian regime of Boran at Beroea (Aleppo) in northern Syria he had discussions with the Nestorian Catholicos, Ishoyahb, who was leading the delegation, and agreed a form of words designed to reunite the two churches; (iv) finally (probably after the failure of the Nestorian project, in the face of vociferous opposition in Mesopotamia ) Heraclius strove to reconcile the Monophysites of Syria and Armenia with the established Chalcedonian church - the mixture of cajolery and inducement used (together with reasoned argument and doctrinal compromise) is best illustrated by Sebeos' version of how the Catholicos Eyr was persuaded to communicate with Heraclius by the Roman general in Armenia (on which see 131-132 with n.49 below).

The wider political situation was changed by the assassination of Shahrvaraz on 9 June 630. Heraclius' agreement with him now lapsed and the frontier question was reopened. With Heraclius and his army menacingly close to the Euphrates, the new regime of Boran sent the embassy headed by Ishoyahb with the prime, urgent task of negotiating a durable settlement. The Persian position was gravely weakened, since the army which had served Shahrvaraz for so long was alienated, and major concessions had to be offered. The new frontier was to be that imposed on Khosrov by Maurice.

This scenario has been reconstructed from odd pieces of information, some of the most valuable being provided by Sebeos. One point in the text requires clarification: it is likely that Heraclius only crossed the Euphrates into northern Mesopotamia ('Syrian Mesopotamia'), where he is known to have visited Constantina and Edessa (134 with n.52 below), *after* negotiating the new treaty at Beroea.

Sources: (i) Nikephoros ch.17; (ii) Theophanes 328 and sources cited <sup>by</sup> Dagrón/Deroche (below); (iii) *Chron.Seert* 557-61, *Khuz. Chron.* 32-<sup>3</sup>> Flusin, *St Anastase I*, 98-101; (iv) Dionysius 138<sup>^</sup>12, Theophanes 329-30.

Literature: (i) Mango, 'Deux Etudes' 105-106, 112, 115-17; (ii)

by Nikephoros, were an early, if not the first, instance of what was to be a characteristic form of Byzantine punishment.

Source: Nikephoros ch.24.

Literature: *PLRE* III, s.vv. David Saharuni 6, Ioannes Atalarichus 260, Mezezius, Theodorus Rshtuni 167, Varaztiroch; Kaegi, *Military Unrest* 152-3.

51: ch.41, **133-134**, *Dawit' Saharuni, first curopalate of Armenia, 637/638-640*. Dramatic changes occurred in Armenia as the outer world came under increasing military pressure from the Arabs. The greater measure of independence for which different magnates had striven in the past was achieved relatively effortlessly by Dawit' Saharuni, once he had escaped from the soldiers escorting him to Constantinople in 636 or 637. He united local Armenian forces under his command, used them to attack and defeat the Roman commander, Mzhezg Gnuni, and took command of the regular Roman forces stationed in Armenia. Politically weakened and facing crises elsewhere, Heraclius had no choice but to recognize the *fait accompli* and bow to the expressed wishes of the Armenian nobility. So he made Dawit' 'prince over all the territories [of Armenia]', a phrase which implies that Dawit' had united the two sectors of Armenia under his command. The grant of the grand court title *curopalate* (n.31 above) should be viewed both as an acknowledgement of this unprecedented extension of authority over Persarmenia, and as an inducement offered to retain the loyalty of Dawit' and, through him, of Armenia. By this stage (probably 637, possibly 638), the Persians could do little to oppose this, all available military resources being needed in Mesopotamia (n.54 below).

Dawit' Saharuni reciprocated, demonstrating his attachment to the Roman empire in the church which he sponsored at Mren to commemorate the restoration by Heraclius of the True Cross to Jerusalem. However, the prestige, which, as Sebeos notes, underpinned his authority, leaked away in three years and he was repudiated by the troops who had brought him to power. It should cause little surprise that he was unable to hold the fractious local interests of **Armenia** together for long, as the pressure from without intensified and the prestige of his Roman backer plummeted.

While the material about Dawit' Saharuni was probably taken from the postulated Dvin Source (because of its connection with the preceding Athalarikos episode), the brief notice which follows about disunity

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**among** the nobles was probably tacked on from elsewhere. Since pgodoros Rshtuni is praised for his defensive measures and later **features** as the hero of two military episodes which are recounted in considerable detail (**138-139**, **145-147**), it may be conjectured that **Sebeos** had a second source for this period, which may be dubbed the **Rshtuni** Source.

**Literature:** *PLRE* III, s.v. David Saharuni 6; Thierry, 'Heraclius'.

### III. SECTION III (134 177)

#### **Introduction**

Sebeos' account of the rise of Islam is terse, presented in a series of compressed notices. There are more of them and they become somewhat fuller as he approaches the time of writing. A great deal of precise information is given, with a necessary minimum of dating indications. The overriding theme, the ruin of the old world order brought about by the excessive ambition of Khosrov, is followed through to its conclusion. The narrative encompasses the three main thrusts of the Arabs, into Roman and Sasanian territory and into the intermediary zone of Transcaucasia of which Armenia was a part. An overarching strategy is discerned which gives shape to the story. So does a subsidiary theme which is introduced: a partial explanation for the scale of the Arabs' initial success is sought in Jewish guidance and leadership.

So dramatic a transformation of the Near East should have prompted other contemporaries to record what they had witnessed and heard, in the way Sebeos did. The Syriac-speaking population of the Fertile Crescent, which was affected most immediately by the new power of the Arabs and could observe them at closest quarters, had both a greater incentive and a better opportunity than Sebeos to inquire into what had happened and to search for explanations. The need to understand, to scabble for scraps of hope from the disastrous story of defeat was even greater for the Romans. Shorn of their empire, facing a continuing menace by land and sea from a clearly superior Arab power, massive adjustments had to be made to inherited structures, ideological as well as institutional. The rump of the old empire, conventionally called Byzantium, had to acquire a new rationale in the light of what had happened. It also needed to learn everything which could be learnt from the scrutiny of recent events so as to devise an effective strategy or strategies of survival. Finally the Arabs themselves, for quite different reasons - pride in their extraordinary achievements and concern with the awesome working out of God's will on earth - should have been "Spelled, with even greater urgency, to write history.



The latter-day historian cannot but be disappointed at the meagre haul of useful information which can be gathered from non-Armenian Christian sources. However devouring the interest of the citizens of Sasanian Mesopotamia and of the Roman Orient in the warfare which transformed their world and the subsequent actions of their Arab masters, all too little of their observations and reflections has survived.

Neither of the principal extant east Syrian chronicles lives up to expectation. The *Khuzistan Chronicle* may cover the same time span as Sebeos but its focus is much narrower and it tails off markedly towards the end. It does, however, present a coherent and plausible account of the conquest of Khuzistan, focused on the fortunes of Susa and Shustar, the cities which held out longest. The *Seert Chronicle*, preoccupied with the careers of great Nestorian churchmen and abbots, contains only two detailed notices about the coming of the Arabs.

Rather more of the west Syrian historical tradition has been preserved. A full and connected history of successive Arab victories and of the gradual dismemberment of the East Roman empire was written by Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, together with an overview of the destruction of the Sasanian empire, but it has to be handled with considerable caution. The demonstrable failings of his account of the Roman-Persian war of 603-630, stemming ultimately from weakness of the critical faculty and carelessness in the arrangement of the material in his principal source (the lost *Chronicle* of Theophilus of Edessa), was compounded, in the case of the Arab conquests, by a laudable decision to draw heavily on Arab traditions both for matter and structure. The resulting amalgam of Arab and Syrian material is both hard to make sense of and hard to square with the evidence provided by other, probably more reliable, sources. Much more trust can be put in the *Chronicle to 724* which has, as has been seen, an impressive record of accuracy in its coverage of the preceding 30 years. The last two notices in that portion of the text which was written around 640 pick out the two stages in the Arab conquest of the Roman Near East which had the greatest impact on civilians: a first devastating invasion of Palestine after a battle fought near Gaza in February 634; and, two years later, the first raid to reach Mardin at a time when the Arabs were taking over Syria and were launching an attack in force on the Sasanian empire.

History is, for the most part, either fragmented or garbled or both in extant Syrian chronicles. Between them they yield only four notices of real value, dealing with specific episodes in a precise way: the conquest

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of Khuzistan (*Khuz.Chron.*), the battle of Qadisiyya (*Chron.Seert*), and two key stages in the Arab advance into the Roman Near East (*Chron. 724*). The track record of Roman sources is even worse. There is a simple explanation in the case of Theophanes, since he drew his material on the Arab conquests almost entirely from the main west Syrian tradition, probably from a Greek translation of the Syriac chronicle of Theophilus of Edessa which was later to be used by Dionysius of Tel-Mahre. His contemporary, Nikephoros, included some material about the fate of Egypt in a selective and impressionistic account of the period. But soon after the accession of Heraclius' grandson Constans II in September 641, his account breaks off entirely, only resuming in 668 with a notice about Constans' unpleasant end in a bath-house in Sicily. Since Theophanes likewise found no usable indigenous source for the secular history of Constans' reign, there is virtually complete silence from the East Roman empire about the most perilous phase in its existence and about the various measures taken to improve its defences and restructure its inherited institutions, which transformed it into a highly militarized and resilient highland power (by convention called Byzantium). The fundamental difficulty confronting Byzantinists is that the formation of the entity with which they are concerned simply cannot be observed. As for the Arab advance over Roman territory, Byzantine sources yield only *one* useful piece of information, about Egypt in the uneasy interlude between the conquest of Palestine and Syria and the attack by 'Amr b. al-As.

There is no dearth of material in extant Arab sources. Quite the contrary. A new type of historical writing can be observed taking shape in the first century and a half of the Islamic era. It differed radically from the kind of elevated, classicizing history which had evolved in the Graeco-Roman world. Instead of placing a premium on elegance, on stylistic homogeneity, the overriding concern was to capture traditions in circulation and to establish their pedigree and authority. Citations of sources and attention to the particularities of individual versions of events were the hallmarks of Islamic historians. Bulky narratives were assembled out of the voluminous materials gathered by individual scholars. A great deal of hard historiographical labour may be required, but <sup>in</sup> the end it should be possible to reconstruct a detailed history of the conquests from several Arab points of view, unless appearances are very deceptive.

But it is now the contention of a majority of the Islamicists studying

the earliest phase of Islamic history that much of the material preserved in extant texts consists of historical traditions deformed out of all recognition in the course of oral transmission across several generations. They conclude that it is virtually impossible to isolate whatever authentic reports may lurk in a mass of unreliable material in the texts which they analyse. This scepticism is now deep ingrained, and can be justified by several powerful arguments. There is too much that is anecdotal in Arab accounts of the conquests (*futuh*), too much that is obviously serving the sectional interests of a later age (chiefly of family, tribe and confession), too much which appears to be retrojecting phenomena of a later present (e.g. a centralized state, legal norms) into the past or seeking to buttress a case being argued later with largely fabricated historical examples.

There is no evidence, it is argued, that traditions about the conquests were brought together at an early stage in what might be termed a historical clearing-house, a vantage point into which information flowed from many different quarters, whether secular (a military high command, for example, or the Umayyad court at Damascus) or religious (at major Muslim centres, above all Medina). A very different process of evolution is suggested after careful scrutiny of the content of *futuh* accounts. They are characterized as history composed from the bottom up, deriving ultimately from the remembered experiences of a multitude of humble individual combatants, formed by a process of aggregation and lacking the wider view of higher authority. The construction of a coherent general historical narrative, within an articulated chronological framework, is attributed to a second, later, scholarly stage in the development of Islamic historical writing. Since the scholars were working at a distance, temporal and spatial, from events, much guesswork was involved in their reconstructions.

Literary considerations deliver a final blow to those who would nonetheless cling to the view that there is an authentic core with some structure, not entirely denuded of a higher view, in the extant Islamic accounts of the conquests. The basic component of the traditions which have been preserved has been identified as an independent narrative unit (*khbar*, plural *akhbar*), which is more often than not anecdotal in character (the more obviously anecdotal *akhbar* are attributed to beduin tribal traditions and classified as *qisas*). Two key processes are then isolated which transformed these *akhbar* into more or less connected narratives - elaboration as an originally short *khbar* was

gradually endowed with much fanciful detail in the course of storytelling across a generation or more, and compilation at the later stage when scholars set to work to collect and edit *akhbar* in circulation. Very little of authentic eyewitness reports was left, it is concluded, by this stage. Hence the latter-day historian should not expect more than a highly distorted view of both the general and the particular in Arab accounts of the conquests.

These conclusions may strike the non-Islamicist as too extreme in their pessimism. They cannot, however, be ignored. The historian determined to try to grasp something of what happened to change the late antique world out of all recognition in the seventh century cannot start from the Islamic sources any more than from the Syrian and Byzantine. A start has to be made elsewhere, in the fourth of the Near East's historical traditions, that of Armenia. This brings us back to Sebeos. No other extant source which touches on the Arab conquests can match his account in its range, coherence, precision and apparent sobriety. A second Armenian chronicle can be used to supplement his material. The *History of the Caucasian Albanians*, put together probably in the tenth century by Movses Daskhurants'i, incorporates material on the Arab expansion which is of the same apparently high standard but with a different geographical focus, taken from a lost laudatory biography of Juansher, military commander in Albania from 637/638 to his death in 668. There is much less to be learned from a third Armenian text, the chronicle of tewond written at the end of the eighth century and covering the period 632-789. tewond seems to have drawn his material on the first half of the seventh century independently from some of Sebeos' sources, but his version is slighter and often garbled (nn.52, 53, 55,62,70 below).

Sebeos' account, filled out with Movses' material, offers the best hope of reaching back to seventh-century historical reality. By repeated comparisons of Armenian with Islamic versions of individual events and of the connections between them, it may also be possible to determine whether modern Islamicists have taken scepticism too far.

Literature: Haldon, *Seventh Century*, Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It* 182-9, 400-9, 416-19, 428-34, 443-6, 631-71; Robinson, *Conquest of Khuzistan*; Donner, *Conquests* 143-6; Hoyland, 'Arabic, Syriac and Greek Historiography'; Theophanes, introduction lxxxii- lxxxiv; Nikephoros, introduction 14-15; Humphreys, *Islamic History* 69-91; Conrad, 'Conquest of Arwad'; Leder, '*Khobar*'; Noth/Conrad 1~87; Mahe, 'tewond'.

Note. So voluminous is the Arabic historical material and so in accessible for the most part to non-Arabists, that only selective reference will be made to a very small number of notable works which are available in convenient translations. These are cited for illustration and to provide readers with some entry-points into primary material emanating from Muslim milieux.

52: ch.42, 134-135, *the origins of Islam* (cf. T.A. 98-99, 101 with additional information, including two important items [Heraclius' brother Theodore laid siege to Edessa; the Jews' desert retreat was the ruined city of Madiam which they restored]). Close attention has rightly been paid to Sebeos' brief account of Muhammad. For Sebeos was well placed to gather information (given the Catholicosate's contacts with other churches of the Near East), and he was writing his chronicle at a time when memories of the sudden irruption of the Arabs into the Near East were fresh. Much of what he says about the origins of the new religion conforms to Muslim tradition and probably approximates to the truth.

He knows Muhammad's name, knows that he was a merchant by profession, and hints that his life was suddenly changed by a divinely inspired revelation. He presents a fair summary of key elements of Muhammad's preaching: advocacy of belief in a single deity; familiarity with the Old Testament, from which much illustrative material is quarried by the Qur'an; and presentation of Abraham as common ancestor of Arabs and Jews and as proponent of pure monotheist worship. He may exaggerate the scale of Muhammad's political success ('they all came together in unity of religion') - a venial error, given the military impact of the *umma* on the surrounding world immediately after his death - but he knows that there was a political dimension to the religious community formed by Muhammad and that a large number of previously independent Arabs were drawn into it. He picks out some of the rules of behaviour imposed on the *umma* (all four prohibitions feature in the Qur'an), but passes over positive injunctions, such as the obligation to give alms.

Finally, Sebeos realizes that there was an internal, religious dynamic directing the attention of Muhammad and his followers to the southern provinces of the Roman Near East. As descendants of Abraham, they like Old Testament Israel, could lay a divinely-sanctioned claim to Holy Land. He is also probably right to present Muhammad as author

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izing action to assert that claim. However, this coherent account of how a new monotheist religion superseded a multiplicity of local pagan cults and brought political unity and formidable military power to the Arabs is placed in a context which makes neither logical nor chronological sense. Jews of the Roman Near East become prime movers: first they gather in Edessa during the temporary hiatus between the withdrawal of Shahrvaraz's forces (after his summit meeting with Heraclius in July 629 [n.45 above]) and the arrival of Heraclius with a substantial Roman army in summer 630 (n.48 above); then they withdraw into the interior of Arabia and propose an alliance to which the Arabs cannot respond because of their religious divisions; it is only now (at the earliest autumn 630) that Muhammad comes on stage and begins the process of creating that union on the religious and political planes which is necessary if the Arabs are to be effective allies; finally, when this goal has been achieved, the Arabs march on the Holy Land with the Jews as their guides. An unnecessary second but overarching explanation is thus introduced for the beginning of the Arab conquests, which has the effect of squeezing the whole of Muhammad's religious mission, from his first revelation (conventionally dated around 610) to the opening attack on southern Palestine (in 634 two years after his death), into a mere three years or so.

It was natural for some Christian contemporaries to associate the new with the old non-Christian monotheist religion and to explain the extraordinary success of the Arabs by the action of some familiar agency, the Jews. It was not Sebeos' view, however. He placed these extraordinary events in a far grander context, that of cosmic history: for him the Arabs were the fourth of the successive kingdoms of which the Prophet Daniel spoke; their coming, the great storm from the south, opened the last act in the history of mankind; it was soon to be followed by a final great war between the forces of good and evil (the start of which he may have thought he was witnessing as he wrote in the mid 650s and as internal tensions grew steadily more acute in the new Arab empire) and then by the Day of Judgement with which time would end. It follows that the spur-<sup>10</sup>Us in<sup>11</sup>terpretation and authentic material about the origins of Islam came conjoined into Sebeos' hands. The joinery is indeed neat, only one Phrase betraying a momentary unease, at the point when the connection<sup>12</sup> first made: Muhammad's preaching is placed loosely *around the time*<sup>01</sup> the flight of the Jews rather than afterwards.

't is plain then that Sebeos is making use of a pre-existing written<sup>so</sup>urce in this first section of the final part of his history. A place of

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composition in Palestine, probably in Jerusalem, may be inferred from the focus of interest. It will therefore be designated the Palestine Source. Sebeos marks the transition to it from the Rshtuni Source with a brief editorial introduction. This also serves to alert the reader to some chronological backtracking (first to 630, then to Arab victories which antedated Dawit' Saharuni's rule in Armenia [637/638-640]). The same story - that Jews were behind the invasion of Palestine (justified likewise by reference to a common descent from Abraham) - appears in Lewond's notice which misdates the attack after Heraclius' death in 641. Lewond seems to have had access, direct or indirect, to the Palestine Source, or something like it.

Sources: Lewond ch.I; Ibn Ishaq.

Literature: Crone/Cook, *Hagarism* 6-8; Millar, 'Hagar'; Hoyland, 'Sebeos'; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw it* 128-31, 532-41; Dagon/Deroche, 'Juifs et Chretiens' 38-43; Rodinson, *Mohammed*; F. Buhl and A.T. Welch, 'Muhammad 1. The Prophet's life and career', *E.I.* VII, 360-376.

53: ch.42, **135-137**, *Arab conquests I (the Roman Near East, 634-636, 639-642)* (cf. T.A. 101-102 with some additional matter [some of which recurs in Lewond's version] but misdated [as in Lewond] to the beginning of the reign of Constans II [late 641]). Still drawing on the postulated Palestine Source, Sebeos gives a brief account of two Arab victories and the subsequent submission of a large part of Palestine. Then, in a passage which takes a broader view and looks like an editorial interjection, he enumerates the successful campaigns of the following few years. He thus places the conquest of Palestine in the wider context of Arab expansion and picks out the two engagements which were reported in the Palestine Source as the decisive battles which opened the way for the conquest of the Roman Near East. It is his considered view which he is presenting. It therefore deserves close scrutiny.

Sebeos supplies no dates, merely putting events in a sequence. Two chronological fixed points may, however, be obtained from a near- contemporary west Syrian source, embedded in *Chron.* 724. This reports a battle between Romans and Arabs 12 miles east of Gaza on Friday 4 February 634. The Romans fled, their commander, a patrician, was captured and killed. So too were four thousand peasants, Christian- Jewish and Samaritan. The Arabs ravaged the whole region (by which a wide swathe of southern Palestine is probably meant). This engagement<sup>enl</sup>

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provides a *terminus post quem* for the first of those recorded by Sebeos which was fought much further north, east of the Dead Sea and just to the south of the Balqa' (Erabovt', *er-rabbath*, 'the great city', of Moab [modern Rabba] lay on an important route running north from Kerak towards Dhiban). A *terminus ante quem* for both Sebeos' battles is provided by the next and last notice in the seventh-century text embedded in *Chron.724*: under the year October 635-September 636 it records that 'the Arabs invaded the whole of Syria and went down to Persia and conquered it'; a raid on the Tur Abdin in Roman Mesopotamia is also reported.

Sebeos' two battles should therefore be placed in the intervening period, 634-635. On both occasions the Romans had concentrated relatively large armies. This may be inferred from the presence of the emperor's brother, Theodore (mistakenly called Theodosius), as commander at the battle of Erabovt', while a very high figure, doubtless inflated, is put on the second army, commanded by the unnamed eunuch. Nonetheless, on both occasions the Arabs won relatively easy victories, aided by surprise at Erabovt' and by 'fear of the Lord' after a Roman attempt to surprise the Arabs in their camp near the Jordan went wrong. The details supplied by Sebeos about the surprise attack suggest: (i) that it was a commando operation relying on stealth (hence it is carried out by infantry), (ii) that the Roman and Arab camps were not **far** apart, (iii) that the Arabs had good intelligence beforehand and (iv) that there were places of concealment nearby (such as ravines) in which **ambushing** forces could be stationed. But it was the Arabs' use of their **camp** both as bait and as killing ground (tents and herds of tethered **camels** which formed its perimeter trapping and disordering the Roman **force**) which opened the way for a victorious counter-attack on the main **Roman** army. There was no effective resistance, the Romans' will having been broken, perhaps at the sight of an unprecedentedly large **and well-**organized force of Arabs, perhaps on realizing the intensity of 'heir commitment, or perhaps out of a half-conscious acknowledgement **hat** God might indeed be on their side. Lewond's account of the second <sup>a</sup> He has several features in common with Sebeos': a large Roman army is involved; it leaves its camp on foot to attack the Arabs; the thet <sup>S ^3Ve</sup> numerous camels and horses; exhausted from the weight of cu/<sup>r</sup> Weapons anc<sup>v</sup> heat and the sand, the Romans are surprised and pieces. It looks like a free rendering by Lewond of material taken <sup>fo</sup>m the **Palestine** Source.



Dagron/Deroche, 'Juifs et Chretiens' 28-38; (iii) and (iv) Flusin, *St Anastase II*, 312-13, 319-27.

49: ch.41,131-132, *ecclesiastical union imposed on Armenia, 631*. Sebeos' account is selective and slanted. He makes no mention of the council convened by Heraclius at Theodosiopolis and attended by Armenian churchmen and nobles, at which an agreement was hammered out over many sessions. By focusing attention on the Catholicos Ezr and his personal negotiations with the emperor, he distracts attention from the fact that all but a small minority of Armenian churchmen accepted the agreement. This massaging of the facts, which includes the false statement that Ezr met Heraclius in Asorestan (south of the Taurus) rather than in the old Roman sector of Armenia (whither he had been asked to go by Mzhezh Gnuni, probably to prepare for the council subsequently held there), may well be the work of Sebeos who was an opponent of union.

The date of the council (and preceding negotiations) may be inferred from the context in which it is placed. It post-dated the formal transfer of a large swathe of central Armenia from Persian to Roman control which was agreed, no earlier than summer 630, in negotiations with Boran. The Romans seem to have moved gingerly, first asserting their authority nominally through Mzhezh Gnuni, military commander of the old Roman sector, then striking a deal with the Catholicosate, and only subsequently setting about establishing a military presence. Sebeos' remark that *shtemarank'* (storehouses, magazines) were to be established in the ceded territory when detachments were stationed there may be an early reference to a type of installation, with a military function, the *apotheke* (storehouse, magazine), which comes into prominence in Asia Minor in the second half of the century. In the context of this cautious, phased take-over, the council of Theodosiopolis should probably be dated to 631, which corresponds to the fourth year after the death of Khosrov (beginning 28 February 631), one of two dates given by the *Narratio de Rebus Armeniae* (the other is the 23rd regnal year of Heraclius, beginning on 5 October 632).

Literature: *PLRE III*, s.v. Mezezius; Garitte, *Narratio* 278-311; Haldon, *Seventh Century* 232-44.

50: ch.41,132-133, *career of Varaztirots' I (632/633-636/637)*. Like his father Smbat, Varaztirots' features in a number of notices dispersed

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through Sebeos' text. It is tempting to suppose that they may have been extracted from a second Bagratuni biography. However, in this case, the notices betray a wider interest in expatriate Armenians, in the politics of Constantinople in which they were involved, and in the repercussions of those politics on Armenia. Notices with these broad but Armenian- slanted interests feature later in the text (133, 137-138, 140-141, 142- 145, 162-163). It may be conjectured that they emanate from the same source of information, and that source may be identified as a record of notable events kept at the Catholicosate in Dvin (possibly by Sebeos himself, since the events in question occurred within 25 years of the time of writing). For convenience, this postulated source will be referred to as the Dvin Source.

The ousting of Varaztirots' from the governorship of Persarmenia, to which he had been appointed by Kawat (128-129), is not reported in any other source. If, as seems likely, Mzhezg Gnuni only made his *demarche* to Rostom, commander of the formidable army of Atrpatakan, after securing the Romans' position in their enlarged sector of Armenia, the winter in which Rostom sent his brother to arrest Varaztirots' at Dvin and Varaztirots' escaped into the Roman sector, may well be that of 632-633. Varaztirots' probably spent several years in comfortable detention in Constantinople before the next incident in which he was involved, the plot to replace Heraclius with his illegitimate son, Athalarikos. Sebeos' account of this tallies in the main with that of Nikephoros, but is considerably fuller, giving more details about the conspirators' plans and naming more of them. The most likely date is 636 or 637, which allows some four years for the causally connected sequence of events now reported by Sebeos: the seizure of power in Armenia by Dawit' Saharuni, who had been implicated in the plot, the passage of three years before he was discredited and ousted, and the ensuing power- vacuum which is unlikely to have lasted much more than a year and which ended with the appointment of T'eodoros Rshtuni to the Armenian command in winter 640-641 (139).

This dating supplies a context which may in turn suggest an explanation for what was evidently a ramified plot against an emperor whose Prestige had stood so high but a few years earlier. It may be postulated that confidence in Heraclius plummeted after the rout of the Roman held army in Palestine and Syria (probably in 635, see n.53 below) and <sup>a</sup>t the conspirators' object was to install a more energetic and bellicose <sup>re</sup>gime. The mutilations ordered by Heraclius, which are corroborated

Wherever this rout occurred, whether close to the Golan heights or further south along the Jordan's passage to the Dead Sea, it was immediately exploited by the Arabs. They advanced across the river, established a base at Jericho, and, aided again by the dread which they or their divine backing engendered, brought about the rapid submission of 'all the inhabitants of the land', including the people of Jerusalem. There may be some exaggeration of the scale of the Roman collapse (some cities on the coast held out for a while), but Sebeos leaves us in no doubt that there was wholesale surrender within a very short time. It may therefore be fitted into the period of two years or so bracketed by the two notices in *Chron.724*.

An outline history of the Arab conquest of Palestine and Syria may thus be extracted from two near-contemporary Christian sources: a first victory won near Gaza on 4 February 634 (*Chron.724*) which opened Palestine to attack from the south; a second victory over a large Roman army east of the Dead Sea, probably later that year (Sebeos); then a third decisive victory somewhere in the Jordan valley which opened the way for the occupation of Palestine from the east in 635 (Sebeos) and for the invasion of Syria in 636 (*Chron.724*). There ensued, as reported by Sebeos, in the brief strategic overview which he appended to this notice (136-137), a first attack on the Sasanian empire in 636 (<*Chron.724*), a campaign across the Euphrates into Roman Mesopotamia (Sebeos and other sources - probably in summer 639, after a short truce which the Romans broke), and the conquest of Egypt (Sebeos and other sources - achieved between December 639 and September 642). This is all too skeletal a version of events, but there is no other reliable material in non-Muslim sources which can be safely used to flesh it out. The much fuller west Syrian tradition, which originated with Theophilus of Edessa in the middle of the eighth century and which was recycled by Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, must be discounted, since it makes extensive use of Islamic sources and the value of those sources may be questioned.

Sebeos' version of events does not tally with any of the reconstructions made by Arab scholars in the eighth and ninth centuries. These present different sets of events in different arrangements, but they are all, paradoxically, committed to finding *human* explanations of a conventional sort for Arab success. Hence battles grow in scale and multiply in number. City after city has to be besieged before it capitulates. In the process of expansion and elaboration, real persons (Heraclius' brother

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Theodore and the eunuch, described as Sacellarius) and real episodes (an engagement near Gaza, defeat of a Roman force at *Araba*, defeat of the inhabitants of *Ma 'ab*, a Roman surprise attack across the Jordan which is converted into crushing defeat) are pulled into a complicated melee of events, presented in different sequences. The rout which followed the failed raid on the Arabs' camp near the Jordan and left 2,000 Roman dead has become the battle of Yarmuk, a conventional battle with huge forces arrayed on both sides. Only the one element common to all the traditions, Khalid b. al-Walid's urgent march across the desert from Sasanian Mesopotamia to reinforce the Arabs confronting the Romans, may be taken as authentic, in spite of Sebeos' silence.

We therefore witness a historiographical failure on the grandest scale imaginable, the failure of Muslims to produce a decent historical record of their conquest of the Holy Land and Syria, the future metropolitan region of the Umayyad caliphate. Whether this failure exemplifies a general weakness in early Islamic historical traditions or may be accounted for, at least in part, by the bewildering speed of the conquest or by some other factor (e.g. an unusual degree of local influence on the formation of historical traditions in a region where Arab settlement was dispersed from the first) is an issue best left to Islamicists to resolve.

Sources: *Chron.* 724 18-19; Lewond ch.1; Dionysius 144-50, 154-65; Nikephoros chs 23, 26; *Khuz. Chron.* 45; John of Nikiu 178-201; Tabari XI-XIII; Baladhuri I 165-234, 269-83, 335-51.

Literature: A. Legendre, 'Ar, Ar-Moab', *Dictionnaire de la Bible* I, cols 814-18; Johns, 'Southern Transjordan' 9; *PLRE* III, s.v. Theodorus 163; Donner, *Conquests* 111-55; Butler, *Arab Conquest of Egypt* 194-367; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It* 574-90.

54: ch. 42, **137**, *Arab conquests II (Sasanian Mesopotamia, 636-640)*. By his reference to the three rival armies which dominated Sasanian politics in the turbulent period following the assassination of Shahrvaraz, Sebeos signals a new transition, in this case back to Persian history and, it may be conjectured, to the Persian Source, which probably supplied the material he used about the succession of rulers from Boran to Yazkert III (**130** with n. 46 above). His account of operations in Mesopotamia is clear, though condensed, but lacks all dating indications. Fortunately some are provided by Movses Daskhurants'i who had access to a high-grade source. Movses, in company with *Chron. Seert*, also provides a fair amount of additional information,

which helps to make sense of Sebeos' sometimes elliptical account, and confirms that Sebeos has reported the major operations in their correct sequence. *Khuz.Chron.*, by contrast, has little to say beyond stressing the scale of the fighting and noting the death of Rostom and the flight of Yazkert from Ctesiphon.

Sebeos picks out six episodes: (i) a siege of Ctesiphon which was defended by Yazkert; (ii) a Persian counter-thrust in massive force, carried out by the army of Media under the command of its general Rostom, which drove the Arabs across the Tigris and back 'to their own borders', beyond the Euphrates in the region of Hira; (iii) a crushing victory in open battle won by the Arabs in which Rostom and 'all' (i.e. most) of the senior Persian (and Armenian) commanders were killed; (iv) the withdrawal of the remnants of the Persian army to Atrpatakan, the base of the Median army, where the troops seem to have elected Khorokhazat as their general (to be identified with 'the prince of the Medes' who plays an important part in subsequent Transcaucasian and Persian affairs [143, 164 with nn.61, 67]); (v) an attempt by Khorokhazat to evacuate the government, treasury and population from Ctesiphon, which ended in disaster; (vi) the flight of Yazkert to the 'army of the south', surely that of Persia proper, previously mentioned by Sebeos in association with that of the east (130). There is one additional episode described in the later sources which he passes over - a second siege or blockade of Ctesiphon by the Arabs, reported to have lasted either six months (M.D.) or 18 (*Chron.Seert*) and to have taken place between the decisive battle and the failed evacuation attempt. Sebeos' remarks about Khorokhazat's haste therefore refer to the speed of his march to Ctesiphon rather than the shortness of the interlude before the Median army returned to the fray.

The two later sources supplement Sebeos' account of Persian mobilization and the counter-attack which drove the Arabs from Ctesiphon (episode [ii]). Movses, whose source traced the career of Juansher from the 630s to his death in 668, reports that contingents came from Albania (with Juansher newly appointed as its commander), Siwnik' and Armenia (which explains the presence of the Armenian commanders noted by Sebeos). *Chron.Seert* has Yazkert distribute largesse to the armies before the start of operations (the use of the plural may indicate that the other regional armies also contributed forces). A date for these preparations may be obtained from a later synchronization made by Movses (tr. Dowsett 115): he equates Juansher's 15th year in the

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Albanian military command with Yazkert's 20th and last regnal year (651/652). It follows that Juansher assumed his command in Yazkert's sixth regnal year (637/638) and that the Persian counter-thrust, which probably took place immediately after the mobilization, can be dated to autumn 637. The Persian plan seems to have been to trap the Arabs in the alluvial land, criss-crossed by canals and irrigation channels, between the two great rivers, but the Arabs managed to retreat beyond the Euphrates. Then, according to Moses, two battles were fought: in the first an Arab attack was driven off, but in the second, dated precisely to 6 January (in 638, as has been established above), the Arabs, who had evidently received reinforcements, prevailed and drove the Persians back across the river. *Chron.Seert*, which does not mention the first engagement, locates the decisive battle near Hira and Qadisiyya (which has mutated into Moses' Katshan).

Neither of the later sources reports the flight and regrouping of the army of Media, nor the election of Khorokhazat as its commander (episode [iv]). Moses follows the fortunes of Juansher who was wounded in the battle. He is nursed back to health in Ctesiphon, is honoured by Yazkert and wins the esteem of Khorokhazat (who thus makes a sudden, unexplained entrance) by helping to restore peace in Media. Moses then dates the second Arab siege of Ctesiphon and Khorokhazat's evacuation operation, Juansher's initial task being to provide cover on the far side of the Tigris (episode [v]), to Yazkert's eighth regnal year (June 639-June 640), a date which overlaps with A.H.19 (2 January-20 December 640) given by *Chron.Seert* (wrongly correlated with Yazkert's seventh year). Finally, *Chron.Seert* adds that Yazkert fled to 'the mountain', that is the Zagros range which shielded both Media and Persia from attack from Mesopotamia.

A coherent and militarily intelligible picture emerges when Sebeos' evidence is combined with that of the two later sources: the initial Arab invasion (dated by *Chron.* 724 to 636) resulted, by 637, in the occupation of Mesopotamia and a first siege of Ctesiphon; the Persians counterattacked in force in the second half of 637, drove the Arabs out of Mesopotamia, but then suffered a crushing defeat in the vicinity of Hira and Qadisiyya on 6 January 638; the Arabs subsequently renewed their attack, reoccupied Mesopotamia and besieged Ctesiphon either for six<sup>or</sup> for 18 months in the course of 638 and 639; then, in the first half of the army of Media under its new, elected general, Khorokhazat, <sup>m</sup>arched swiftly down from Atrpatakan, organized the evacuation of

Ctesiphon, but lost its nerve when, in the course of a fighting retreat, it was unexpectedly attacked by a large Arab force and abandoned the people and the state treasures which it was escorting to safety.

This reconstruction of events corresponds in essentials with that of the Islamic sources, which are in general agreement with each other on the course of operations in Mesopotamia. They report: (i) an initial Arab advance into the Mesopotamian alluvium up to al-Mada'in (the conjoined cities of Veh-Artashir and Ctesiphon); (ii) a serious Arab defeat at the Battle of the Bridge followed by an apparently disorderly retreat back to the fringe of the desert near Hira; (iii) some raiding activity while reinforcements were being gathered in Arabia, operations which, according to some accounts, involved one serious engagement, said to have ended in an Arab victory, at Buwayb; (iv) the advance of a large Persian army commanded by Rostom across the Euphrates and its crushing defeat in a major battle at Qadisiyya, a short distance southwest of Hira; (v) a second Arab push into the Mesopotamian alluvium which culminated in a long siege of al-Mada'in (said to have lasted from two to 28 months); (vi) the evacuation of Yazkert from the city, swiftly followed by its occupation and the capture of the Sasanian royal treasures (of which much is made by Sayf b. 'Umar, Tabari's source for these events).

Sources: *Chron.* 724 19; M.D., tr. Dowsett 109-12; *Chron.Seert* 580- 1, 627-8; *Khuz. Chron.* 33; Dionysius 151-4; Tabari XI-XIII; Baladhuri 1387-419, 11 51-9.

Literature: Donner, *Conquests* 173-220.

55: ch.42, **137-139**, *death of Heraclius (11 February 641), Arabattackon Dvin (October 640)*. The near-juxtaposition of two notices about Heraclius' death points to use of two sources: the first, fuller notice may be attributed to the postulated Dvin Source, since there is a reference **to** the *aspet* Varaztirots' in exile; the second to the postulated Rshtuni Source, since the initial reference to divisions among Armenian princes picks up a point made in the previous short notice about T'eodoros Rshtuni (**134**) and T'eodoros himself appears on the scene towards **the** end of the episode. The Rshtuni Source goes into considerable detail (including precise dates) about operations on this and on a later occasion (**145-147** with n.62).

The Arabs were probably in firm control of Roman Mesopotamia before they set off on their northern raid beyond the Armenian Taurus-

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they used the easiest of the passes, which debouches at modern Bitlis, and the safest and most direct route across the volcano-studded landscape of south-west Armenia to reach the administrative heartland in Ayrarat. Apart from the mystery of the Metsamawr bridge (destroyed but used), the only puzzling feature concerning the operations themselves is the terminology apparently used of Dvin: when it comes under attack, it is consistently called a *k'alak'* (walled city); but there are two earlier references, in the context of the last-minute warning of attack brought by three named princes, to an *awan* (unwalled town), the first of which explicitly names Dvin as the *awan* in question, and one reference to a *herd* (fortress) apparently at Dvin. Since there was an *awan* near Dvin, namely the town founded across the Azat river from Dvin as the residence of the Chalcedonian Catholicos when the Catholicosate split in 591, it may be suspected that something has gone awry with the text and that the whole district of Dvin was being warned, including the *awan* and an unnamed fortress nearby.

This episode is also reported with much emotional rhetoric by Lewond. He misplaces it in the second year of Constans' reign (642/643). The same basic phenomena are registered (rapid Arab march on Dvin, fall of the city, 35,000 prisoners taken) but Dvin falls because its troops are serving with Teodoros Rshtuni and neither Teodoros nor any other Armenian noble dares attack the Arabs. If a common source underlies the two accounts, it has been much transmuted by Lewond.

Sources: Nikephoros ch.27; Theophanes 341; Hewsens, *ASX* 65, 70; Lewond ch.3.

Literature: *PLRE* III, s.v. Theodorus Rshtuni 167, Varaztiroch; Grousset, *Histoire* 296-7; Manandean, 'Invasions' 163-77; M. Canard, 'Arminiya 2. Armenia under Arab domination', *E.I.* I, 635-636; Garitte, *Narratio* 246-67.

56: ch.42, **139**, *Arab conquests III (operations in Arabia and the Gulf, MI)*. This short notice demands careful analysis, (i) The caliph, who is designated *t'agawor* (a general word for king) and *ark'ay* (hitherto <sup>a</sup>**PP**lied only to the Sasanian king), is named (correctly) for the first time <sup>as</sup> Umar (634-644). He is presented as directing operations at a distance, <sup>3s</sup> in early Islamic historical traditions, (ii) No date is given, but the Positioning of the notice in Sebeos' text and the brief editorial recapitula-



248. tion of previous Arab conquests with which it begins (akin to the cast-forward at **136-137**) point to a date in 641.

(iii) Sebeos gives a cryptic account of the first of the two campaigns conjoined in this notice: it was clearly important since it involved 'royal (i.e. caliphal) armies'; and it was directed into 'the original borders of the territory of Ismael'. The conjunction *apa*, 'then', which prefaces the sentence, dates the campaign after the initial phase of expansion which has just been summarized. It follows that the territory which was attacked was not Palestine, since it had already been conquered, but a region which Sebeos or his source (here probably the Persian Source) regarded as the Arab homeland or part thereof. It appears then that the campaign was an assertion of power by the caliph *within Arabia*, at a stage long after the supposed unification of Arabia in the wars of conquest, misleadingly termed wars of apostasy (*ridda*) in early Islamic historical traditions. It may be conjectured that the targets were secluded by distance and geography from the new Islamic centres in the Hijaz, hence that they probably lay in the south, in the Yemen. The Muslims, it may be surmised, were only ready to confront the Persian authorities who had been governing the southern seaboard of Arabia since the 570s once they had broken Persian power in Mesopotamia. The later reference to prisoners-of-war taken from Arabia (the preposition *i*, 'from', should almost certainly be restored to the text, which makes no sense as it stands) to Khuzistan confirms that there had been military action at this late date in Arabia.

(iv) There is no difficulty in making sense of Sebeos' somewhat fuller report about the second campaign, a new offensive, authorized by the caliph, against the whole length of the Persian coast, from Persia proper to the borders of India. It should probably be viewed as the opening phase of a grand assault on the core territory of the Sasanian empire, intended to draw troops away from that sector of the northern Zagros which was going to be assaulted in 642. Sebeos does not diverge from early Islamic historical traditions on this matter, although they date the attack to 640 at the latest.

(v) It is tempting to infer, from the final note about the locality where eyewitness evidence was gathered, that the author of the <sup>postulated</sup> Persian Source was at work in Khuzistan. If so, he surely included a full account of the hard-fought campaign for Khuzistan (interrupted, according to *Khuz. Chron.*, by a two-year truce [6387-640?], after which the two chief centres of resistance, Susa and Shustar, were captured [the

latter after a two-year siege]) and Sebeos must have decided to excise it from his version.

Sources: Tabari X, XIII; *Khuz. Chron.* 41-4; Baladhuri II 105-28. Literature: Kennedy, *Prophet* 24-5; Donner, *Conquests* 82-90; Hinds, 'The First Arab Conquests'; Robinson, 'Conquest of Khuzistan'.

57- ch.43, **139-140**, *an incident in Jerusalem (641)*. The reference to 'the plots of rebellious Jews' connects this notice with that concerning the Arab conquest of Palestine with its stress on the guiding role of the Jews **1134 136** with n.53 above). It may therefore be attributed to the postulated Palestine Source.

The preamble confirms the dating of the construction of the first Aqsa mosque on the Temple esplanade soon after the Muslims entered the city. This early date is given by contemporary eyewitness testimony, which is to be found in a Georgian translation of an Arabic translation of one of a set of edifying tales written originally in Greek and collected together soon after 668 in the St Sabas lavra near Jerusalem. Sebeos also provides a context: the Muslims reacted swiftly to a pre-emptive move by Jews to rebuild the Temple of Solomon, by appropriating the site and constructing their own place of worship. Arculf, who visited Jerusalem around 670, is derogatory about its architecture but reports that it could accommodate 3,000 people.

The incident reported by Sebeos happened an unspecified amount of time later. The position of the notice would suggest a date in 641. The new Muslim or Muslim-backed authority has redressed the traditional balance between Christians and Jews in the holy city in favour of the latter. Jerusalem, it emerges, has a Jewish governor, and the Jews have been allowed to construct a synagogue very close to the site of the Temple, right at its base. Nonetheless even-handedness was vital if good order was to be maintained. Hence a potentially inflammatory incident, <sup>su</sup>ch as the desecration of the mosque by Jewish *agents provocateurs*, ^as subject to careful, impartial and public investigation. The postulated estine Source was well informed but discreet, refraining from naming Muslim magnate who identified the perpetrators of the sacrilege. Literature: Mango, 'Temple Mount' 1-3; Flusin, 'L'esplanade du 'emple'.

50. .

• **ch.44, 140-141**, *succession crisis in Constantinople, 641*. This short <sup>otic</sup>e (taken probably from the postulated Dvin Source) is misleading

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in certain respects: (i) Constantine III's reign lasted rather more than 'a few days', since he came to the throne on 11 February 641 and died 103 days later (i.e. on 24 May); (ii) the story that Martina had a hand in his death, which also appears in Theophanes. Dionysius and *Chron.Seert*, looks like a *canard* put into circulation by her opponents; neither Nikephoros nor John of Nikiu, the two principal sources for this period of political crisis in Constantinople, breathes a word of it; (iii) according to Nikephoros, Valentinus held no formal military appointment under Constantine III, let alone the supreme command in Asia Minor implied by Sebeos, but was a military officer in the entourage of the treasurer Philagrius, who was entrusted with a large sum in cash for distribution as largesse to secure the support of the army in Asia Minor for the dying Constantine's children.

However, after the sacking and exile of Philagrius which came soon after Constantine's death, Valentinus took over political leadership of the army, brought it to the Bosphorus and put pressure on the new regime of Martina and her young son Heraclius II, known as Heraclonas. He succeeded in extracting a number of concessions from them (first the coronation of Constantine III's son, Constans II, later more largesse for the soldiers and the command of the *Excubitores* for himself [of which a seal provides confirmation]) and, finally, after popular opposition to Heraclonas and Martina (which he helped to foster) burst out into open rebellion in Constantinople, he deposed them and had them mutilated and exiled. Sebeos is right about Martina's punishment (excision of the tongue) but wrong in saying that she and her two sons were executed.

This political turbulence, spread over a few months (from 24 May into September) in 641, was assuredly connected with the grave crisis in the Near East. With the fall in 641 of the last Roman coastal redoubt in Palestine, the provincial capital Caesarea, the only substantial area still under Roman control was the Nile delta, but their position there looked increasingly precarious, as the Arabs, established in the interior of Egypt, pushed north and prepared to lay siege to Alexandria. The burning issue of the day was whether to negotiate the formal surrender of Egypt or to make a final military effort there. Of the three sources, Nikephoros, Theophanes and John of Nikiu, on whose overlapping and largely consistent testimonies the composite account given above is based, it is John of Nikiu who reveals most about the conflict over foreign policy between the hawks (led by Philagrius, and later by

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Valentinus) and the doves whom Martina favoured and who included **Cyrus**, patriarch of Alexandria, and two powerful, if shadowy, figures in the European and Asian provinces of the empire (Kubratos, leader of the Unogundurs or Huns, and a certain David the Matarguem). In the **end**, the hawks won the political battle at the centre (in September), but **by** then it was too late to alter the policy of appeasement initiated during the reign of Heraclonas. The patriarch Cyrus returned to **Alexandria** on 14 September, and before long embarked on negotiations with the Arab commander, 'Amr b. al-'As, which resulted in an **agreement**, signed probably on 8 November, giving the Romans 11 months to withdraw from Egypt.

Sources: Nikephoros chs22, 28-32 (with commentary 191-93); **Theophanes** 341-2; Dionysius 166-7; John of Nikiu 184-98; *Chron. Seert* 628-9; Zacos/Veglery nos1087 (Valentinus), 1365 (Philagrius).

Literature: Kaegi, *Military Unrest* 154-7; Herrin, *Formation of Christendom* 215-17; Stratos, *Seventh Century II*, 175-205; Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians* 174, 178-9; *PLRE III*, s.v. Cyrus 17, Koubratos, Philagrius 3, Valentinus 5; Donner, *Conquests* 152-5; Butler, *Arab Conquest of Egypt* 275-327.

59: ch.44, **141**, *Arab conquests IV (the battle of Nihawand [642] and advance into Iran)*. In this notice Sebeos homes in on what he or his source (almost certainly the postulated Persian Source) viewed as a battle of great strategic importance. He makes it plain that large forces were mobilized on both sides, that the battle was long and hard fought, and that victory, when it came, opened up the Iranian plateau to Arab attack. The synchronized dating by regnal years of Constans and **Yazkert** places the battle in the **first** half of 642. By virtue of this date, as well as its military significance and general location in Media, the battle briefly described by Sebeos may be identified with an analogous engagement reported in early Islamic historical traditions and given a precise **location** at Nihawand. Nihawand was, indeed is of the utmost strategic **importance**, commanding as it does the point where the main trans-<sup>^</sup>agros pass linking Mesopotamia and Media opens out into the large Plain of modern Malayer, which acts as a southern ante-chamber to the north-west segment of the Iranian plateau. It was therefore natural that, the loss of the rich lowland component of their empire, the <sup>es</sup>sians should mobilize all available military forces for a stand there,

so as to prevent the Arabs breaking through the formidable natural bulwark guarding their core highland territories.

Although several *topoi* (most notably a story that Persian soldiers were chained together) have been identified in early Islamic traditions about the battle, Albrecht Noth, one of the foremost revisionists among contemporary Islamicists, clearly goes too far in regarding the traditions as nothing but tissues of fictitious matter. For Sebeos provides independent and solid corroboration for Arab testimony that the battle was important and that Yazkert was still capable of fielding a large army. It may also be inferred that the campaign required caliphal authorization, as claimed by Arab sources, given the size of the forces which were mobilized.

The brittleness of Persian morale, which collapsed at a rumour (a piece of well-timed disinformation?) that Arab reinforcements had arrived, is probably to be explained by the shock induced by the extraordinary recent Arab successes. The dissolution of the Persian field army presented the Arabs with alternative routes of invasion, the easier running over Media towards Rey and the Elburz mountains, the more difficult leading south-east into the highlands of Persia proper, which could also be approached from Khuzistan by a difficult pass (the Persian Gates). Early Islamic traditions report Arab thrusts in both directions, that into Persia encountering stiffer resistance and taking nearly a decade to achieve success. These campaigns stretching over many years are touched on in Sebeos' last summary sentence. This supplies an important item of information - that 22 fortresses, designated *herd* rather than *k'alak'* (fortified city), were captured in the course of the Arab advance. Most of them were probably small administrative centres (one of which, Qasr-i Abu Nasr, close to Shiraz, has been excavated) which acted as the foci of resistance in the heartland of the Sasanian empire.

After several years of defensive warfare, there was a perceptible weakening in Persian resistance. The naturally fissiparous world of Sassanid Persia and its dependencies in Transcaucasia began to break apart. Automata- acceptance of membership of a single imperial entity, deep-ingrained by centuries of experience and ideological bombardment, was attenuated as the armed force necessary to sustain imperial pretension visibly failed to meet the Islamic challenge. Moses Daskhurants'i is the sole source for this important development, which he dates around 644. Juansher withdrew from the defensive war, after seven years of

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service beginning with the Qadisiyya campaign. The 'Persian general', probably to be equated with Sebeos' 'prince of the Medes' (identified in n 54 above as Khorokhazat), responded by sending troops to occupy the main centres and lowlands of Albania and took Juansher's father and brothers hostage but before long he had no choice but to back down as Iberia came to Juansher's aid. The striking power of the army of Media, one of the two major military forces still underpinning Sasanian power, was gravely impaired.

Sources: *Chron.Seert* 581; M.D., tr. Dowsett 112-15; Dionysius 154; Tabari XIII-XV; Baladhuri 1420-33,469-89, II 3-24, 39^8,128-38.

Literature: Noth/Conrad 18, 135-6, 142-3, 185-6, 209-11; Spuler, *Iran* 11-18; Whitcomb, *Qasr-i Abu Nasr*.

60: ch.44, 142-143, *continuing political crisis in Constantinople, 642/643-645/646*.

Two distinct episodes have been conjoined in this notice. The date given, Constans II's second regnal year (September 642-September 643), belongs to the first episode. It is confirmed by a fuller notice in John of Nikiu, which places the event loosely in the days following Constans' accession. According to John, Valentinus sought the throne for himself 'in order to contend against the Moslem'. The clear implication of this phrase, which helps clarify Sebeos' obscure reference to his exercising his military command as emperor, is that he was seeking plenipotentiary military and political powers to conduct the war against Islam more effectively. Sebeos adds the important item of information that he gave his attempt to seize supreme power constitutional propriety by involving the Senate. According to John, popular opposition in Constantinople forced him to back down and to reach a compromise with the young, 11-year-old emperor. In return for renouncing his attempt to assume imperial status (presumably as senior co-emperor), he was appointed commander-in-chief of the army (probably *Magister Militum per Orientem*) and obtained an indirect connection with the throne through his daughter, who was married to the emperor and proclaimed Augusta. This was surely the context for Constans' formal address to the Senate in 642/643, reported by Stephanos, in which he thanked the senators for their support against 'that inviter to advise him in future. It may be surmised

that, as also announced the terms of the agreement with Valentinus had perhaps been brokered by the Senate), second episode occurred two years later, in 644/645, and resulted

in Valentinus' death. In a curt notice Theophanes reports that Valentinus rebelled against the emperor and was executed, the army's loyalty being transferred to the emperor. Corroboration for the date is to hand in a later notice of Sebeos' (143 with n.61 below), which places two indirect consequences of Valentinus' fall well after 642-643 - the recall of Varaztirots' from exile (dated to 645/646) and the dismissal of Teodoros Rshtuni from the Armenian military command (he was taken under armed guard to Constantinople apparently *after* Varaztirots' recall, since they met there).

Sebeos gives us a fleeting insight into Roman opinion at a time when the high command and society at large were forced to adjust to the loss of empire and the growing Islamic threat. Two years have passed since Valentinus was granted what may have been near-dictatorial powers. He is directing the war from Constantinople, his authority underpinned by a force of 3,000 soldiers stationed there. "The burden of subjection", by which is probably meant high taxation, is resented. It is taking time for civilians to accept the scale of financial sacrifice demanded to sustain the war effort from a much reduced resource base. Valentinus and his advisers are impatient and move swiftly to crush the opposition but in so authoritarian a manner, with so little regard for independent authority, as to provoke general outrage.

Sebeos was undoubtedly working from a source which blended together Constantinopolitan and Armenian politics, that which has been termed the Dvin Source. Hence the concluding sentence which reports the appointment of Teodoros, one of the loyal Armenian princes in Roman service, as general (presumably *Magister Militum per Orientem* in succession to Valentinus), referred to in future as 'the Greek general'. This Teodoros, it should be noted, is to be distinguished from Teodoros Rshtuni, at the time local Roman commander in Armenia ('the general of the Armenian army', i.e. probably *Magis<sup>er</sup> Militum per Armeniam*). The same Dvin Source then supplies material for the next, long notice about the repercussions in Armenia of what was in effect a new government at the centre, a notice which takes the story on into 645/646. Sebeos, who, here as elsewhere, is compiling his text out of chunks of material quarried from individual, written <sup>source</sup> thus allows his source to take him and his readers on an unadvertised foray of three years into the future from his base point in 642/643.

A final historiographical observation. The episode of Valentinus' downfall is well told. Specific scenes are conjured up. Snatches of o

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ech add some fizz. The style is reminiscent of the more anecdotal chapters (chs2, 4, 28) of the first part of the *Short History* of Nikephoros, which reworks and recycles a lost source, probably a continuation of the chronicle of John of Antioch. So too is the focus on metropolitan politics, in particular on the prolonged political crisis following Heraclius' death. The suspicion arises that material from the lost continuation of John of Antioch has made its way into Sebeos' history, perhaps supplying much of the information on Constantinopolitan politics which was then given a strong Armenian spin in the Dvin Source. If so, it may be conjectured that the text circulated widely in eastern Christendom in the years of crisis when the Arabs were carrying all before them a hypothesis which is lent support by the presence of material similar in style and focus to Nikephoros' and Sebeos' in John of Nikiu, the west Syrian historical tradition represented by Dionysius, and Theophanes.

Sources: John of Nikiu 198-9; Theophanes 342-3; Dionysius 167.

Literature: Kaegi, *Military Unrest* 157-9; Stratos, *Seventh Century* III. 8-15; Nikephoros, introduction 12-14; *PLRE* III, s.v. Theodoros Rshtuni 167, Valentinus 5, Varaztiroch.

61: ch.44, 143-145, *crisis in Armenia (644/645-645/646)*. Sebeos continues to quarry material from the Dvin Source. Attention turns to a gathering political crisis in Armenia which came to a head a year or more after a second, massive demonstration of Arab military power to the whole of Transcaucasia in 643 (described, out of sequence, in the following notice). Sebeos makes no connection between the episodes, offers no explanation for the actions of his main protagonists. But some tentative suggestions may be made: (i) that the scale of Arab military action in 643 shocked the northern world, making it plain to both the Prince of the Medes', commander of one of two substantial fighting forces left in Sasanian Iran, and the Roman authorities that their territories were now exposed to attack from Transcaucasia; (ii) that in consequence they negotiated a military alliance, probably in the following year (an alliance which T'umas was sent out to renew, probably in , 645); (iii) that the promotion of an Armenian to a senior command in the Roman army had an ulterior purpose, to prepare opinion in Armenia for closer military co-operation between Romans and Armenian Roman direction; (iv) that the Armenians, or at any

<sup>ca</sup> faction led by Theodoros Rshtuni (the last sentence of this notice



points to the existence of a substantial faction opposing him), favoured a more defensive stance than either Persians or Romans, preferring, in the light of their experience in 643, to fall back on their natural mountain redoubts rather than take the war to the enemy; (v) that in consequence there were growing strains in relations between Romans and Armenians, which were coming to a head in 644/645-645/646; and finally (vi) that Khorokhazat, 'prince of the Medes' (137 with n.54 above), who was facing growing recalcitrance in his sector of Transcaucasia at this very time (Juansher rebelled in 644/645 according to Movses Daskhurants'i), was anxious to prevent the Armenians from giving support to the refractory elements and pressed for the dismissal of Teodoros Rshtuni, of whom he harboured suspicions.

The new Roman general Teodoros, who replaced the murdered Valentinus and who is clearly distinguished from Teodoros Rshtuni, army commander in Armenia, cannot but have raised his standing in Armenia by interceding successfully on behalf of Varaztirots', or being portrayed as doing so in what may have been a stage-managed recall of a number of Armenian princes from exile. The new Roman military regime had to carry Armenian opinion with it if its plans for introducing a more effective command structure or adopting a more offensive strategy in the east were to succeed. Hence the meeting convened by T'umas before his discussions with the 'prince of the Medes', to gain support for his negotiating stance. However, Roman plans came to naught despite these efforts. The arrest and deportation of Teodoros Rshtuni, at the insistence of the 'prince of the Medes', provoked widespread opposition, forcing the imperial authorities to put on a show trial of T'umas outside the palace. Teodoros Rshtuni may have been vindicated, but he was nonetheless detained in Constantinople, only later being reinstated in his Armenian command after the death of Varaztirots'. The opposition evidently reached a dangerous level after Varaztirots' slipped out *incognito* from Constantinople - exacerbated first by the security precautions ordered by the high command in Armenia and second by the news that Varaztirots' had reached Tayk • At this point the Roman authorities caved in. A second meeting, army officers and princes, was convened and gave its approval to a compromise which respected Armenian autonomy and took account of the swelling support for Varaztirots'. Varaztirots' was to be recommended for appointment as *curopalate*, probably combining civil and military powers over the whole of Armenia. It was an extraordinary

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*note-face* but explicable in the circumstances. For the Romans could not afford to antagonize the Armenians at the time when they were investing their main military effort into a counter-attack intended to raise Egypt against the Arabs.

Several items of incidental information are worthy of note: the number of written documents which feature in this episode, in particular the travel permit issued to Varaztirots's men; the high status of the *proto-spatiaris* who commanded the personal bodyguard of the emperor; and the inclusion of Persian-style insignia of office (silver cushions) among the presents sent to Varaztirots'.

Sources: M.D., tr. Dowsett 112-15 (rebellion of Juansher); John of Nikiu 199-200 (temporary reoccupation of Alexandria).

Literature: Grousset, *Histoire* 298-9; *PLRE* III, s.v. Symbatius 2, Theodorus Rshtuni 167, Varaztiroch; Butler, *Arab Conquest of Egypt* 465-83; Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians* 182-90.

62: chs44-45, **145-147**, *Arab invasion of Transcaucasia, 643*. Sebeos has waited for a break in the political story retailed by the Dvin Source before introducing this notice, which, to judge by the prominent role played by Teodoros Rshtuni, is taken from the postulated Rshtuni Source. In doing so he disregards chronology and backtracks some two years (from 645/646 to 643). His account of operations is remarkably detailed. The campaign is firmly anchored in time by the precise date given for the capture of Artsap'k' by the Arabs - Sunday 10 August 643. There are enough geographical particulars noted for us to follow the movements of the three corps into which the Arab army divided. A great deal of precise information (including two figures for troop strengths and the names of the two Arab commanders killed) is given about the fall of Artsap'k' and Teodoros' deadly counter-attack on the following day. It is the sort of material customarily conveyed in military despatches. In this case it is virtually certain that a despatch was written since Teodoros would not have sent 100 captured Arab horses to the emperor Constans without an accompanying explanatory letter. It may therefore be suggested with reasonable confidence that the Rshtuni Source drew its material about the campaign from a copy of a document recording the first Armenian victory over the Arabs.

The Rshtuni Source has also left its mark on Lewond's account. He deludes a shorter notice about the campaign with many similarities to

<sup>cos</sup> • The strategic context is sketched before an account is given of

the siege of Artsap'k'. The episode is misdated (to 657) and a fair amount has been garbled, but, as in Sebeos' version, the invasion army divides into three, the Arabs enter Artsap'k' under cover of darkness and there is a body-count of some 3,000 after T'eodoros' victory. An additional piece of precise information is supplied: T'eodoros' force comprised 600 men.

On the basis of Sebeos' notice the following reconstruction of the campaign may be offered. By their attack through the Bitlis pass in 640 (138 with n.55 above) and their victory at Nihawand in 642 (141 with n.59 above) the Arabs had punched two holes in the mountain defences of the interlinked northern lands of Transcaucasia and Iran. They were probably embarking on the piecemeal conquest of Persia in 643 and may already have been probing the defences of Media, but their main action was the invasion of Transcaucasia in force. After reaching Atrpatakan, the army split into three corps which then conducted independent but co-ordinated operations. If the corps were of roughly equal strength (although that sent directly against Nakhchawan may well have been larger than the other two), a total of some 10,000 men was committed to the campaign. One corps marched on Ayrarat, the administrative centre of Armenia, and raided the lands to the north, in a huge arc from Armenian Tayk' in the west through Iberia to Albania in the east. A second corps set about the piecemeal conquest of the southern Armenian highlands between Atrpatakan and the relatively open country north of Lake Van (*Sephakan gund*). The third invaded Albania, advanced up the Araxes valley, capturing the fortress of Khram on the way, and besieged Nakhchawan. Nakhchawan, commanding the Araxes valley below Dvin, seems to have been the principal objective, an important task of the northern and southern army corps being to divert attention and mask the initial siege operations, before converging on the city and themselves joining in the siege.

The second corps had the most difficult assignment. Some of the population of the southern highlands took refuge in fortresses together with their livestock (note the large number of cattle found inside Artsap'k'). Others probably retreated deep into its mountain fastnesses. Raiding forays were sent ahead, to cause as much damage as possible, while what was probably the main force advanced west more slowly, launching assaults against each of the fortresses it passed. Two held out. The third, Artsap'k', was taken, but a classic guerrilla attack by T'eodoros Rshtuni's outnumbered force resulted in the annihilation of

its captors. Instead of gaining a large mountainous bridgehead in southern Armenia, flanked by a forward base at Nakhchawan, from which they could have projected their power over much of Transcaucasia and controlled the northern approach to the Bitlis pass, the Arabs were taught a painful lesson - that passive defence, backed by small mobile guerrilla forces, made Armenia extremely difficult to conquer.

This disaster dislocated the whole Arab campaign. Nakhchawan held out against the two army corps which were still unscathed. The only real achievement was the destructive raiding sweep by the northern corps. Nonetheless, this display of Arab striking power must have impressed the peoples of Transcaucasia and deterred them from taking too active a part in the defence of north-western Iran (n.61 above). The Romans gained in two ways from Teodoros Rshtuni's victory. First there were the hundred Arab horses which he presented to the emperor. Second it had made it less likely that the Arabs would try to attack Asia Minor from the east, using the relatively easy routes provided by the Euphrates and Aratsani rivers in western Armenia, now that the Armenians had demonstrated their powers of resistance.

Source: *tewond* ch.3.

Literature: Grousset, *Histoire* 299; Manandean, 'Invasions' 177-90; M. Canard, 'Arminiya 2. Armenia under Arab domination', E.I. I, 635-6; *PLRE* III, s.v. Theodorus Rshtuni 167.

63: ch.45, **147**, *first Arab offensive in the Mediterranean and subsequent negotiations for a cease-fire, 649-650/651*.

(i) *Events as reported by Sebeos*. No reason is given by Sebeos for Muawiya's decision to develop a naval arm, but there was surely a connection with the display of Roman naval power in 645-646, when Alexandria was reoccupied and an attempt made to raise Egypt in revolt. It is not clear whether purpose-built warships were constructed or merchant vessels were converted for naval service. In either case, though, it would have taken time to prepare both ships and crews for <sup>ac</sup>tion. Muawiya then took personal command and sailed against Constantinople. The expeditionary force was, however, intercepted by <sup>he</sup> the Roman fleet, and an engagement was fought in which Greek fire seems to have been used for the first time. Although Muawiya suffered <sup>ca</sup>y losses and was clearly forced to halt his advance, his display of naval might shocked the Romans and led them to negotiate a cease-fire.

Terms were agreed, involving payment of an unspecified sum of tribute by the Romans and demarcation of a (temporary) frontier, with Constans' representative (Procopius). The most interesting element in the notice concerns the constitutional arrangements in place during Constans II's minority: the army was directly involved in foreign policy decisions; initiatives required its formal approval, given probably by a military council of senior officers. This happened in the case of the decision to seek an armistice, the army council or, more probably, a delegation thereof then accompanying Procopius to the negotiations in Damascus.

(ii) *Date*. Not much weight should be attached to the position of this episode in Sebeos' text - after the Armenian political crisis of 645/646 (143-145) and the Arab attack on Transcaucasia of 643 (145-147), and before the Council of Dvin in 649 (147-161). For the materials of which it is composed at this point are heterogeneous and the chronological order is disturbed. Firmer indications are provided later: the cease-fire held for three whole years (164); the decision to break it was taken and announced by the caliph in Constans' 11th regnal year (September 651- September 652 [169]); the order to start operations was issued in Constans' twelfth year (652/653 [164]) and resulted in action, on a very grand scale, in his 13th year (653/654 [170], with nn.68, 75 below). The cease-fire must have started a minimum of three years before the renewed outbreak of fighting in 654. It follows that the negotiations conducted by Procopius took place at the latest early in 651, but more probably in the latter half of 650. The naval battle should therefore be dated to 650 or 649.

(iii) *The evidence of other sources*. Dionysius retails a lengthy account of naval operations at this time which he found in Theophilus of Edessa's lost chronicle (condensed by Theophanes into two sentences). Muawiya remains the prime mover. Two fleets are raised, one from Syria, his own command, the other from Egypt, 1,700 ships all told. When they combine, their multitudinous masts look like a floating forest. The year is one of the two inferred for Sebeos' battle - Seleucid era 660 (October 648-September 649). The objective, however, is not Constantinople but Cyprus, and operations proceed without a hitch. The island is laid waste. Much booty and many prisoners are taken. The Roman response - to install a defensive force - may revive morale but provokes a **second**, equally successful attack, carried out by a subordinate of Muawiya s, 'shortly afterwards', probably the next year (650).

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Constantinople is the target of a third great naval expedition of Muawiya's, which takes place some years later (of which Theophanes gives a full description). On this occasion, the fleet, again commanded by a subordinate of Muawiya's, is met off Phoinix on the Lycian coast by a Roman fleet commanded by the young emperor Constans. A great battle is fought. Victory goes eventually not to Constans (who escapes *incognito*) but to Muawiya. Nonetheless he does not sail on beyond Rhodes. Dionysius, whose multiple dating is inconsistent, places it five or six years after the first great raid on Cyprus (either 654 or 655). Theophanes puts it six years afterwards.

Theophanes (but not Dionysius) reports the negotiations conducted by Procopius, places them two years after the first attack on Cyprus, and has the cease-fire last for two years. Lewond refers in passing to a three-year cease-fire in the caliphate of 'Uthman (644-656).

(iv) *Provisional reconstruction.* The naval battles reported by Sebeos and the later derivatives of Theophilus of Edessa, Dionysius and Theophanes, have several features in common: both are actions on a grand scale; both involve the emperor himself; both take place apparently far from Constantinople; both are hard fought; although the outcomes are different, in both cases Muawiya's advance is brought to a halt. It seems likely that the battles are one and the same, and that either Sebeos or Theophilus of Edessa has misdated it. So impressive is Sebeos' record as chronographer and historian (and so comparatively weak is that of Theophilus), that Sebeos' dating (before, not after the cease-fire) and account of the outcome (a setback for the Arabs) should be preferred. The following reconstruction of events can then be made:

649: a huge Arab fleet from Syria and Egypt devastates Cyprus, sails on, and encounters a Roman fleet off the coast of Lycia; the Roman fleet wins the engagement and sails on to Cyprus; a large force is left to defend the island.

650: the Syrian fleet returns and devastates the island for the second time, the defending naval force having withdrawn without a fight.

650/651: a cease-fire is negotiated on a Roman initiative.

654: the cease-fire ends when an Arab armada sails for Constantinople and Arab land forces invade Asia Minor.

Confirmation that there were two Arab raids on Cyprus, dated to the <sup>sev</sup>enth indiction (the Roman financial year running from 1 September 648 to 31 August 649) and the next year, and that they caused extensive <sup>am</sup>age and captured a very large number of prisoners is provided by a

two-part inscription commemorating the completion of repairs to the episcopal church of Soloi in 655. There is also an incidental reference to 'the first conquest of the island of Cyprus' in the *Life* of St Spyridon which was first declaimed by its author, Theodore Bishop of Paphos, on 14 December 655 (but the date given, the eighth indiction [September 649-August 650], is that of the second attack).

Sources: Dionysius 173-7 (Cyprus), 179-80 (naval battle); Theophanes 343-4 (Cyprus), 344 (cease-fire), 345-6 (naval battle); tewond ch.2; Feissel, 'Inscriptions'; Spyridon, introduction 86-88, 101-8, text 88-91.

Literature: Butler, *Arab Conquest of Egypt* 465-83; Canard, 'Expeditions' 62-7; Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer* 17-25; Stratos, *Seventh Century* III, 38-55; *ODB*, s.v. 'Greek Fire'.

64: ch.45, **147**, *the building of the church of the Heavenly Angels (644 - after 659/660)*. The church of the Heavenly Angels (Zuart'nots), of which the foundations and various architectural fragments remain visible, was one of the masterpieces of the first great period of Armenian architecture (ca.610-ca.670). In plan it was a double-shell quatrefoil, an inner space with four large semi-circular recesses being surrounded by an outer ambulatory, measuring 123 feet in diameter. In elevation it comprised three superimposed cylinders which diminished in diameter and rose to a masonry dome, set on squinches. Inspiration from outside Armenia, mainly from Syria, is attested by the use of columns (normally absent from Armenian churches) and basketwork capitals. Carved monograms in Greek of the Catholicos Nerses have left his signature on the building. The church was only completed after his return to Dvin in 659/660, following six years' exile in Tayk' (**174 175** with n.81 below).

Literature: Khatchatrian, *L'Architecture Armenienne* (1949), 25-7, Mango, *Byzantine Architecture* 98-107.

65: chs45-46, **147-161**, *Council of Dvin, 649*. The council, **convoked at** the request of Constans, was attended by nobles as well as bishops. It was held four years before Constans' visit to Dvin in 653 (**168** with **n.71** below). The Catholicos Nerses and 'the pious Armenian **general** Teodoros Rshtuni (reinstated in his command after the death of Varaztirots' in 645/646 [**145** with n.61 above]) presided. Although it must have been torn between the commitment of a majority<sup>0</sup>

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Armenian churchmen to the Monophysite confession and the need to maintain good relations with the court at Constantinople in the face of the threat from Islam, it adhered to the beliefs of the majority. RWT discusses (Part I, Introduction II., The Armenian Text, above) whether **or** not the long defence of its doctrinal position, which Sebeos includes in his text, is an authentic document. A detailed commentary on the text is given in the footnotes to the translation. As Flusin has shown, there **has** been some tampering with the historical record in the first part where an anti-Chalcedonian spin has been put on an account of a meeting convened by Khosrov between 605 and 609 to provide public justification for his switch of favour from Nestorians to Monophysites. **But** this is as likely as not to have been the work of the council (certainly it served its interest) and may well have featured in the original document. It is hard to withhold assent from RWT's conclusion that the text **is** not a later medieval concoction but represents, for the most part, the majority view of the council, given its anomalous features and, above **all**, its studious avoidance of the divisive issue of differences in ritual **practice**. The deferential tone in which Constans is addressed and the **respect** shown towards Roman imperial authority (**148-149**, **151-152**, 161) provide additional authentic touches.

Literature: Grousset, *Histoire* 300; Flusin, *St Anastase* II, 114-18; Thomson, 'The Defence'.

**66:** ch.47,**161-163**,*purge in Constantinople (651)*. Sebeos marks the transition from the lengthy exposition of the Armenian church's doctrinal position back to his main subject of Near Eastern political and military history with an emotive passage of his own composition. He touches on the apocalyptic theme which he has developed earlier (**141-142** above): the Arabs are the fourth beast of Daniel; they have emerged from the desert like a tempest of burning wind to punish Christians for their sins. Then he returns to his principal source on Constantinopolitan politics, the postulated Dvin Source, but does not immediately alter his tone.

He writes of disorder, disasters, civil war, wholesale slaughter of **leading** figures in the government (all *exterminated*). He takes time to wind down and to resume his customary practice of purveying material from his sources to his readers in a neutral manner. Once he begins giving details about the course of events and the parties involved in the <sup>nsis</sup>; ^ becomes plain that there is a great deal of exaggeration in his °**Pening** remarks. If due allowance is made for his highly-charged



language, the following picture emerges. The emperor Constans gets wind of a conspiracy involving a senior general stationed close to Constantinople (Georg) and a leading minister in the city (Manuel, an Armenian with Arsacid blood in his veins [144-145]). He then sends Smbat Bagratuni (who is Manuel's son-in-law and probably one of Georg's subordinate commanders) to bring Georg, by devious or open means, to Constantinople. As soon as Georg has been isolated from the troops devoted to him, a pre-emptive strike is made against the conspirators, all apparently in Constantinople. It is now that the blood flows, as the executions mount up. Smbat, discredited with the troops under his command, is implicated by them in the conspiracy. The emperor does not dismiss the charge nor does he spare him entirely from punishment (exile), perhaps in the hope of improving his standing in army circles.

Roman domestic sources have fallen silent well before this episode. It can only be dated by its position in Sebeos' text, after the naval battle of 649 and the Roman-Arab negotiations which followed in 650/651 (147 with n.63) and before the Arab advance into eastern Iran in the first half of 652 (described at 163-164, in a notice taken from the Persian Source). This points to a date in 651, one close enough to the time of writing to have been remembered by Sebeos. Kaegi is probably wrong to put it in 652, but makes the attractive suggestion that Constans II (now 20 years old) launched the purge to free himself from the tutelage of the military and civilian elite. It also looks as if the reorganization of the field armies and their collective renaming as themes (commanded by *strategoi*) has not yet been completed. For Georg was a *Magister*, presumably *Magister Militum Praesentalis*, since he was stationed 'in that region', i.e. the region of Constantinople. Smbat's command is harder to identify: Kaegi suggests the regular army of Thrace, but Sebeos' phrasing ('leader of the army of the Thracian princes') may point rather to a force raised from descendants of Armenians settled in Thrace.

Literature: Kaegi, *Military Unrest* 160-1; *PLRE* III, s.v. Symbatius 2; Haldon, *Seventh Century* 208-20.

67: ch.48, 163-164, *Arab conquests V, the end of the Sasanian dynasty. 652* (cf. T'.A. 104). Curt notices in Movses Daskhurants'i's chronicle (simply noting the date of the death of the last Sasanian king, Yazkert III) and *Khuz.Chron.* (merely noting the place of his death, Marv). together with a somewhat more informative one in *chron.Seer* (reporting his failure to assemble an army, his flight,

concealment,

discovery and execution) bid farewell to the Iranian power which had dominated the continental hinterland of the Near East throughout late antiquity. Early Islamic traditions devote much more space to the event, thereby underlining its significance, but treat it in a tabloid manner: attention is focused on Yazkert, antagonisms and intrigues in high places at Marv, and the precise details of his death. For example, five different but related versions of his death are presented side by side by Tabari, three of which involve the Turks, Yazkert's last hope, turning against him, and all five of which end with him caught and killed in the house of a miller. Another variant of this story turns up in Dionysius. Considerable effort is required to extract the barest outline of Arab strategy: the attack on Khurasan, bastion of Iranian power facing the steppes, came from the south; Yazkert was unable to assemble an effective fighting force and withdrew east to Marv, placing his hopes in the Turks. No explanation is given for the failure of the two functioning Persian armies in the field to unite, that directly under Yazkert's command (from Persia proper and Khurasan) and that serving under Khorokhazat, Sebeos' 'prince of the Medes'. In combination they would have become a formidable adversary.

Sebeos, by contrast, presents a clear, intelligible account of the strategic circumstances which led to the death of Yazkert. He had summoned the army of north-western Iran to join that under his own command in the east, in Khurasan. He had also called on the Turks (referred to as T'etalk') for aid. An Arab army, evidently mobilized from troops across the whole of Khuzistan and Iran, advanced across the Iranian plateau in the first half of 652 (the importance of the episode being underlined by the triple dating used by Sebeos). The Arabs managed to prevent the three armies facing them from coalescing. They surely had a hand in the rebellion of the 'prince of the Medes', to which there is a cryptic reference (either a passage has dropped out of Sebeos' text in its long transmission and the cross-reference is his, or, possibly, the cross-reference was lifted together with the notice in which it was embedded, from Sebeos' source. Probably the Persian Source). Meanwhile the Turkish army, careful not to cross the frontier with Persian territory, was a spectator as Yazkert's army was caught as it retreated towards the frontier and was annihilated, Yazkert himself sought asylum with the Turks but was put to death by them, while the 'prince of the Medes' came out of the stronghold to which he had withdrawn and formally submitted to the Arabs in the • it is a coherent and plausible account, which, unlike the other

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extant sources, explains the sudden, apparently painless snuffing out of Sasanian power.

Sources: M.D., tr. Dowsett 115; *Khuz.Chron.* 33; *Chron.Seert* 581; Dionysius 178; *tewond* ch.2; Tabari XV; Baldhuri I 490-3.

Literature: Spuler, *Iran* 18-21.

68: ch.48,164. *end of cease-fire, 652/654* (cf. n.63 above). There appears to be a contradiction between the date given in this notice, the 12th regnal year of Constans (652/653), for the caliph's ending of the ceasefire, and the preceding 11th regnal year reported in a later, apparent doublet of this notice (at ch.49, 169). Tempting though it may be to amend the second date, it is more prudent to refrain from tampering with the text, especially since both dates are written out in full. There are significant differences in the substance of the two notices which should not be overlooked. That dated to 651/652 records that this was the year when 'the treaty between Constans and Muawiya, prince of Ismael, was broken' (i.e. when the intention to break it was formulated) and the caliph ordered a general redirection of Arab forces to the west for war against the Romans, defining Constantinople as the objective. That dated to 652/653 gives a context (news of victory in the east [in summer 652] and the [consequent] destruction of Persian power has reached the caliph), defines the length of the cease-fire as three full years, and has the caliph order operations against the Romans to begin by sea and land. There is nothing implausible about this sequence of events: the decision in principle to break the cease-fire was taken and mobilization in the west was ordered, as soon as the Arabs' position was secure in Iran (mid or late summer 652); this was followed in 653 by the order to begin operations; the main attack on Constantinople then took place in 654 (ch.50,169-171 with n.75).

The caliph (*ark'ay*, 'king') is portrayed as exercising effective authority over Arab armies in the field. Sebeos views the caliphate at this early stage in its evolution as a cohesive political entity which is capable of concentrating resources dispersed over vast areas against a single principal adversary, or, as was the case in 642, of co-ordinating separate operations in separate theatres to maximize the effect of each (139 with n.56 above). How much initiative in strategic matters was exercised by the centre as opposed to the commanders in the field must remain a matter of speculation, but major operations are presented as requiring authorization from the caliph. This accords with the picture

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presented by early Islamic historical traditions, a picture which has been rejected recently as the product of later reworkings of an original core of early traditions.

Literature: Noth/Conrad 11-12, 55-7, 80-1.

69: ch.48,164, *T'eodoros Rshtuni's submission to the Arabs, 652/653*. This important event is dated to Constans' 12th regnal year (652/653). The contracting parties were T'eodoros Rshtuni, representing all the princes of Armenia in his capacity as an influential prince as well as general commanding the Roman field army in Armenia (145 for his reinstatement in 645/646), and the 'prince of Ismael', identifiable as Muawiya. The precision and coherence of Sebeos' summary of the terms suggest that he had access to a copy of the original agreement.

The terms offered by Muawiya were not unattractive in the circumstances. The main burden falling on the Armenians was military. They were to maintain a large standing army of 15,000 cavalry, for deployment by the Arab authorities as they saw fit, but north of the Taurus. In return the Arabs undertook to provide military aid on request, but otherwise to refrain from establishing a political or military presence in Armenia. Of the fiscal terms, the following conjectural interpretation may be offered: after an initial period of three tribute-free years, the amount of tribute was to be subject to negotiation, based upon some sworn declaration by the Armenians (perhaps concerning the size of the harvest, if a particular proportion was to be paid over, or concerning their assets in general). The annual tribute was expected to be substantial, since the cost of provisioning the 15,000 cavalry which the Armenians undertook to field would be offset against the total 'royal tax'.

It is made plain, from subsequent events reported in this chapter **(165)**, that T'eodoros Rshtuni had not obtained the agreement of all the Princes of Armenia before negotiating purportedly on their behalf. The making of the agreement looks like a political act intended to bring about a general shift of allegiance in Armenia. It was not kept secret. The news may indeed have been allowed deliberately to leak out. Many Princes, who were opposed to it, were aware of T'eodoros' plan, and had observed the coming and going of Arab emissaries. News of what was afoot soon reached Constans, who made a counter-proposal to shore up his position in Armenia and announced that he was coming to Karin (Theodosiopolis). There he would be met by the princes of <sup>W</sup>estern and central Armenia, who had not defected **(165)**.

It is surprising that Muawiya was not called on to provide the military aid which he promised, in anticipation of opposition within Armenia or from the Romans. There was every prospect of Roman intervention in force, since the treaty included a provocative statement barring an enemy (immediately afterwards defined as Roman) from entering Armenia.

Theophanes reports the defection of the patrician of Armenia, whom he calls Pasagnathes, and the treaty which he made with Muawiya, and dates it a year earlier (651 /652).

Source: Theophanes 344.

Literature: Grousset, *Histoire* 300-1; Laurent/Canard 55-6,195-7.

70: ch.48,165, *Roman defeat in Mardastan, 652*. Sebeos' elliptical account must be read with care to discern what happened. Teodoros Rshtuni, general in command of the local field army of Armenia ('the pious Armenian general' [148]), was accused of having colluded with the Arabs when they attacked and defeated Roman troops serving in a separate command. Mardastan, where the encounter took place and the Romans lost all their equipment, lay north-east of Lake Van. Together with the districts of Garni to the west and Artaz to the east, it formed the northern rim of the highlands of Vaspurakan. The plain of Gogovit, commanded by the Bagratuni fortress of Dariwnk' (modern Dogubayazit) (104.144). lay immediately north of Mardastan. Since the aggrieved Roman troops are unlikely to have been slow about lodging their complaint and Constans, who went to Armenia in his 12th regnal year (September 652- September 653), is presented as responding swiftly, the engagement should be dated to the second half of 652.

The same incident is described in greater detail by Lewond. Again a Roman army serving under a Roman general, named as Procopius, is surprised and defeated by an Arab force. The Arabs are returning west after the defeat and death of Yazkert and the completion of the conquest of Iran (so the date is the same, the second half of 652). They are a part of the returning force which has taken a northern route and conducts a sweeping raid through Media and up the valley of the Araxes (past Golt'n and Nakhchawan). The raiders then divide, some taking the prisoners 'to their own country', others advancing and raiding Artaz (and thus approaching the neighbouring district of Mardastan). 'The Greek general Procopius', stationed with a large army in southern Gogovi close to the boundary with Mardastan, prepares to attack the raiders

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but the Arabs act more swiftly, launch a surprise attack and inflict a **serious** defeat. As in Sebeos' notice, T'eodoros Rshtuni stands aside, although the charge of active collusion is rebutted, the blame being **transferred** to Procopius who is accused of indolence (ignoring repeated **warnings** from T'eodoros), of irascibility (provoking reciprocal anger in **T'eodoros**, who then 'stayed away from him') and, implicitly, of incompetence. T'eodoros himself is presented as taking effective action to bar the Arabs' way into Vaspurakan.

It is evidently the same incident which is viewed from different angles, toward, it may be conjectured, drew his version, which amounts to an apologia for T'eodoros' admitted inaction, from the Rshtuni Source which, as we have seen, supplied him, as also Sebeos, with information about the Arab raids of 640 and 643. Sebeos, who, it is clear from his language, was outraged at T'eodoros' agreement with Muawiya ('a pact with death', 'an alliance with hell' [164]), has chosen to disregard the Rshtuni Source and to give the Roman view instead. When the information from the two sources is combined, three tentative observations can be made:

(i) Procopius, described as 'the Greek general' by Lewond, held a command separate from that of T'eodoros Rshtuni, 'the Armenian general' (Sebeos, 148 above). If Procopius' command was the same as that of the other T'eodoros, who succeeded Valentinus in the supreme military command in 644/645 and then took personal charge of affairs in Armenia in 645/646 (where he too was called 'the Greek general' [144]), Procopius was probably *Magister Militum per Orientem*. It was perhaps in this capacity that he had earlier acted as Constans' and the army's representative and had negotiated a ceasefire in 650/651 (147 with n.63 above). T'eodoros Rshtuni was probably *Magister Militum per Armenianz* (as suggested in n.69 above).

(ii) A further inference may now, hesitantly, be made. The East Roman empire attached a very high priority to the defence of Armenia, so high that it was ready to deploy a second high-ranking general there <sup>ar</sup>>d, presumably, a substantial field army serving under his command <sup>on</sup> at least two critical occasions in the 640s and early 650s. It is possible, indeed, that the assignment was more permanent, that the *Magister Militum per Orientem* was stationed in Armenia continuously in this Period.

<i'i) Such a forward concentration of Roman troops would have rved three purposes. First, by consolidating Roman control of

Armenia and reinforcing the regional field army under the command of the *Magister Militum per Armeniam*, the Anatolian heartland of the reduced empire was secured from attack along the relatively easy eastern approaches. Second, Roman forces were well placed to intervene in Atrpatakan and Media, if the opportunity presented itself. Third, the presence of a formidable Roman fighting force, firmly entrenched in Armenia and holding its natural south-eastern bastion (the mountains of Vaspurakan), was a standing threat to Arab control of the plains of northern Mesopotamia to the south.

Source: Lewond ch.2.

Literature: Grousset, *Histoire* 296 (summary, misdated); Hewsen, *ASX* 66 (map xviii), 187 (Mardastan and Artaz), 218 (Gogovit and Dariwnk'); Haldon, *Seventh Century* 208-20 (Roman command structure).

71: chs48-49, 165-168, *Constans' intervention in Armenia, 653*. The narrative is in the main self-explanatory. Constans' arrival at Karin (Theodosiopolis), dated to his 12th regnal year (652/653), probably took place towards the end of summer 653, not long before the start of the next regnal year in September. If Sebeos' figures are to be trusted here, Constans was bringing an army as large as any ever fielded by the Roman empire in late antiquity (amounting to 100,000 men), which he then reduced to a more manageable force (20,000 strong) before marching on to Dvin. For he had decided to undertake limited operations over the winter months. There were five of these, designed to isolate Teodoros Rshtuni and to bring Persarmenia and the rest of Transcaucasia under Roman control. It is not clear whether Mushel Mamikonean, who was made commander of the Armenian cavalry and led them on one of these forays, held a senior command in the Roman army of Armenia or the position of *aspes* traditionally held by a Bagratuni.

Sebeos' personal interest in church affairs (and possibly his personal involvement) may account for the length and detail of the account of the celebration of the Chalcedonian liturgy in the cathedral at Dvin. B should not be inferred that Constans' hurried return to Constantinople which is reported in the next notice came immediately after the ceremony. Juxtapositions of notices in the text do not necessarily reflect juxtapositions in reality. The ceremony probably took place earlier rather than later during Constans' stay in Dvin, if, as seems likely,<sup>1</sup>

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was staged not only to impart more ideological cohesion to the Roman-Armenian partnership but also to influence opinion in the Romans' favour elsewhere in Transcaucasia and thereby to reinforce the military operations undertaken that winter.

Before he left, Constans gave the command of the Armenian army to Maurianus, and gave him authority over civil government as 'prince of Armenia'. This was the first occasion, in this period, that both powers were vested in a Roman.

Literature: Grousset, *Histoire* 301-2; M. Canard, 'Arminiya 2. Armenia under Arab domination', *E.I.* I, 636; Howard-Johnston, *The Great Powers* 165-9; Garitte, *Narratio* 337-43.

72: ch.49,168, *Constans' return in haste to Constantinople, 653/654*. The pressing summons came well before the end of winter, which is reported later (169) in connection with the start of Teodoros Rshtuni's offensive (with Arab backing) against the forces which Constans had left behind under the command of Maurianus. The reason for the summons and Constans' instant departure is made plain in the next chapter: the authorities at Constantinople had realized that a massive Arab offensive was being prepared against what remained of the empire; the presence of the emperor and the crack troops under his command was urgently needed.

Things had worked out extraordinarily conveniently for the Arabs. News, perhaps deliberately leaked, of Teodoros Rshtuni's defection, and the consequent fear that the whole of Armenia might follow suit had drawn Constans and the largest field army which he could muster away from his capital in 653. The warning not to enter Armenia delivered by an Arab delegation when he had reached Derjan (on the upper Euphrates below Karin) had acted (predictably) as an additional spur (165). It was not followed up. No attempt was made by Teodoros Rshtuni with the backing of Arab forces to take over Armenia. None of the promised Arab military aid materialized. Teodoros and his local supporters simply withdrew to their strongholds, placing their treasures (perhaps by a pre-arranged plan) in the strongest of them. There was no active resistance to the Romans, no apparent attempt to call on the support of the princes of Armenia whom Teodoros claimed to be representing. The prospect of achieving real success in the winter months was ^uring, and Constans was drawn deeper into Armenia to Dvin, and yet further from his capital.

Meanwhile Muawiya, so inactive in Armenia, was preparing for a



land and sea assault on the core territories still retained by the Roman empire. These had been denuded of troops in summer 653, and, although many were able to return home for the winter, the best were engaged in operations in Transcaucasia. When at last the Roman authorities realized what was afoot, there was inevitably disruption to their defensive preparations and a significant weakening in available fighting strength, not to mention the depressing effect on morale of the emperor's absence until shortly before the Arabs closed in on Constantinople.

Sebeos' narrative presents cumulatively convincing evidence that Constans was the victim of strategic deception on a grand scale. The prime function of Muawiya's agreement with Teodoros Rshtuni, it may be conjectured, was not to establish a permanent framework for Armenian-Arab relations (although it may have done so), nor to multiply the number of Arab clients among the princes, but to lure and entangle Roman forces in Armenia, thereby weakening the defences of the capital and Anatolia. The scheme was remarkably successful, almost bringing about a replay of the 626 siege, with emperor and field army cut off from the capital, but this time with all the additional dangers posed by a large enemy armada.

73: ch.49, 169, *Arab occupation of Armenia, 654*. A short notice summarizes the sudden reversal in military and political fortunes which followed Constans' departure and the arrival of a 7,000 strong Arab force to help Teodoros Rshtuni. The ease with which the Arabs took over the whole of Armenia in 654 should probably be attributed mainly to a swift and general change in Armenian attitudes at the news from the west. Maurianus, the Roman commander, probably had little choice but to retreat in the circumstances, especially as the news must have harmed the morale of his men.

Several detached and misplaced notices, which appear later in the text, fill in the missing parts of the story, (i) A second notice about Teodoros Rshtuni's formal request for Arab military aid defines his objectives as the expulsion of the Roman army of Armenia and the devastation of Iberia (the last sentence of chapter 50 [172]). Both objectives were pursued by Arab forces in 654 but only the first was achieved, (ii) The Arab general, described as a merciless executioner, is identified as Habib (probably Habib b. Maslama, for whom see below), on the occasion of the betrayal and execution of Artavazd Dimak'sean (173- 174). (iii) Some information about Armenian reactions to the arrival o

the Arab army is supplied at the beginning of chapter 52 (173). Mushel Mamikonean, who had been appointed to a senior command by Constans (166), took the lead in changing sides. After the Arabs had secured control of the whole of Armenia, all the princes submitted to Arab authority with Teodoros Rshtuni at their head, perhaps in a public ceremony. This event provides a context for Teodoros Rshtuni's later visit to Damascus, where Muawiya invested him as client-ruler of Transcaucasia (169). (iv) A notice, placed immediately after the account of the attack on Constantinople in 654, reports that the Arabs tried to invade Iberia, the second of Teodoros Rshtuni's two aims, as winter was approaching, but were thwarted by the weather (ch.50,171).

Theophanes reports the Arab take-over under the right year (653/654), names the Arab commander correctly (Abibos), but has him pursue Maurianus north to the Caucasus rather than west-north-west to the Black Sea coast. Arab historians also take note of it but envisage heavy fighting (with Khazars and Alans aiding the Romans). The general is identified as Habib b. Maslama, who had distinguished himself in earlier campaigns in Syria and Mesopotamia. His army moves in a sinuous way, first to Karin, then a short distance down the upper Euphrates, then south-east to the north shore of Lake Van, then north-east to Dvin and finally north to Tpkhis. The campaign is dated much earlier, towards the end of A.H.24 (645/646).

Source: Theophanes 345.

Literature: Grousset, *Histoire* 302-3; M. Canard, 'Arminiya 2. Armenia under Arab domination', E.I. I, 636.

74: ch.50, 169-170. *caliph's ultimatum to Constans, 654*. An introductory sentence along the lines of 'the king of Ismael wrote a letter to Constans king of the Greeks' probably dropped out when the chapter heading, which now provides the necessary introduction to the quoted letter, was inserted. There is nothing in the letter's contents or in what is stated about the circumstances of its composition and delivery to occasion doubt about its authenticity. As in the case of Muawiya's agreement with Teodoros Rshtuni, it is presented in summary form. The caliph issued Constans with an invitation to convert to Islam, demanded the disbandment of the bloated armed forces of the empire which alone could offer serious resistance to his armies, and proposed to leave Constans in charge of his territories, as a client-ruler of a grand sort ('a great prince').

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A well-thought-out plan for the peaceful take-over of the East Roman empire was outlined in the caliph's letter. Arab troops would be deployed with the emperor's (nominal) agreement in place of his own disbanded forces; governors would be appointed to Roman cities; the emperor would be consulted on the amount to be raised in tribute; and the reserves in the treasury would first be inventoried and then apportioned, the emperor being allowed to retain a quarter. It is hard to conceive of such a scheme being devised unless the Arabs had by this stage developed an organized state of their own with effective managerial capacity.

Literature: Noth/Conrad 146-67.

75: ch.50,170-171, *Arab attack on Constantinople, 654*. Sebeos dates the Arab offensive, which had long been in preparation, to Constans' 13th regnal year, 653/654, a date which squares with that of the previous regnal year given in the previous chapter (165) for Constans' march into Armenia. Operations probably began in early summer 654 when there should have been little danger of storms. The notice, although brief and stressing religious factors, provides a great deal of detailed information, some of it partially but not entirely obscured in the editing process (or subsequent transmission by copyists). It is therefore possible to produce a reconstruction on the following lines (a number of hypotheses, italicized, are included).

A huge effort, itself bespeaking impressive organizational capacity, was made to assemble land and sea forces so large as to assure the Arabs of success in their campaign of conquest. Troops were summoned from far-flung reaches of the nascent empire, from the interior of former Sasanian territories (Khuzistan, Persia and the *south-east*

*inarches facing India*), from northern Mesopotamia (Aruastan) and from Egypt, to reinforce the army of Palestine and Syria under Muawiya's command. The cities of the eastern Mediterranean littoral, chief among them Alexandria, were put to work *building* and equipping a huge invasion fleet, including large transport vessels and small, swift fighting ships. There is evident exaggeration both of numbers of ships and of their carrying capacity in the story as retailed by Sebeos. Siege- engines of various sorts were prepared, including fire-throwing machines, artillery and *ship-borne towers* from which to assault the seawalls (the towers are not mentioned in the list of war-machines, but are mentioned *a propos* of the assault plan and were among the equipment destroyed at sea by the storm).

When the forces, ships and equipment were assembled after a year and a half of preparations (if, as argued in n.68 above, the caliph ordered preparations to be made in the second half of 652), they were organized into four independent fighting forces: an army under Muawiya's personal command which advanced across Anatolia to Chalcedon, opposite Constantinople; a second reserve army, which took up a position in Cappadocia, from where it could secure the advance force's communications and keep control of Anatolia; a first fleet, consisting entirely of light vessels *which probably set off from the coast of Palestine and Syria* (i.e. from within the area of Muawiya's command) and arrived at Chalcedon at roughly the same time as Muawiya where they were kept inshore until the arrival of the great ships; and a second fleet, stated to have come from Alexandria, which arrived later and included all the great ships.

If ever the hand of God played a part in human affairs, Sebeos is right to suppose that it did so on this occasion. There is much rhetoric and some Old Testament reminiscence in his descriptions of the armada and the storm which destroyed it, but there is no reason to doubt the bald statement of its effect - 'their hearts broke'. There was nothing surprising if Arab morale suddenly plummeted when Allah seemed to have turned against them, nothing surprising if Muawiya set off soon, under cover of darkness, for home.

There is one particularly arresting sentence in this chapter: when Muawiya crossed Anatolia, 'all the inhabitants of the country submitted (literally, here as elsewhere, 'subjected themselves to servitude'), those <sup>o</sup>n the coast and in the mountains and on the plains' (170). The whole People who would later show obstinate determination in resisting the

Arabs decade after decade, who would commit themselves wholeheartedly to a guerrilla war of defence, surrendered without a fight. All three geographical zones of Anatolia were involved, coastlands, highlands and interior plateau. There could be no more telling evidence of the shock of the initial, ultra-dynamic phase of Arab expansion, when it had carried all before it and resistance had indeed been useless.

Other extant sources do not mention this episode, save for glancing references by Dionysius (179) and Theophanes (345) to a planned attack on Constantinople, apparently not executed, *a propos* of the Battle of Phoinix (n.63 above). It is overlooked in the standard authorities, apart from a fleeting and dismissive reference in Canard, 'Expeditions' 63, n.4.

Some standard authorities: Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la men* Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, Stratos, *Seventh Century*; Kennedy, *Prophet*; Herrin, *Formation of Christendom*; Haldon, *Seventh Century*, Whittow, *Orthodox Byzantium*; Treadgold, *History*.

76: ch.50, **171-172**, *events in Armenia after the Arabs' failures in the west I 654-655*. Before launching their abortive attack on Iberia (placed in context in n.73 above), the Arabs established their base for the winter at Dvin and set about negotiating the surrender of the Iberians. They encountered unexpected diplomatic resistance, and then, after winter weather impeded their attack on Iberia, withdrew not to Dvin but south to Asorestan (Syria, as at **176** below) at high speed. News of the scale of the disaster which they had suffered in the west, massive storm damage to the fleets and the defeat of the reserve army in Cappadocia, were probably responsible for both of these developments.

The Armenian princes were more cautious than the Iberians. In the absence of T'eodoros Rshtuni who was ill (he was to die in 655 [**174**]), his chief ally and son-in-law Hamazasp Mamikonean (**169**) joined with Mushel Mamikonean who had remained loyal to the Romans until early 654 (**173**), to convene a general assembly of the princes of Armenia. Prefaced with some sort of ringing declaration about their concern for the peasantry, the princes agreed to refrain from fighting that winter (654-655) and to raise taxes, probably those owed to the Arabs. The method of apportionment, according to the size of each prince's cavalry contingent, was the fairest, since the moneys raised were probably to be spent on provisioning the army which they had undertaken to provide, according to the terms of T'eodoros' agreement with Muawiya.

Literature: Grousset, *Histoire* 303; Toumanoff, *Studies* 394-5.

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**77:** ch.51,**172-173**, *rebellion in Media, 654-655*. Sebeos leaves his readers in no doubt about the crucial role played by Media during the Arab conquests (nn.54, 59, 61, 67 above). The regional army, with its own elected leader (the 'prince of Media'), had been one of two formidable Sasanian fighting forces left after the loss of Mesopotamia. Its defection had opened the way for the decisive victory over Yazkert in Khurasan in 652. This successful cultivation of Media had evidently required considerable diplomatic skill on the part of the Arabs.

There was a marked change in their approach after the defeat and death of Yazkert, as this chapter makes plain. Media was subjected to a tough regime, analogous to that proposed for the rump Roman empire in 654. Its army was disbanded and the rate of taxation was determined by the Arabs. Whether or not the rate was exorbitant and a prime cause of discontent, as Sebeos reports, it is impossible to decide, but we may suspect that a strong sense of regional identity and pride in the imperial past of Iran were more important factors.

Sebeos dates the start of the rebellion to the same year as the events of the previous chapters, the occupation of Armenia, the attack on Constantinople and the abortive invasion of Iberia (**169-171**). This yields a secure date of 654. The murder of the chief tax-collector was the signal for a general rising. The rebels began to reconstitute the regional army and gained the backing of the highlanders of Gelum and Delum in the western Elburz. They were then able to exploit the natural defences offered by fissured and forested mountains and by equally impenetrable fens to harass the Arabs as they sought to re-impose their authority.

It may be inferred, both from the dating indications supplied by Sebeos and from his evocation of the fighting, that Arab counter-insurgency operations, which were wearing and achieved little, lasted for several months. If the rebellion began in late summer 654, triggered perhaps by the news of Arab failures in the west, the campaign is likely to have dragged on through the following autumn and winter. Eventually, probably in spring 655, the decision was taken to change strategy and to seek elsewhere a notable success which might shake the resolution of the rebels, or, at any rate, might recoup some of the prestige 'ost in the mountains of Media.

Literature (Gelum and Delum): Hewsens, *ASX* 87-8; Gyselen, *Geographie* 45,49-50, 81-8.

78: ch.51,173, *Arab defeat in the Caucasus, 655*. The new strategy was to march to the Caucasus and take firm control of the easiest route north, which runs between the east end of the mountains and the Caspian Sea. This long narrow coastal passage extends from modern Sumgait in the south to Makhachkala in the north, and includes a number of pinch-points, of which the narrowest is at Darband. The Sasanians had constructed four or five defensive lines, the strongest of which barred the Darband pass. On the assumption that Sebeos meant to distinguish between the places which he named, the following reconstruction may be suggested. The Arabs advanced unopposed up the southern half of the coastal passage (the whole of which appears to be designated the Caspian Gates) and passed Darband and its associated defences (the Pass of Chor). They then set about ravaging the foothills of modern Dagestan, presumably with the intention of imposing their authority on the local tribesmen. They had, however, marched into a natural trap. A small force attacked them from the Gate of the Huns, perhaps to be identified with the northern outlet of the coastal passage. This was then backed up by a large nomad army which came down from the steppes beyond. The Arabs were decisively defeated in a close engagement. Meanwhile another army appeared in their rear and cut off their retreat. The only hope of escape was to take to the hills. Only a small number managed to do so and eventually made their way back to Ctesiphon.

Taking account of the considerations discussed in the previous note, this defeat should probably be placed in late spring or early summer 655. The identity of the Arabs' adversaries is left obscure, since the name they are given, 'T'etalk', is used generically for nomads. The most likely candidates are the Khazars, who were building up their power in the steppes to the north of the Caucasus at this time.

The defeat has left its mark on Arab sources. The episode has been remoulded and redated (to A.H.32 [652]), but nonetheless remains recognizable: the expeditionary force made its way through the pass and laid siege to the town of Balanjar, probably a short distance from its northern outlet; there it was caught between a sortie from the town and a relieving force, and was cut to pieces.

Literature: (i) (Caspian Gates) Hewsen, *ASX* 56A (map vii), 122-3; Howard-Johnston, 'The Great Powers' 191-2; E. Kettenhofen- 'Darband', *E.Ir.* VII, 13-19; (ii) (Khazars) Dunlop, *Khazars* 41-57; W. Barthold and P.B. Golden, 'Khazar', *E.I.* IV, 1172-3.

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79: ch.52, **174**, *events in Armenia after the Arabs' failures in the west II 655*. The winter of 654-655 was severe. The Arabs had called off their invasion of Iberia because of the cold and snow (**171**). 'The days of piercing winter cold', to which Sebeos now refers, probably came somewhat later. For a Roman army had had time to return to Armenia. Maurianus was in command, so the army was probably that which had fled ignominiously to the Pontic coast in 654. The Arabs now made a strategic withdrawal to Zarehawan, a plain immediately to the west of the head of Lake Urmia. Maurianus, who had clearly recovered western Armenia, including Karin, launched an offensive aimed at the chief towns of what used to be Persarmenia, Dvin which fell and Nakhchawan which held out. An Arab counter-attack brought about a sudden reversal of fortunes in spring 655. Once again Maurianus took to his heels, this time fleeing north to Iberia. Theophanes' notice (345 - cited in n.73 above) may well refer to this second defeat of Maurianus, since this time his flight did take him towards the Caucasus.

Time-honoured methods were now used by the Arabs to reimpose their authority: (i) shows of force (probably exaggerated in their effects by Sebeos) in Armenia, Albania and Siwnik'; (ii) punitive exactions (to judge by the case of Karin); and (iii) deportation of a large number of hostages, amounting to some 1,797 in all (**175**). These measures were probably taken in early summer 655. Together they constituted a well-judged response to the recent fickle behaviour of the Armenians, and testify to a well-developed Arab statecraft, able and ready to learn from the practice of the great powers in late antiquity.

Literature: Grousset, *Histoire* 303-4.

&0: *general remarks on the events of 654-655*. With this second notice about Armenian affairs in the changed climate following Arab failures in the west, Sebeos brings the main body of his history to a close. His coverage of contemporary events is considerably fuller than that of the first Arab conquests or the campaigns of the 640s. Although there is some disarrangement of the material, as he acknowledges (**176**), it is not <sup>so</sup> serious as to prevent us from piecing together a connected history of Arab actions in the year and a half between the end of the three-year case-fire and the time when Sebeos laid down his pen for several years <sup>fr</sup>V summer 655, after recording the tough regime imposed on Hienia). It is worth pausing for a moment and taking stock of what Sebeos has enabled us to see.



The expansion of the small religio-political community established by Muhammad to the status of a world power within 20 years of the *Hijra* is the most spectacular, observable example of dynamic growth of political power in history. Success in the defensive war against Mecca created an initial momentum. Each subsequent victorious campaign added to the momentum. Islam's fighting forces increased in size, its managerial skills were improved, and confidence grew that the Arabs were indeed the earthly shock-troops of a single, awesome, truly omnipotent deity. The converse was true of the established great powers as defeat came hard on the heels of defeat. Their material and, much more important, their immaterial resources haemorrhaged away. This was compounded in the case of Iran by a tendency towards regionalism and division programmed in by geography and history.

One of Sebeos' great services is to cast light on the first serious faltering of this dynamic process. Failures, if they were serious and if there were several of them, could put the dynamic process into reverse - draining the Arabs of some of their confidence, raising new hope and encouraging resistance among the occupied peoples, especially traditionally refractory highlanders, inflicting losses and forcing the Arabs to fight on several fronts at once. Something of this sort happened in 654 and 655. First came the destruction of the great armada assembled before Constantinople in summer 654. The news of this had important repercussions as it spread. The defeat suffered by the field army quartered in Cappadocia is surely partly attributable to shaken morale. Further east, two peoples, both endowed with formidable natural defences, took heart: the Medes rebelled and began reconstituting their formidable army; the Iberians refused to negotiate terms when threatened with attack at the end of the year.

The defeat (in Cappadocia), failure against Iberia and the increasing danger posed by the rebellion in Media between them dealt Arab prestige and morale a second serious blow. Their position now began to crumble in Armenia. The army which had set off against Iberia did not withdraw to its designated winter-quarters at Dvin but scurried south, beyond the line of Zagros and Taurus mountains. The other Arab troops in Armenia withdrew to a safer position in Atrpatakan, by Lake Urmia- Maurianus, *Magister Militum per Armeniam*, was now emboldened to march into the heart of Armenia and to bring it back under Roman control, continuing operations through the worst of winter, early in 655-

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Further east, the rebels in Media had no difficulty in holding out against the Arab army sent against them.

By spring 655, there was an evident confidence (over-confidence, it later transpired) on the part of the Roman forces in Armenia as they pressed their siege of Nakhchawan, while the Arab army in Media was disheartened by a wearisome and fruitless counter-insurgency campaign. The prestige of the new imperial power was dropping fast in the north. This spurred the Arabs to two bold but risky counter-strokes. They launched a surprise attack on the Roman field army in Armenia in spring 655 outside Nakhchawan, won a decisive victory and recovered the ground lost in winter. Meanwhile their forces extricated themselves from their entanglement in Media and sought to re-establish their invincibility by exploits in the Caucasus region. But if the first gamble in Armenia had come off, this one went disastrously wrong, resulting in a defeat almost as damaging to Arab prestige and confidence as the loss of their fleet before Constantinople. The arrival of the ragged remnants of the expeditionary force in Ctesiphon surely made a considerable impression on opinion throughout the central lands of the nascent empire.

At this point Sebeos broke off writing. The immediate political and military consequences of these successive reverses suffered by the Arabs were covered cursorily in postscripts added several years later. It is tempting to suppose that he stopped writing and concealed his manuscript for fear of what would happen were it to fall into Arab hands. If so, the new repressive regime may have been sustained for a year or so in Armenia, while the troubles elsewhere grew more serious. But it is impossible to follow, in any detail, the chain of actions and reactions within and beyond the territories controlled by the Arabs after early summer 655. It is, however, clear that whatever the exact course of subsequent events, the defeats and difficulties of 654 and 655 were inducing increasing stress within the ruling elite of the caliphate, probably Prompting recriminations and anxious reflection seeking to identify the causes of Allah's evident displeasure. Within a year the crisis intensified. The caliph 'Uthman was assassinated and the hitherto cohesive caliphate broke up into four antagonistic regional powers. A civil war began which <sup>w</sup>ould last five years.

<sup>81</sup>: ch.52, **174-175**, *Catholicos Nerses in exile, 654-659/660*. Nerses, <sup>w</sup>hose support for the Chalcedonian position had been made manifest

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<sup>282</sup>during Constans' visit to Dvin, prudently left at the same time as the emperor, probably early in 654 (168 with n.72 above). Sebeos adds, in the first part of this notice, that, after leaving Dvin for his home region of Tayk', Nerses paid a visit to Constantinople and was received with great honour - a visit which surely took place after the great Arab attack of 654 (rather than before, as implied by the phrasing). These were probably the last words he wrote before penning the final peroration (176-177) which brings the main body of the chronicle to a close (in late spring or early summer 655). Six years later he returned to the text and added three *scholia* to bring it up to date. The first was squeezed in before the final peroration (there was presumably a small blank space in his original manuscript between the last notice and the peroration). He notes that Nerses spent six years in exile in Tayk', his former episcopal see (166-167), at the north-western extremity of Armenia. Tayk', it may be inferred, was of Chalcedonian inclination, doubtless influenced by its proximity to areas where Chalcedonianism was entrenched, Iberia and Roman territory along the Black Sea coast. The occasion of his return was almost certainly the second visit of Constans to Transcaucasia six years after he left Dvin, in his 19th regnal year (September 659- September 660), when he consolidated Roman authority throughout Transcaucasia (n.82 below). The completion of Nerses' great church of Zuart'nots' (147 with n.64 above) can then be dated to the early 660s.

Source: M.D.,tr. Dowsett 118.

Literature: Garitte, *Narratio* 339; Hewsen, *ASX204-10*.

82: ch.52,175, *secession of Armenia from Arab rule, 656 (?)*. This notice concerns a grim episode in which the new great power showed that it was prepared to act ruthlessly to maintain its authority. The date cannot be fixed exactly, but the year mentioned at the start is probably best taken as the year of the outbreak of civil war in the caliphate, i.e. 656, intimations of which run through Sebeos' peroration. This would explain both why the Armenian princes were prepared to secede and why there were no Arab forces to hand to take direct punitive action against them. The army, which had reimposed Arab authority and had removed some 1,797 hostages in 655, had probably been drawn south when the political crisis broke.

Hamazasp Mamikonean, a bookish prince without experience of warfare, seems to have been inspired by his reading to emulate the exploits of his ancestors (174). To judge by the position of *curopalate* of Armenia

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granted to him afterwards, he took a leading part in the defection of a large number of princes (probably those of western and central Armenia, who had sided with Constans against Teodoros Rshtuni in 653 [165 above]), which Sebeos reports in his second postscript. There were other princes, though, led by Mushel Mamikonean (so probably from the rump of the former Persarmenia, now described as the Arab sector [171]), who were deterred from following suit for fear of what might befall their relatives held hostage by the Arabs but were equally nervous of obeying a summons to go south with their wives. The Arab response - indiscriminate slaughter of all the hostages to hand (all but twenty-two of them) - drove Mushel and his allies, together with the army of Albania under its commander, the prince of Albania (Juansher who, Movses Daskhurants'i confirms, submitted to Constans at roughly this time) and the princes of Siwnik' into the arms of the Romans. Although they were taken into custody, the princes with Mushel were soon released on the emperor's orders while Mushel himself was summoned to Constantinople. The ill-judged brutality of the Arabs had placed the Romans in firm control of the whole of Transcaucasia.

This notice provides a context for a detailed account, taken by Movses from the laudatory biography of Juansher which he was using, of Juansher's dealings with Constans. Juansher first concluded a treaty with 'the Armenian general' (Hamazasp, who is later named) and then forwarded an offer of submission by letter to Constans. Constans replied with fine presents, a large number of titles for redistribution by Juansher in Albania and, the most precious gift, a fragment of the True Cross, which sealed this new alliance of senior with junior Christian ruler. Juansher was designated, in Constans' reply, 'lord of Gardman and prince of Albania, ex-consul and first patrician and governor of the east'. Movses then continues the story. Constans made a second journey to Transcaucasia in his 19th regnal year (659/660), when the Arab civil war was probably reaching a crescendo of violence (n.83 below). This was a grand imperial progress which took him into Media in the autumn of 659, then back to central Armenia where he was in the following spring. To judge by the case of Juansher, local client-rulers<sup>w</sup>ere given audiences and formally invested with the insignia of their offices, and largesse, comprising presents, titles and land, was distributed. The aim was clearly to consolidate Roman authority throughout Transcaucasia and to transform the region into a Christian highland ■"edoubt which would act in unison against the Muslim forces in the

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south, whenever the civil war came to an end. Constans may even have sought to draw Media with its formidable highland forces into an alliance. This would explain his visit to Media, where Juansher had the first of this two audiences (in the presence of Armenian nobles and 'the general Hamazasp').

Constans left Transcaucasia in 660 and, before long (by 663), was at the opposite end of his realms, apparently trying to organize a trans-Mediterranean maritime front against Islam, with Sicily and North Africa as its outer bastions, as distant western analogues to Armenia and Albania.

Source: M.D., tr. Dowsett 115-20.

Literature: Grousset, *Histoire* 304; Herrin, *Formation of Christendom* 263-7; Haldon, *Seventh Century* 59-61.

83: ch.52, *II5-M6, first Arab civil war, 656-661*. Sebeos' account of the first great crisis of the nascent Islamic empire differs fundamentally from that of the main strands of extant early Islamic tradition. Such, however, is the authority of Sebeos, a well-placed contemporary who has been seen at work gathering and arranging primary material of high quality on the complex events of the preceding 80 years or more, that his version cannot simply be pushed aside and ignored. Rather attention should be focused on the grave doubts which it arouses about the truth of the main thrust of extant Islamic accounts.

Political dissension at the apex of the Muslim community preoccupies Islamic tradition. There is no hint that serious reverses suffered by Islamic forces in distant theatres of war (as reported by Sebeos) played a part in rousing opposition to the Caliph 'Uthman's rule. Instead it is domestic grievances, above all 'Uthman's alleged nepotism, which led a deputation of Arabs from Egypt and their allies to assassinate him in summer 656, when their demands were not met. 'Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law then assumed power, *qua* leading member of the Prophet's family, only to encounter growing opposition from the established Meccan elite, and in particular from the Umayyad relations of 'Uthman, who claimed that a caliph should be chosen by consultation (*,shura*) among the leaders of the Muslim community. For Sebeos, by contrast, the civil war was a struggle for military and political hegemony between a number of competing regional military forces. He theretofore begins by sketching the composition of the rival groupings, of which there are four rather than the two of Islamic historical tradition.

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It is not easy to identify all the regional armies named by Sebeos. A start can be made by noting that Asorestan here designates not the whole of the Fertile Crescent south of the Taurus and Zagros, but its western, Syrian component which had been governed by Muawiya since 639 and had been enlarged with the addition of Jazira (northern Mesopotamia) late in 646 or early in 647. It follows that the great Arab garrison cities of Iraq, Kufa and Basra, where much of the political and military action after 'Ali's assumption of power takes place according to early Islamic tradition, are not mentioned by name in Sebeos' account. It may therefore be postulated that they lurk concealed in Sebeos' fourth part, which he locates 'in the territory of the Arabs and the place called Askarawn'. Hewsen notes that, for Armenian authors, Arabs normally meant the Arabs of Mesopotamia, while the mysterious place-name 'Askarawn' surely has something to do with Arabic *askar*, 'army'. The disposition of Arab military forces on the eve of the civil war may then be reconstructed with a reasonable degree of probability as follows: (i) an army in southern Iran targeted on the Indus valley, with elements probably stationed in Persia, the old heartland of the Sasanian empire; (ii) the army of Syria, commanded by Muawiya, and an army in the north, presumably the force which had reoccupied Armenia in spring 655, together with such troops as had been left to hold Media after the end of the counter-insurgency campaign there; (iii) the army of Egypt and, aligned with it, the army which had driven Yazkert from Khurasan and now faced the (former) territory of the Hephthalites; (iv) the army of the Arabs garrisoned at Kufa and Basra on the edge of Iraq. The picture presented by Sebeos is one of a single Arab-controlled world, in which political alliances can be formed between widely separated forces and in which the competition is for a central unitary authority.

The picture presented by early Islamic tradition is very different, above all because it is parochial. Attention is focused on Iraq, in particular on Kufa and its fractious politics. The rival political parties of the Hijaz look to Iraq for support, the opposition to Basra, 'Ali to Kufa. A battle takes place outside Basra in December 656 which is remembered<sup>as</sup> the Battle of the Camel, because the fighting revolves around the camel ridden by 'A'isha, widow of Muhammad. 'Ali wins a decisive victory, only to face a new adversary in Muawiya who launches a propaganda war from Syria. In spring 657 'Ali and Muawiya mobilize their forces and confront each other at Siffin, on the right bank of the

Euphrates, not far from the old Roman-Persian frontier. The confrontation ends in an inconclusive engagement and an agreement by both sides to go to arbitration. The arbitration is equally inconclusive and the two parties remain openly antagonistic but keep their distance from each other. The political and military balance shifts in Muawiya's favour in 658. While 'Ali is distracted by political dissidence in Iraq, Muawiya takes control of Egypt which has hitherto obstinately resisted overtures from him and 'Arar. b. al-'As, its original conqueror and first governor. At some stage, perhaps before the acquisition of Egypt but more likely after it, Muawiya is formally declared caliph by his Syrian supporters. The stand-off continues until, in January 661, 'Ali is assassinated by an Iraqi dissident at Kufa. Thereafter Muawiya has little difficulty in imposing his authority on Kufa and the whole of the caliphate.

Sebeos' version is initially compatible with early Islamic tradition. The king killed by an alliance of the army of Iraq (the suggestion made above) and the Egyptian army was the Caliph 'Uthman. The king whom they installed in his place was 'Ali. The allied forces then parted, allowing Muawiya, governor of Syria and second-ranking ruler in the caliphate (probably by virtue of his command of the war against the Christians in the north and the north-west), to deal with them separately. So far so good, but from this point it becomes impossible to reconcile the two accounts. For in the second phase Sebeos has Muawiya march into the desert, kill 'Ali and then inflict a heavy defeat on the army of Iraq. 'Ali's death is thus dated long before the end of the civil war and takes place in the desert, rather than at Kufa. Muawiya is made directly responsible for it. The battle fought between Syrian and Iraqi forces (which may have mutated into the Battle of Siffin) ends in a decisive victory for the former.

Some corroboration for Sebeos' version can be obtained from a probably late seventh-century Syrian Maronite chronicle, which dates 'Ali's assassination to 658 rather than 661, locates it at Hira and does not name those responsible (who could therefore have been acting or thought to be acting on orders from Muawiya). This was followed by Muawiya's arrival at Hira and the submission to him of all the Arab forces there (which could have followed an engagement).

One crucial point is firmly established by the Maronite chronicle- Muawiya became caliph in 660, well after 'Ali's death. The opening ceremony took place in Jerusalem, in the course of which Muawiya visited Golgotha and Gethsemane. It was followed by an assembly of etni<sup>5</sup>

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and Arabs in July (evidently held outside the city) which proclaimed him caliph-Sebeos, who was concerned with underlying military realities, turns rather to the third phase of the conflict, between the army of Egypt and Muawiya's forces. Perhaps the most startling single piece of information which he supplies is his notice that the army of Egypt sought to strengthen its position by making a treaty with the emperor (Constans) and that the whole host, some 15,000 men, converted to Christianity. A stray reference in early Islamic tradition to Muslims reverting to Christianity in a quite other part of the caliphate at this time because of the deadly strife within the congregation of Muhammad (in Bahrain) may ease some of the incredulity which Sebeos' statement is likely to arouse in Islamicists. As regards other events of the third phase, lasting, we may guess, from 658 to 661, Sebeos, alas, supplies no details but gives the clear impression that all the armies which he enumerated were involved, that the fighting was widespread and the casualties heavy. The outcome had become all too clear by the time he completed the last postscript to his history. Muawiya was the victor and had pacified the whole Muslim-controlled world.

A postscript to these postscripts of Sebeos will bring this commentary **to an end**. It is based on Moses' version of the life of Juansher, prince of Albania, who ruled (and naturally prayed for) 'those who dwell on the **shores** of the sea in the east'. Five years after Constans' second visit to Transcaucasia, in Juansher's 28th year as military commander in Albania (664/665 - the dating is precise and faultless, with a single **exception** noted below), the extended eastern front against Islam which he **had** created along the Taurus and northern Zagros mountains **collapsed** without a fight. The seat of Arab government had been **transferred** to Damascus six years before (a remark which corroborates the **Maronite** chronicle's date of 658 for the death of 'Ali). Muawiya, who is not named, 'began to suck the marrow of the land around him'. He is **described** as ruling 'the four corners of the earth'. Juansher recognized **brute** reality (so too probably did 'the Armenian general' and nobles **who** met him and honoured him on his way south) and went to do obeisance to 'the conqueror of the world' at 'the universal court'. There he <sup>wa</sup>s honoured, says his biographer, was given presents, and made a treaty to which he remained faithful. Three years later (so in 667/668, <sup>m</sup>stakenly equated with an impossible 30th regnal year of Constans



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[670/671]), he was summoned again to Muawiya's court, his advice being sought on a scheme to assassinate Constans. He was rewarded with the extension of his authority to cover Siwnik' and a reduction of a third in Albania's tribute. He then returned home by winter 667-668, with many presents - horses, robes, a sword, an elephant and a parrot (the last two described in rich, evocative prose by his biographer who saw them at the assembly which he held on his return). Within a year he, like Constans, was assassinated.

A new Arab and Islamic world-order was firmly established in the 660s, as Sebeos foresaw when he laid down his pen. Muawiya, victorious in the civil war, did indeed rule the four corners of the earth from a universal court at Damascus.

Sources: (i) (civil war) *West-Syrian Chronicles* 29-32; Tabari XVI- XVII; (ii) (postscript) M.D., tr. Dowsett 120-30,142-5.

Literature: Hewsen, *ASX* 229; Wellhausen, *The Arab Kingdom* 75- 112; Hawting, *The First Dynasty* 24-33; M. Hinds, 'Muawiya I', E.I. VII, 263-5; Noth/Conrad, 33-5; Madelung, *Succession* 113-326.

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# INDICES

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Direct quotations within the text are marked with an asterisk [\*]. Allusions within the text are in italics.

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## II. TECHNICAL TERMS

Each entry presents the English term as it appears in the translation, the transcribed Armenian word, a brief commentary (if needed), the pages of the Armenian text (marked in bold in the translation) on which the term may be found and the total number of appearances of the term. This index is designed to provide an introduction only; it does not attempt to present an exhaustive analysis, etymological, bibliographical or otherwise.

'ancestral, customary' - *hayren i*

A rare term, used to qualify either religion (**85**), wealth (**129**) or kin (**174**).

[Total: 5]

'Arab' - *Tachik*

Rarely used, and generally in a geographical sense. Its use in the treaty between Muawiya and Teodoros Rshtuni (**164**) is unusual - in combination with 'army', *spay*, a word not otherwise attested in Sebeos. See also 'Hagarene'; 'Ismaeli'; 'Ismaelite'. **74,75,164,171,174-176** [Total: 9]

archbishop' - *ark 'episkopos*

Applied by Modestos to Komitas in the formal heading of his letter to him (**116**); also used of Leontius of Caesarea (**155**). [Total: 2]

archbishop/chief-bishop' - *episkoposapet*

Used of both the Nestorian Catholicos of Persia and Komitas, who is I described as such in the formal heading to a letter. **70,118** [Total: 2]

<sup>ar</sup>ch-priest' - *erets'apet* ^^ Used at **116** of Modestos, reflecting his rank in

Jerusalem. [Total: 1]

'Armenia/ Armenian' - *Hay as tan*

Denotes the land or country of Armenia in combination with *erikir*, *ashkharh*, *kolmank'* or *sahmank'*, as well as Armenian nobles, princes etc. when qualifying an appropriate noun. Present throughout the text. Unlike *Hayk'* it is never incorporated into a title. See 'Armenia/Armenian', *Hayk'*.

64, 66, 67, 86, 90, 91, 96 98, 104, 105, 110, 113, 114, 116, 129, 131, 143,147-149,173 [Total: 28]

'Armenia/Armenian' - *Hayk'*

More usual word to express 'Armenian', derived by M.K. from the eponymous ancestor of all Armenians. Although found in combination with 'land' and 'country' to express 'Armenia', and with other collective nouns, it is also found as a free-standing noun throughout the text, on 33 occasions. The title *ishkhan Hayots'*, 'prince of Armenia', is first encountered at 133, in relation to Dawit' Saharuni. See 'Armenia/Armenian', *Hayastan*.

65 68, 70, 73, 76 78, 84, 87, 88, 90 92, 95, 101, 105, 107, 108, 111, 113, 116, 118, 126, 129,132-134,137, 138, 143 146, 148 151, 164 169, 171,174,175 [Total: 109]

'*aspet*office of*aspef* -*aspet/aspetut'iwn*

Derived from the Middle Iranian word for 'master of the horse' and used once in this Persian context (71). Otherwise this title is linked exclusively to the Bagratunik' house. It is used consistently to refer to Varaz- tirots', and later to his son Smbat, but was never applied to Smbat Bagratuni. Khosrov Shum. The relationship between this term and *spar- apet* is difficult to discern, prompting some commentators to suggest that it was only ever a title and not an office. See 'commander', *sparapet*. 71,94,129,132,133,138,143,144,162,163 [Total: 17]

'auditor' -*hamarakar*

The Vaspurakan auditor, a Persian administrator, became caught up in the rebellion of the Vahewunik' and negotiated with the rebels on behalf of Khosrov II. There is a solitary reference to the auditor of another Persian district (96), similarly targeted by rebel Armenians. He had fiscal duties but seems to have had responsibility for the storage and transport of revenue as well. See also 'investigator';*marzparf*. 87,88,94,96 [Total: 11] '*bishop/episcopacy*' - *episkopos/episkoposut iwn*

Derived from the Greek and used for both Armenian and non-Armenian bishops without discrimination. See also 'overseer'.

95,100,112,118,129,148,149,150,151,154,155,156,158,167,168 [Total: 42]

'boundary, territory' -*sahman*

65,66,78,87,102, 111, 113,114,126,128,130,131,135,137,139,147, 155 [Total: 25]

'brigand' - *hen*

Applied variously to Khosrov II, Khosrov king of Armenia and to the 'one of the south' i.e. the kingdom of Ismael. 65,72,73,122,141 [Total: 6]

'camp, army' - *banak*

Used in connection with Persian, Roman and Arab forces. It is only found in its plural form when denoting Arab forces. At 139, the text refers to the 'royal forces', *ark'unakan banakawk'*, a phrase which seems to indicate caliphal control and command of the forces; see 'king', *ark'ay*. The variant *banakateln* does not appear to have any significance.

65, 79, 82, 102,108, 109, 124, 125, 126, 132, 134,135, 136,138,139, 141,145,173,176 [Total: 33]

'capital' - *shahastan*

Used of Ahmatan/Hamadan and Bahl.

80,91,103,112 [Total: 4]

'cathedral' - *kat 'olike*

Used of the main church in Dvin, at 121. [Total: 2]

'Catholicos/Catholicosate (i.e. office of Catholicos) -*kat 'olikos/kat oli- kosut iwn*

Title used for the head of the Armenian church. It renders the Greek 'metropolitan'. The office was split after the partition of Armenia in 591, reflecting the pro- and anti-Chalcedonian divisions within the church (91, 112). However it is also applied to the Nestorian church leader in Persia and Viroy of Aluank' (70, 150). See also 'patriarch'; 'archbishop'; 'arch-priest'; 'chief-priesthood'.

70,91,100,112,121,129,131,132,139,144,147,148,150,156,165-  
168,174,175 [Total: 46]

'census' - *shahrmār*

A Persian term, used at 67 to illustrate the inclusion of Siwnik' in the administrative structure of Atrpatakan rather than that of Armenia. At 176 the Armenian equivalent, *ashkharhagir*, is used, in a similar context. [Total: 1]

'chief-priesthood' - κ *'ahanayapetut 'iwn*

Used twice in an Armenian context (129, 155) and once generally when praising the Greek empire (149). [Total: 3]

'city' - *k'alak'*

A walled urban centre. Within Armenia, it is applied to Valarshapat, Dvin, Karin, Nakhchawan, Angl, Erginay and Dz'it'arich. If any pattern is discernible, it is perhaps that the most recent entries in the text do not contain a comparable spread of cities to the earlier episodes. Furthermore, in these more recent entries, cities are increasingly cited by name without being identified as *k'alak'*. See also 'town'; 'village'; 'walled village'.

65 70, 74-76, 84 91, 95, 100,105 119,121,122,124,125, 127,131, 133,134,137,138,140,142,143,147,149,151,158,161,164,165,169- 172,174,175 [Total: 145]

'commander' - *hramanatar*

Found in a Persian context only, at 102,129 and 130. [Total: 3]

'commander' - *sparapet*

Derived from the Persian word for 'commander' and linked in the text to the Mamikonean house. It was an hereditary office, reflecting their dominant role in Armenian society. Yet only Vahan Mamikonean is called *sparapet* in the text, and three of the references have a Persian context. See also *aspef* \ 'general'. 66,73,75 [Total: 4]

'community, residence, monastery' - *vank'*

Used of the Christians living at the court of Khosrov II under the protection of his wife Shirin (85), and of the community to which Yovhanik belonged (121). [Total: 3]

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### 'contingent' - *gund*

The contingent formed around an individual prince; found consistently in a military context, although not applied to a named noble-led retinue. There is one reference to the region of *Vaspurakan gund* (84) and four references to the *Sephakan gund* (145,166). The former term is met for the first time in the *ASX*.

65,66,68,74,77,84,88, 90,94,99,101,136,145,166,172 [Total: 19]

### 'curator' - *korator*

A Roman official, responsible for imperial estates. 89,113,133 [Total: 3]

### 'curopalates' - *kiwrapalat/kiwrapalatut 'iwn*

A high Roman title, accorded by Heraclius to Dawit' Saharuni (133) in the mid 630s, and subsequently by Constans II to first Varaztirots' (144) and later Hamazasp Mamikonean (175). See also '*patrik*' [Total: 4]

### 'district, province' - *gawar*

This term distinguishes smaller, individual districts, generally either Armenian or Persian. The fifteen Armenian *ashkharhk'* of the *ASX* are subdivided into *gawark'*.

66,68,77,84,99,101-104,107-109, 111, 114,115,124,126,129,134, 138,141,148,165,166,174 [Total: 30]

### 'donative, salary' - *hrog*

Found in a Greek context at 122 and 164, and derived from the Greek *roga*. Compare 'stipend', *rochik*, which has a similar meaning but in a Persian context. [Total: 2]

### 'eminent, greatest' - *metsametsk'*

Used infrequently as a general term with no obvious pattern of use. 64,69,80,85,114,124,133,140 [Total: 8]

### 'eminent, senior' - *awag*

Used only once (69) in a Persian context. [Total: 1]

### 'emperor' - *kaysr*

Used exclusively in a Roman context, for Maurice, Heraclius and Constans. Intriguingly it is also used of T'eodos, Maurice's eldest son who is reported by Sebeos to have survived the coup of Phocas, but not

of Phocas himself. Infrequent use in respect of Constans II. See 'king' *ark'ay*, 'king', *t'agavor*.

65,76.81,84.86 88.90,91.95,105.106,110,111,114,122-125 128  
131,133,135,136,139,143,158,163,164 [Total: 36]

'empire, principality, authority' - *ishkhanut'iwn*

Used in a variety of senses, as the definition implies. See 'lordship'-  
'prince'.

64, 66, 67, 76. 84. 95. 96. 101,109. 128, 132.133, 143 145, 151.165  
172,174,175 [Total: 27]

'flag' - *drawsh*

Found only in combination with 'contingent'. When T'eodoros Rshtuni receives a standard from Muawiya (169), a different word for 'flag', *var*, is used.

77,94,101 [Total: 4]

'fortification' - *amrut'iwn*

By contrast to 'inaccessible', *amur*, this term indicates an artificial, constructed defensive work. Used of only two sites. Also used of armour (103). See also 'fortress', *amur*\ 'fortress', *berd*\ 'fortress, *amrots*'. 103,109.136 [Total: 6]

'fortress, stronghold' - *amrots*'

Found in a generic sense at 70 and 144. See also 'fortification'. [Total: 2]

'fortress' (n.) and 'inaccessible, secure' (adj.)-*amur*

Indicates remoteness or isolation contributing to the strength of the location as much as any man-made construction. It is particularly linked with the land of Gelum and the country of Media. See also 'fortification'.

89.91.95.96,98.99.125.172,173 [Total: 15]

'fortress' - *herd*

Describes a man-made defensive feature. This term is frequently coupled with the name of the fortress. Dvin itself is occasionally referred to as a *herd*, although this may refer to a fortress nearby; see 100. At 100 and 110. the (Persian) official in charge of a *berd* is defined as *berdakal*. In the treaty between Muawiya and T'eodoros Rshtunik' (164), a rare

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plural of *herd*, *berdorayn* appears in apposition to *amirays*, a word otherwise unattested in this text. See also 'fortification'.

75, 100, 103, 105, 108 110, 138, 141, 145-147, 164 166. 174 [Total: 37]

'general, commander' - *zawravar/zawravarut'iwn*

Used of Persians, Greeks and Armenians but never of Arabs. It appears regularly in the text until 148. but not thereafter. At 131, Mzhezh Gnuni is entitled the commander of the Greeks and Dawit' Saharuni replaces him in this office at 133. At 137 Mushel Mamikonean is called the 'Armenian general', the first occasion on which this phrase appears. At 138 the office 'general of the country of Armenia' appears, belonging to T'eodoros Rshtuni. See also '*aspet*' 'commander'; and '*stratelat*

70. 88, 89.105 109.114,115, 122.125,126.131-133, 136-140, 143- 146.148 [Total: 40]

'governor' -*sahmanakal*

Found in the lists of governors; interchangeable with *marzpan*.

71,105 [Total: 2]

'Greek' - *Yoynk'*

Used frequently throughout the text. Occasionally the singular *yoynn*, 'the Greek', appears by itself, at 90,110. 113-115,123,147,171, 174. However 'the Aluan', *Aluann* and 'the Siwni', *Siwnin* are also used in a similar way (166). See also 'Roman'.

65,67,68,71,74,75,79,80,84,86,88. 89 92,97,104 111,113 115, 123. 124. 128. 131-136, 141, 143, 144. 147, 148. 150. 164, 171, 173-176 [Total: 75]

'guard, bodyguard' -*p'ushtipan*

Used to denote the royal guard of the Persian king. On one occasion, it is found in combination with *ostikan* (83). Linked with 'auxiliary', *Wamaharz*.

74,75,81.83 [Total: 6]

'Hagarene' - *Hagarats'ik'*

Rare generic term for Muslims, referring to their descent from Hagar, a maidservant of Abraham by whom he had a son, Ismael. More

commonly called 'Ismaelites' or 'sons of Ismael'. The text never refers to them as Saracens or as 'foreigners', *aylazgik*' (the most usual **Armenian term**). See also 'Arab'; 'Ismaeli'; 'Ismaelite'. 139,170 [Total: 2]

'hall' - *dahlich*

The gathering place at the royal court for the greatest Persian nobles See also 'palace'.

75,103,127,149 [Total: 4]

'head of a family, patriarch' - *nahapet*

Noticeable for its infrequent use. It is applied specifically to Vahan Mamikonean and Sahak Artsruni; the other two references are impersonal, relating to the heads of the tribes participating in the Arab conquests. Given its Biblical context - specifically its identification with Abraham the patriarch - it may have the sense of the founder of the family, or at least of that particular line or branch. See also 'lord'; 'noble'; 'prince'; 'tanuter'. 65,112,135 [Total: 4]

'house, family' - *tun*

Used in the sense of both family and literally of a building - see for example 139 'a house of prayer'. Interestingly, the other Armenian term for family or house, *tohm*, is not found.

65,75,77,84,94 96,99,129,135,139,145,165-167,170,174 [Total: 20]

'inhabitants' - *bnakich* 'k'

Used of both districts and cities, one of the rare expressions for the local community, as opposed to the great number of terms denoting the leadership of those communities. See also 'ordinary people'. 108. 111, 112.115,117,131,136.137,142,162,170 [Total: 16]

'investigator' - κ *'nnol*

A Persian administrative official (102). [Total: 1] See also 'auditor'; *'marzpan*.

'Ismael' - *Ismayeli*

Applied to Muslims, denoting common descent from the son<sup>0</sup>

■

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/Vbraham and Hagar. Its use in combination with 'king' and 'prince' is mentioned in the relevant entries. See below and also 'Arab'; 'Hagarene'.

**65, 131, 134, 135, 137, 139 141, 145-147, 164, 165, 169, 171-176** [Total: 38]

'Ismaelite' - *Ismayelats'ik'*

Less common than *Ismayeli*; used generically and never of an individual. See above and also 'Arab'; 'Hagarene'.

**139,141,145-147,163 165,169,171,172,175** [Total: 21]

'king' -*ark 'ay*

A title restricted to Persian and other non-Roman kings until **128**, when it is applied to a Roman emperor, Heraclius, for the first time. Thereafter it is used infrequently in a Roman context. It is also used to designate the caliph, *ark'ay Ismayeli*, at **164, 169,170,172** and **176**. The Armenian word *amirapet*, found in later histories, is never used in Sebeos. The title *ark'ay ark'ayits'* is applied on three occasions to the Persian king, at **82** and **88**. See also 'king', *t'agavor* and 'emperor'.

**65-70, 73-76, 80 85, 88, 89, 94 97, 99 113,115,123,124,126-129, 141,143, 144,146, 147,149 151, 155, 157,158, 161, 163 166, 168 170, 172,175,176** [Total: 146]

'king' -*t'agavor*

Found in both Persian, Greek and other contexts, this title appears very frequently throughout the text. Used repeatedly for Heraclius after **131** and no fewer than **37** times for Constans II. This contrasts with the use of *kaysr* for Constans on only three occasions. At **176** and **177**, it is used to designate the caliph; see also 'king', *ark'ay* and 'emperor'.

**65, 68-71, 73-76, 79-88, 90 95, 97, 99 101, 103 107, 111, 113-116, 122-124, 129-134,136,137,139, 141-144, 147-151,155,158, 160,162, 163,165,167,168,171,174-176** [Total: 184]

'kingdom, kingship' -*t'agavorut'iwn*

Used throughout, in both Persian and Greek contexts, though never to reflect the Arab conquests. The Muslim domination is described in terms of their 'authority', *ishkhanut'iwn*, or their 'lordship', *terut'iwn*.

**64, 66, 67, 69, 73, 74, 76, 78, 80, 84, 89, 90, 94, 95, 97,100, 104,106, 111-115,121,122,124, 126-130,132,133, 136,137, 139,141-143, 149, 151,152,161,164,165,168.169,175** [Total: 97]



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'land, country' - *ashkharh*

Used in a political or administrative, as opposed to a geographical, sense to denote a particular land. Thus titles are linked to *ashkharh* and not *erkir*. The fifteen regions of Armenia in the Armenian Geography (*ASX*) are called *ashkharhk'*.

64, 65 67, 70. 72-78, 80, 84 88, 90 92. 94, 95 100. 105, 106, III, 113,116-119. 123. 125, 129. 130,132, 137, 138,143, 144, 147-151,155^ 162,164-168,170,172-175 [Total: 104]

'land, country' - *erkir*

A general term denoting geographical extent, although occasionally it refers to the earth in general.

67-70, 72, 73, 76-79, 84, 86-92, 95, 96, 98. 100 103, 106, 109, 110, 113-115, 123,126,128.131, 132,134-138,141-143, 147, 151, 152,156, 161-164.166,169,170-174,176,177[Total: 111]

'letter, official letter' - *hrovartak*

Regularly used throughout the text, particularly in relation to high- level diplomatic correspondence.

73,74,77,78.92,94.99,100,103,113,123,124,128,148 [Total: 21]

'lord' - *ter*

A title used both of Jesus Christ (40 occasions) and of the head of a family (43 times). The text indicates that there could only be one *ter* of a house at any one time. However in the contemporary notices, both Mushel (166,173,175) and Hamazasp (169,174,175) Mamikonean are given the title *ter Mamikoneits'*. This marks a significant change; the appearance of two rival leaders of the same house suggests that the period after 640 was a time of greater social fluidity, when customary social practices began to disintegrate. See also 'head of a family'; 'tanuter'.

67-70, 72, 77, 87, 88, 94. 99, 101, 116-120. 123, 124, 129, 137-139, 143,145,146,148,152,156-166,169 177 [Total: 83]

'lordship, dominion' - *terut'iwn*

Used of both Arsacid, Greek, Persian and Ismaelite lordship.

64,67,77,83, 90,99,106,122,134,151,163-165 [Total: 13]

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'Magistros' - *Magistros*

A Greek title, applied to Teodoros (133) and to Georg (162, 163). [Total: 7]

'magus'- *mo vpet*

A priest of the Persian state religion. The head of the organization is entitled *movpetan movpet*, 'movpet of movpets'. 69,85 [Total: 4]

'marzpan/office of marzpan' - *marzpan/marzpanut'wn*

Found only in a Persian context. Its original sense was 'governor of a border region'. It is used of Persian governors of Armenia, of the Persian command that Smbat Bagratuni held in Vrkan between 599 and 606/607, and of the Armenian office accorded to his son Varaztirots' by Kawat in 628. See also 'auditor'; 'investigator'. 67,70,71,96,98-101,111,129 [Total: 15]

'metropolitan' - *metropawlit*

Used twice, once of Komitas when addressed by Modestos (116) and once of Kamyishov of Beth Dasen (151). See also 'Catholicos'; 'patriarch'. [Total: 2]

'noble, free' - *azatk'*

A general meaning of noble, as distinct from the third estate, the *anazatk'* or unfree. One reference to *azatagund* (79), which denotes a military formation. 79,81,134 [Total: 3]

'noble' - *nakharar*

Found 17 times in a Persian context and 15 in an Armenian context. The term is used both collectively and individually. It indicates nobility in both societies, and is applied to all members of the same family. The distribution of the term in the text is very uneven, there being only four references after the death of Khosrov II (128) and none after 149. This implies that it obtained definition only in and through Persian society; after the Persian withdrawal from Armenia and the subsequent Sasanian collapse, the term ceased to have meaning and was therefore replaced in the contemporary notices with the term 'prince', *ishkhan*.

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64, 65, 73-75, 77, 80, 83, 84, 90-92, 94, 95, 101-104, 127, 128, 137  
144,148,149 [Total: 32]

### 'noble' -*sepuh*

Used only once, at 89, in relation to the members of the rebellious Vahewunik' house, none of whom is accorded the title 'lord', *ter*. Hence it describes the junior members of a house. [Total: 1]

### 'ordinary people' - *ramik*

A rare term, reflecting those neither noble nor ecclesiastical. See also 'inhabitants'; 'peasant'. 115 [Total: 1]

### 'ostan' - *ostan*

Originally this referred to the royal domain of the Arsacid kings of Armenia. Subsequently it was applied to the core domain or capital of the major families. Linked exclusively to Dvin (111, 113). It denotes the Persian administrative and strategic centre around Dvin. [Total: 2]

### 'overseer, bishop' - *tesuch'*

A literal translation of the Greek 'epi-skopos' (100). See also 'bishop'. [Total: 1]

### 'pact, covenant' - *ukht*

Used of both secular agreements - that between Constans and Muawiya at 143 for example - and of the clergy, at 91 and 114, 'the covenant of the church, the clergy'. There is no sense of 'oath of fealty' or vassalage.

68,76,91,114,129,143,164 [Total: 8]

### 'palace' - *ark 'unik'*

Rare but found in both a Persian and a Roman context.

79,143,160 [Total: 3]

### 'palace' -*kayeank'*

Found only in relation to the palace of the Persian king.

68-70,84, 85,95 [Total: 6]

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'palace' - *palat*

Found in a Greek context to denote the imperial residence in Constantinople.  
84,88,92,93,104,114,133,136,146,149,156 [Total: 12]

'palace' - *tachar*

Denotes the palace of the Persian king and also the temple of Solomon in Jerusalem (139). 104,130,139,155 [Total: 4]

'patriarch/ office of patriarch' - *hayrapet/hayrapetut'iwn*

This term is applied in an Armenian context specifically to saint Gregory, the 'Illuminator' of Armenia, and saint Sahak, a famous head of the Armenian church in the fifth century. The contemporary heads of the Armenian church are all entitled 'Catholicos' rather than 'patriarch'; see entry above. The other references to patriarch are either to the patriarch of Jerusalem or the patriarch of Constantinople.

100,112,116,121,124,129,142,143,148,149,151,155 [Total: 14]

'patrik, patrician' - *patrik*

The Greek title, used of both Greeks and Armenians. It is not found after 139; this may coincide with the award of 'prince of Armenia', *ishkhan Hayots'* and/or '*curopalates'* to Armenians. See 'prince'; '*euro-palates'*,

67,74,77,82,83,104,105,132,139 [Total: 9]

'pavilion' - *mashkapachen/mashaperchan*

The quarters of the Persian king on campaign (69,82). [Total: 2]

'peasant' - *shinakan*

Used only once (172), illustrating the lack of interest on the part of the author in the third estate. [Total: 1]

'people, race, kin' - *azg*

Used in a variety of contexts. At 130 and 174, it is applied to an individual family, giving the meaning of kin or extended family.

64,65, 70,74,76,81,86,90,97,102,115,130, 134,135,160,172,174 [Total: 18]

'possession, property' - *kaluats*

Hereditary entitlement based upon kinship with Abraham through Ismael. Not used in a specific, individual sense and not of any land- holding in Armenia. Muawiya's triumph in the first Arab civil war is described in terms of him ruling over the 'possessions of the sons of Ismael'.

136,139,176 [Total: 3]

'prefect, governor' - *ostikan*

Used once in respect of a court official (83), but more often as 'governor', for example of Jerusalem (115). In the tenth century, it was the title of the Arab governor of Armenia, but there is no mention of governors of Armenia in the text. Compare '*marzpan*' 83,115,149,169 [Total: 5]

'priest' - *ere ts'*

Used interchangeably with *k'ahanay*, with no obvious pattern. See also 'youth', *manuk*.

89,97,99,114,116,121,149,167 [Total: 11]

'priest/office of priest' - *k'ahanay/k'ahanay ut'iwn*

Used interchangeably with 'priest', *erets'*. Derived from Syriac. See also 'youth', *manuk*.

85,97,114,119,120,154,168 [Total: 8]

'primate, pastor/leadership' - *arajnord / arajnordut'iwn*

Used four times to denote those responsible for spiritual guidance (100, 117, 158, 160) and twice to designate secular leadership (75, 129). See also 'archbishop'; 'Catholicos'; 'patriarch'. [Total: 6]

'prince, official' - *ishkhan*

Used in Persian, Armenian, Roman and Arab contexts, both individually and generically. In a Persian or Roman context it implies an official or officer, someone with authority or the power of compulsion. It is used frequently to refer to the members of the Armenian noble houses. At 133 a new title, *ishkhan i veray amenayn ashkharhats'n*, 'prince over all the countries', is granted to Dawit' Saharuni and at 138, the title *ishkhan Hayots'*, 'prince of Armenia', is awarded to Teodoros Rshtuni: a similar title was later confirmed to him by Muawiya (169) but its remit

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was extended to include Iberia, Aluank' and Siwnik'. At 164, 169, 170 and 176, Muawiya is entitled *ishkhan Ismayeli*. He is distinguished from the caliph, who is either *ark'ay Ismayeli* or *t 'agavor Ismayeli*; see 'king'. See also 'noble'.

66,67,73.83,84, 86, 88, 90.94 96,101,102,106,107,109,115,122, 128-134,137, 138,140.142 147,149,150.155,162-176 [Total: 88]

'queen' - *bambishn*

Applied to the Sasanian queen at 69, 85 and 130, where it designates Bor, daughter of Khosrov II, who briefly held power in her own right. [Total: 3] See also 'wife'.

'region, district, side' - *kolmn*

A very general term for a region, which can also refer to one side (of two) or to a particular direction.

65-67, 69, 73, 76 78, 80. 84, 88-92, 95-98.101,104, 106 110,112- 114.121, 124. 126-130,132,134,136, 138,142, 143,145-147,149 151, 155,162,163,165,166,168-173,175,176 [Total: 127]

'Roman' - *Hofom/Hrovmayetsi'*

Used increasingly towards the end of the text, but apparently interchangeable with the more common 'Greek', *Yoynk'*.

77,83,106,123,134,147,148.162,164,165,167,169,170 [Total: 20]

'Sephakan' - *Sephakan*

Traditionally derived from *sepuh* and defined to mean 'hereditary'. In the text of Sebeos, the term is used only in combination with 'contingent', *gund* and has a geographical meaning: see 145 and 166, 'the regions of the *Sephakan gund*'. [Total: 4]

'stade' - *asparez*

A measure of distance, linked to the length of a stadium, traditionally 606 feet or one eighth of a Roman mile. 86,171 [Total: 2]

'stipend' - *rochik*

Denotes the financial remuneration for services rendered to the Persian king (or queen, for which see 85). Usually in combination with *yark'unust*, 'royal treasury'. Found exclusively in a Persian context

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except at 143 when the text portrays Constans in a similar role, but uniquely through Persian vocabulary. See also 'donative'. 85,94,105,110,143 [Total: 5]

'*stratelat*, general' - *stratelat*

Used only of the Greek commander, at 77 and 105. [Total: 2]

'submission' - *tsarayut'iwn*

A term indicating recognition of the authority of another. It is found in both an individual and a collective context; thus numerous cities submit to Khoream at 111-115. However it only applies in the text of Sebeos to the ultimate overlord - either the Persian or Roman king, or later the Arab caliph - and does not refer to any relationship of service at a lower level within Armenian society.

66, 67, 74, 77, 84, 88, 92, 96, 104, 110-113, 115, 123,133,136, 142, 144,151,164,166,169,170,172,173-175 [Total: 53]

'*tanuter*, headship' - *Tanuterakan/tanuterut'iwn*

Traditionally defined to mean senior member of a house and used interchangeably *wiihnahapet* or *ter*. At 76 and 84, it appears in combination with *ishkhanut 'iwn* and *tun*. Both these references occur in the conditions of the 591 treaty between Maurice and Khosrov II which redefined the partition of Armenia; on both occasions, they define an area of Armenia. See 'head of the family'; 'lord'. 76,84,95,101,129,144 [Total: 6]

'tent' - *khoran*

Used of Khosrov's quarters on campaign, and once (124) in a similar context for those of Heraclius. 79, 82,83,109,124 [Total: 11]

'throne, cushions' - *gahoyk'*

These played an important role in the strictly hierarchical Sasanian, and, by extension, Armenian social structure. Their appearance in the text is associated with either plunder or gift-giving. There is no reference to the order of 'dignity', *gah* or 'position', *bardz*, amongst the nobles, a subject which absorbed other Armenian historians. 75,79,132,144,155,175 [Total: 6]

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'town' - *awan*

Clearly distinct from 'city\*k'alak*\) although much less common. The difference between the two may be related to the presence or absence of walls. At 138, Dvin is categorized as an *awan*, which is very unusual. See also 'city'; 'village'; 'walled village'. 84,125,126,138 [Total: 6]

'tribunal' - *atean*

On both occasions at 150, used in a Persian context. [Total: 2]

'tribute' - *hark*

A general term for tax or tribute. Although only four references are given, these have either a Persian or Arab context; no reference is made to direct Roman financial impositions upon Armenia. 66,96,123,172 [Total: 4]

'tribute-collector' - *harkapahanj*

Found only at 172. Both references indicate that they collected money and not goods in kind. [Total: 2]

'tutor, guardian' - *dayeak*

The arrangement for the up-bringing of noble-born sons in the family of another noble was common in both Persian and Armenian society. Found only in a Persian context (73). [Total: 1]

'vardapet, spiritual instructor' - *vardapet*

Used once in an expressly Armenian context, of the Catholicos (100) and on three occasions in connection with famous teachers of the early church. 100,158,161 [Total: 4]

'vicar, locum-tenens' - *telapah*

A title applied to Modestos (116), reflecting his intermediate status in Jerusalem after the forced exile of the patriarch Zak'aria. Also applied to the emperor as God's vice-regent on earth (133). [Total: 2]

'village' - *gewl*

Identified as a small settlement, without defences, although one has a 'small fort', *berdak*, within it; this settlement is defined further as a



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'walled village/komopolis', *giwlak'alak'* (102). Villages are usually named in the text. See also 'city'; 'town'; 'walled village'.

70.71.98.102,104,108,109.112,125,137,148.166 [Total: 17]

'walled village/komopolis' - *giwlak'alak'/k'alak'agiwl* A small, defended settlement.

88,101,102,108 [Total: 4]

'wife, lady' - *tikin*

Used twice of Shirin, wife of Khosrov II (85) and once in the plural (127) for the wives of Khosrov. At 85 Shirin is also entitled 'queen of queens', *tikinats' tikin*, the corollary of 'king of kings', *ark'ay ark'ayits'* (82,88). See also 'queen'. [Total: 3]

'youth, cleric' - *manuk*

Found in its usual context-both Khosrov II (82) and Constans(147) are described as young men, to explain their inexperienced behaviour - and collectively, to specify the clergy ( 91,154). 82,91,107-109,112,115,147,154 [Total: 9]

### III. ARMENIAN PERSONAL NAMES BY FAMILY

The direct references in this appendix are to the following works: *The Epic Histories (Buzandaran Patmut'iwnk')* [HATS 8] (Cambridge, MA, 1989) ('EFT') by N.G. Garsoian, which contains an extensive commentary on these families; and *Studies in Christian Caucasian History* (Georgetown, 1963) *C Studies'*) by C. Toumanoff. The numbers in brackets identify the numbering of the person in the lists in the five- volume study by H. Acharean, *Hayots' Andznannuneri Bararan* (Erevan, 1942-1962; repr. Beirut, 1972). This work remains untranslated. The figures in bold supply the first reference only to that individual in the text of Sebeos, and follow the page numbers in the Abgaryan edition of the text (incorporated in the same way into the body of the translation) and not the page numbers of this book. Amatuni [house in Vaspurakan and Aragatsotn]: *EH* 346-7; *Studies* 197-8 Kotit [no. 1]: 87 Shapuh [no.4]: 138 bishop of Amatunik' [Matt'eos no.6]: **150** Apahuni [house in Turuberan, north of Lake Van]: *Studies* 199 Artavazd [no. 17]: **101** Hmayeak [no.8]: **101** Manuel [no.8]: **101** Vstam [no.3]: **101**

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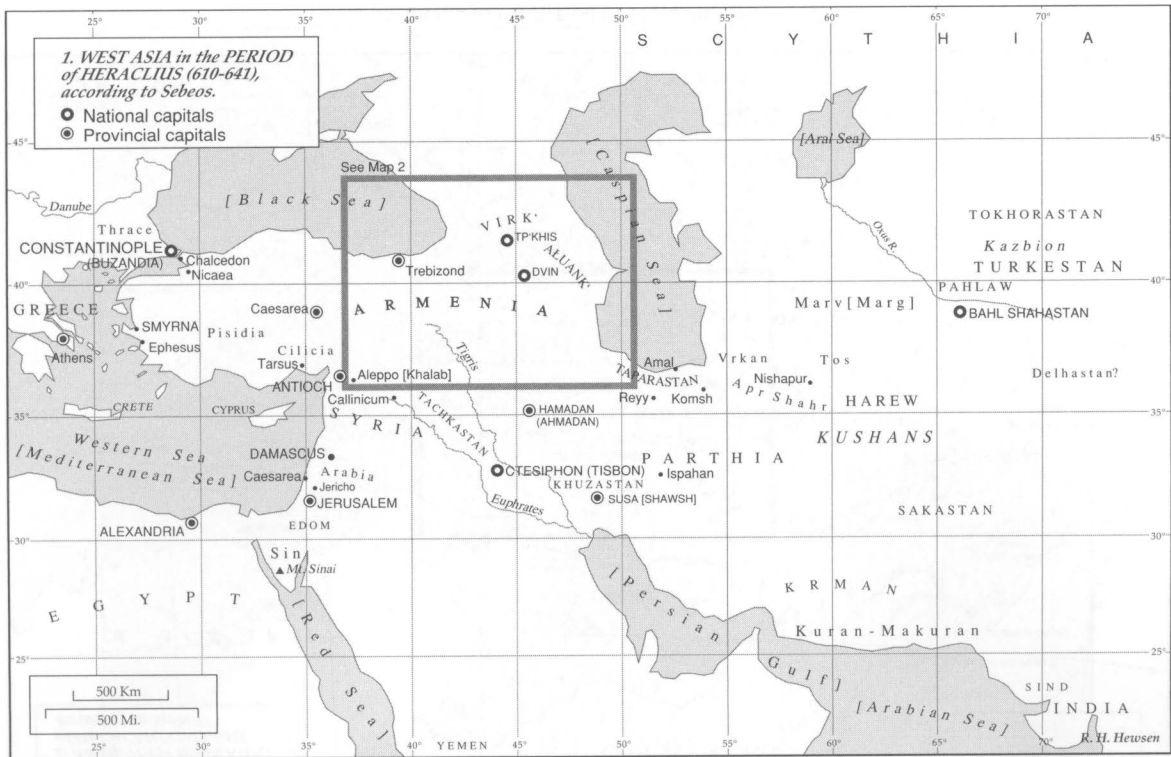
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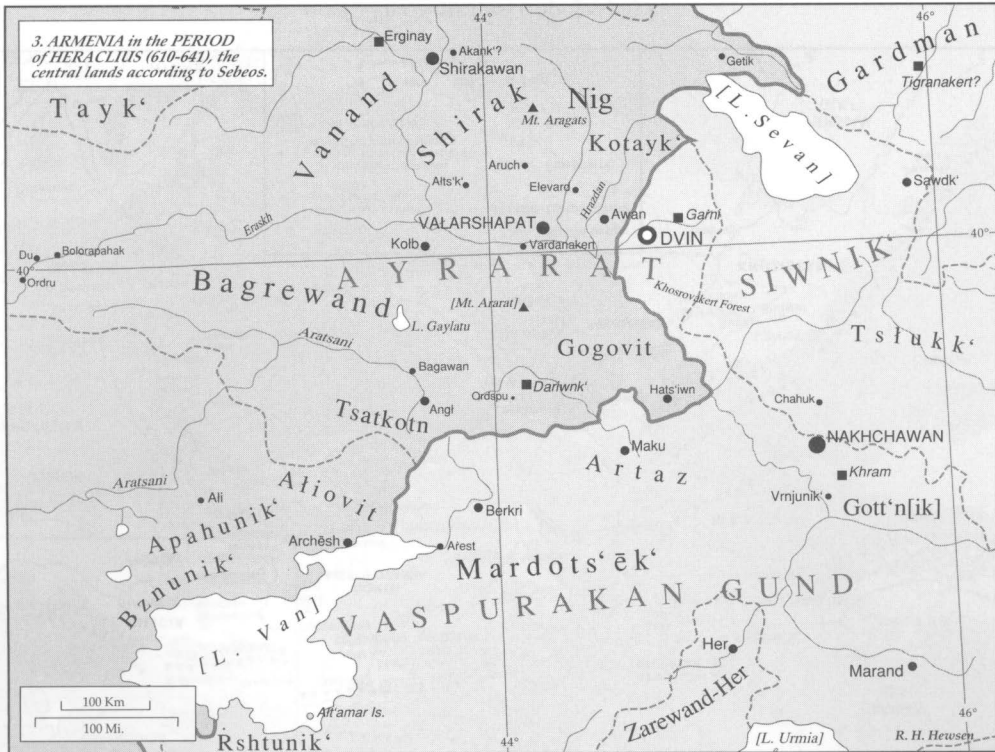
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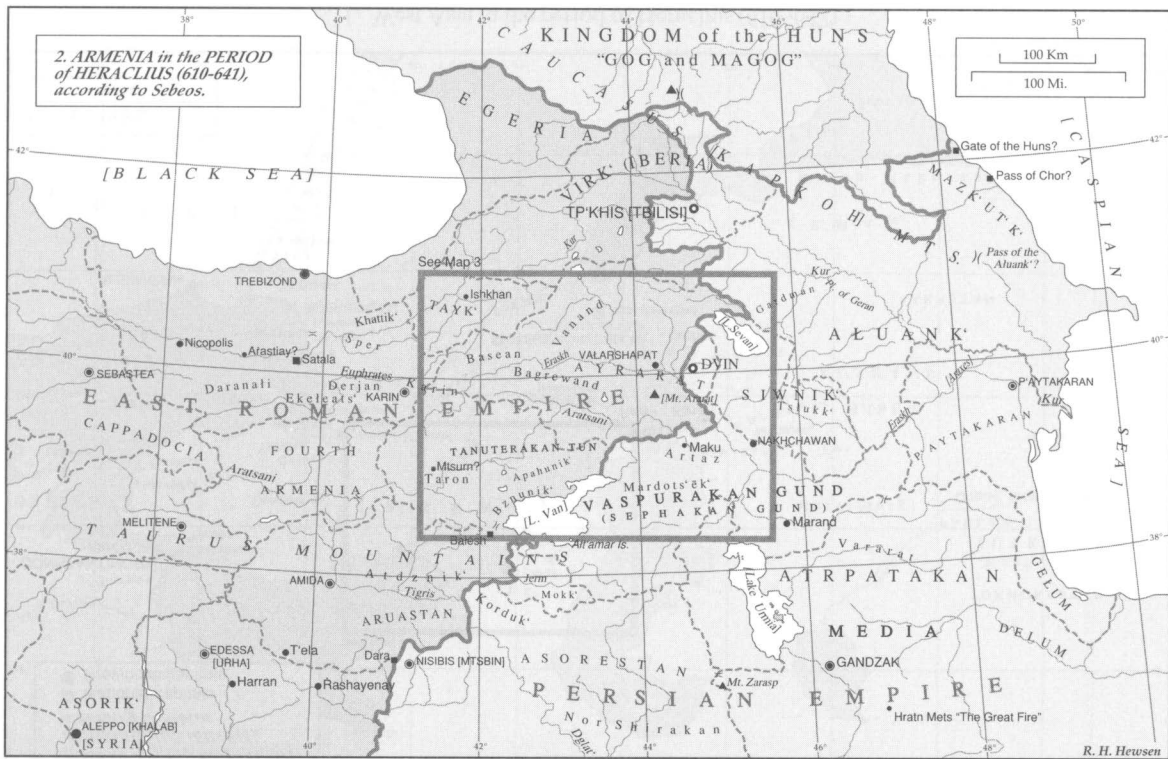


1. West Asia in the period of Heraclius (610–642)





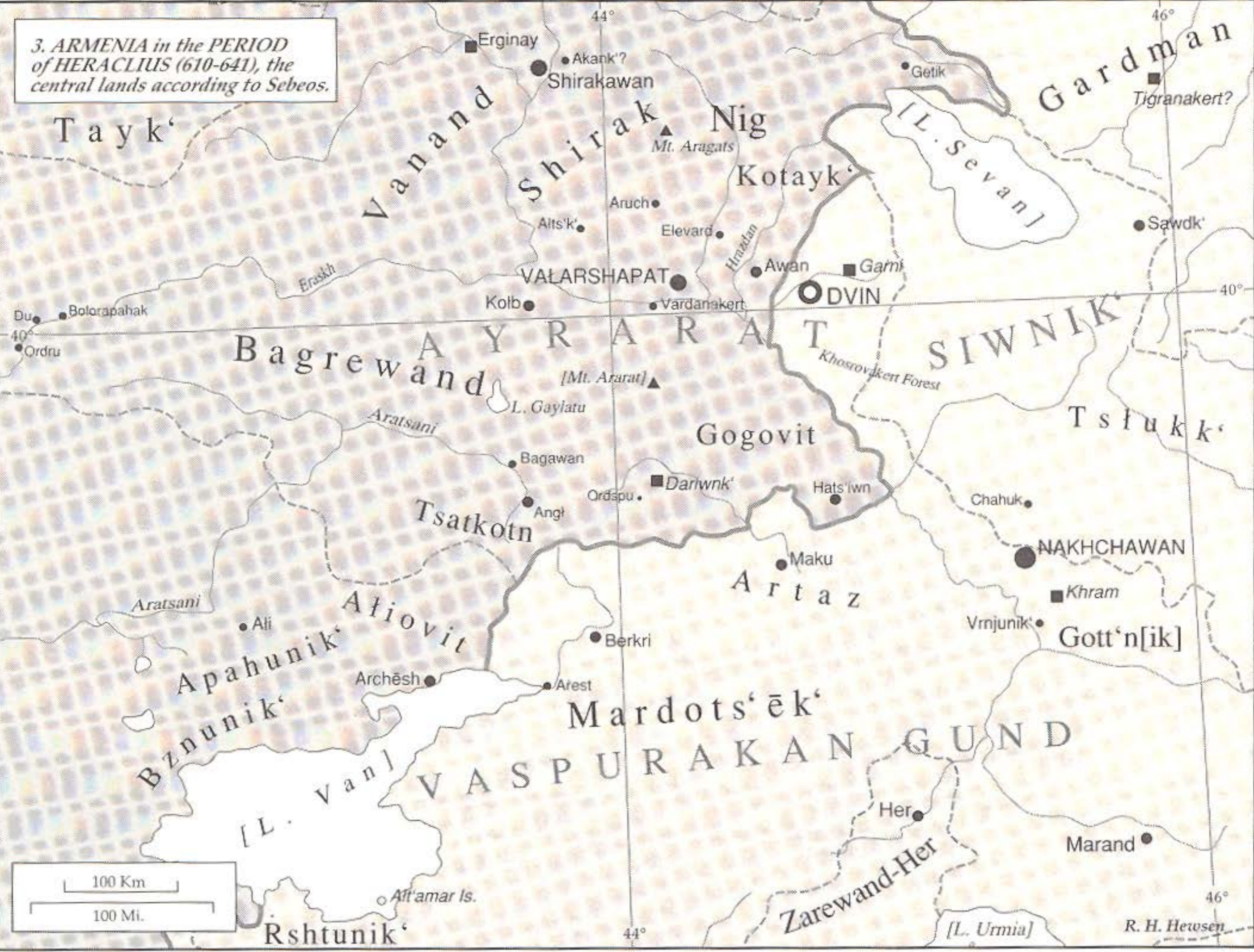
3. Armenia in the period of Heraclius: the central lands



2. Armenia in the period of Heraclius (610–642)

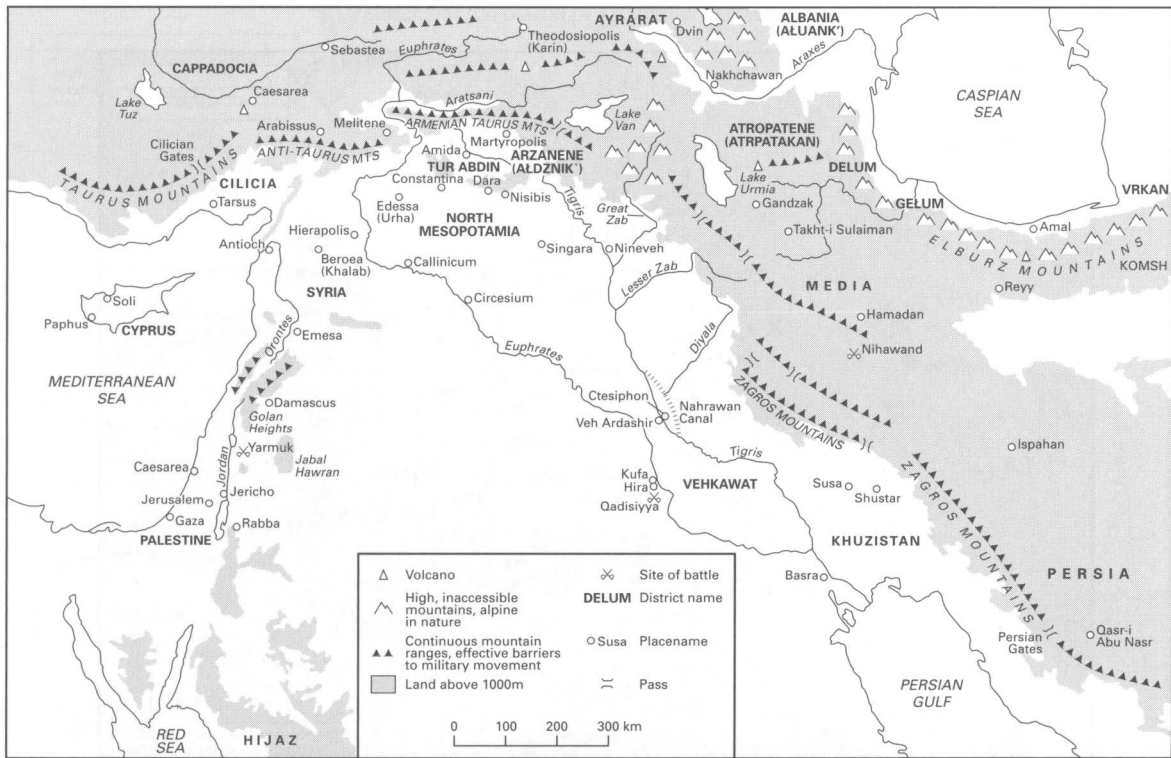


3. ARMENIA in the PERIOD of HERACLIUS (610-641), the central lands according to Sebeos.

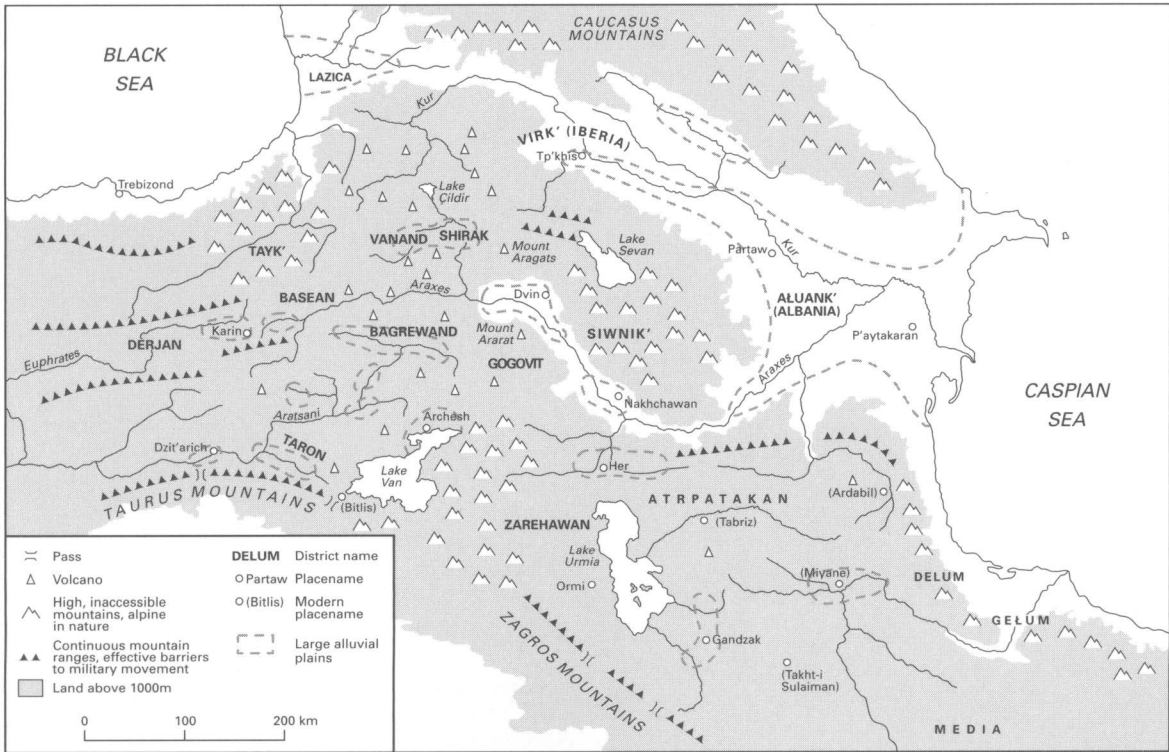


3. Armenia in the period of Heraclius: the central lands





4. The Near East (topography)



5. Armenia and neighbouring lands (topography)