

# Syriac Evidence for the Roman-Persian War of 421–422

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**S**TUDY OF ROME'S RELATIONS with her eastern neighbors makes a number of special demands. Not only the material evidence but also the literary sources, written in various languages, require special expertise on a broad front. Some ten years ago K. G. Holum offered a good example of the multi-lateral approach. Relying on numismatic material and Greek, Latin, Armenian, and Arabic sources, he succeeded in giving a new analysis of the causes, course, and consequences of the Persian war that broke out shortly after the accession of the Sassanid Vahram (=Bahram or Varahran) V Gor (421–438) in the reign of Theodosius II (408–450).<sup>1</sup>

With some justification, Holum did not refer to Syriac sources: accounts in Syriac historiography of this short, violent war depend almost wholly on Greek sources, the works of Socrates and Theodoret. But there are at least three Syriac texts that are pertinent to topics Holum discusses. They will be treated here (I–III), along with a review of the formal accounts of the war in Syriac historiography (IV).

## I

According to Holum, Theodosius' sister Pulcheria, whose influence was paramount at the time, initiated the war of 421–422 as a crusade. Inspired by her wish to gain a victory for Christ and the emperor, her government broke with the policy of the *praefectus praetorio per Orientem* Anthemius, who until 414 had promoted tolerance for the fire cult within the Empire and maintained good relations with Vahram's father, Yazdgard I

<sup>1</sup> K. G. HOLUM, "Pulcheria's Crusade A.D. 421–22 and the Ideology of Imperial Victory," *GRBS* 18 (1977: hereafter 'Holum') 153–72; for the date of Vahram's actual accession see T. NÖLDEKE, *Geschichte der Persen und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden. Aus der arabischen Chronik des Tabari* (Leiden 1879: hereafter 'Nöldeke') 420.

(399–end 420). When Yazdgard's policy of tolerance collapsed under the constant pressure of the magi and the provocations of zealous Christians, Pulcheria's regime "did not respond with diplomacy," Holum maintains, but "decided to ... go to war."<sup>2</sup> On this point a Syriac document is of special interest.

The acta of the Synod of Seleucia-Ctesiphon<sup>3</sup> report that the meeting was convened in 419/420 under the presidency of Catholicus Y(h)abalaha I, who had visited Constantinople as Yazdgard's ambassador in 417/418. The Synod was also attended by Bishop Acacius of Amida, who, as the same acta state, was then visiting Ctesiphon as a Roman ambassador.<sup>4</sup> Garsoïan and

<sup>2</sup> Holum 162; some criticism of Holum (not pertinent to my argument, but see n.8 *infra*) in J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops: Army, Church, and State in the Age of Arcadius and Chrysostom* (Oxford 1990) esp. 129.

<sup>3</sup> Preserved in the so-called *Synodicon*: see J. B. CHABOT, *Synodicon Orientale, ou recueil de synodes nestoriens* (= *Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale et autres bibliothèques* 37 [Paris 1902: hereafter 'Chabot']) 37–42 (276–84). The anachronisms detected by modern scholars in several texts of the *Synodicon* concern adaptations of dogmatic and ecclesiastical formulations to later standards and are due to a compiler, probably of the eighth century: see J.-M. Fiey, "Les étapes de la prise de conscience de son identité patriarcale par l'église syrienne orientale," *L'orient syrien* 12 (1967) 15ff, and *Jalons pour une histoire de l'église en Iraq* (=CSCO 310, Subsidia 36 [Louvain 1970]) 78; A. de Halleux, "Le symbole des évêques perses au Synode de Séleucie-Ctésiphon (410)," in *Erkenntnisse und Meinungen: Festschrift W. Strothmann* (= *Göttinger Orientforschungen* I.17 [Wiesbaden 1978]) II 161–90; S. Gero, "The See of Peter in Babylon: Western Influences on the Ecclesiology of Early Persian Christianity," in N. G. Garsoïan, T. F. Matthews, R. W. Thomson, edd., *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period* (Washington 1982) 45–51. These anachronisms do not affect the importance of the acta as an historical source: cf. Fiey (1970) 17f.

<sup>4</sup> See Chabot 37 (277); for later references to both embassies see L. Sako, *Le rôle de la hiérarchie syriaque orientale dans les rapports diplomatiques entre la Perse et Byzance aux V<sup>e</sup>–VII<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris 1986) 71–77. An echo of Acacius' visit (or an earlier one) is also found in the acts of the martyrdom of Mar Peroz: see, for the text, P. Bedjan, ed., *Acta martyrum et sanctorum* IV (Paris 1894) 256; translations: G. Hoffmann, *Auszüge aus syrischen Akten persischer Märtyrer* (= *AbhKM* VII.3 [Leipzig 1880]) 41; O. Braun, *Ausgewählte Akten persischer Märtyrer* (= *Bibliothek der Kirchenväter* 22 [Kempten 1915]) 165. According to Socrates (*HE* 7.21), Vahram invited Acacius to his court to thank him for the release of 7,000 Persian captives whom Acacius had ransomed from the Roman commander. The visit probably resulting from this invitation is, pace e.g. Chabot 277 n.2 and Garsoïan (n.5 *infra*) 124 n.24, to be distinguished from Acacius' sojourn at the Sassanid court as an ambassador to Yazdgard, as Sako 75–80 makes clear. The sources, however, do not

Sako have shown that it was normal to entrust high ecclesiastical dignitaries with important state negotiations.<sup>5</sup> We may conclude that shortly before the war broke out diplomatic activities had not been abandoned.

The Byzantine court clearly was concerned about the sudden change in Yazdgard's Christian policy. At least on 5 May 420 Constantinople was taking anti-Persian but, it must be emphasized, wholly defensive measures: "property-holders in provinces exposed to Persian attack (were invited) to protect their estates with private fortifications."<sup>6</sup> The Persians showed the same prudence. Although Acacius had the delicate task of confronting Yazdgard with Roman displeasure about the Persians' recent mistreatment of Christians,<sup>7</sup> the synodic acts reflect no tension between the two empires. On the contrary, the Persian bishops heartily conformed to all decisions taken by the church of Constantinople. They would never have professed so overtly their unity with the Western church without Yazdgard's consent. Later accounts of both Y(h)abalaha's mission to Constantinople (417/418) and Acacius' embassy to Ctesiphon (419/420) also breathe a spirit of courtesy. Thus even in the last year of Yazdgard's reign Byzantium and Ctesiphon undoubtedly maintained normal, even friendly relations.<sup>8</sup>

The rupture occurred only after Yazdgard's death (end of 420) and the accession of Vahram (spring 420).<sup>9</sup> Analysis of develop-

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support Sako's thesis (75f, 78ff) that during his second visit to Seleucia-Ctesiphon Acacius brought the peace negotiations to a successful conclusion. Procopius had that charge: Holum 169. Vahram's invitation concerned Acacius personally.

<sup>5</sup> N. G. Garsoïan, "Le rôle de la hiérarchie chrétienne dans les relations diplomatiques entre Byzance et les Sassanides," *REArméniennes* n.s. 10 (1973-74) 119-38; Sako (*supra* n.4).

<sup>6</sup> Holum 162. There is no reason to date the troop movements mentioned there to 420. They more likely belong to 421.

<sup>7</sup> It is not surprising that the acknowledged leader of Persian Christianity, Y(h)abalaha, was present at the meeting between Yazdgard and Acacius: see Chabot 276f.

<sup>8</sup> Sako (*supra* n.4) 71-77. These facts forbid assuming with A. Christensen (*L'Iran sous les Sassanides*<sup>2</sup> [Copenhagen 1944] 275f) and Liebeschuetz (*supra* n.2: 129) that the war of 421-422 was the immediate consequence of Yazdgard's measures to repress the aggressive behavior of some Christians.

<sup>9</sup> For these dates see Nöldeke 419f.

ments leading to this break should not overlook a factor well discussed in earlier literature. On the basis of Tabari, Nöldeke pointed out Vahram's precarious position at his accession: his father had faced strong opposition from the magi and other Persian nobles; his eldest brother had even been murdered by them, and Vahram owed his throne only to the support of Mundhir I, the Arab prince of Hira.<sup>10</sup> To win the loyalty of the Persian nobles, Vahram had no choice but to replace his father's widely detested policy with a decidedly anti-Christian stance.<sup>11</sup> Thus the anti-Christian faction at the Persian court, already given free scope since Yazdgard's death, now received active support from the Shah. Consequently, Constantinople no doubt felt obliged to defend the Christians against the ensuing persecutions. In the Byzantine view, therefore, the war of 421–422 was certainly fought for the sake of Christianity, and so far Holum is justified in calling it "Pulcheria's crusade." The war, however, did not result from long-range planning by a Byzantine regime spurred on by ideology and seeking a possibility for victory, as Holum thinks. Tabari and the synodic acta of Seleucia/Ctesiphon clearly indicate that the decisive factor behind the war of 421–422 lay in the Persian dynastic crisis after Yazdgard's death. Accordingly, the Roman offensive of 421 should be seen primarily as a reaction to internal Persian developments.<sup>12</sup> The Christian ideology of victory, which Holum so ingeniously reconstructed, must have been developed after Yazdgard's death when the war seemed inevitable.

<sup>10</sup> See Tabari I 855–63, in M. J. De Goeje, ed., *Annales quas scripsit Abu Djafar Mohammed Ibn Djarir at-Tabari* I.2, rec. J. Barth and T. Nöldeke (Leiden 1881–82); tr. in Nöldeke 85–98. The indices in both these publications (s.v. "[al-]Mundhir b. [al-]Nu'man") do not distinguish this prince from his homonymous descendant, living a century later: cf. Christensen (*supra* n.8) 274ff; R. N. Frye, "The Political History of Iran under the Sasanians," in E. Yarshater, ed., *The Cambridge History of Iran III: The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Period* (Cambridge 1983) 144; I. SHAHID, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century* (Washington 1989; hereafter 'Shahid') 28f. The SUNY translation of the relevant part of Tabari has not yet been published.

<sup>11</sup> See Nöldeke 98 n.1; J. Labourt, *Le christianisme dans l'empire perse sous la dynastie sassanide (224–632)* (=Bibliothèque de l'enseignement de l'histoire ecclésiastique [Paris 1901]) 109f.

<sup>12</sup> Other incentives may have been the ever-growing influence of hard-line Christians (Holum), the wish of Constantinople's unmilitary rulers to show that they could be victorious (Liebeschuetz [*supra* n.2] 129), and on the Persian side the influence of Mundhir of Hira (Shahid 29).

## II

Another Syriac text sheds light on Persian strategy in the war. Socrates (*HE* 7.18ff),<sup>13</sup> our main source for the military campaigns of the war, relates that after a Roman invasion of Arzanene, Narsaeus, the Persian commander,<sup>14</sup> decided to try his luck in Mesopotamia. The Romans, however, locked him up in Nisibis. Vahram with Arab auxiliaries under Alamundarus<sup>15</sup> came to the rescue and succeeded in raising the siege. After some additional fighting, peace was concluded in 422.<sup>16</sup> Vahram's campaign merits attention.

Theodoret (*HE* 5.37.6–10) recounts a siege of Theodosiopolis by the Persian king Gororanes in the time of Theodosius II. Since peace was broken only once during the reigns of Vahram and Theodosius II, the episode must belong to the war of 421–422.<sup>17</sup> Vahram, according to Theodoret, made a fierce assault on Theodosiopolis, but the piety and tactical insight of Bishop Eunomius prevented his success: by skilfully managing a ballista named after the apostle Thomas, Eunomius even succeeded in killing one of Vahram's chief allies, thus proving that God chooses the side of the good.

Only one problem remains to be solved: the identity of this Theodosiopolis. There are two candidates: the Armenian city (modern Erzerum in northeastern Turkey) founded by Theodosius II in, presumably, 421 (or later), and Theodosiopolis-Resaina (Resh'ayna) on the Chabur River in Mesopotamia, 115 km. west of Nisibis, near the modern Turkish-Syrian border, founded by Theodosius I in 383.<sup>18</sup> Theodoret gives no clue,

<sup>13</sup> See the rather too critical discussion in Holum 167–70.

<sup>14</sup> Ṭabari is rather detailed about the Persian 'grand vizier' Mihr-Narse (=Narse or Mihr-Narseh): see the Index in Nöldeke 495.

<sup>15</sup> *I.e.*, al-Mundhir b. al-Nu'man I of al-Ḥira: see *supra* n.10. Mundhir's attack was directed against Syria; he was defeated by the Romans under Vitianus: see *e.g.* E. W. Brooks, "The Eastern Provinces from Arcadius to Anastasius," in *Cambridge Medieval History* I (Cambridge 1911) 464; E. Honigmann, "Syria," *RE* 4A (1932) 1702; and most recently Shahid 29–35.

<sup>16</sup> Socrates 7.18, 20; Sozomen 9.4 *in.* (Migne, *PG* 67).

<sup>17</sup> See also B. Croke, "Dating Theodoret's *Church History and Commentary on the Psalms*," *Byzantion* 54 (1984) 63–72.

<sup>18</sup> Theodosiopolis-Erzerum: F. H. Weissbach, "Theodosiopolis," *RE* 5A (1934) 1923–28; A. H. M. Jones, *The Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces*<sup>2</sup> (Oxford 1971) 224; Holum 167 with n.61; Theodosiopolis-Resaina: V. Chapot, *La frontière de l'Euphrate de Pompée à la conquête arabe* (=BEFAR 99 [Paris

speaking periphrastically of τὴν ἐπώνυμον τοῦ βασιλέως πόλιν. As the Armenian city was named for Theodosius II, Weissbach, followed by Seeck and Stein (without argument), assumed that Vahram attacked that fortress,<sup>19</sup> but his view is hardly convincing. For a panegyric author like Theodoret, every Theodosiopolis could be ἐπώνυμος τοῦ βασιλέως, whether or not its name derived from the reigning emperor. Gibbon, Brooks, and Bury opted for the Mesopotamian Theodosiopolis, Resaina, but without argument.<sup>20</sup>

Holum shed new light on the problem from the Armenian historian Moses of Chorene: at the beginning of his reign Vahram faced not only a Byzantine attack but also a revolt in the Persian sector of Armenia. The disturbances in Persarmenia lasted three years and render unlikely any attack by Vahram on the new fortress of Theodosiopolis-Erzerum, lying close to the Roman-Persian frontier in Armenia. Thus Holum, followed by Croke, argued that Vahram besieged Theodosiopolis-Resaina.<sup>21</sup> But Demandt, in what will be a standard work, puts the siege, again, at Theodosiopolis-Erzerum, as does Shahid.<sup>22</sup> The problem warrants reconsideration.

First, according to Socrates (7.18), Vahram in person raised the Roman siege of Nisibis; and a subsequent counterattack on Roman Theodosiopolis-Resaina, 115 km. from Nisibis, is more logical geographically than a long march into the interior of Anatolia. A Syriac source, however, provides a more decisive

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1907]) 301–04; F. H. Weissbach, “Resaina,” *RE* 1A (1914) 618f; 5A, 1922f; Jones 222; L. Dillemann, *Haute Mésopotamie orientale et pays adjacents: Contribution à la géographie historique de la région, du v<sup>e</sup> s. avant l’ère chrétienne au vi<sup>e</sup> s. de cette ère* (= *Bibl. Arch. Hist.* 72 [Paris 1962]) Index s.v. “Resaina,” “Theodosiopolis d’Osroène.”

<sup>19</sup> Weissbach (*supra* n.18: 1934) 1925f; O. Seeck, *Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt* VI (Stuttgart 1920) 86; E. Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire I: De l’état romain à l’état byzantin*, ed. J.-R. Palanque (Paris 1959) 281.

<sup>20</sup> E. Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. J. B. Bury (London 1909–14) III 413; Brooks (*supra* n.15) 464; J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire from the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian* (London 1923) II 4 n.5.

<sup>21</sup> Holum 168 with n.62; Moses of Chorene 3.56=R. W. Thomson, tr., *Moses Khorenats’i. History of the Armenians* (= *Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies* 4 [Cambridge (Mass.) 1978]) 326; Croke (*supra* n.17) 64, 69.

<sup>22</sup> A. Demandt, *Die Spätantike: Römische Geschichte von Diocletian bis Justinian* (= *Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaften* III.6 [Munich 1989]) 167; Shahid 34.

argument for Theodosiopolis-Resaina. Michael the Syrian's *Chronicle* speaks several times of this war. Although he depends wholly on Socrates and Theodoret—through some *Zwischenquellen*, as we shall see (IV.3 below)—one of his accounts is pertinent: the Persian king Varahran attacked Resh'ayna but failed to achieve success, through the prayers of "the then bishop, Eunomius."<sup>23</sup>

Michael says Resh'ayna, whereas Theodoret refers to a city called Theodosiopolis; but this observation does not settle the question. Michael's *Zwischenquelle*, a Syriac source, understanding from Theodoret that Vahram besieged Theodosiopolis, may well have assumed automatically the city of that name lying in a Syriac-speaking region and called Resh'ayna in his native tongue. Therefore Michael does not prove identification of Theodoret's Theodosiopolis with Resaina.

By chance, however, Michael offers a second clue in a quite different context—a letter written in 684, two and a half centuries after Vahram's attack, by a group of bishops assembled in Resaina. The letter was signed "in the palace of Eunomius" (*b-haykla d-'Ewnomiyos*).<sup>24</sup> At that time Bishop Gabriel occupied the see of Resaina,<sup>25</sup> so the episcopal palace must have been named after an Eunomius, already an historical figure in 684—no doubt the bishop who saved Theodosiopolis from the Persians. No other Eunomius, so far as I know, was ever associated with Resaina. The arguments, if taken together, are thus: (1) a "palace of Eunomius" at Resaina, (2) Michael's rendering Theodoret's "Theodosiopolis" as "Res'ayna," (3) the proximity of Resaina and Nisibis, (4) the revolt in Persarmenia, yield the unavoidable conclusion that Theodosiopolis=Resaina was the target of Vahram's assault in 421.

<sup>23</sup> J.-B. CHABOT, ed. and tr., *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, patriarche jacobite d'Antioche 1166-1199* (Paris 1899-1924; hereafter 'M.S.') IV 171 (II 13); Chabot's translation, "l'évêque Eunomius, qui s'y trouvait," for '*Ewnomiyos epis d-'it (h)wa bah* lays too much stress on Eunomius' physical presence.

<sup>24</sup> M.S. IV 438 (II 458). Presumably, the corpus from which this letter derives belonged to a private collection of one of the actors of 684, Jacob of Edessa: see R. Abramowski, *Dionysius von Tellmahre, jakobitischer Patriarch von 818-845* (= *AbhKM* 25.2 [Leipzig 1940]) 91; and my "Chronological Problems," *Oriens Christianus* 75 (1991) 66-69.

<sup>25</sup> W. Hage, *Die syrisch-Jakobitische Kirche in frühislamischer Zeit nach orientalischen Quellen* (Wiesbaden 1966) 98; Schrier (*supra* n.24) 67.

## III

The *Chronicle of Arbela* can now be cited for information on the peace treaty in 422, as the authenticity of this work, long the subject of serious doubt, has recently been vindicated.<sup>26</sup> It

<sup>26</sup> The first editor, A. MINGANA (*Sources syriaques* I [Mosul 1908: hereafter 'Mingana']), has more than once been suspected of generating the text himself: see most recently J. M. Fiey, "Auteur et date de la Chronique d'Arbèles," *L'orient syrien* 12 (1967) 265–302; arguments for authenticity in S. P. Brock, rev. of G. Wiessner, *Untersuchungen zur syrischen Literaturgeschichte* I, in *JThS* n.s. 19 (1968) 308 n.1; M.-L. Chaumont, *La christianisation de l'empire iranien des origines aux grandes persécutions du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (=CSCO 499, Subsidia 80 [Louvain 1988]) 37; and most vigorously by the latest editor, P. KAWERAU, ed., *Die Chronik von Arbela* I (text)–II (tr.) (=CSCO 467–68, Syr. 199–200 [Louvain 1985: hereafter 'Kawerau']). The pivotal argument concerns the exact date of the battle in the plain of Hormizdagan that marked the end of the Parthian empire and the beginning of Sassanid ascendancy. As recently established from an inscription found in 1935, the battle occurred on 28 April 224, a Wednesday: see R. Altheim-Stiehl in Kawerau II 13–16. Kawerau (I ix–x, II 5–11) argues that this date is so similar to that of the *Chronicle* (Mingana 29 [105f]; E. SACHAU, *Die Chronik von Arbela: Ein Beitrag zur Kenntniss des ältesten Christentums* [=AbhBerl 1915.6: hereafter 'Sachau'] 61; Kawerau 30 [50]), viz. Wednesday 27 April 535 (Seleucid era=A.D. 224), that Mingana in 1908 could not have contrived it. For Kawerau the similarity of the dates constitutes irrefutable proof that Mingana's text is authentic, but his argumentation requires modification. Nöldeke 409ff had already suggested, on the basis of Tabari, that the battle should be dated to 28 April 224. Nöldeke's surmise won wide acceptance, *inter alios* by Labourt (*supra* n.11: 1), whose work was almost certainly known to Mingana, then living in Mosul: cf. Fiey 299. If, therefore, Mingana had forged the text, he could have simply taken over the date of Wednesday 28 April 224. His text, however, gives the battle as Wednesday 27 April 535 Seleucid era—a date that apparently embarrassed him seriously, for he added a note (106 n.1) that, since 27 April fell on a Wednesday in 225, the battle must have been fought in 225, contrary to the opinion of Nöldeke and Labourt. He concludes, moreover, that for dates of the Seleucid era in the *Chronicle* the number 310 must be subtracted to find equivalents in the Christian era—a statement that must have amazed even himself. If he had been the author of the text, he could have avoided these difficulties by simply following the opinion of scholars he held in high esteem. Not the correspondence, therefore, but the difference between the date of the battle in the *Chronicle* and Nöldeke's real date exonerates Mingana of forging the *Chronicle*. Authenticity of the *Chronicle* should not be doubted, and the deviation of one day can be explained: when mediaeval Islamic historians record both the weekday of an event and its date, the weekday is almost invariably the more reliable: see B. Spuler, "Con amore, oder: Einige Bemerkungen zur islamischen Zeitrechnung," *Islam* 38 (1963) 154, who linked his observation with the uncertainties inherent in the Hegira calendar, but the view may be accurate for any society without pocket diaries and wall calendars. The *Chronicle*'s Wednesday 27 April 535 Sel. era is a simple mistake for Wednesday 28 April 535 Sel. era: cf. n.34 *infra*.



appears to be the work of an anonymous local historian, writing in the middle of the sixth century, before *ca* 569.<sup>27</sup> After a brief reference to a war between heathen Persians and Christian Romans during the pontificate of the Arbelite metropolitan Daniel (407–431), the *Chronicle* states that “in consequence of that (war) both parties agreed to give their territories complete liberty in the matter of religion” (*w-beh* [ *sc. qra*ba ] *'et'awwiiw trayhon gabbe d-heruta mshamlayta nettun l-'atrawathon mettul haymanuta* ).<sup>28</sup> The *Chronicle* thus supplements Socrates and other sources, who only record that Persian Christians ceased to be persecuted after the conclusion of peace,<sup>29</sup> and affirms a thesis that both parties to the treaty agreed to tolerate each other's religion within their own territories.<sup>30</sup>

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This argument does not imply that the extant text of the *Chronicle* is the original: abbreviation of the text in the Middle Ages would account for strange omissions: *cf.* Fiey 287. Besides, there is something wrong with the only available manuscript, *Berlin Staatsbibliothek preußischer Kulturbesitz or. fol.* 3126: the arguments of J. Assfalg, “Zur Textüberlieferung der Chronik von Arbela: Beobachtungen zu Ms.or.fol.3126,” *Oriens Christianus* 50 (1966) 19–36, cannot be ignored. See also n.27 *infra*.

<sup>27</sup> The original text must date before *ca* 569 as Mar Abraham (†*ca* 569), rector of the school of Nisibis, is said to be alive: see Mingana viii; Sachau 6; A. Vööbus, *History of the School of Nisibis* (=CSCO 266, Subsidia 26 [Louvain 1965]) 210; for the text Mingana 73 (154); Sachau 91; Kawerau 78 (105f). Therefore Kawerau's identification (II 9) of the *Chronicle* with Isho'zka's *Ecclesiastical History*, written in the first half of the seventh century, must be incorrect. Similarly, attribution of the *Chronicle* to Mshihazka, as Mingana viif and others, is questionable: see Assfalg (*supra* n.26) 26; Fiey (*supra* n.26) 284. Indeed, according to Kawerau II 8ff and Chaumont (*supra* n.26) 35f, the identification of Mshihazka with Isho'zka (and Zkaisho') does not derive from the *Catalogue of Books* of 'Abdisho' (Ebedjesu, †1318) but only from the superscription and notes in J. S. Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana* III.1: *De scriptoribus Nestorianis* (Rome 1725) 216. The *Chronicle* must be considered the reworking of an anonymous but authentic document from the middle of the sixth century.

<sup>28</sup> Mingana 62f (142); Sachau 33; Kawerau 67 (91f). Kawerau's “Christentum” for *haymanuta*, a wholly unwarranted translation, implies that Theodosius promised to tolerate the practice of the Christian religion in his empire.

<sup>29</sup> Socrates 7.20; H. Gismondi, ed., *Maris Amri et Slibae De Patriarchis Nestorianorum Commentaria* I.1–2 (Rome 1899) fol. 155<sup>a</sup> (30), and II.1–2 (Rome 1896–97) 28<sup>\*</sup> (17).

<sup>30</sup> See Labourt (*supra* n.11) 118; Holum 170f, whose interpretation of the peace terms is unconvincing: Persia's inability to win the release of 7,000 captives without Acacius' help (see *supra* n.4) proves, in my view, that the war

## IV

We now turn to formal accounts of the war in Syriac historiography. Besides the *Chronicle of Arbela*, four sources are pertinent: the *Chronicles* of Jacob of Edessa, Ps.-Dionysius, Michael the Syrian, and the *Chronicon syriacum* of Bar-Hebraeus.

(1) A note in the *Chronicle* of Jacob of Edessa (†708) contains a summary of the last lines of Socrates 7.18. Jacob knew Greek and probably used Socrates directly, although his paraphrase garbles Socrates' account by combining Vitianus' Syrian campaign (see *supra* n.15) with Mesopotamian operations.<sup>31</sup>

(2) The *Chronicle of Ps.-Dionysius*, written 774/775 by an anonymous monk, presumably in the monastery of Zuqnin near Amida (modern Diyarbakır), closely follows Socrates 7.18–21,<sup>32</sup> although omitting the excursus on the courier Palladius (7.19)<sup>33</sup> and transposing Acacius' ransoming of the Persians (7.21) to mention of their capture (7.18; *supra* nn.4, 30).

Two observations are in order. First, Socrates' account of the war begins with the Persian government's anti-Christian measures. Ps.-Dionysius replaces this passage with two statements asserting that a severe three-year Persian persecution of Christians preceded the war and culminated in the presumably legendary, but for that reason not less horrible, death of Jacobus Intercisus.<sup>34</sup> He further interrupts his account of the war by insertion of a long, lively version of the legend of the Eight

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was not a Persian success. The Arab Christians must have profited from the peace treaty: Shahid 37.

<sup>31</sup> E. W. Brooks, ed., *Chronicon Jacobi Edesseni* (=CSCO 5–6, Syr. 5–6 [Louvain 1905–07]) 308 (228). Brooks reconstituted this mutilated passage from a parallel in Michael the Syrian: see IV.3 below.

<sup>32</sup> J.-B. Chabot, ed., *Incerti auctoris Chronicon Pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum* I (=CSCO 91, 121, Syr. 43, 66 [Louvain 1927, 1949: hereafter 'Ps.-D.']) 193–208 (144–55); W. Witakowski, *The Syriac Chronicle of Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre: A Study in the History of Historiography* (=Studia Semitica Upsaliensia 9 [Uppsala 1987]) 27, 30.

<sup>33</sup> M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge 1986) 58 n.79.

<sup>34</sup> See P. Devos, "Le dossier hagiographique de S. Jacques l'Intercis," *AnalBoll* 71 (1953) 157–210, 72 (1954) 213–56. The original Syriac *Passio* dates his death to Friday 27 November 420, which is impossible (cf. Devos [1953] 157f, 168, 177) and should be corrected, according to Spuler's principle (*supra* n.26 *in fine*), to Friday 26 November 420.

Sleepers of Ephesus.<sup>35</sup> Clearly the author wanted to emphasize that Byzantium fought this war in a truly Christian spirit. Moreover, he distributed his material over three years to enhance the importance of the war.<sup>36</sup> These deviations from Socrates conform to Ps.-Dionysius' well-known tendency to use Christian historiography for didactic aims.<sup>37</sup>

Second, Ps.-Dionysius betrays some personal interest, I presume, regarding a Roman defensive ditch near the Persian frontier (Socrates 7.20: ἔνθα τὴν τάφρον οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι πρὸς οἰκείαν φυλακὴν ἐπέποιήντο). The Syriac author repeats the passage but adds "under Dara" (*Itaht men Dara*)—perhaps from autopsy, as the author claims to have undertaken many journeys in Mesopotamia.<sup>38</sup> Yet reliance on a *Zwischenquelle* even for this remark cannot be discounted.

(3) The *Chronicle* of Patriarch Michael the Syrian (†1199), with that of Barhebraeus the most important and certainly the most reliable of Syriac chronicles, depends on its sources no less than other such works. Michael mentions the 421–422 war three times.<sup>39</sup>

The first passage (A) consists of three parts: (i) an abstract of Socrates 7.18, 20, (ii) the Persian attack on Resaina (see *supra* II), and (iii) a second abstract of Socrates 7.18. In Michael the attack on Resaina (ii) occurs "after peace (had been concluded)" (*batar sayna*). The second abstract (iii) is introduced by "again the

<sup>35</sup> Ps.-D. 195–206 (145–54); cf. Witakowski (*supra* n.32) 117, 133. In the Syriac tradition not seven but eight boys arose from a nearly bicentennial sleep: cf. E. Honigmann, *Patristic Studies* (= *Studi e testi* 173 [Vatican 1953]) 136, but see n.41 *infra*. The legend of the Sleeping Boys has nothing to do with the war of 421–422: as Honigmann demonstrated, it originated from events in the summer of 448. See also IV.3 below.

<sup>36</sup> Ps.-Dionysius (193 [144]) places the persecutions in the years 732–734 Sel. era (=A.D. 420/421–422/423) and spreads his description of the war over the years 735–737 Sel. era (A.D. 423/424–425/426).

<sup>37</sup> See Witakowski (*supra* n.32) 136ff, 170ff.

<sup>38</sup> Ps.-D. 206 (154); cf. Witakowski (*supra* n.32) 91ff. There is no guarantee, of course, that the chronicler could localize the Roman moat of 421–422. The fortress Dara-Anastasiopolis dated only from 507, and the author may have overrated the antiquity of the impressive moat of Justinian dug in defense of the southern walls of the city: see Procop. *Aed.* 2.1.23–27; B. Croke and J. Crow, "Procopius and Dara," *JRS* 73 (1983) 143–59; M. Whitby, "Procopius' Description of Dara (*Buildings* II.1–3)," in P. Freeman and D. Kennedy, edd., *The Defence of the Roman and Byzantine East* (=BAR International Series 297 [Oxford 1986]) esp. 761.

<sup>39</sup> M.S. IV 171, 173f, 176 (II 13f, 16, 21f).

Persians marched out” (*w-tub Parsaye sleq[w]*). Some pages later, the very beginning of Socrates 7.18 is paraphrased (B) in a chapter devoted to the period of the Council of Ephesus (431); in a later passage (C), concerned with the same period, some lines recur from the beginning and end of Socrates 7.18. Hence the reader is left with the impression that Rome was entangled in nearly continuous warfare with perfidious Persians. In reality, the triplication of the narrative undoubtedly results from Michael’s use of different sources. One can be identified: part of (C), as Chabot noted, is copied from Jacob of Edessa.<sup>40</sup> Since passages (B) and (C) are separated by a version of the legend of the Sleeping Boys of Ephesus,<sup>41</sup> as in Ps.-Dionysius (*supra* IV.2), both texts could ultimately derive from a common source. Further, passages (A) and (C) are reproduced in the *Chronicon syriacum* of Bar-Hebraeus (†1286),<sup>42</sup> who apparently copied them from Michael.

Formal accounts of Roman-Persian wars in Syriac literature do not significantly alter the general understanding of events in 421–422, but they do provide insights into the treatment of sources in Syriac historiography. Only the *Chronicle of Arbela*, the authenticity of which I defend, adds information on the treaty of 422. Incidental remarks of Syriac authors prove that Vahram in 421 attacked Theodosiopolis-Resaina, not Theodosiopolis-Erzerum, and show in combination with Tabari’s account that a Persian dynastic crisis after Yazdgard’s death primarily caused the war.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Chabot in M.S. II 22 n.3; cf. *supra* IV.1.

<sup>41</sup> M.S. IV 172–76 (II 17–21); Michael, copying Ps.-Zachariah Rhetor, has seven sleepers: cf. Honigmann (*supra* n.35) 136; Witakowski (*supra* n.32) 131.

<sup>42</sup> Text: P. Bedjan, ed., *Gregorii Barhebraei Chronicon Syriacum* (Paris 1890) 70; tr.: E. A. W. Budge, *The Chronography of Gregory Abû'l Faraj, the Son of Aaron, the Hebrew Physician, Commonly Known as Bar Hebraeus* (Oxford 1932) I 67.

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