

UC Irvine

UC Irvine Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

From Rome to Iran: Identity and Xusro II

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1rp8c11b>

Author

Baca-Winters, Keenan

Publication Date

2015

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

From Rome to Iran: Identity and Xusrō II

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in History

by

Keenan Baca-Winters

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Touraj Daryaee, chair
Professor Elizabeth DePalma Digeser
Associate Professor Laura J. Mitchell

2015

© 2015 Keenan Baca-Winters

DEDICATION

To those who have gone before me:

Thomas N. Sizgorich and Gregory J. Winters

Until we meet again

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
CURRICULUM VITAE	vi
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1: Fear in a Handful of Dust: Roman Emotional Reaction to Xusrō II	29
CHAPTER 2: Pseudo-Sebēos and Xusrō II: An Armenian Seizes His Identity in a Perso-Romano World	66
CHAPTER 3: Xusrō II and the Church of the East in <i>Ērānšahr</i>	110
CHAPTER 4: A Dream Deferred: Xusrō II in Ferdowsī's <i>Shahnameh</i> and Al-Ṭabarī's <i>History</i>	154
CONCLUSION: Xusrō, We Hardly Knew Ye	195
BIBLIOGRAPHY	215

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation was not the result of just my effort. Many people have supported me on this long and difficult journey.

I first would like to thank Thomas Sizgorich, whose support and advice he gave me when I was his undergraduate student at the University of New Mexico inspired me to become a scholar. I deeply regret our friendship at UC Irvine was cut short by his untimely death, and I will always treasure the memory I have of him teaching me Syriac on Friday afternoons at Arriba Baja Grill across the street from UCI. Many times, the lessons stopped, and we spoke about life. Little did he know how much he helped me navigate life's rough waters before and after his death. Tom, I hope this dissertation pays off some of the debt I owe you, and I will always remember to help my students like you helped me.

I also would like to thank Nancy McLoughlin for opening up her home to me after Tom's death. Not only did I live with Nancy for two years, but she also was my unofficial adviser and cheerleader during my time at UC Irvine and when I was writing this dissertation. We spent a lot of time talking about how to survive academia, her rowing and my bicycling workouts, and, more importantly, our philosophy-the art of letting things go and doing what you can with what you have. Nancy helped me out during many difficult times and more than once talked me down from the metaphorical ledge. Thank you, Nancy.

I also would like to thank Mary Whitby for sending me all of her hard-to-find articles on George of Pisidia. I was hoping she would send me electronic copies of those articles, but imagine my surprise when I found the articles in my home mailbox. Her husband, Michael Whitby, also went above and beyond and sent me the hard copy of an important article he wrote in the early 1990s.

The help of Stephen Rapp was also instrumental in the completion of this dissertation. Not only did our conversation during his visit to UC Irvine help me contextualize complicated history of the Caucus region, he helped me by speedily giving me the critical edition of Pseudo-Sebēos. I cannot express in words how much I appreciate his help.

I would be remiss if I did not mention my committee. To my chair, Touraj Daryaee: Thank you for taking me on as your student after Tom's death. To

Elizabeth Digeser: I am glad you agreed to help with with my dissertation. You have kept me grounded in the details and your comments have made me a better scholar. And last, but not least, to Laura Mitchell: Thank you for helping me with my prose and showing me how I can link late antiquity with world history. Because of your guidance, I can make history exciting and relevant to my students by using the tools you gave in your world history seminar.

I would like to also thank my family, especially my mother, Elizabeth Baca, and grandmother, Marcella Baca, for indulging me with my incessant need to have her read to me when I was a child. Because of this, I find joy in reading the primary sources. Thank you to Father Joseph Vanderholt, S.J., for explaining to me, in the simplest terms, the difference between monophysite, diaphysite, and orthodox Christianity. I owe a debt to Jhonn Balance, Peter Christopherson, and Thighpaulsandra for the aural distractions. Thanks to my editor, Jim Wagner, who was instrumental in helping clean up my writing. A special thanks is owed to Soodabeh Melakzadeh-Eradji for being there. And most importantly, I would like to thank my late father, Gregory Winters, who, when I was younger, knew before I did that I would be a historian and made sure my hunger for history was always satisfied.

I must also express my gratitude for receiving the Regent's Fellowship from UC Irvine and the Charles and Anne Quilter Graduate Students Award in History.

I thank all of you and the others left unmentioned. All these people are responsible for the good parts of this dissertation. I, on the other hand, am responsible for anything found lacking.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Keenan Baca-Winters

EDUCATION

Ph.D. in history, University of California, Irvine, 2015

M.A. in history, San Diego State University, 2010

B.A. in history, University of New Mexico, 2008

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Teaching assistant, University of California, Irvine, 2011-2013

Teaching associate, San Diego State University, 2009-2010

Graduate assistant, San Diego State University, 2008-2009

AWARDS

Charles and Anne Quilter Graduate Students Award in History, 2014

Regent's Fellow, the University of California, Irvine, 2010-2013

Non-resident Tuition Waiver, San Diego State University, 2008-2009

PAPERS BEFORE CONFERENCES

"A New World: Procopius's Depictions of Eastern and Western Barbarians in the Sixth Century CE", the University of California, Irvine, History Grad-Student Association, 2011

"A New World: Procopius's Depictions of Eastern and Western Barbarians in the Sixth Century CE", the University of California, Irvine, Grad-Student Recruitment Meeting, 2011

"Who is Better at Enduring Toil?": Constructing Memories of the Hannibalic Invasion in the First Century CE", San Diego State University, Student Research Symposium, 2010

LANGUAGES

Modern: French, Persian, and Spanish

Ancient: Syriac, Middle Persian, Latin, Classical Greek, Classical Armenian

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

From Rome to Iran: Identity and Xusrō II

By

Keenan Baca-Winters

Doctor of philosophy in History

University of California, Irvine, 2015

Professor Touraj Daryaee, chair

The Roman-Sasanian War of the seventh century CE was the last conflict of late antiquity. *Šahanšah* Xusrō II nearly conquered the Roman Empire. James Howard-Johnston has studied the war extensively. Walter Kaegi has produced a biography of Xusrō II's opponent, Heraclius, while Geoffrey Greatrex and Touraj Daryaee have written articles focusing on Xusrō II. Scholars, however, have not attempted a major study of him. This dissertation seeks not only to understand how different authors depicted Xusrō II but to understand the man's personality.

Roman authors who witnessed the war sought to highlight only the negative aspects of Xusrō II. He was, according to the Romans, an enemy of God. Fear of Xusrō II was the basis for these depictions. Pseudo-Sebēos, an Armenian historian, depicted Xusrō II as an arrogant, blasphemous ruler. Pseudo-Sebēos, howev-

er, did not write anything positive about the Romans, either, because both the Romans and Sasanians wanted to control Armenia.

Christians living under Xusrō II's rulership also seemed to despise him. They portray Xusrō II as wicked because, in an attempt to punish them, he did not let allow them to elect a ruler. A careful reading of these sources, however, suggests these authors were aware of how Xusrō II took care of Christians in his realm. Finally, Arab and Persian sources differ in their portrayals of Xusrō II because both groups, although both Muslim, were competing for legitimacy in the post-Islamic conquest of Iran, due to ethnic tensions. Arab authors emphasized Xusrō II's faults. Persian authors, on the other hand, presented his good qualities.

Ultimately, all of these different depictions of Xusrō II demonstrate that he possessed a fierce will and embraced a vision of how to rule. Xusrō II wanted to conquer the Romans and extend his domain and be remembered forever. Xusrō II's drive might have made him seem arrogant to the authors studied in this dissertation, and they depicted him accordingly. We should not, however, lose sight of the man he truly was: a man who dared to dream.

INTRODUCTION

Preliminaries

Before the reader is introduced to Xusrō II's rule (590 CE-628 CE)—the man who almost conquered the Roman Empire—it is necessary to discuss the *milieu* of his reign and how rebellion, opportunity, total war, and betrayal were part of his story. Xusrō II was an interesting character who dared to dream big and desired to etch his name indelibly in the annals of history. His story starts when he was a young man. His father, Hormīzd IV (r. 579 CE-590 CE) ordered *Spahbed* (general) Wahrām Čubīn (r. 590 CE-591 CE) to drive the Turkish hordes out of *Ērānšahr* (the Sasanian Empire). Wahrām Čubīn was ultimately successful, but Hormīzd IV insulted him by sending him some women's clothes to wear after a defeat in a minor battle.¹ Wahrām Čubīn rallied his army in rebellion against the *šahanšah* (the ruler of *Ērānšahr*), which in English means “king of kings” and is analogous to the term emperor. At the same time, another faction rose in rebellion. Xusrō II's maternal uncles, Bīstahm and Bīndōe, broke out of prison and led a group of nobles in revolt against Hormīzd IV. Bīstahm and Bīndōe ultimately blinded the *šahanšah* with a hot poker.

Ērānšahr was a secular mess. Many factions vied for power, and the ruler of the realm was maimed. During all of this, Xusrō II was caught up in the drama and turned out to be a rebel. Fueled by a systematic disinformation campaign from

1. Warren Treadgold, *A History of Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 230.

Wahrām Čubīn, including minting coins in Xusrō II's name and proclaiming that his actions sought to punish the young prince and avenge Hormīzd IV's mutilation, Hormīzd IV wanted his son dead. Xusrō II soon fled to Azerbaijan with the help of his uncles. Wahrām Čubīn marched and engaged Xusrō II, a battle in which the prince was utterly defeated. His army fled, and he was left with a small entourage. Xusrō II had no choice but to return to the Sasanian capital of Ctesiphon. With tears in his eyes, he kowtowed before his father and swore he had nothing to do with either rebellion and certainly had nothing to do with his disfigurement. Hormīzd IV accepted his son's apology and made him promise he would punish those who were responsible for the situation. Father and son agreed that Wahrām Čubīn was the greater threat, because he had more potential to wipe out the kingly house of Sasan. After dealing with him, Xusrō II promised his father he punish of his uncles.²

Hormīzd IV then told his son to flee to the Romans and ask Emperor Maurice (r. 582 CE-602 CE) for aid. Thus, Xusrō II, his uncles, and his entourage fled from Wahrām Čubīn's pursuit. On the journey, Bīstahm and Bīndōe became fearful that Wahrām Čubīn might get to Hormīzd IV and convince him to write Maurice and ask for their arrest. With the guise of taking care of their personal affairs and saying goodbye to their families, the brothers returned to Ctesiphon and strangled Hormīzd IV. It is discussed later in the dissertation whether Xusrō II gave them tacit permission to do this.

2. Firdausī *Khusrau Parwīz*, 3 trans. Arthur George Warner and Edmond Warner *The Shāhnāma of Firdausī*, vol. 8 (London and New York Routledge, 2002).

When Xusrō II reached Circesium, he and Maurice sent letters back and forth. Xusrō II promised that if the emperor gave him an army, he would return the strategic cities of Dara and Amida (both taken by the Sasanians in previous centuries) and give Persarmenia and Iberia (modern Georgia) to the Romans. Xusrō II promised all of this because of his dire situation. The Roman senate urged Maurice to refuse Xusrō II's offer so the Iranians could kill each other and save the Roman Empire later trouble. Maurice did not listen to them and sent Xusrō II back to *Ērānšahr* with an army, money, and kingly clothes so he could reclaim his kingship. The joint Roman-Sasanian force successfully defeated Wahrām Čubīn. The rebel fled to the protection of the Turks and later was assassinated.

Once the throne was secure, Xusrō II ordered the deaths of his uncles. Bīndōe soon was assassinated while Bīstahm fled with the remainder of Wahrām Čubīn's army in defiance. Xusrō II eventually defeated Bīstahm with the help of the Armenian prince Smbat Bagratuni. Xusrō II then held a banquet in honor of the Romans who helped him and sent them back to Maurice with gifts.

The end of the civil war in *Ērānšahr* was the eye of the hurricane. What seemed like bloody conflict paled to what was coming—a war that threatened the survival of the Roman Empire, a war where no quarter was asked, and none was given. Although no one in either realm could predict the outcome of the war, the result was that there were really no winners. In the end, the Romans fought back from the brink and defeated the Sasanians, but both empires were drained from 26 wars of total warfare, and neither side could mount a serious defense against the

ascendant Arab armies, united by their prophet Muḥammad under the banner of Islam.

Before those events, however, the Romans and Sasanians maintained their respective realms. Xusrō II fulfilled his promise and gave Amida, Dara, Persarmenia, and Iberia to the Romans.³ If nothing ruined the balance between the Romans and Sasanians, both empires would have survived for centuries afterwards. But certain events occurred and opportunities were born. Xusrō II felt glory calling; he took the chance to be remembered until the end of time.

The death of Xusrō II's benefactor, Maurice, was the *casus belli* of the war of the seventh century CE.⁴ The rebel Phocas (r. 602 CE-610 CE) deposed Maurice and murdered him and his entire family.⁵ Xusrō II was enraged at the death of his patron and invaded the Roman Empire and went to the aid of the Roman commander Narses, who refused to recognize Phocas.⁶ In quick succession, Xusrō II's army conquered Amida (609 CE), Edessa (610 CE), and Theodosiopolis (610 CE) (an important city in Armenia). Most alarmingly, in 608 CE, the Sasanian landed in

3. Treadgold, *A History of Byzantine State and Society*, 231.

4. Sebeos, *The Armenian History* 34, *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos: Part 1. Translation and Notes* ed. and trans. R. W. Thomson with commentary by James Howard-Johnston with Tim Greenwood (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 66; Theophylact Simocatta, *The History of Theophylact Simocatta: An English Translation with Introduction and Notes* 15.7 ed. and trans. Michael and Mary Whitby (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1986); Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia* AM 6095, in *The Chronicle of Theophanes* trans. Cyril Mango and Roger Scott with Geoffrey Greatrex (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997); *Histoire Nestorienne (Seert Chronicle), Seconde Partie* LXX, LXXIX trans. Addai Scher and Robert Griveau in *Patrologia Orientalis: Tomus Decimus Tertius* ed. R. Graffin and F. Nau (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1919); Yuri Stoyanov, *Defenders and Enemies of the True Cross: The Sasanian Conquest of Jerusalem in 614 and Byzantine Ideology of Anti-Persian Warfare* (Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2011), 5.

5. Treadgold, *A History of Byzantine State and Society*, 236; Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 37.

6. Treadgold, *A History of Byzantine State and Society*, 236-237.

Chalcedon, a city across the Bosphorus Strait from the Roman capital, Constantinople. In the same year, the exarch of Africa, Heraclius the Elder, rebelled against Phocas.⁷ Then in 610, Phocas himself was assassinated, and Heraclius the younger (r. 610 CE-641 CE) was proclaimed emperor.⁸

Xusrō II's armies wreaked havoc on the Romans and in 613 CE conquered Antioch. Constantinople essentially was cut off from the rest of Asia Minor and the Levant. The Romans' fortune, however, sank further in 614 CE when the Sasanians captured Jerusalem and with it, the True Cross of Jesus Christ's crucifixion. This was a blow to the Romans' morale while (as we will see in chapter three) the Christians of *Ērānšahr* rejoiced at receiving the relic. Then in 617 CE, the Sasanians consolidated their grip on Chalcedon, and it seemed imminent that they would besiege Constantinople. To compound this misfortune, the Sasanians captured Egypt in 618 CE, and Constantinople lost the grain that province provided.⁹

The murder of Phocas did not soothe Xusrō II's desire. Heraclius tried to sue him for peace, and the *šahanšah* dismissed the emperor's overtures, and his armies kept marching. In 622, however, Heraclius defeated the Sasanians for the first time, when his army defeated them outside of Antioch. At this time (as is further discussed in the first chapter) Heraclius turned this war of survival into a holy war.

7. Treadgold, *A History of Byzantine State and Society*, 239.

8. Treadgold, *A History of Byzantine State and Society*, 287; Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 38.

9. For the threat of the starvation of Constantinople, see chapter one and John Haldon, "The Reign of Heraclius: A Context for Change?" in *The Reign of Heraclius (610-641): Crisis and Confrontation* eds. Gerrit J. Reinink and Bernard H. Stolte (Leuven: Peeters Publishing, 2002): 3; Beate Dignas and Engelbert Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 118. For the Sasanians' gains in general, see Treadgold, *A History of Byzantine State and Society*, 240-241, 287-293.

Xusrō II's soldiers, according to Heraclius, desecrated churches, profaned the True Cross, and raped Christian maidens.¹⁰ This was all propaganda, but it worked. In 624 CE, Heraclius took his army over the Caucuses and invaded *Ērānšahr* itself. The invasion was bloody. The Romans sacked and burned Zoroastrian fire temples and massacred many subjects of *Ērānšahr*, many of whom, ironically, were Christians, not Zoroastrian.¹¹ The sons and daughters of *Ērānšahr* paid a heavy price because the Romans stabbed and chopped and burned and killed without reservation.

Xusrō II tried to strike one last time at the Romans and entered into an alliance with the Avars. In 626 CE, the two armies besieged Constantinople. Heraclius did not take the bait and remained in *Ērānšahr*. He sent a token contingent of his expeditionary force to help defend the city, however.¹² What he did next signaled the beginning of the end of the war. Heraclius entered into an alliance with the Turks, whose savagery brought further ruin to the people of *Ērānšahr*¹³ (as is discussed in chapter three).

Because of the Roman army operating in his realm with impunity, Xusrō II had no choice but to recall his army. The situation for the *šahanšah* was dire. The

10. George of Pisidia, *De Expeditione Persica* 2.99-115 in Agostino Pertusi, Giorgio di Pisidia. *Poemi. I. Panegirici epici* (Studia patristica et Byzantina 7. Ettal: Buch-Kunstverlag, 1959).

11. This claim is explored in chapter three.

12. James Howard-Johnston, "The Siege of Constantinople in 626," in *Constantinople and its Hinterland*, ed. C. Mango and G. Dagron (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1995), 133-134 reprinted in *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity: Historiographical and Historical Studies* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT.: Ashgate Variorum, 2006); Treadgold, *A History of Byzantine State and Society*, 297.

13. For the shocking effects Turkish invasion of *Ērānšahr* had on Sasanian subjects, see Movsēs Dasxuranci 10 *The History of the Caucasian Albanians* trans. C. J. F. Dowsett *The History of the Caucasian Albanians* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961); Walter E. Kaegi, *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 177.

nobility were upset that the Romans were killing scores of people and desecrating Zoroastrian holy sites, especially the fire temple Atur Gušnap, where *šahanšahs* would make pilgrimages and ordinary Zoroastrians would make devotions to Ohrmazd, the deity of Zoroastrianism.¹⁴ The noble families of *Ērānšahr* also chafed at the taxes and levies Xusrō II laid upon them to pay for the war effort.

Heraclius was aware of the situation in *Ērānšahr* and used it to his advantage. During the siege of Constantinople, the Romans intercepted a letter sent to the *Spahbed* Šahbarāz. The Romans doctored the letter, forging it to read that Xusrō II ordered the death of Šahbarāz. Heraclius met with the *spahbed* and showed him the letter. The ruse worked. Šahbarāz sat out the remainder of the war,¹⁵ which undoubtably hampered Xusrō II's capacity to defend *Ērānšahr* against the Roman onslaught.

The final clash between the Romans and Sasanians occurred at the Battle of Nineveh (627 CE), near modern Mosul, Iraq.¹⁶ The Romans broke the Sasanian field army, which fled south to escape the Romans. Heraclius then destroyed and

14. Touraj Daryaee, *Sasanian Iran (224-651CE): Portrait of a Late Antique Empire* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers: 2008), 87-88; Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge, 1987), 142; James Howard-Johnston, "The Official History of Heraclius' Persian Campaigns," *The Roman and Byzantine Army in the East: Proceedings of a Colloquium Held at the Jagiellonian University, Kraków in September 1992* ed. E. Dabrowa (Kraków: Uniwersytet Jagiellonski, 1992), 58 reprinted in *East Rome, Sasanian Persia, and the End of Antiquity: Historiographical and Historical Studies* (Aldershot: Variorum, 2006); James Howard-Johnston, "Pride and Fall: Khusro II and His Regime, 626-628," in *La Persia e Bisnazio (Atti dei Convengi Lincei 201)* ed. G. Gnoli (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 2004): 106-107 reprinted in *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity: Historiographical and Historical Studies* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2006). For Atur Gušnap being a Zoroastrian holy site used by *šahanšahs* and ordinary folk alike, see Boyce, *Zoroastrians*, 124-125; J. Christoph Bürgel, "Zoroastrianism as Viewed in Medieval Islamic Sources," in *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions: A Historical Survey* ed. Jacques Waardenburg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 207.

15. Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 148-150.

16. Treadgold, *A History of Byzantine State and Society*, 298.

plundered Xusrō II's palace at Dastagerd, personally tearing down a mural of the *šahanšah*. Xusrō II himself retreated to the palace at Ctesiphon, where he tried to raise a defense of his realm. Unfortunately for him, a conspiracy between the nobility and Heraclius sealed his fate.

After turning Šahbarāz against Xusrō II, Heraclius contacted the highborn in *Ērānšahr*. They agreed to stage a *coup* against Xusrō II if Heraclius ended hostilities. In the dead of night, the nobility sprung from prison Šīroē (r. 628 CE), Xusrō II's son whom he had with his Roman wife, Maryam. The next morning, the nobles proclaimed the boy as *šahanšah*. The clamor woke Xusrō II's beloved Christian wife, Šērīn, from her sleep. She woke her husband and urged him to flee so he could save himself and the realm. Xusrō II, however, dressed himself in his finest armor and awaited his captors in the palatial gardens.¹⁷

After his arrest, Xusrō II's captors put on a show trial (as is discussed in chapter four and the conclusion). They accused him of draining the treasury and raising taxes to cover the deficit. Additionally, the nobles accused him of stationing troops at the frontier for far too long, keeping the soldiers away from their families. Xusrō II then was murdered. Šīroē then asked Heraclius to end hostilities. The emperor agreed, and based on their back-room dealings that Šīroē would repatriate Roman prisoners and evacuate the Sasanian army from occupied Roman territory,

17. Firdausī *Khusrau Parwīz* 64; Abolqasem Ferdowsī, *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings* trans. Dick Davis (New York: Penguin Group, 2006), 820; Bal'amī *Chronique de Abou-Djafar-Mo'hammed-Ben-Djarīr-Ben-Yezid Tabari, traduite sur la version Persane d'Abou-'Ali d'après les manuscrits de Paris, de Gotha, de Londres et de Canterbury*, vol. 2, ed. and French trans. M. Hermann Zotenberg (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1869), 331.

the two realms returned to the *status quo ante bellum*.¹⁸

Xusrō II's death marked the beginning of the end of *Ērānšahr*. Šīroē himself was assassinated a few months later, and a revolving door of *šahanšahs* (discussed more in the conclusion) tried to hold the realm together. The Muslim armies of Muḥammad brought an end to *Ērānšahr* during the reign of Yazdgird III (r. 632 CE-651 CE). The Romans fared only a little better. The Arabs conquered large parts of the Roman Empire but did not capture Constantinople; it limped on for a few hundred years, never able to regain its former glory.

The life of Xusrō II was important because not only did he come so close to conquering the Roman Empire, he almost changed the course of world history. Imagine for a second if Xusrō II captured Constantinople. The world might have been built based on the magnificence of *Ērānšahr*. Not only that, if I may briefly play with alternate history, perhaps the Sasanians could have fought off the Arab Muslim armies. Or perhaps if Xusrō II had been able to make the Romans into a client state of *Ērānšahr*, both empires could have withstood the threat posed by Muḥammad's soldiers.

The point here is that Xusrō II is an important figure worthy of an entire study because he was able to do so much during his reign. Most *šahanšahs*, and emperors, for that matter, were content to raid their rival's domains. Cities such as Nisibis, Amida, Theodosiopolis traded hands back and forth during the centuries of

18. James Howard-Johnston, "Heraclius' Persian Campaigns and the Revival of the East Roman Empire, 622-630 CE," *War and History* 6 (1999): 27 reprinted in *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity: Historiographical and Historical Studies* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT.: Ashgate Variorum, 2006).; Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 178-180.

Roman-Sasanian warfare. Before the war of the seventh century CE, the biggest event to occur in the years of Roman-Sasanian hostility was Šābūhr I's (r. 240 CE-270 CE) capture Emperor Valerian (r. 253 CE-259 CE).¹⁹ Raids and border skirmishes, however, were the tactics each realm used to fight the other. Xusrō II was the only leader of both realms to have the confidence and the drive to try to disrupt the balance between Ctesiphon and Constantinople. He had a vision in which he believed he could rule the entire Roman Empire and *Ērānšahr*. Unfortunately, however, one would never know of Xusrō II's importance to late antique history based on the scholarship available. One first must look at what has been written about the Sasanians in general to realize that such an important figure has been left out of the scholarship.

Historiography

The bedrock for any study of Sasanian history is Arthur Christensen's 1944 work, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*. Christensen concisely discusses the origins of the war of the seventh century CE.²⁰ Christensen, however, surprisingly went further than just discussing the war and its background. He offered a brief exploration about the psychology of Xusrō II. Unflatteringly, Christensen wrote, "*l'avidité semble avoir été le trait le plus saillant de la psychologie de Khusro II*"²¹ and spent several

19. David S. Potter, *The Roman Empire at Bay (AD 180-395)* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 155-156; James Howard-Johnston, "The Two Great Powers in Late Antiquity: A Comparison," in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East. III: States, Resources and Armies* ed. A. Cameron (Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, 1995): 161 reprinted in *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity: Historiographical and Historical Studies* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT.: Ashgate Variorum, 2006).

20. Arthur Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides* (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1944), 441-453.

21. Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*, 453.

pages describing all of his possessions.²² As we will see later in this dissertation, this was probably true, but is this all Christensen could have said about him?

Richard N. Frye then published two brief surveys, both in 1983, that examined the entire span of Sasanian history. The first monograph is *The History of Ancient Iran*. In it, Frye spends about 50 pages on the Sasanians. As for Xusrō II and the war of the seventh century CE, Frye briefly mentions the origins of the war.²³ Like Christensen, Frye then wrote “The long reign of Chosroes II was not only known for the internal as well as external strife but also for the luxury, or even decadence of the court.”²⁴

Other scholars also focused on Xusrō II's bad aspects. For instance Alireza Shapour Shahbazi, in his entry in the *Encyclopedia Iranica* on Xusrō II's uncles, Bīstahm and Bīndōe, wrote that Xusrō II was in league with his uncles when they overthrew and executed Hormīzd IV.²⁵ This topic is explored in detail in chapter four, but it is sufficient to say that Shahbazi's encyclopedia entry represents scholarship that is hostile to Xusrō II. Shahbazi, and scholars like him, whether they intended to or not, took the sources at face value. Thus, their views on Xusrō II were influenced by hostile sources. Scholars need to examine the sources in more depth

22. Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*, 464-469.

23. Richard N. Frye, *The History of Ancient Iran* (München: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1983), 334-337.

24. Frye, *The History of Ancient Iran*, 337.

25. A. Shapour Shahbazi, *Encyclopedia Iranica*, vol IV, fasc. 2 (New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 1989), s.v. "Bestām o Bendōy."

and not assume that what ancient scholars said about Xusrō II was true.

On the other hand, Frye is more sympathetic to Xusrō II in *The Cambridge History of Iran*. Frye offers a straightforward account of the start of the war of the seventh century CE. He then says the following about Xusrō II's character:

“Regardless of the conflicting accounts of his character, the splendour of his reign is recognized by the Arabic and Persian sources. He is supposed to have amassed a great fortune.”²⁶ Again, while Frye's language here is softer than in *The History of Ancient Iran*, he still wrote about Xusrō II's supposed avarice. While the sources do talk about Xusrō II's love of treasure, historians need to uncover why the sources always mentioned all the things Xusrō II might have owned.

Recently, two updated surveys of the Sasanians have been published, both by Touraj Daryaee. The first book, published in 2008, is *Sasanian Iran (224-651 CE): Portrait of a Late Antique Empire*. It is a slim book, written for someone who wants a quick introduction to *Ērānšahr*. Daryaee states that perhaps the Zoroastrian sources probably portrayed Xusrō II as avaricious because of his interest in Christianity.²⁷

Daryaee's second work, *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire*, features more details than *Sasanian Iran*. It was published in 2009 and has supplanted Christensen's *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*. Daryaee's treatment of Xusrō II

26. R. N. Frye, “The Political History of Iran under the Sasanians,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran, Volume 3 (1): The Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian Periods* ed. Ehsan Yarshater (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983): 171.

27. Daryaee, *Sasanian Iran*, 90.

is good. He speaks of Xusrō II's conquests,²⁸ describing him as a “warrior-king.”²⁹ Clearly, as scholarship changed over time, scholars began looking at Sasanian history outside the methodology of historical surveys. What we see with this brief overview of Sasanian historiography on Xusrō II is that scholars have begun to look between the lines and have begun to critically examine sources.

The best example of this trend is Parvaneh Pourshariati's 2008 *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: The Sasanian-Parthian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran*. Pourshariati's thesis is that the Sasanian family, while grasping the kingship from the Parthian Arsacid dynasty in the third century CE, never were able to break the powerful Parthian families that constituted the nobility of *Ērānšahr*. Wahrām Čubīn's rebellion against Hormīzd IV was the ultimate Parthian rebellion, as he was from the house of Mihrān and had roots in Parthia.³⁰ Even more revolutionary is Pourshariati's claim that the Parthian families worked with the Arab conquerors of *Ērānšahr* and wielded power centuries after the Islamic conquests.³¹ Pourshariati has broken open the field of Sasanian history and demonstrated that it is possible, and necessary, to do more investigative work on important events in the history of *Ērānšahr*.

28. Touraj Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 33.

29. Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia*, 34. For Xusrō II's armor, see *ibid.* 45.

30. Parvaneh Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: The Sasanian-Parthian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2008), 122-130.

31. Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 462-465.

In a way, this dissertation answers Pourshariati's call to study the reign of Xusrō II, as she states in the first sentence of the book:

The history of Iran in the late antique, early medieval period (circa 500-750 CE) remains one of the least investigated fields of enquiry in recent scholarship. This, in spite of the fact that some of the most crucial social and political process transpiring during this period in what Hodgson has termed the *Nile to Oxus* cultural zone, directly implicate Iranian history. The "last great war of antiquity" of 603-628 CE, between the two great empires of the Near East, the Byzantines (330?-1453 CE) and the Sasanians (224-651 CE), was on the verge of drastically redrawing the map of the world of late antiquity.³²

Xusrō II was a man with a fierce will and determination to get ahead in the world. He saw an opportunity to change the course of history; he took it, which most people in his position would not have. Although the outcome was not what he wanted, his actions in fact redrew "the map of the world of late antiquity," which is why he is the focus of this dissertation when he invaded the Roman Empire.

Scholarship on the war of the seventh century CE roughly follows this trajectory of historical surveys, morphing into more analytical works as historians become comfortable with taking risks. The best place to begin is with a collection of articles by James Howard-Johnston in the anthology titled *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity: Historiographical and Historical Studies*. Several articles in this collection aid the historian in better understanding the war of the seventh century CE. "The Official History of Heraclius' Persian Campaigns" is a study on how George of Pisidia used the official *communiqués* of Heraclius to compose his panegyrics to the emperor. "The Siege of Constantinople in 626" is an expert retelling of the events of the Avar-Sasanian siege of the Roman capital. "Heraclius'

32. Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 1.

Persian Campaigns and the Revival of the Eastern Roman Empire, 622-630” is a survey on Heraclius' invasion of *Ērānšahr* and how he saved the empire from the brink of destruction. The last article in this collection that is useful to this dissertation is “Al-Tabari on the Last War of Antiquity.” Howard-Johnston studies how al-Tabari wrote about the war of the seventh century CE and how his account adds to our knowledge. This small selection of articles runs the gamut from surveys to historiographical studies and is indicative of the change in scholarship that has taken place.

The next best book available to historians is the introduction to R. W. Thomson's translation of Pseudo-Sebeos titled *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*. Thomson presents a concise survey of the events of the war;³³ which is helpful when a scholar needs to know the details any phase of the war without being drowned in minutiae.

Beate Dignas and Engelbert Winter's seminal 2007 monograph and collection of sources *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity* examines how both realms were at each other's throat, while at the same time both sides recognized the other's right to exist. Dignas and Engelbert do an excellent job of talking about the hostilities between the Romans and Sasanians during the war of the seventh century CE,³⁴ but the strength of the book does not lie with their reiteration of those

33. R. W. Thomson, “Introduction,” in *The Armenian History 32, The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos: Part 1. Translation and Notes* ed. and trans. R. W. Thomson with commentary by James Howard-Johnston with Tim Greenwood (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), xxii-xxv.

34. Beate Dignas and Engelbert Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 42-49.

events. One, Dignas and Winter do an excellent job of discussing how Xusrō II was a warrior king by studying his rock relief at Tāq-e Bustān.³⁵ Two, the two authors included an example of a letter Xusrō II wrote to Maurice when he asked for aid in regaining the throne.³⁶ This letter is important because in it, Xusrō II called the Roman Empire and *Ērānšahr* the two eyes given to the world by God to keep the barbarians at bay. By including Xusrō II's letter, Dignas and Winter show us that the relations sometimes demonstrated a sense respect that one would not find between the two empires that often warred with each other.

Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity is an exemplum of a book that looks at the complicated relations between the Romans and Sasanians, which cannot be defined simply as perpetual conflict. Another book, *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran* by the art historian Matthew P. Canepa, published 2009, achieves this feat. Canepa argues that even though the two realms were in total war by the seventh century CE, previous embassies and diplomatic letters between Constantinople and Ctesiphon gave each realm an intimate knowledge of the other.³⁷ Canepa's scholarship really shines when he discusses how rulers of both realms shared similar projections of power with the lozenge motif found in Sasanian and Roman stucco work.³⁸ Clearly, these two realms had a

35. Dignas and Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity*, 66.

36. Dignas and Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity*, 236-237.

37. Matthew P. Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual Kingship Between Rome and Sasanian Iran* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2009), 15.

38. Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*, 217.

complicated relationship, which straddled the border between outright hostility and cultural appropriation committed by both sides.

The final three books on the war of the seventh century CE demonstrated all of the exciting possibilities that can occur when historians ask interesting questions about the war. The first is James Howard-Johnston's 2010 book, *Witnesses to a World in Crisis: Historians of the Middle East in the Seventh Century*. The “crisis” studied in this book is actually two events: the final war between the Romans and the Sasanians and the Islamic conquests of *Ērānšahr* and large parts of the Roman Empire. Howard-Johnston, despite not being able to read many of the languages needed to read the panoply of primary sources,³⁹ does an excellent job of studying how many of the primary sources featured in this dissertation portray the war of the seventh century CE.

The second book is G.W. Bowersock's *Empires in Collision in Late Antiquity* and is a collection of lectures he delivered in 2011 as part of the Menahem Stern Jerusalem Lectures. Bowersock traces the causes of the war of the seventh century CE by highlighting how the Romans and Iranians were rivals centuries before the war.⁴⁰ Bowersock is particularly concerned with focusing on the proxy war between the Arab-Jewish kingdom of Ḥimyar and the monophysite Christian kingdom of

39. James Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World in Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), viii-ix.

40. G.W. Bowersock, *Empires in Collision in Late Antiquity* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2012), 4-7.

Arabia.⁴¹ The leaders of Ḥimyar massacred Christians in Najrān in 523 CE.⁴² This is important, because the massacre showed the tensions in pre-Islamic Arabia. The Sasanians backed the kingdom of Ḥimyar and the Romans backed the Ethiopians who invaded Ḥimyar in retaliation.⁴³ This proxy war foreshadowed the Jewish support of the Sasanian occupation of Jerusalem in the war of the seventh century.⁴⁴

Bowersock's book does much to demonstrate that the Sasanian occupation of Jerusalem was not traumatic to the city, nor to its inhabitants.⁴⁵ While this idea is explored further in the next book discussed in this historiography, it is important to realize that scholars are starting to explore the Sasanians and their actions in the war of the seventh century CE. It seems that historians are no longer content to study the war from the Roman point of view. It is time to expand our view of late antiquity.

Bowersock, however, does this and more; he seeks to go beyond the Roman-Sasanian world. At the end of the book, Bowersock uses the end of the war of the seventh century to demonstrate that Heraclius' defeat of Xusrō II allowed the rise of Muḥammad and his armies.⁴⁶ Bowersock's book is an example of a groundbreaking

41. Bowersock, *Empires in Collision*, 6.

42. Bowersock, *Empires in Collision*, 19.

43. Bowersock, *Empires in Collision*, 22-23.

44. Bowersock, *Empires in Collision*, 35.

45. Bowersock, *Empires in Collision*, 42.

46. Bowersock, *Empires in Collision*, 58.

piece of scholarship that forces us to consider the Sasanian side of the war of the seventh century CE and its aftermath in the late antique Middle East.

While Bowersock's book is important, another recent book on the war of the seventh century CE is perhaps the most exciting. In 2011, Yuri Stoyanov published his excellent book, *Defenders and Enemies of the True Cross: The Sasanian Conquest of Jerusalem in 614 and Byzantine Ideology of Anti-Persian Warfare*. Stoyanov brilliantly argues that the Roman re-conquest of Jerusalem was linked to the Romans' desire as a Christian empire to rule the city as forerunners to the return of Jesus Christ while they waited for the end of the world.⁴⁷ The Sasanian conquest of Jerusalem actually set off fear and anxiety among the Romans because they, not some “ungodly” pagans, were to remain in control of the city.⁴⁸ Stoyanov's brilliance shines through in this book because he introduces in the human element of the war of the seventh century CE. It is one thing to read about how the Sasanians conquered Roman cities and territory, but to understand how the Romans felt about it brings their experiences to life.

This brief historiography, however, is not meant to imply that there no work has been done on Xusrō II. The problem is that any study on the war of the seventh century CE does not focus on the *šahanšah* himself. In 2003, for instance, Walter Kaegi published his historical evaluation of the life of Heraclius, *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium*. Kaegi made the Heraclius' life the backdrop of a historical study of the

47. Stoyanov, *Defenders and Enemies of the True Cross*, 64.

48. Stoyanov, *Defenders and Enemies of the True Cross*, 7.

last war of antiquity and the rise of Islam. What Kaegi accomplishes with this book is that he deftly illustrates the troubles in which the Roman Empire found itself. He paints the desperation of the loss of Antioch in 613 CE to the Sasanians and how it split the Roman Empire in two.⁴⁹ In another section of the book, Kaegi describes on the eve of Heraclius' invasion of *Ērānšahr*, how the emperor turned the war of the seventh century CE, a war of survival of the Roman state, into a holy war against the Zoroastrian Sasanians. Kaegi describes how Heraclius and Sergius, the patriarch of Constantinople, brought the remains of Saint Theodore of Sykeon into Constantinople and beseeched the saint to protect the city from the Sasanian onslaught.⁵⁰

What is more, Kaegi also does an excellent job of describing how Heraclius operated in *Ērānšahr* as his armies penetrated deeper and deeper. For instance, Kaegi writes about how Heraclius lured the Sasanian *spahbed* Rāhzādh into battle west of Nineveh, the climax of the war of the seventh century CE.⁵¹

Kaegi's work is important because it highlights the threat Xusrō II posed to the Romans. Taken further, Kaegi also demonstrates the lengths Heraclius had to take to save his empire from the *šahanšah*, thus showing how clever Xusrō II was to have taken the Roman Empire to its knees and how clever Heraclius was to save it. The only issue with Kaegi's book is that it is not a study on the life of Xusrō II. This is

49. Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 77.

50. Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 105-106.

51. Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 168.

not a condemnation of *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium*. I say this only to underscore how much a study of Xusrō II is needed.

Indeed, Kaegi's book is not the only work to study Heraclius. In April 2001, a workshop entitled *The Reign of Heraclius: Crisis and Confrontation* was held, featuring thirteen papers on the emperor. The papers were collected in a book called *The Reign of Heraclius (610-641): Crisis and Confrontation*, and they cover a range of topics, focusing mostly on the war of the seventh century CE. The articles relevant to this dissertation are covered below.

Howard-Johnston's "Armenian Historians of Heraclius: An Examination of the Aims, Sources and working Methods of Sebeos and Movses Daskhurantsi" studies how the Armenian historians portrayed Heraclius, which is important for chapter two. In another important article, John W. Watt shows us how the Syriac sources depicted Heraclius in "The Portrayal of Heraclius in Syriac Historical Sources." The third chapter studies how the Syriac sources depict Xusrō II. Lawrence I. Conrad's "Heraclius in Early Islamic Kerygma" is a study on how early-Islamic texts depicted Heraclius and how those depictions changed over time from Heraclius recognizing Islam as the "true" faith to recognizing their conquering prowess. Chapter four studies how Persian and Arabic texts depict Xusrō II and how one historian wrote that he haughtily dismissed signs that Muḥammad was a prophet of God. The last important article in this book is Mary Whitby's "George of Pisidia's Presentations of the Emperor Heraclius and his Campaigns: Variety and Development." Whitby presents in her article how the panegyrist George of Pisidia depicted in his poems

Heraclius. As is studied in the first chapter, George of Pisidia witnessed the Sasanian-Avar siege of Constantinople. When he then wrote poems celebrating Heraclius' invasion of *Ērānšahr*, what George of Pisidia saw affected his writing.

Clearly, ample material is available on the personage of Heraclius. This is to be expected, as he saved the Roman Empire from Xusrō II and was the first emperor to encounter the Muslim armies of Muḥammad. There is, therefore, precedence for historical studies on the important figures of the war of the seventh century CE. Surprisingly, there is even a monograph on Xusrō II's most cherished wife, Šērīn, which suggests that there is something about the last war of antiquity calls to scholars.

Wilhelm Baum's *Shirin: Christian–Queen–Myth of Love: A Woman of Late Antiquity: Historical Reality and Literary Effect*, published in 2004, is a study of Xusrō II's wife, Šērīn. Baum presents his reader the background of the entire war of the seventh century CE. More importantly, Baum presents Šērīn within the context of doctrinal disputes that afflicted the Christian community of *Ērānšahr* and how Xusrō II's interest in Christianity was influenced by his wife⁵² (both topics introduced in chapter one and fully explored in chapter three). We have an entire book dedicated to Šērīn, who was monumentally important to Xusrō II. Now it is time for a study of the *šahanšah* himself.

This is especially true when one considers that only three articles focus on

52. Wilhelm Baum, *Shirin: Christian–Queen–Myth of Love: A Woman of Late Antiquity: Historical Reality and Literary Effect* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004), 30-53.

Xusrō II. These articles only hint at Xusrō II's complexity, and this dissertation seeks to shine a light on his life. One of the seminal articles on the war of the seventh century CE is Geoffrey Greatrex's 2003 article, "Khusro II and the Christians of his Empire." In this article, Greatrex shatters the previously held belief that Xusrō II was somehow an enemy of Christianity, as presented in the Roman sources. Greatrex discusses how the diaphysite (a branch of Christianity that emphasized the humanity of Jesus Christ and is explored more in chapter three) Christian church of *Ērānšahr* had a close relationship with Sasanian *šahanšahs*.⁵³ Moreover, Greatrex establishes that Xusrō II's involvement with the Christians of his realms was passive and benign in that he responded to requests posed only by the varying factions of Christians in his realm, and he did so pragmatically, because he had to balance all of their desires in order to keep *Ērānšahr* running smoothly.⁵⁴

The second article focusing on Xusrō II is Touraj Daryaee's 1997 piece, "The Use of Religio-Political Propaganda on the Coinage of Xusrō II." This article is important because it is an early study of Xusrō II's personality. According to Daryaee, Xusrō II used the concept of *x^warrāh*, the royal glory of the house of Sasan derived from the mythical Keyanid kings of ancient Iran (more on this in chapter four), on his coinage.⁵⁵ The reality behind this was that Xusrō II had to use this keen

53. Geoffrey Greatrex, "Khusro II and the Christians of His Empire," *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 3 (2003): 79-81.

54. Greatrex, "Khusro II and the Christians of His Empire," 82-83.

55. Touraj Daryaee, "The Use of Religio-Political Propaganda on the Coinage of Xusrō II," *American Journal of Numismatics* 9 (1997): 44-49.

piece of propaganda not because of his victories against the Romans but because of the rebellions of Wahrām Čubīn and Bīstahm.⁵⁶ This implies that Xusrō II's rule was not secure because of the threats he faced in his reign.

The last article focusing on Xusrō II is James Howard-Johnston's 2004 article "Pride and Fall: Khusro II and his Regime, 626-628." Howard-Johnston ties how the Roman invasion and destruction of *Ērānšahr* eroded Xusrō II's support from the nobility. Further compounding Xusrō II's troubles was his "pride"—raising taxes on the people for the war effort and his supposed greedy nature.⁵⁷ Taxes are the bane of all civilized peoples, but to stage a coup and depose a *šahanšah* who needed money tells only half of the story. As is explained in the conclusion, the nobility and people of *Ērānšahr* became weary with the war, the Sasanian army spent years fighting in Roman territory, only to have everything become undone when the Romans in turn invaded *Ērānšahr*.

This brief historiography demonstrates that while ample studies have been done on the war of the seventh century CE, including studies on the important players of the war, there is a void in the scholarship when it comes to Xusrō II. Indeed, if Xusrō II's armies never invaded the Roman Empire, then more than likely both realms would have continued their co-existence—marked with raids and border skirmishes—for next few hundred years. Xusrō II's ambition caused the war and everything that occurred afterwards. For this reason alone, it is worthwhile to do an

56. Daryaei, "The Use of Religio-Political Propaganda on the Coinage of Xusrō II," 48-49.

57. Howard-Johnston, "Pride and Fall: Khusro II," 111.

entire study on Xusrō II. When his personality is added into the mix, however, it becomes apparent that he was a character with a strong personality. For these reasons, doing a dissertation-length study on Xusrō II not only is necessary, but is fun to do.

This dissertation is arranged in the following manner. The first chapter, “Fear in a Handful of Dust: Roman Emotional Reaction to Xusrō II,” demonstrates that the Romans' bad depictions of Xusrō II were because he was such a threat to the Roman world. Those depictions are rooted in the fear and terror felt by many Romans when Xusrō II seemed to do the impossible and conquer the Roman Empire.

Chapter two, “Pseudo-Sebēos and Xusrō II: An Armenian Seizes His Identity in a Perso-Romano World,” is a study of the Armenian historian Pseudo-Sebēos and how historians should not take his dislike for Xusrō II as a sign of him being pro-Roman. The Armenians occupied a place in between both empires, both literally and figuratively. Armenia's place in the strategic Caucasus mountains ensured that both the Romans and Sasanians tried to outright conquer Armenia, or meddle in its affairs. Eventually, the Romans and Sasanians agreed to split Armenia and both sides tried to incite the other realm's portion away from its patron empire. Add to this how Roman emperors tried to impose orthodox Chalcedonian Christianity (the belief that Jesus Christ had two natures, both human and divine) on the monophysite Armenian Church (where they believed Christ had one nature: divine), and it becomes apparent that Pseudo-Sebēos was not really pro-Roman, either.

The third chapter, “Xusrō II and the Church of the East in *Ērānšahr*,” demonstrates that while several diaphysite Christian sources depict Xusrō II as wicked, he actually worked with those Christians. The sources tacitly acknowledge all Xusrō II did for them. The reason why the relationship soured is because they disobeyed Xusrō II and refused to support his nomination for patriarch. Xusrō II then did not allow them to elect anyone to lead their church for years afterward. This is why those sources wrote about Xusrō II's “wickedness.” Xusrō II also had to balance the needs of the monophysite Christians in *Ērānšahr*, thus that tension is played out in those unfavorable depictions of Xusrō II.

“A Dream Deferred: Xusrō II in Ferdowsī's *Shahnameh* and Al-Ṭabarī's *History*” is the fourth chapter. This chapter examines how the poet Ferdowsī depicted Xusrō II in the epic poem, *The Shahnameh*. Ferdowsī treated the *šahanšah* well. The poet spoke about how Xusrō II had nothing to do with either rebellion against Hormīzd IV and how he certainly was innocent in his father's death. The Arab historian, al-Ṭabarī, on the other hand, wrote about all of Xusrō II's bad characteristics, such as he knew his uncles were about to execute his father and he tacitly allowed it. The themes of borderlands is important to this chapter because these two depictions of Xusrō II compete with one another. Although both authors were Muslim, Ferdowsī was Persian and thus was more sympathetic to the last powerful *šahanšah* of the Sasanian dynasty. Al-Ṭabarī was more inclined to write about Xusrō II's flaws to suggest the decadence on the Sasanians to his Muslim audience.

The conclusion of this dissertation, “Xusrō, We Hardly Knew Ye,” attempts to discover who the man was by looking at how all of these sources similarly depicted him. The conclusion basically states that Xusrō II had a lot of ambition and that this aspect of his personality was buried in the sources. Thus, while most of this dissertation uncovers why different sources had different depictions of Xusrō II, the conclusion seeks to understand the man himself. This dissertation, in other words, is not a complete biography of Xusrō II.

A Quick Guide to Pronunciation

Throughout this dissertation, the reader will encounter several letters with diacritical marks. Here is a reference on how to pronounce the graphemes used to represent the sounds in Persian, Syriac, and Armenian. The following graphemes are used the most in this dissertation.

Š represents the sound “sh,” as in shine. Ł represents the sound “gh.” A native English speaker might not be able to pronounce this sound. It sounds like a throatier “g.” For reference, pay attention to how a native Persian speaker says Baghdad or Afghanistan. Č is pronounced as “ch” as in China. Ĵ is pronounced as “j” as in jump. When one encounters *W* in the name Wahrām it is pronounced “v.” The last grapheme used throughout this dissertation is *X*. This character represents the rough sound at the end of Bach or Loch, which resembles someone trying to clear their throat. I transliterated the names of people using the *X* grapheme to properly reflect their original form in Persian. I did not use it in place names such as Khuzistan, which shares the same sound as Xusrō II, as this is the most recognized

form. It is acceptable, for this dissertation, to pronounce \bar{t} as a regular "t."

The reader will notice also the use of macrons. When one sees the letter \bar{a} , it means the vowel is elongated as in father. The letters \bar{e} and \bar{i} are respectfully pronounced as reel and ride. The letter \bar{o} is pronounced as in the word over.

Chapter 1

Fear in a Handful of Dust: Roman Emotional Reaction to Xusrō II

In his poem to Emperor Heraclius (r. 610 CE-641 CE), George of Pisidia wrote the following about *Šahanšah* Xusrō II (r. 590 CE-628 CE), after the end of the Roman-Sasanian War of the seventh century CE. This passage is awash with dramatic language of the downfall of the Sasanian monarch:

Rejoice, the chorus of stars, bringing to light the slave of the stars [who] has fallen down, even ignorant of his own fall. For the creator does not honor nor tolerate it, having received disrespect. Now let the all-shining moon shine, as Xusrō comes to an end, the remaining ones pledge [that] the Persians no longer serve creation. And now the thrice-greatest axis of the sun washed itself with the cleansing of murders, cries out, [and] tells to you the slaughter of Xusrō, having escaped the profane suspicions of the god.⁵⁸

This passage is significant because it suggests that the war, a horrible event that had a lasting impact on witnesses,⁵⁹ affected George of Pisidia and influenced how he depicted Xusrō II.

Recent scholarship, however, has underscored the propagandistic undertones of Roman accounts of supposed Sasanian cruelty such as this during the war. For instance, Walter Kaegi, in his biography of Heraclius, writes that stories of Sasanian violence against Christians after the fall of the Levant “involved great

58. George of Pisidia, *Heraclius* 1.1-12, in Agostino Pertusi, Giorgio di Pisidia. *Poemi. I. Panegirici epici* (Studia patristica et Byzantina 7. Ettal: Buch-Kunstverlag, 1959): 240-261: Ἀγαλλιᾶσθω πάς χορὸς τῶν ἀστέρων τὸν ἀστρόδουλον δεικνύων πεπτωκότα καὶ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ πῶσιν ἠγνοηκότα· οὐκ ἔστεγεν γὰρ ἡ κτίσις τιμωμένη κὰν δυσσεβηθεὶς ὁ Κτίσας ἠνείχετο. νῦν πανσέληνος ἢ σελήνη λαμπέτω τοῦ Χοσροῦ λήγοντος ἐγγυωμένη Πέρσας τὸ λοιπὸν μὴ θεουργεῖν τὴν κτίσιν. καὶ νῦν ὁ τρισμέγιστος ἡλίου πόλος, λούσας ἑαυτὸν τῇ καθάρσει τῶν φόνων, βοᾷ, λαλεῖ σοι τὴν σφαγὴν τοῦ Χοσροῦ, θεοῦ βεβήλους ἐκφυγῶν ὑποψίας. Special thanks to Vicky Hioureas of the History Department at Princeton for help with this translation.

59. James Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World in Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 6, 21.

exaggerations and hysteria.”⁶⁰ Yuri Stoyanov’s position is that the loss of Jerusalem was a blow to the Romans’ religious and military morale.⁶¹ Thus we see sources detailing the destruction of churches and the slaughter of Christians in the city that historians have accepted as fact.⁶² Stoyanov notes that archaeology suggests that while there were some mass graves and damage to buildings in Jerusalem, there was no lasting impact of the Sasanian occupation.⁶³

The Romans used anti-Sasanian propaganda for several reasons. The Romans believed they had to defend Jerusalem because Constantinople was both the “New Rome” and the “New Jerusalem,” realigned as the spiritual capital of an orthodox Christian empire.⁶⁴ Stoyanov also writes that depictions of Sasanian violence in the Levant could have been used to drive a wedge between non-Chalcedonian Christians living in *Ērānšahr* who might have been loyal to Xusrō II.⁶⁵ Mary Whitby postulates that George of Pisidia used language, such as in the passage above, to talk to a

60. Walter E. Kaegi, *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 77. See also 78-82, 86.

61. Yuri Stoyanov, *Defenders and Enemies of the True Cross: The Sasanian Conquest of Jerusalem in 614 and Byzantine Ideology of Anti-Persian Warfare* (Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2011), 11.

62. Stoyanov, *Defenders and Enemies*, 11. For example, see Gerrit J. Reinink, “Heraclius, the New Alexander: Apocalyptic Prophecies During the Reign of Heraclius,” in *The Reign of Heraclius (610-641): Crisis and Confrontation* eds. Gerrit J. Reinink and Bernard H. Stolte (Leuven: Peeters Publishing Publishing, 2002): 81-82 who calls the sack of Jerusalem “bloody.”

63. For the existence of a few mass graves, see Stoyanov, *Defenders and Enemies*, 21. For supposedly damaged churches still in use during the war, see 18-20. See also G. W. Bowersock, *Empires in Collision in Late Antiquity* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2012) 47-48 for the lack of destruction of Jerusalem during the Sasanian occupation.

64. Stoyanov, *Defenders and Enemies*, 35, 45.

65. Stoyanov, *Defenders and Enemies*, 43.

Constantinopolitan audience and soothe them when Heraclius left the capital and campaigned against the Sasanians.⁶⁶ Other historians, however, have taken a middle path. G. W. Bowersock has made allowances for the exaggeration of the sources of total destruction but at the same time acknowledges that the loss of Jerusalem was a strategic and religious disaster for the Romans.⁶⁷

What this chapter seeks to highlight is the fear experienced by Romans in this time; experiences that demonstrate that while truth of the war was more complex than “bad Xusrō II” invading the Roman Empire, the Romans felt terror at the invasion. This terror, in turn, influenced verbiage of people like George of Pisidia when he described the rejoicing of the heavens of the defeat of Xusrō II and the downfall of the Sasanians. George of Pisidia’s poems resonated with an audience that feared Xusrō II due to his invasion of the Roman Empire, no matter the actual propagandistic value of his work. Studying George of Pisidia as court poet of Heraclius who pumped out the emperor’s message is important because it cannot be ignored.⁶⁸ It is more important, however, to consider that people like George of Pisidia were more inclined to present Xusrō II in a bad light because they lived through the war; and like the common people, felt terror of Xusrō II.⁶⁹ No matter

66. Mary Whitby, “George of Pisidia’s Presentation of the Emperor Heraclius and his Campaigns: Variety and Development,” in *The Reign of Heraclius (610-641): Crisis and Confrontation* eds. Gerrit J. Reinink and Bernard H. Stolte (Leuven: Peeters Publishing, 2002): 164-165.

67. Bowersock, *Empires in Collision*, 31-32, 41-47.

68. For George of Pisidia being Heraclius’ court poet and panegyrist, see Mary Whitby, “Defender of the Cross: George of Pisidia on the Emperor Heraclius and His Deputies,” in *The Propaganda of Power: The Role of Panegyric in Late Antiquity* ed. Mary Whitby (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 1998), 248-249.

69. This is because George of Pisidia actually composed his poems during the brutal Roman-Sasanian War of the seventh century CE. See Whitby, “Defender of the Cross,” 253.

how much historians can paint depictions of Xusrō II as propaganda, it would not have resonated with the Roman people if they did not feel fear of the *šahanšah*. As Martyn P. Thompson explains: “no reader reads a text without some experiences and some expectations; what is got out of a text is always in part a function of them.”⁷⁰

This chapter studies authors who lived through the events of the war in the seventh century CE. There are two writers, however, who lived two centuries after the fact: Theophanes Confessor and Nikephoros, patriarch of Constantinople. While the span of time can be problematic when studying an emotional reaction to an event, in this case, it is not. Theophanes, who lived in the eighth and ninth centuries, used the poems of George of Pisidia and the official dispatches of Heraclius.⁷¹ As will be seen shortly, Theophanes used these sources because the memory of Xusrō II’s actions lingered in his lifetime. Nikephoros was born in the mid-eighth century, and his account of the war is a rhetorical exercise from his school days.⁷² But if his account was only a school exercise, why did Nikephoros talk about the alleged cruelties of Xusrō II? Again, the memory lived on after the war because it was engrained in the Roman cultural psyche.

We see that other Roman authors present Xusrō II like George of Pisidia did

70. Martyn P. Thompson, “Reception Theory and the Interpretation of Historical Meaning,” *History and Theory* 32, no. 3 (Oct., 1993): 252.

71. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World in Crisis*, 25, 30, 268, 277, 286; Mary Whitby, “George of Pisidia and the Persuasive Word: Words, Words, Words...,” in *Rhetoric in Byzantium* ed. Elizabeth Jeffreys (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 173.

72. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World in Crisis*, 238-240, 249.

in the previous quotation. The unknown author of the *Chronicon Pascale* wrote that after Heraclius defeated the Sasanians at the battle of Nineveh (627 CE), he sent the following letter to the populace of Constantinople:

Let us all Christians rejoice, praising and glorifying, we give thanks to the one God, rejoicing with great joy in his holy name. For fallen is the arrogant Xusrō, fighting against God. He is fallen and cast down to the depths and the memory of him is extinguished from the earth; the exalted one even spoke injustice in arrogance and contempt against our lord Jesus Christ of the true God.⁷³

The author of this passage wrote further that Xusrō II's son, Šīroē (r. 628 CE), led the Sasanian army in rebellion against his father. Šīroē imprisoned the "God-hated Xusrō"⁷⁴ and "killed the same brutish, arrogant, blaspheming opponent of God, so he knew that Jesus ... against whom he blasphemed, is God almighty."⁷⁵ Xusrō II then "departed to the unquenchable fire that was prepared for Satan and his friends."⁷⁶

Like George of Pisidia, the unknown author of the *Chronicon Paschale* is fixated with the fact that God supposedly hated Xusrō II for blaspheming against him and that the *šahanšah's* ultimate fate was the Christian hell.⁷⁷

73. *Chronicon Paschale* 628 *Chronicon Pascale*, 284-628 AD: *Translated with Notes and Introduction* by Michael Whitby and Mary Whitby trans. Michael Whitby and Mary Whitby (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1989), 183; L. Dindorf, *Chronicon paschale*, vol. 1 (Corpus scriptorum historiae Byzantinae. Bonn: Weber, 1832): 3-737, 728.2-8: καὶ πάντες οἱ χριστιανοὶ αἰνοῦντες καὶ δοξολογοῦντες εὐχαριστήσωμεν τῷ μόνῳ θεῷ, χαίροντες ἐπὶ τῷ ἁγίῳ αὐτοῦ ὀνόματι χαρὰν μεγάλην. ἔπεσεν γὰρ ὁ ὑπερήφανος καὶ θεομάχος Χοσρόης. ἔπεσεν καὶ ἐπτωμάτισθη εἰς τὰ καταχθόνια, καὶ ἐξωλοθρεύθη ἐκ γῆς τὸ μνημόσυνον αὐτοῦ ὁ ὑπερραϊόμενος καὶ λαλήσας ἀδικίαν ἐν ὑπερηφανίᾳ καὶ ἐξουθενώσει κατὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ θεοῦ.

74. *Chronicon Paschale*, 628 in Whitby and Whitby, 183; Dindorf, 729.3: τὸν θεομίσητον Χοσρόην.

75. *Chronicon Paschale*, 628 in Whitby and Whitby, 183; Dindorf, 729.4-8: ἀνείλε τὸν αὐτὸν ἀγνώμονα καὶ θεομάχον καὶ ὑπερήφανον καὶ βλάβσφημον πικροτάτῳ, θανάτῳ, ἵνα γινῶ ὅτι Ἰησοῦς... θεὸς παντοδύναμος ἐστίν.

76. *Chronicon Paschale*, 628 in Whitby and Whitby, 184; Dindorf, 729.12-14: εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ ἀκατάσβεστον τὸ ἠτοιμασμένον τῷ Σατανᾷ καὶ τοῖς ἀξιῶις αὐτοῦ ἀπῆλθεν.

77. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World in Crisis*, 48.

It is clear that George of Pisidia and the author of the *Chronicon Paschale* held Xusrō II in contempt because they witnessed the events of the war. They received news about the fall of Jerusalem and the loss of the True Cross (614 CE), the fall of Egypt (618 CE), and the fall of Anatolia (617 CE), all to Xusrō II's generals. The fall of Anatolia was especially shocking for the Romans because it put the Sasanians in striking distance of Constantinople, especially when they captured the city of Chalcedon, which was adjacent to the Roman capital.⁷⁸ The Sasanians took advantage of the situation by allying themselves with the Avars. The Avars besieged Constantinople under their Khagan,⁷⁹ while the Sasanians captured and occupied significant parts of the Roman Empire.

The fall of Egypt to the general Šahbarāz also was cause for concern. Egypt was the breadbasket for the empire and when the Sasanians took it, grain shipments stopped.⁸⁰ Nikephoros wrote: "At that time a grievous famine developed in the state; for Egypt was no longer feeding it."⁸¹ George of Pisidia and the author of the *Chronicon Paschale*, along with everyone else in Constantinople, witnessed these

78. Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 74, 133-134.

79. Whom the author of the *Chronicon Paschale* called the "godless" (τοῦ θεομισήτου). See *Chronicon Paschale*, in Whitby and Whitby, 171; Dindorf, 717.4, for instance. For details of the siege, see Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 135-138; James Howard-Johnston, "The Siege of Constantinople in 626," in *Constantinople and its Hinterland*, ed. C. Mango and G. Dagron (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1995), 131-142 reprinted in *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity: Historiographical and Historical Studies* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT.: Ashgate Variorum, 2006).

80. John Haldon, "The Reign of Heraclius: A Context for Change?" in *The Reign of Heraclius (610-641): Crisis and Confrontation* eds. Gerrit J. Reinink and Bernard H. Stolte (Leuven: Peeters Publishing, 2002): 3; Beate Dignas and Engelbert Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 118.

81. Nikephoros, *Breviarium* 8.2-3 ed. and trans Cyril Mango, *Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople: Short History* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1990), 48: ἐφ' οἷς καὶ λιμὸς τηνικαῦτα τῇ πολιτείᾳ ἐπέφύη βαρύτερος· οὐ γὰρ ἡ Αἴγυπτος αὐτοῖς τὸ λοιπὸν ἐπεσίτιζεν.

events, and thus these writers portrayed Xusrō II as an enemy of God who ultimately was killed and sent to hell as punishment for his sins.

Due to the heightened state of fear experienced during the war, Roman writers reached deep into the past to properly portray the supposed villainy of Xusrō II. George of Pisidia praised Heraclius as another Scipio Africanus, the general who invaded the Carthaginian Empire when Hannibal was ravaging Italy and threatened the Roman Republic during the Second Punic War (218 BCE-201 BCE), when he did the same thing by invading *Ērānšahr* after making the Turks his allies. “O Scipio, keep silent; custom was written to say Scipio is Heraclius,” wrote George of Pisidia⁸² By equating Heraclius with Scipio Africanus, George of Pisidia equated Xusrō II with Hannibal, who was one of the biggest threats faced by the Roman people and whose memory haunted the Romans centuries after his defeat.⁸³ Xusrō II, in other words, was a threat to the Roman people in the seventh century CE, much like Hannibal was in the third century BCE. Because Xusrō II was the new Hannibal, the author of the *Chronicon Paschale* and George of Pisidia were keen on highlighting his enmity toward the Christian God and how he went to hell after his

82. George of Pisidia *Heraclias* 2.97-98 in Agostino Pertusi, Giorgio di Pisidia. *Poemi. I. Panegirici epici* (Studia patristica et Byzantina 7. Ettal: Buch-Kunstverlag, 1959): 240-261: ὁ Σκηπίων, σίγησον· ἐγράφη νόμος τοῦς Σκηπίωνας Ἡρακλείωνας λέγειν; Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World in Crisis*, 22; Mary Whitby, “A New Image for a New Age: George of Pisidia on the Emperor Heraclius,” in *The Roman and Byzantine Army in the East: Proceedings of a Colloquium Held at the Jagiellonian University, Kraków in September 1992* ed. E. Dabrowa (Kraków: Uniwersytet Jagiellonski, 1992), 205. For Heraclius’ Turkish allies, see Nikephoros, *Breviarium*, 12.42-43; Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 143-144. The role of the Turks in the war of the seventh century CE is further explored in chapter three.

83. Although there are many problems with this master’s thesis, see Keenan Baca-Winters, *Memoria Hannibalis: Constructing Memories of Punic War Violence from the Second Century BCE Through the Fifth Century CE*, (master’s thesis, San Diego State University, 2010), for more on Hannibal and Roman cultural memory.

death.

Thus we see that when Heraclius invaded *Ērānšahr*, George of Pisidia praised his course of action and gleefully recounted the destruction wrought upon the Sasanians and their Zoroastrian fire temples:

But both the common king and lord of all and commander of the campaigns is he with whom is steadfastly a general, through whom victory is sacred.... For it is clear for us to advance against the enemies who pay obedience to forgeries [false idols], mixed the pure blood with polluted blood. Those are churches of human misery, polluted with the worst sensual pleasures. They are willing to dig out the grapevine of the sacred word with the barbarian sword. Wherefore they are the ones about whom David, inspired by God, spoke out, saying blessed is he who strikes down the children of Persia and smashes them against the rocks.⁸⁴

George of Pisidia then wished that Heraclius' black boots would be soaked red with Iranian blood.⁸⁵

Perhaps the worst blow to the Sasanians was the destruction of the fire temple of Atur Gušnap, which Iranian tradition said that Ohrmazd created along with several others across *Ērānšahr*,⁸⁶ and protected the entire world from evil.⁸⁷

84. George of Pisidia, *De Expeditione Persica* 2.99-115 in Agostino Pertusi, Giorgio di Pisidia. *Poemi. I. Panegirici epici* (Studia patristica et Byzantina 7. Ettal: Buch-Kunstverlag, 1959): 240-261: οὗτος δὲ κοινὸς καὶ βασιλεὺς καὶ δεσπότης καὶ τῶν καθ' ἡμᾶς ἡγεμῶν στρατευμάτων, μεθ' οὗ στρατηγεῖν ἔστιν ἀσφαλέστερον, δι' οὗ τὸ νικᾶν ἔστιν εὐσεβέστερον· ἐφ' ᾧ πεποιθὼς καὶ τὰ νῦν ἀφιγμένος ὡς εἰς ἀφ' ὑμῶν πρὸς πόνους ὀπλίζομαι. πρέπει γὰρ ἡμᾶς, ὡς ἐκείνου πλάσματα, χωρεῖν κατ' ἐχθρῶν προσκυνούντων κτίσματα, οἱ τὰς τραπέζας τὰς ἀμίκτους αἱμάτων λύθροις ἔμιξαν αἱμάτων μαιφόνους· οἱ τὰς ἀδέκτους τῶν παθῶν ἐκκλησίας ἐν ἡδοναῖς χραίνουσιν ἐμπαθεστάταις· οἱ τὴν φυτουργηθεῖσαν ἄμπελον Λόγῳ ξίφει θέλουσιν ἐξορύξαι βαρβάρῳ· δι' οὗς ὁ Δαβὶδ ἐνθέως ἐφθέγγετο μακάριος εἰπὼν ὅς τὰ τέκνα Περσίδος πέτραις προσαντέκρουσεν ἠδαφισμένα. Translation modified from Walter Kaegi's translation in Heraclius, 114-115. See also Whitby, "George of Pisidia and the Persuasive Word," 184.

85. According to Mary Whitby, the black boots are symbolic of Heraclius taking control of the Roman army in person, the first emperor since Theodosius I (r. 379 CE-395 CE). See Whitby, "A New Image for a New Age," 197-198.

86. Matthew P. Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual Kingship Between Rome and Sasanian Iran* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2009), 15.

87. *The Bundahshin* ("Creation"), or *Knowledge from the Zand* 17.7 *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 5 trans. E.W. West (Oxford University Press, 1897).

George of Pisidia described the temple as a “wall of sin” that housed the *magi*, the Zoroastrian clergy.⁸⁸ While George of Pisidia’s rhetoric denotes the hyperbole of propaganda,⁸⁹ it is important to ask why he would need to use such terms to describe the death and destruction of the Sasanian people. Why did he link Heraclius to David of the Psalms, who murdered people by braining them against rocks? Why does he link Heraclius to Scipio Africanus and his invasion of the Carthaginian Empire?

It is undeniable that George of Pisidia, as a Christian, felt aversion toward Zoroastrianism,⁹⁰ just as it is undeniable that the Romans meant for anti-Zoroastrian propaganda to escalate the religious aspects of the war.⁹¹ There is more than propaganda, however, to depictions of the destruction of these holy sites.

Theophanes Confessor helps to answer these questions in his account of Heraclius’ invasion of *Ērānšahr*. According to Theophanes, Heraclius addressed his troops before the commencement of the invasion:

But Heraclius summoned his army and roused them with words of exhortation, saying: ‘Men, my brothers, let us catch in mind the fear of God and fight to avenge the violence done to God. Let us make a noble stand against the enemies who have done terrible things to the Christians. Let us respect the sovereignty of the Romans, and make a stand

88. George of Pisidia, *Heraclius* 2.199-203 in Agostino Pertusi, Giorgio di Pisidia. *Poemi. I. Panegirici epici* (Studia patristica et Byzantina 7. Ettal: Buch-Kunstverlag, 1959): 240-261: εἰς τεῖχος, ὡς ἔδειξε, τῆς ἀμαρτίας· ἐκεῖ γὰρ εἶχε Χοσροὴς καὶ τοὺς μάγους καὶ τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ προστάτας τοὺς ἀνθρώκας, δεινὴν κρατηθεὶς εἰκότως ὑποψία. Again, special thanks to Vicky Hioureas of the History Department at Princeton for help with this translation.

89. Stoyanov, *Defenders and Enemies*, 8.

90. Whitby, “Defender of the Cross,” 253; Whitby, “George of Pisidia’s Presentation of the Emperor Heraclius and his Campaigns, 163; Whitby, “A New Image for a New Age,” 217-218.

91. Stoyanov, *Defenders and Enemies*, 23, 42-43, 60-61.

against the enemies armed with impiety... Let us avenge the ruin of our maidens.’⁹²

This passage suggests that Theophanes believed that the soldiers of Xusrō II did violence against the god of the Christians and the Roman people, especially against their women. But there is more to this passage. The sentence, “Let us respect the sovereignty of the Romans,” denotes that the entire Roman state was at stake in the war. This quotation is thus more than a reflection of the religious enmities between the two states.⁹³ It was unprecedented for a *šahanšah* to penetrate into Roman territory, as did Xusrō II. The existence of the Roman Empire was indeed in danger. People who read or heard about Xusrō II’s advances did not think too highly of him. This dislike was mixed with fear, and passages such as this were meant to rally the Roman people after years of disastrous war.⁹⁴ Thus, after Heraclius’ speech, Theophanes wrote that Heraclius burnt down Thebarmais and its fire temple.⁹⁵ Heraclius and his army then wintered in Albania, where all of his soldiers prayed he would “become the savior of the Persians and kill Xusrō, the destroyer.”⁹⁶

92. Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia* AM 6114, in *The Chronicle of Theophanes* trans. Cyril Mango and Roger Scott with Geoffrey Greatrex (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 439; C. de Boor, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1883; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1963): 3-503, 307.1-9: Ἡράκλειος δὲ προσκαλεσάμενος τὸ ἑαυτοῦ στράτευμα λόγοις παραινετικοῖς διήγειρεν αὐτούς, λέγων· ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί μου, λάβωμεν εἰς νοῦν τὸν τοῦ θεοῦ φόβον καὶ ἀγωνισώμεθα τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ ὕβριν ἐκδικήσαι. στώμεν γενναίως κατ’ ἐχθρῶν τῶν πολλὰ δεινὰ Χριστιανοῖς ἐργασασμένων. αἰδεσθώμεν τὸ τῶν Ῥωμαίων αὐτοδέσποτον κράτος, καὶ στώμεν κατ’ ἐχθρῶν δυσσεβῶς ὠπλισμένων... ἐκδικήσωμεν τὰς φθορὰς τῶν παρθένων.

93. Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 126.

94. Stoyanov, *Defenders and Enemies*, 64-65.

95. Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia* AM 6114.

96. Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia* AM 6114 in Mango and Scott with Greatrex, 440; C. de Boor, 308.24-25: ὥστε πάντες μετὰ δακρύων τούτῳ ἠύχοντο ὅςτις γενέσθαι καὶ τῆς Περσίδος, τὸν κοσμόλεθρον ἀνελόντι Χοσρόην. For wintering in Albania, see Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 128.

It is clear that this passage suggests that according to Theophanes, Heraclius not only would kill Xusrō II because of gains he made in the war but he would liberate the Sasanian people from the grip of his tyranny. Whether the Sasanians thought this about their *šahanšah* will be explored in another chapter. It is important, however, to realize that if Theophanes is any indication, some Romans considered Xusrō II to have mistreated the Sasanians, his own subjects, as he did the Romans. There were, in other words, no limits to the depravity of Xusrō II.

Theophanes continued that Heraclius and his army captured Dastagerd. The Romans destroyed the city and the palaces in it to send a message to the *šahanšah*.

After releasing Roman captives, Heraclius

celebrated the feast of Deliverance in Dastagerd, he gladdened and revitalized his men and he trampled on the palaces of Xusrō II. He razed to the ground the priceless, marvelous, and wonderful buildings so that Xusrō II might learn the sort of suffering the Romans endured when their cities were burnt and destroyed by him.⁹⁷

Again, it is important to note that Theophanes stressed that Heraclius destroyed the palaces of Dastagerd and the rest of the city in retaliation for the sufferings of the Roman people, although Walter Kaegi also points out that the need to restore the empire's finances by taking booty also played a part.⁹⁸ Even if Heraclius sacked only Xusrō II's palaces to replenish the empire's treasury, there was an emotional reaction in someone who heard about this event. The people of

97. Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia* AM 6118 in Mango and Scott with Greatrex, 452; C. de Boor, 322.16-21: ἐποίησε δὲ ὁ βασιλεὺς καὶ τὴν ἑορτὴν τῶν φώτων ἐν Δασταγέρδ εὐφραίνων καὶ ἀνακτώμενος τὸν τε λαὸν καὶ τὰ ἄλογα, καὶ καταστρέφων τὰ τοῦ Χοσρόου παλάτια κτίσματα ὑπέριμα ὄντα καὶ θαυμαστά καὶ καταπληκτικά, ἅπερ ἕως ἐδάφους καθεῖλεν, ἵνα μάθῃ Χοσρόης, οἷον πόνον εἶχον Ῥωμαῖοι τῶν πόλεων ἐρημουμένων παρ' αὐτοῦ καὶ πυρπολουμένων; Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 127, 172.

98. Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 110-111.

Constantinople desired revenge for Sasanian gains in the war. Hearing accounts of Heraclius burning Sasanian cities fulfilled this desire.⁹⁹

The issue of destroying fire temples can be rightly described as Christian anti-Zoroastrian violence, but there is another dimension to this. Nikephoros described Heraclius' destruction of a temple in *Ērānšahr*, and from it, we can see that the destruction of Xusrō II's palaces and Sasanian cities also were meant to be acts of violence upon the *šahanšah* himself:

In one of these [temples], it was discovered that Xusrō, making himself into a god, had placed himself [a portrait of himself] on the ceiling, as if he were seated in heaven, and made stars, the sun and moon, and angels placed around him, and a contrivance to make thunder and rain whenever he wanted. Upon beholding the abomination, Heraclius threw it down onto the earth and destroyed it.¹⁰⁰

This episode can, of course, be classified as anti-Zoroastrian violence committed in retaliation for Xusrō II's invasion of the Roman Empire. There is, however, a personal element to the destruction of this fire temple. Xusrō II, at least according to Nikephoros, had made himself into a god and was seated in heaven among the astral bodies. In his megalomania, he made a contraption to make it thunder and rain in the temple. Clearly, Nikephoros thought Xusrō II was a despot with delusions of grandeur. Heraclius, by casting down Xusrō II's portrait, attacked that despot in revenge for his war against the Roman people. This act of violence was committed against Xusrō II himself, that tyrant who thought he was a god.

99. Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 156.

100. Nikephoros, *Breviarium*, 12.43-46, in Mango, 56: ἐφ' ἑνὸς δὲ τούτων εὑρηται, ὡς Χοσρόης ἑαυτὸν θεοποιήσας ἐν τῇ τούτου στέγῃ ἑαυτὸν καθήμενον ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ ἀνεστήλωσεν, ἀστραπὰς καὶ ἥλιον καὶ σελήνην συγκατασκευάσας, ἀγγέλους περιεστώτας αὐτῷ, καὶ βροντὴν διὰ μηχανῆς ποιεῖν καὶ ὕειν ὅπῃ ἂν θελήσειεν. τοῦτο τὸ βδέλυγμα θεασάμενος Ἡράκλειος εἰς γῆν κατέρριψε καὶ ὡς κονιορτὸν διέλυσε. Translation modified from Mango. According to Howard-Johnston, Nikephoros actually wrote about the destruction of Atur Gušnap. See Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World in Crisis*, 245-246.

The theme of the despotic *šahanšah* also is apparent in another author from the same era, Theophylact Simocatta. He wrote about the reign of the emperor before Heraclius, Maurice (r. 582 CE-602 CE), whose murder at the hands of Phocas (r. 602 CE-610 CE) was the trigger for Xusrō II's invasion of the Roman Empire. Maurice gave substantial assistance to Xusrō II to regain his throne from Wahrām Čubīn, the reneged *spahbed* (general) who deposed *šahanšah* Hormīzd IV (r. 579 CE-590 CE). Theophylact had many interesting things to say about Sasanian *šahanšahs* and their cruelty or ineptitude. But before I commence, it must be noted that like George of Pisidia, the events of the Roman-Sasanian War of the seventh century CE also took their toll on Theophylact, because he was alive for the entirety of the war and undoubtedly witnessed many of its events.¹⁰¹ His experience also influenced how he portrayed Xusrō II and other Sasanian rulers.

Theophylact wrote that after the death of Xusrō I (r. 531 CE-579 CE), the grandfather of Xusrō II, his son and successor Hormīzd IV was a despotic ruler:

At the start of spring, Xusrō [I], the king of the Persians was caught in a net by disease and trampled on this life, after placing his son Hormīzd as successor, a man with harshness had overshot the wicked habits of his ancestors. For he was violent, and was most insatiable, who gave no place to justice; he rejoiced in deceit and wallowed in falsehood, clinging to hostilities rather than peace.¹⁰²

101. According to Michael Whitby and Mary Whitby, Theophylact was born in the 580s CE, was present in Constantinople for Heraclius' entrance into the city, and mentioned the death of Xusrō II. See Michael and Mary Whitby, "Introduction," in *The History of Theophylact Simocatta: An English Translation with Introduction and Notes* eds. and trans. Michael and Mary Whitby (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986): xiii-xiv, xvi; Michael Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian: Theophylact Simocatta on Persian and Balkan Warfare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 30, 39, 40, 295. Whitby also proposes that Theophylact wanted to continue his history to include the war in the seventh century CE but did not because the Arab invasions erased Heraclius' achievements in *ibid.* 46-47.

102. Theophylact Simocatta, *The History of Theophylact Simocatta: An English Translation with Introduction and Notes* 3.16.7-8 ed. and trans. Michael and Mary Whitby (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1986), 98; C. de Boor, *Theophylacti Simocattae historiae*. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1887; repr. Stuttgart, 1972): 20-314, 3.16.7-8: Ἡρως δ' ἀρχομένου, νόσω σαγηνευθεὶς Χοσροῦς, ὁ τῶν Περσῶν βασιλεὺς, τὸν τῆδε κατεστρέψατο βίον, διάδοχον προστησάμενος Ὀρμίσδαν τὸν υἱόν, ἄνδρα τῆ χαλεπότητι τὴν πατρῶαν

The significance of this passage is that Theophylact does not explain why Hormīzd IV is a tyrant; he is just generally greedy and violent toward the Sasanian people.

Take this passage from Theophylact about the usurper, Wahrām Čubīn Wahrām Čubīn (r. 590 CE-591 CE): “that Persian tyrant, who started the dissolution of the tyrant Hormīzd [Hormīzd IV]” was from the house of Mihrān, an important Parthian family.¹⁰³ If Theophylact is any indication, both Hormīzd IV and Wahrām Čubīn were tyrants, but again, there is no substantive evidence of their bad behavior. Theophylact made general statements about how both men were not good people. He did, however, reveal a hatred for Xusrō II when he wrote about his behaviour during the Roman-Sasanian effort to restore him to the throne.¹⁰⁴ This time, Theophylact offered evidence of the shortcomings of Xusrō II.

Theophylact wrote that after his usurpation and imprisonment, Hormīzd IV had sent word from prison and wanted to make a speech. After lambasting Wahrām Čubīn, Hormīzd IV had this to say about his son:

And let him strip the diadem of Xusrō from his head. He is not kingly in spirit, he does not think in ruling thought, his mind is not authoritative. His impulses are ungovernable, he puts forth madness on his soul, he has surrounded himself with a look of inhumanity, he does not exalt foresight with custom, his manner is arrogant, he has begotten a

ὑπερηγοντικότερα τῶν τρόπων ἀνοσιότητα· ἦν γὰρ βίαιός τε καὶ τοῦ πλείονος ἐραστῆς ἀκορέστατος, ἐν οὐδεμᾶ τὸ δίκαιον μοῖρα τιθέμενος· ἀπάτη τε ἠδόμενος καὶ τῷ ψεύδει περιορεόμενος τῶν πολέμων, οὐ τῆς εἰρήνης, ἐγλίχετο. Translation modified from Whitby and Whitby.

103. Theophylact Simocatta, *The History of Theophylact Simocatta*, 3.18.6 in Whitby and Whitby, 101; C. de Boor, *Theophylacti Simocattae historiae* 3.18.6: ἀπὸ μὲν τῆς Ῥαζακηγῆς οὕτω καλουμένης ὀρμάσθαι μοῖρας τὸν Βαράμ, οἰκαρχίας δὲ τῆς τοῦ Μιρράμου γεγονέναι τὸν Πέρσην ἐκείνον τὸν τύραννον, ὃς ἀφορμὴ τῆς καταλύσεως Ὀρμίσδα τῷ τυράννῳ γεγένηται. Translation modified from Whitby and Whitby. See also Daryae, *Sasanian Persia*, 31. This point will be important in the fourth chapter.

104. Indeed, Evagrius states that it was two armies—one Sasanian and one Roman—that restored Xusrō II to the throne. See Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.19 Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.17, *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus* ed. and trans. Michael Whitby (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000).

yearning for sensual pleasures, all is second in rank to his consent, he does not wait for what is expedient, he does not cherish good counsel, he dismisses generosity, he clings to a love of money, he a lover of war and strife, and without appetite for peace.¹⁰⁵

Hormīzd IV then stated that Xusrō II's brother was to succeed the throne, only to be rebuked by Xusrō II's uncle, Bīndōe. The crowd slaughtered Hormīzd IV's wife and son in front of his eyes and blinded him with a red-hot poker.¹⁰⁶ Xusrō II then took the throne.

After this incident, Hormīzd IV spent his time in captivity while Xusrō II waged war against Wahrām Čubīn. It is here that Theophylact revealed his evidence that Xusrō II was truly awful and not just some general, greedy tyrant like he portrayed Hormīzd IV and Wahrām Čubīn. While in captivity, Hormīzd IV became boorish, and the nobility killed him, but Theophylact said, "Xusrō [II], after defiling the prelude of reign with uncleanness" and held feasts to celebrate his power.¹⁰⁷ But when the war against Wahrām Čubīn turned for the worse, Xusrō II's cowardly nature caused him to lose the throne. In a battle near the river Zab, Wahrām Čubīn placed his army behind entrenchments while Xusrō II refused to engage. His forces

105. Theophylact Simocatta, 4.4.14-15 *The History of Theophylact Simocatta* in Whitby and Whitby, 109; C. de Boor, *Theophylacti Simocattae historiae* 4.4.14-15: ἀπογυμνούσθω τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ Χοσρόης τοῦ διαδήματος. οὐκ ἔστι βασιλικὸς τὴν ψυχὴν, οὐκ ἀρχικὴ διανοία κεκόσμηται, οὐκ ἐξουσιαστικὸν τοῦτου τὸ φρόνημα. ἀκάθεκτός ἐστι ταῖς ὀρμαῖς, λυσσώδης πέφυκε τὸν θυμὸν, ἀφιλότιμον αὐτῷ περιέχεται βλέμμα, οὐκ οἶδε νόμοις προνοίας σεμνύνεσθαι, τὸν τρόπον ἐστὶν ἀγέρωχος, τὴν ὄρεξιν φιλήδονος πέφυκεν, πάντα δεύτερα τίθεται τοῦ βουλήματος, οὐ καταδοκεῖ τὸ συνοῖσον, τὴν εὐβουλίαν οὐκ ἐναγκαλίζεται, τὸ φιλότιμον ἀποπέμπεται, τῇ φιλοχρηματίᾳ προσπλέκεται φίλοις ὧν καὶ φιλοπόλεμος καὶ τῆς εἰρήνης ἀνόρεκτος. Translation modified from Whitby and Whitby. See also Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian*, 294.

106. Theophylact Simocatta, *The History of Theophylact Simocatta*, 4.6.1-5.

107. Theophylact Simocatta 4.7.4, *The History of Theophylact Simocatta*, in Whitby and Whitby, 112; C. de Boor, *Theophylacti Simocattae historiae*, 4.7.4: δὲ Χοσρόης τηλικούτῳ μύσει τὰ τῆς βασιλείας βεβηλώσας προαύλια. Translation modified from Whitby and Whitby.

soon became disillusioned after being slaughtered and then deserted his cause.¹⁰⁸ It becomes apparent that Theophylact stressed the cowardly nature of Xusrō II and his lack of martial acumen. This is especially true after Maurice sent military aid to Xusrō II.

In an episode similar to the one mentioned, Theophylact writes that at the battle of Siraganon, the Roman commander, Narses, ordered his soldiers to remain in camp located on the hills. Xusrō II overruled him and had the army rush at Wahrām Čubīn's position, an act that led to the allied defeat. After the battle, the Romans "denounced the thoughtlessness of Xusrō [II]."¹⁰⁹ Obviously, Theophylact thought little of Xusrō II's abilities as a commander. The more interesting thing here, however, is that Theophylact actually stated something else. While Xusrō II's armies themselves were able to inflict harm upon the Roman people during the war of the seventh century CE, the man himself was inclined to commit acts of tomfoolery. The man was not a good commander and had a competent staff that did the conquering for him.¹¹⁰ All one had to do was look at history to see the evidence, at least according to Theophylact.

It becomes apparent that while Theophanes and George of Pisidia were keen

108. Theophylact Simocatta, *The History of Theophylact Simocatta*, 4.9.5-10.

109. Theophylact Simocatta, 5.9.12 *The History of Theophylact Simocatta*, in Whitby and Whitby, 145; C. de Boor, *Theophylacti Simocattae historiae* 5.9.12: τῆς ἀβουλίας κατηγορεῖ Χοσρόου.

110. Michael Whitby believes that Xusrō II was not a distinguished war leader and that indeed, his generals took the field for him during the war in the seventh century CE—unlike other Sasanian rulers. See "The Persian King at War," in *The Roman and Byzantine Army in the East: Proceedings of a Colloquium Held at the Jagiellonian University, Kraków in September 1992* ed. E. Dabrowa (Kraków: Uniwersytet Jagiellonski, 1992), 232, and especially 239-243 for *šahanšahs* taking the field and leading Sasanian troops.

on demonstrating the bloodthirsty nature of Xusrō II, Theophylact took a different approach to paint him in a bad light. According to Theophylact, Xusrō II was a fickle, mercenary, and untrustworthy man who broke all of his promises to Maurice in return for his aid instead of being simply labeled a “tyrant” – which is, of course, what Hormīzd IV said about Xusrō II in his speech before he was blinded.

For instance, when Xusrō II asked Maurice for military aid, the emperor granted it because of a speech the Sasanian ambassadors gave. The envoys said: Maurice should recall the fickleness of fortune and take the more kingly route and support Xusrō II, because “through a small alliance you would draw perpetual peace.”¹¹¹ Clearly, the envoys were appealing to Maurice’s better nature, but the idea of eternal peace aside,¹¹² they made more immediate promises:

We return Martyropolis, we will hand over Daras [Dara] as a gift, and we will set war with burial and build a house of peace by saying farewell to Armenia, on whose account war was unfortunately liberally prosperous. Even if the gifts are not deserving of necessity, certainly still this is our highest principle, to contrive with measure in promises than by enticing by sound with great offers and incur perpetual enmity when fail to bring about their conclusion, storing up against the future health of peace great occasions for evil.¹¹³

111. Theophylact Simocatta, *The History of Theophylact Simocatta*, 4.13.16, in Whitby and Whitby, 122; C. de Boor, *Theophylacti Simocattae historiae*, 4.13.16: ἀφύση διὰ μικρᾶς συμμαχίας τὴν εἰρήνην ἀθάνατον.

112. This would not be the first time talk between a perpetual peace took place between the Romans and Sasanians. For the attempts at everlasting peace between Rome and *Ērānšahr* during the reigns of Xusrō I and Justinian, see Touraj Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 30; Touraj Daryaee, *Sasanian Iran (224-651CE): Portrait of a Late Antique Empire* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers: 2008), 77-78; Dignas and Winter, *Rome and Persia: Neighbors and Rivals*, 38; A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602: A Social and Economic Survey* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 272-273.

113. Theophylact Simocatta, *The History of Theophylact Simocatta*, 4.13.24-5, in Whitby and Whitby, 123; C. de Boor, *Theophylacti Simocattae historiae*, 4.13.24-5: ἡμεῖς δὲ τὴν Μαρτύρων πόλιν ἀνταποδίδομεν, τό τε Δαρὰς προῖκα παρέξομεν, τόν τε πόλεμον ταφῆ καθιδρύσομεν ἀπόμισθοι τὴν εἰρήνην οἰκοδομήσαντες τῇ τε Ἀρμενίᾳ χαίρειν εἰπόντες, δι’ ἣν ὁ πόλεμος τὴν παρορησίαν δυστυχῶς τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἠτύχησεν. καὶ εἰ μὴ τῆς ἀνάγκης ἐπάξια τὰ δωρήματα πέφυκεν, ἀλλ’ οὖν τοῦτο κάλλιστόν ἐστιν ἡμῶν, τὸ μέτρον φιλοσοφεῖν τὴν ὑπόσχεσιν, ἢ μεγάλαις ἐπαγγελίαις τὴν ἀκοὴν ἐκλιπάναντας τῷ ἀτελεσιουργῆτι τῷ συμπεράσματι ἀθάνατον τὴν διαβολὴν ἐπιφέρεισθαι, μεγάλας κακῶν ἀφορμὰς τῇ τῆς εἰρήνης ἐς ὕστερον εὐεξία κακῶς θησαυρίσαντας. Translation modified from

This commitment was stronger than the one of perpetual peace. By returning Martyropolis and Dara, Xusrō II made a sign of good faith that he needed Maurice's help. On the other hand, the promise to renounce the claim to Persarmenia, which had been a point of contention for centuries between the Romans and Sasanians, demonstrated Xusrō II's real need for aid.¹¹⁴ Maurice now could take Xusrō II seriously after that promise was made—and so he did, when he accepted the envoys' offer. He then clothed Xusrō II in kingly attire so he could reclaim the throne¹¹⁵ and sent a Roman army into *Ērānšahr* to wage war against Wahrām Čubīn.¹¹⁶

Of course, Theophylact was concerned in portraying Xusrō II in a bad light as a form of revenge for his supposed acts of cruelty during the war in the seventh century CE. After his envoys made their promises, Xusrō II allegedly directed the Sasanian garrison at Martyropolis to not surrender the city to the Romans when they came to the city. Theophylact wrote:

But they who were in possession of Martyropolis, and yet they were besieged by the Romans, complying with the secret orders of Xusrō [II], did not give the city to the Romans, but even staunchly resisted. Accordingly, when the wickedness of Xusrō [II] became detected, Domitianus [the Roman commander], with shrewd calculation, counter-marshaled irresistible advice and put an end to the festering sore of the Persian deceit like an outgrowth of bubbles [blisters].¹¹⁷

Whitby and Whitby.

114. I examine Armenia fully in the second chapter.

115. Theophylact Simocatta, *The History of Theophylact Simocatta*, 5.3.7; Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*, 187.

116. It should be noted, however, that Evagrius believed that Maurice sent Xusrō II aid because of the uncertainty of life. See Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.17; Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian*, 297.

117. Theophylact Simocatta, *The History of Theophylact Simocatta*, 4.15.8-9, in Whitby and Whitby, 126; C. de Boor, *Theophylacti Simocattae historiae*, 4.15.8-9: οἱ δὲ τῆς Μαρτύρων ἐχόμενοι πόλεως, καίτοι τῆς πολιορκίας ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίων ἐπιστατούσης, τοῖς ἐν παραβύστω τοῦ Χοσρόου προστάγμασι πειθήνιοι πως γινόμενοι οὐκ ἐδίδοσαν τὴν πόλιν Ῥωμαίοις, ἀλλὰ καὶ μάλα καρτερῶς ἀντετάττοντο. οἰγαροῦν

Xusrō II directed his soldiers to surrender only the city and executed the Roman defectors who originally were responsible for handing over the city to the Sasanians in the first place—after Domitianus kept pestering the Sasanians about his promise to surrender the city!¹¹⁸ Theophylact was concerned with elucidating the untrustworthy nature of Xusrō II, an account that might not have been based in reality. This was, however, his way of getting revenge against the *šahanšah*.

The theme of the untrustworthy Sasanian is not confined to the authors studied thus far. In the *Strategikon*, attributed to Maurice, the Sasanians are said to be “wretched and dissembling and servile, but even patriotic and obedient.”¹¹⁹ While this text might not have come from the pen of Maurice himself, it betrays mistrust for the Sasanian people as well as a sense of admiration.¹²⁰ In an anonymous military treatise named *Strategy*, the Roman army was warned to be wary of deserters from an enemy force that could have acted as a fifth column, because “when the Persians dispatched three hundred men in the form of slavery [tribute], they took the city.”¹²¹

ὄτε κατάφωρος πανουργῶν γέγονεν ὁ Χοσρόης, Δομετιανὸς λογισμοῦ ἀγγινοῖα δυσκαταμάχητον ἀντιστρατεύσας βουλήντοῦ Περσικοῦ δόλου δίκην πομφολύγων ἐκφύσεως διαλύει τὸ ὑπουλον.
Translation modified from Whitby and Whitby. See also Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian*, 299.

118. Theophylact Simocatta, *The History of Theophylact Simocatta*, 4.15.10-16.

119. Maurice, *Strategikon* 11.1.1, *Maurice's Strategikon* ed. and trans. George T. Dennis (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), 113: Τὸ Περσικὸν ἔθνος μοχθηρὸν καὶ κρυψίνου καὶ δουλοπρεπὲς ἐστὶ, φιλοπάτριον δὲ καὶ εὐπειθές.

120. Scott McDonough, “Were the Sasanians Barbarians? Roman Writers on the ‘Empire of the Persians,’” in *Romans, Barbarians, and the Transformation of the Roman World: Cultural Interaction and the Creation of Identity in Late Antiquity* ed. Ralph W. Mathisen and Danuta Shanzer (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 58.

121. *The Anonymous Byzantine Treatise on Strategy* 41.13-15 *Three Byzantine Military Treatises* ed. and trans. George T. Dennis (Washington, DC.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library Collection, 2008), 120: ἐπεὶ καὶ Πέρσαι ποτὲ τριακοσίους ἄνδρας ἐν σχήματι δουλείας δωρεὰν στείλαντες δι’ αὐτῶν τὴν πόλιν

While these examples are part of broader Roman anti-Sasanian tropes, it is important to realize that authors who witnessed the war in the seventh century CE had more concrete reasons to harshly portray Xusrō II. They were more inclined to highlight the idea that one could not trust the Sasanians because Xusrō II broke his promises to Maurice by later invading the Roman Empire. Tellingly, Theophylact wrote that when Xusrō II dismissed the Romans from *Ērānšahr* on the eve of victory over Wahrām Čubīn, the *šahanšah* should “not be unmindful of the kindness and salvation done by the Romans for him.”¹²²

This quotation demonstrates why one should look at how seventh-century CE authors viewed Xusrō II. The *Strategikon* and the anonymous *Strategy* dryly label the Sasanians as being untrustworthy; even the example of Sasanians taking a Roman city by deceit is suspect because there is no mention of which city they captured. Theophylact was explicit. His approach to Xusrō II was that he was a man who broke his promises with the Romans. The Romans should not have trusted him because in the end, he forgot the kindness and salvation that the Romans gave him to regain his throne. How did Xusrō II break this promise? By invading the Roman Empire after Maurice’s death and almost breaking the Roman people. The fear of Xusrō II and the memory of his forgetting Roman aid and the seizure of Roman territory is why Theophylact portrayed Xusrō II in the manner he did. There is,

παρέλαβον.

122. Theophylact Simocatta, *The History of Theophylact Simocatta*, 5.11.8, in Whitby and Whitby, 147; C. de Boor, *Theophylacti Simocattae historiae*, 5.11.8: μή ἀμνημονεῖν τῆς γεγонуίας αὐτῶ ὑπὸ τῶν Ῥωμαίων φιλοφροσύνης τε καὶ σωτηρίας; Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian*, 303-304.

however, more to this story, for Xusrō II was not as one-dimensional as these Romans portray him to be.

While it is important to realize that the Roman authors witnessed the events of the war in the seventh century CE and those events shaped how they portrayed Xusrō II, they also unknowingly betray another side to the *šahanšah*—his familiarity with Christianity.

After the revolt of Wahrām Čubīn and the desertion of his army, Evagrius Scholasticus wrote that Xusrō II went to the Roman city of Ciresium after “he called upon the God of the Christians” to send his horse in the right direction for aid.¹²³ After he regained his throne, Xusrō II sent a golden cross with an inscription upon it to a certain Gregory, written in Greek in honor of the martyr Sergius.¹²⁴ According to Evagrius Scholasticus, Xusrō II sent the cross for this reason:

I Xusrō, king of kings, son of Xusrō, give this cross, after we arrived in Romania as a result of the devilish activity and wickedness of the Wahrām Gusnas [Čubīn] and the cavalry with him, on account of the approach towards Nisibis of the unfortunate Zadespram [a general of Wahrām Čubīn] with an army for the seduction of the cavalymen in the district of Nisibis to rebel and stir up trouble; we too sent cavalymen with a commander into Charchas, and through the fortune of sacred Sergius, the all-revered and famous, when we heard that he was a giver of requests, in the first year of our reign, on the seventh month of January, we requested that, if our cavalymen should slaughter or subdue Zadespram, we would send a gold bejeweled cross to his all-august name, and on the ninth of the month of February, they brought us the head of Zadespram; so having received our request, so that each thing is beyond dispute, to his all-revered name this cross that is from us, with the cross sent by Justinian, emperor of the Romans, to his house, and carried here in the time of estrangement between the two polities by Xusrō, king of kings, son of Kawād, our father, and found our treasuries, we sent to the house of the holy all-revered

123. Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.17, in Whitby, 308; J. Bidez and L. Parmentier, *The ecclesiastical history of Evagrius with the scholia* (London: Methuen, 1898): 5-241, 234.2-4: τὸν θεὸν τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἐπικαλεσάμενος

124. For the spread of the cult of Sergius in *Ērānšahr*, see Elizabeth Kay Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius between Rome and Iran* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999), 4-5, 120-129.

Sergius.¹²⁵

This letter is significant for two reasons. One, it demonstrates that at least one author was aware of Xusrō II's knowledge of Christianity. Xusrō II was the leader of a large, multiethnic, multicultural, and multireligious empire—of course he had knowledge of Christianity. He even presided over the East-Syrian Synod of 605 CE and put the weight of his office behind certain candidates for the office of bishop. The Christian bishops also proclaimed their loyalty to the *šahanšah* at the synod.¹²⁶ Xusrō II even asked the *katholicos* of Christians in *Ērānšahr*, Sabrišo, to accompany him when he campaigned against the Romans.¹²⁷ Clearly, Xusrō II was not an enemy of God, as portrayed by other authors, and had a good relationship with Christians in his realm.¹²⁸

125. Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.21, in Whitby, 311-312; J. Bidez and L. Parmentier, *The ecclesiastical history of Evagrius with the scholia*, 235.18-236.13: Τοῦτον τὸν σταυρὸν ἐγὼ Χοσρόης βασιλεὺς βασιλέων, υἱὸς Χοσρόου, ὅτε ἐκ διαβολικῆς ἐνεργείας καὶ κακουργίας τοῦ δυστυχεστάτου Βαράμ Γουσανάς καὶ τῶν σὺν αὐτῷ καβαλλαρίων εἰς Ῥωμανίαν ἀπήλθομεν, καὶ διὰ τὸ ἔρχεσθαι τὸν δυστυχῆ Ζαδεσπράμ μετὰ στρατοῦ εἰς τὸ Νισίβιος ἐπὶ τὸ ὑποσῦραι τοὺς καβαλλαρίους τοῦ μέρους τοῦ Νισίβιος εἰς τὸ ἀντάραι καὶ ταράξει ἐπέμψαμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς καβαλλαρίους μετὰ ἄρχοντος εἰς τὸ Χάρχας, καὶ διὰ τῆς τύχης τοῦ ἁγίου Σεργίου τοῦ πανσέπτου καὶ ὀνομαστοῦ, ἐπειδὴ ἠκούσαμεν δοτῆρα εἶναι αὐτὸν τῶν αἰτήσεων, ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ ἔτει τῆς βασιλείας ἡμῶν, μηνὶ Ἰαννουαρίῳ ἑβδόμῃ, ἠτησάμεθα ὡς, ἐὰν οἱ καβαλλάριοι ἡμῶν σφάξωσι τὸν Ζαδεσπράμ ἢ χειρώσωνται, σταυρὸν χρυσοῦν διάλιθον εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ πέμπομεν διὰ τὸ πάνσεπτον αὐτοῦ ὄνομα, καὶ τῇ ἐνάτῃ τοῦ Φεβρουαρίου μηνὸς τὴν κεφαλὴν τοῦ Ζαδεσπράμ ἤνεγκαν ἐπὶ ἡμῶν· ἐπιτυχόντες οὖν τῆς δεήσεως ἡμῶν, διὰ τὸ ἕκαστον ἀναμφίβολον εἶναι, εἰς τὸ πάνσεπτον αὐτοῦ ὄνομα τοῦτον τὸν σταυρὸν τὸν παρ' ἡμῶν γενόμενον, μετὰ τοῦ πεμφθέντος σταυροῦ παρὰ Ἰουστινιανοῦ βασιλέως Ῥωμαίων εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ, καὶ τῷ καιρῷ τῆς ἀμυξιάς τῶν δύο πολιτειῶν ἐνεχθέντος ἐνταῦθα παρὰ Χοσρόου, βασιλέως βασιλέων, υἱοῦ Καβάδου, τοῦ ἡμετέρου πατρὸς, καὶ εὐρεθέντος ἐν τοῖς ἡμετέροις θησαυροῖς, ἐπέμψαμεν ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ τοῦ ἁγίου πανσέπτου Σεργίου. Translation modified from the Whitby translation.

126. See Joel Walker, "Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq," in *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2006), 87-106.

127. *Histoire Nestorienne (Seert Chronicle), Seconde Partie LXX* trans. Addai Scher and Robert Griveau in *Patrologia Orientalis: Tomus Decimus Tertius* ed. R. Graffin and F. Nau (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1919); Stoyanov, *Defenders and Enemies*, 39-40; W.A. Wigram, *An Introduction to History of the Assyrian Church or the Church of the Sassanid Persian Empire, 100-640 A.D.* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004), 224. I study the relationship of the Church of the East and Xusrō II in chapter three.

128. See Daryae, *Sasanian Persia*, 77-78 for how the status of Christians in *Ērānšahr* changed over time.

The second reason why this passage is important is because it demonstrates that not every author saw Xusrō II as a destroyer of Roman cities, a taker of the True Cross, a rapist of maidens. Evagrius Scholasticus demonstrated that Xusrō II did feel grateful that the Romans helped him to regain the throne. He specifically mentioned that the Sasanians took the gold cross when they were at war with the Romans during Emperor Justinian's (r. 527 CE-565 CE) reign and that he returned it after it was found. Why does this account show another side to the *šahanšah*? Evagrius did not live to see the war in the seventh century CE.¹²⁹ The other authors mentioned above obviously experienced fear when they heard that the Sasanians captured more Roman territory and when their Avar allies besieged Constantinople. When one examines how Theophylact Simocatta described Xusrō II's flight from *Ērānšahr*, one can clearly see that he wanted to show Xusrō II's mercenary character.

Theophylact wrote, as Evagrius, that Xusrō II promised a cross to the shrine of Sergius, and he included verbatim the same letter in the latter's account.¹³⁰ He, however, specifically mentioned that Xusrō II wanted to festoon that cross "covered with pearls and radiant Indian stones; for the due measure of necessity made him cry [implore] more piously."¹³¹ Xusrō II wanted only to fashion an ostentatious cross

129. He concluded his account in 594 CE, the 12th year of Maurice's reign, before his overthrow, and he did not mention Xusrō II's invasion. See Michael Whitby, "Introduction," *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus* ed. and trans. Michael Whitby (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000): xx; Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian*, 4.

130. Theophylact Simocatta, *The History of Theophylact Simocatta*, 5.13.4-7; C. de Boor, *Theophylacti Simocattae historiae*, 5.13.4-7; Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian*, 300

131. Theophylact Simocatta, *The History of Theophylact Simocatta*, 5.1.8, in Whitby and Whitby, 133; C. de Boor, *Theophylacti Simocattae historiae*, 5.1.8: μαργαρίτην τε περιβαλεῖν αὐτῷ καὶ τῶν Ἰνδικῶν λίθων τοὺς διαυγεῖς· εὐσεβέστερον γὰρ ποτνιώμενον ὑπὸ τῆς ἀνάγκης ὁ καιρὸς αὐτὸν ἐξειργάζετο.

only in his time of need; he switched to Christianity when only it suited him, in other words.¹³² This is in Theophylact's work because unlike Evagrius, he actually witnessed the war in the seventh century CE. There is, however, one area on which Evagrius Scholasticus and Theophylact agree on the relationship between Xusrō II and Christianity: his Christian wife Šērīn.

According to Evagrius, Xusrō II again sent a monetary gift with a letter to the shrine of Sergius in thanks for the following:

During that time I was in Beramais, I asked from you, holy one, to come to my aid and that Siren [Šērīn] conceive in her womb. And since Siren is a Christian and I a pagan, our custom does not allow us to have a Christian wife. On account of my gratitude to you, I disregarded this law and among my wives I held and hold from day to day in legitimacy, and in this way I now perceived your goodness, holy one, [that] she conceive in her womb.¹³³

The existence of this letter in both authors' accounts is important because as already stated, Xusrō II's familiarity with Christianity was widely known, but there is more. Both authors acknowledge that Šērīn was Xusrō II's beloved, and she was a Christian.¹³⁴ What this account suggests is that despite Xusrō II's supposed enmity toward the Christian God, someone like Theophylact could not ignore his love for Šērīn, despite the fear that person experienced during the war of the seventh century CE.

132. Dignas and Winter, *Rome and Persia*, 149.

133. Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.21, in Whitby, 312; J. Bidez and L. Parmentier, *The ecclesiastical history of Evagrius with the scholia*, 236.20-237.6: Ἐν τῷ εἶναί με ἐν τῷ Βεραμαῖς ἠτησάμην παρὰ σοῦ, ἅγιε, ἐλθεῖν εἰς τὴν βοήθειάν μου καὶ ἐν γαστρὶ συλλαβεῖν Σιρῆν. Καὶ ἐπειδὴ ἡ Σιρῆν Χριστιανὴ ἐστὶν ἀγῶ Ἕλληνας, ὁ ἡμέτερος νόμος ἀδειαν ἡμῖν οὐ παρέχει Χριστιανὴν ἔχειν γαμετήν. Διὰ γοῦν τὴν ἐμὴν πρὸς σὲ εὐγνωμοσύνην εἰς ταύτην τὸν νόμον παρείδον, καὶ ταύτην ἐν γυναιξίν ἡμέραν ἐξ ἡμέρας ἐν γνησιότητι ἔσχον καὶ ἴσχω, καὶ οὕτω συνείδον νῦν δεηθῆναι τῆς σῆς ἀγαθότητος, ἅγιε, ἐν γαστρὶ συλλαβεῖν αὐτήν. For Theophylact's take, see *The History of Theophylact Simocatta* 14.2-4.

134. Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian*, 305.

However little Theophylact acknowledged that there was more to Xusrō II than his actions during the war in the seventh century CE, it should not be ignored that he and other Roman authors experienced fear during the war. This fear influenced how they perceived the *šahanšah*. Other authors, in the years before the war, also betray a sense of fear of certain *šahanšahs* who caused heartache and strife in the Roman Empire. Of course, as we shall see, the difference between the following authors and the ones studied thus far is that Xusrō II actually threatened the entire Empire, which affected how those seventh-century CE authors depicted Xusrō II.

The fourth-century CE author Ammianus Marcellinus was a witness to such skirmishes and the effects they had on his fellow Romans, for he lived during the invasion of *Šahanšah* Šābūhr II (r. 309 CE-379 CE). Ammianus did not portray Šābūhr II as an enemy of God, but he did write about the human toll of Roman-Sasanian border wars. For instance, Ammianus had the following to say about what he saw from the Mesopotamian city of Nisibis and his subsequent flight from it:

And while within the walls, things urging haste, smoke and fire constantly shone from the Tigris, through the Castra Maurorum and Sisara and remaining country, all the way to the city, in a continuous line, more numerous than usual, informing that the ravaging bands of the enemy burst forth and crossed the river. Therefore, we left swiftly, for fear the roads might be blocked; when we came within two miles, we saw a fine-looking boy, adorned with a necklace, eight years old (as we conjectured), the son of a man of position (as he said), crying in the middle of the causeway; his mother, while she was fleeing, with excited fear of the enemy, being agitated and hampered, left [him] behind alone. While I, at the command of the leader, moved with pity set [him] before me on [my] horse and carried him back to the city, the plunderers, after building a rampart around the walls, were ranging more extensively. And because the calamities of the siege terrifying me, I set the boy down within a half-shut postern gate, with winged

speed I hastened half dead with fear back to our troop; I was all but captured.¹³⁵

Ammianus then fled to Amida, where he remained for 73 days and witnessed the spirited defense of the city before its denizens, “armed and unarmed, without distinction of sex, were ritually maimed, [like] cattle.”¹³⁶

If one ignores Ammianus’ hyperbole about almost being captured (for he was fond of placing himself in the historical narrative for dramatic effect,¹³⁷ but who is to say that he was really not in danger?), it becomes apparent that Ammianus was concerned for the people living on the Roman-Sasanian border. These people—Ammianus’ fellow Romans, like the abandoned boy, and the slaughtered people of Amida—suffered from the invasion, and he wanted to show the terror and suspense they, and he, felt at the hands of Šābūhr II. This is not unlike the men who wrote about Xusrō II’s supposed crimes during the war in the seventh century CE.

Another author who witnessed firsthand the battles between the Romans

135. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* 16.6.9-11, ed. and trans. John C. Rolfe, *History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 438-40: *Dumque intra muros maturanda perurgerentur, fumus micantesque ignes assidue a Tigride per Castra Maurorum et Sisara et collimitia reliqua, ad usque civitatem continui perlucabant, solito crebriores, erupisse hostium vastatorias manus superato flumine permonstrantes. Qua causa ne occuparentur itinera, celeri cursu praegressi, cum ad secundum lapidem venissemus, liberalis formae puerum torquatum, (ut coniectabamus) octennem, in aggeris medio vidimus heulantem, ingenui cuiusdam filium (ut aiebat); quem mater dum imminentium hostium terrore percita fugeret, impeditior trepidando reliquerat solum. Hunc dum imperatu ducis miseratione commoti, impositum equo, prae me ferens ad civitatem reduco, circumvallato murorum ambitu praedatores latius vagabantur. Et quia me obsidionales aerumnae terrebant, intra semiclausam posticam exposito puero, nostrorum agmen agilitate volucris repetebam exanimis, nec multum a fuit quin caperer.* Translation modified from the Rolfe translation.

136. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, 16.6.9-11, in Rolfe, 510: *pecorum ritu armati et imbelles sine sexus discrimine truncabantur.* Translation modified from the Rolfe translation. See also John Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (London: Duckworth, 1989), 58-61, 65-66 for the chronology of the siege of Amida.

137. See David Rohrbacher, *The Historians of Late Antiquity* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 19; Gavin Kelly, *Ammianus Marcellinus: The Allusive Historian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 53-55, for Ammianus’ dramatic account of his meeting the abandoned boy presented as a story. See also Timothy D. Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representation of Historical Reality* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 11-19, especially 16-17, who offers survey of scholarship critical of the veracity of Ammianus due to his exaggerations.

and Sasanians was Procopius of Caesarea.¹³⁸ Procopius, who was a member of the general Belisarius' staff, saw for himself the consequences of war when the city of Antioch fell to and was destroyed by Xusrō I:

But I become dizzy as I write of that great incident and send it in memory to a future time. And I do not understand why it should be the will of God to lift up on high the fortunes of a man or a place, but to hurl them down obliterate for no reason that appears to us. For it is not right to say that with him things are always without reason. Though he then endured to see Antioch brought down to the ground at the hand of an unholy man, a city whose beauty and magnificence in all respect could not be verily hidden.¹³⁹

Again, notice Procopius' language. He labels Xusrō I as "unholy," which is similar to how later authors described Xusrō II. What is the similarity between Procopius, Ammianus, and the authors studied in this chapter? They were witnesses to the sufferings of the Roman people, and they experienced the same fears as their compatriots. These feelings manifest in portrayals of Sasanian *šahanšahs* as being unholy, fiendish, or unpleasant people. Of course, there was propaganda present in these accounts, but if we ignore the feelings of the authors, then we do them a disservice. We cannot wholly take what they wrote as truth (the *šahanšahs* were not enemies of the Christian God); however, we cannot totally disregard them as propaganda. These men saw things happening, and that undoubtedly affected how

138. For Procopius being present at many of the events he describes, see Averil Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 135-136.

139. Procopius, *The Persian War*, 2.10.4-5 trans. H.B. Dewey, *History of the Wars* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 342-344: ἐγὼ δὲ ἰλιγγιώ πάθος τοσοῦτον γράφων τε καὶ παραπέμπων ἐς μνήμην τῷ μέλλοντι χρόνῳ, καὶ οὐκ ἔχω εἰδέναι τί ποτε ἄρα βουλομένῳ τῷ θεῷ εἶη πράγματα μὲν ἀνδρὸς ἢ χωρίου του ἐπαίρειν εἰς ὕψος, αὐθις δὲ ῥιπτεῖν τε αὐτὰ καὶ ἀφανίζεῖν ἐξ οὐδεμίας ἡμῖν φαινομένης αἰτίας. αὐτῷ γὰρ οὐ θέμις εἰπεῖν μὴ οὐχὶ ἅπαντα κατὰ λόγον αἰεὶ γίνεσθαι, ὃς δὴ καὶ Ἀντιόχειαν τότε ὑπέστη ἐς τὸ ἔδαφος πρὸς ἀνδρὸς ἀνοσιωτάτου καταφερομένην ἰδεῖν, ἧς τό τε κάλλος καὶ τὸ ἐς ἅπαντα μεγαλοπρεπὲς οὐδὲ νῦν ἀποκρύπτεσθαι παντάπασιν ἔσχεν. Translation modified from the Dewey translation. For a detailed analysis of the destruction of Antioch, see Warren Treadgold, *A History of Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 193-194; Anthony Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea: Tyranny, History, and Philosophy and the End of Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 204-209.

they viewed the Sasanians, especially Xusrō II, and these depictions are complicated.

The reality is that while these authors wanted to highlight to their audience the destruction wrought by Xusrō II, their portrayals of the *šahanšah* were complex. Recall how Evagrius and Theophylact demonstrated that they knew about his familiarity with Christianity and his love of Šērīn. Based on what we know about this, we cannot assume that witnessing the horrors meant a negative portrayal of a *šahanšah*.

Procopius, for all his talk of Xusrō I being “unholy,” actually saved most of his vitriol for Justinian. He portrayed, in his *Secret History*,¹⁴⁰ the emperor as being a shape-shifting, nonhuman entity and said it was Justinian who goaded Xusrō I into war by invading and conquering other parts of the Mediterranean and threatening *Ērānšahr*, if the delegation from Vittigis (r. 536 CE-540 CE), the Ostrogothic king of Italy, said is any indication:

Indeed, already he destroyed the Vandals and trampled the Moors; the Goths stood in friendship for him, he came against us bringing both a lot of money and men. But it is clear that if he is able to destroy the Goths he [will] with us and those enslaved wage war against the Persians, neither considering the name of friendship nor blushing before any of his promises.¹⁴¹

Procopius also stated “for not only Xusrō himself was wicked in nature, as told by

140. Procopius, *Anecdota*, 12.20-23 trans. H.B. Dewey, *The Anecdota or Secret History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

141. Procopius, *The Persian War*, 2.2.8-9, in Dewey, 266-268: Βανδύλων μὲν οὖν ἤδη καθελῶν τὴν βασιλείαν καὶ Μαυρουσίους καταστρεψάμενος, Γότθων αὐτῷ φιλίας ὀνόματι ἐκποδῶν ἱσταμένων, χρήματά τε μεγάλα καὶ σώματα πολλὰ ἐπαγόμενος ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς ἦκει. ἐνδηλος δὲ ἐστίν, ἣν καὶ Γότθους παντάπασιν ἐξελεῖν δύνηται, ὡς ξὺν ἡμῖν τε καὶ τοῖς ἤδη ἐπὶ Πέρσας στρατεύσει, οὔτε τὸ τῆς φιλίας ἐννοῶν ὄνομα οὔτε τι τῶν ὁμοιοσμένων ἐρυθροῖων δεδουλωμένοις. For Xusrō I’s concern of Justinian’s expansion in the Mediterranean, see Dignas and Winter, *Rome and Persia*, 106-107; Andrew Louth, “Justinian and His Legacy (500-600),” in *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire: C. 500-1492*, ed. Jonathan Shephard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 107 120, 135; John Moorhead, “Western Approaches (500-600),” in *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire: C. 500-1492*, ed. Jonathan Shepard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 206; Treadgold, *A History of Byzantine State and Society*, 191.

me in the proper place, but he was provided by him [Justinian] for all the reasons of war”¹⁴² and that “thus during his reign, the whole earth was constantly drenched with human blood coming from both the Romans and practically all the barbarians.”¹⁴³ Justinian, not just Xusrō I, was to blame for causing the destruction of Antioch, according to Procopius.¹⁴⁴ Such complexity in a narrative cannot be ignored.

Even Ammianus, who wrote a dramatic account of Šābūhr II’s invasion of the eastern Roman frontier, did the same thing. He remarked that Emperor Julian (r. 361 CE-363 CE) not only invaded *Ērānšahr* because he wanted to avenge the loss of Roman territory but that he also strongly desired the cognomen of “Parthicus.”¹⁴⁵ Again, just because an account is hostile to the Sasanians, it is a good idea to look beneath the surface to understand that not every instance of a bad depiction of a *šahanšah* meant that the author hated them.

What is more, a negative portrayal of the Sasanians does not mean they did something to warrant such a depiction. For instance, Agathias compared the Achaemenid Persians to the Sasanians, and it was not pretty:

Certainly those people did not know about those burial practices [the ancient Zoroastrian practice of exposure of the dead instead of burial], nor certainly was

142. Procopius, *Anecdota*, 12.28-29, in Dewey, 220: ἦν μὲν γὰρ τε καὶ Χοσρόης αὐτός τε πονηρὸς τὸ ἦθος καὶ, ὡς μοι ἐν λόγοις εἴρηται τοῖς καθήκουσι, τὰς μὲν αἰτίας αὐτῷ τοῦ πολέμου ὅδε παρείχετο πάσας.

143. Procopius, *Anecdota*, 12.30, in Dewey, 220: αὐτῆ τε αὐτοῦ βασιλεύοντος ἡ γῆ ξύμπασα ἔμπλεως αἵματος ἀνθρωπέου ἔκ τε Ῥωμαίων καὶ βαρβάρων σχεδὸν τι πάντων διαρκῶς γέγονε. Translation modified from the Dewey translation.

144. Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea*, 67.

145. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, 12.12.1-2.

the decency of the marriage-bed degraded the way it is now. Not only do they have intercourse with both their sisters and nieces without restraint, but fathers profanely bind themselves [lie] with their daughters, and o the unnaturalness of it, sons with their mothers.¹⁴⁶

Agathias blamed Zoroastrianism for the Sasanians' supposed perversions,¹⁴⁷ but this is not to say that Agathias himself was a Christian who hated that religion. Anthony Kaldellis has argued convincingly that Agathias believed that Zoroastrianism was terrible because of its similarity to Neo-Platonism, not because he was a Christian.¹⁴⁸ What is more, Agathias himself did not witness nor experience the effects of any Sasanian invasion of the Roman Empire, for he was in Constantinople for most of his life practicing law and what little he knew of the Sasanians was secondhand.¹⁴⁹ This is why for all Agathias' supposed outrage at the practice of next-of-kin marriage, he got the story wrong. It was the Sasanian royal family who committed this act, not the entire people.¹⁵⁰ Why did Agathias portray the Sasanians as badly as George of

146. Agathias Scholasticus, *Agathias: The Histories* 2.24.1 trans. Joseph Frendo *The Histories* (Berlin: Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae, 1975), 57-8; R. Keydell, *Agathiae Myrinaei historiarum libri quinque* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae. Series Berolinensis 2. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1967): 3-197, 71.24.25-29: Οὐκ οὖν ἐκείνοί γε ὧδε ἐγίγνωσκον οὔτε περὶ τὰς ταφάς, οὐ μὲν οὖν ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ἐς τὴν τῆς εὐνῆς παρανομίαν ὅποια οἱ νῦν ἀκολασταίνουσιν, οὐ μόνον ἀδελφάϊς τε καὶ ἀδελφιδαῖς ἀνέδην μὴ γινόμενοι, ἀλλὰ πατέρες τε θυγατρῶσι καὶ τὸ δὴ πάντων ἀνοσιώτερον, ὃ νόμοι γε καὶ φύσις, υἱοὶ ταῖς τεκούσαις. Translation modified from Frendo. According to Averil Cameron, Agathias' obsession with Sasanian burial practices and sexual habits is indicative of typical sixth-century CE Roman attitudes toward the Sasanians: The Romans were obsessed with the Sasanians, yet found them repulsive at the same time. See Averil Cameron, *Agathias* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 116.

147. Agathias *The Histories* 2.24.5; Averil Cameron, "Agathias on the Sasanians," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 23/24 (1969/1970), 91-92.

148. See Anthony Kaldellis, "The Historical and Religious Views of Agathias: A Reinterpretation," *Byzantion: Revue Internationale des Études Byzantines* 69, fasc. 1 (1999): 246-247. For Agathias' Neoplatonic philosophy, see *ibid.* 226-36, especially 231-236. See also McDonough, "Where the Sasanians Barbarians? Roman Writers on the 'Empire of the Persians,'" 63.

149. See Cameron, *Agathias*, 1, 31; Anthony Kaldellis, "Things Are Not What They Are: Agathias 'Mythistoricus' and the Last Laugh of Classical Culture," *The Classical Quarterly* 53, no.1 (May, 2003): 295. For Agathias' limited knowledge of the Sasanians, see McDonough, "Where the Sasanians Barbarians? Roman Writers on the 'Empire of the Persians,'" 57.

150. Daryae, *Sasanian Persia*, 64.

Pisidia, Nikephoros, Theophylact, Theophanes, and the *Chronicon Pascale* portray Xusrō II?

If taken at face value, one can come away with two conclusions. One, that the Sasanians were actually perverts; or two, they did something to make him hate them. In this case, however, Agathias presents us a third option: the Sasanians were anathema to him because of jealousy. Scott McDonough wrote that Agathias attacked the Sasanians because he regarded many authors of his era, like Procopius, as being pro-Sasanian. These authors reached great literary heights and obtained powerful patrons, unlike Agathias' career.¹⁵¹ Moreover, those authors who praised the Sasanians did so to criticize the Roman administration—Procopius is a perfect example of this. To Agathias, this was unacceptable; thus in his narrative he attacked the Sasanians and by extension praised the Romans. In the words of McDonough, “Agathias hoped to demonstrate his own erudition while humbling his rivals within his own Constantinopolitan literary circle.”¹⁵² Thus with the case of Agathias, we have a Roman who wrote hateful depictions of the Sasanians, but he did not have any intimate knowledge of them. Therefore, not every Roman who badly depicted the Sasanians went through traumatic events like the authors mentioned above.

With these complications in mind, it is important to understand that many of those authors chose only to highlight all the terrible things that happened during

151. McDonough, “Where the Sasanians Barbarians? Roman Writers on the ‘Empire of the Persians,’” 56.

152. McDonough, “Where the Sasanians Barbarians? Roman Writers on the ‘Empire of the Persians,’” 65.

the war of the seventh century CE. By extension, these authors only focused on how Xusrō II was supposedly evil. As the example of Agathias suggests, there is more to depictions of the Sasanians than meets the eye. Even Nikephoros, the author who maligned Xusrō II, featured a complex portrayal in his text. He wrote, “On the one hand, the Persians were externally damaging the Roman Empire; on the other hand, Phocas [the usurper of Maurice] was doing worse on the inside.”¹⁵³ This sentiment is significant, for we see that even George of Pisidia, because he was Heraclius’ court poet, also wrote despairingly about Phocas.¹⁵⁴ Thus these authors were negative to their own emperors.

Nikephoros also had many bad things to say about Heraclius himself. After Egypt fell to the Sasanians, Heraclius wanted to flee Constantinople and move the imperial capital to Carthage, in modern Libya. Nikephoros portrayed the emperor as being seized by “despair and embarrassment” for the loss of Egypt and changed his plans when the patriarch of Constantinople bound him in a church.¹⁵⁵ He also wrote that while the Sasanians were able to harm the Roman Empire with impunity, Heraclius, like Phocas, was committing a worse crime:

And yet Heraclius, even though the affairs of state have come to such a disgusting and anomalous pass, did not even put his private affairs in order, but he did an unlawful deed [that] the laws of the Romans forbid, by contracting marriage to his

153. Nikephoros, *Breviarium*, 1.4-6, in Mango, 34: Πέρσαι μὲν τὴν Ῥωμαίων ἀρχὴν ἐκτὸς κατελήμαινον, Φωκάς δὲ ἔνδον χεῖρῳ τούτων ἔπραττε; Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World in Crisis*, 244.

154. Whitby, “Defender of the Cross,” 255; Whitby, “A New Image for a New Age,” 209.

155. Nikephoros, *Breviarium*, 8.6-7; 13-14, in Mango, 48: δυσθυμία καὶ ἀπορία; Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 88.

niece Martina.¹⁵⁶

These quotations are important because they demonstrate that someone such as Nikephoros, who, as we saw earlier, did not hold Xusrō II in high regard, and still could depict his emperor in an unflattering light. This is true with Heraclius' marriage to his niece, an event that sparked controversy in the Roman world.¹⁵⁷

With these examples from Nikephoros, one can appreciate the complexity of the Roman sources on the war in the seventh century CE. Not every Roman source that was hostile to the Sasanians meant that the author heaped praise upon the Romans. To ignore this one facet of the histories of this era is to misunderstand the emotions of the authors who composed them.

While it is important to realize the propagandistic value of depicting Xusrō II as an enemy of god and unholy (and these portrayals do border on absurd¹⁵⁸), one must be cognizant that perhaps the men who composed these texts and their readers experienced trauma at the news of Xusrō II's advances. Compounding all of this was that the Romans also felt religious terror when the news reached them that Xusrō II took the True Cross from Jerusalem. To lump all the portrayals of Xusrō II as propaganda does injustice to the people who lived through the war.

156. Nikephoros, *Breviarium*, 11.1-5, in Mango, 52: Ἡρακλείῳ δέ, καίτοι τῶν κοινῶν αὐτῷ πραγμάτων ἐπὶ τοσοῦτο δυσχερείας καὶ ἀνωμαλίας ἠκόντων, οὐ μὴν οὐδὲ τὰ οικεῖα εὐθέςθαι φροντὶς ἐγγόνει, ἀλλ' ὄγε πρὸς πρᾶξιν ἄθεσμον καὶ ἦν Ῥωμαίων ἀπαγορευοῦσι νόμοι ἰδῶν, τὸ πρὸς τὴν ἀνεψιᾶν Μαρτίναν ἡσπᾶσατο κήδος. Translation modified from Mango.

157. Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 106.

158. For the drama of historical texts, see Thompson, "Reception Theory and the Interpretation of Historical Meaning," 265.

On the other hand, to believe that Xusrō II actually was an enemy of God also does injustice to the complexities of the events of the war. As stated earlier in this chapter, life in Sasanian occupied cities went on after their conquest;¹⁵⁹ the existence of Christians in the Sasanian army denotes the lack of cohesiveness in Xusrō II's forces because there was no religious unity, while there was no guerrilla resistance in Sasanian-occupied Roman territory, either.¹⁶⁰ Additionally, the siege of Constantinople, as awful as it was, can be seen as a turning point of this long war, and after their failure, the Sasanians found themselves on the defensive in *Ērānšahr* when Heraclius invaded.¹⁶¹ According to Michael Whitby, the reason for the shift was that Xusrō II liquidated his officer corps due to suspected mutiny, and the Sasanian army could not cope with the invasion.¹⁶²

Even the conclusion of the war did not bring an end to *Ērānšahr*. Heraclius did not conquer it; the two peoples returned to the state of co-existence that existed before the war.¹⁶³ The point here is that depictions of Xusrō II exist on a continuum that reflects the author's complex intentions, as most texts do.¹⁶⁴ Despite the apparent propagandistic value of these texts, the audience and the authors might

159. Stoyanov, *Defenders and Enemies*, 22.

160. Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 97.

161. Stoyanov, *Defenders and Enemies*, 6.

162. Whitby, "The Persian King at War," 253.

163. Irfan Shahid, "The Iranian Factor in Byzantium during the Reign of Heraclius," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 26 (1972): 297-298, 306.

164. Thompson, "Reception Theory and the Interpretation of Historical Meaning," 272.

have experienced legitimate fear of the *šahanšah*, despite how the war actually played out, that manifests itself in these texts; it is a fear we need to realize might have existed.

Chapter 2

Pseudo-Sebēos and Xusrō II: An Armenian Seizes His Identity in a Perso-Romano World

At first glance, Pseudo-Sebēos' dramatic¹⁶⁵ account of the Roman-Sasanian War of the seventh century CE demonstrates his abhorrence of Xusrō II (r. 591 CE-628 CE). Throughout the narrative, Pseudo-Sebēos depicted Xusrō II as badly as in Roman accounts. Based on the evidence, it seems entirely possible that as a

165. James Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World in Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 8, 75.

Christian who was a subject of *Ērānšahr*, Pseudo-Sebēos held Xusrō II in as much contempt as did the authors studied in the last chapter. As two Christian nations in late antiquity, that shared their hatred of the *šahanšah* who “stole” the True Cross, sacked Jerusalem, and caused untold suffering to Christians during the course of the war. It makes sense when one considers that the majority of Armenia was an important theater of war and combat, like the Roman Empire and *Ērānšahr*.¹⁶⁶ The Armenians (and everyone else who lived in the Caucasus) were pulled into the war, like ordinary Romans and Sasanians, and witnessed its horrors.

When one examines the source further, however, one sees that Pseudo-Sebēos’ perceptions of Xusrō II, and the entire war, for that matter, were shaped on his own terms. He owed neither side any loyalty, and he did not portray Xusrō II as a total monster. His depictions of the *šahanšah* at times stray into the extreme, but instead of finding the man whom God supposedly hated, we see another side of Xusrō II that Roman authors in the last chapter hinted at or ignored.

Take, for instance, the famous letter of Xusrō II sent to Heraclius, found only in Pseudo-Sebēos’ account. After Heraclius deposed the usurper Phocas, he wrote a letter to Xusrō II asking for peace. In an effort to cease hostilities, this letter features

166. Sebeos, *The Armenian History* 32, *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos: Part 1. Translation and Notes* ed. and trans. R. W. Thomson with commentary by James Howard-Johnston with Tim Greenwood (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 59-62; James Howard-Johnston with Tim Greenwood, *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos: Part 2. Historical Commentary* ed. and trans. R. W. Thomson with commentary by James Howard-Johnston with Tim Greenwood (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 198-202; Nina Garsoïan, “The *Marzpanate* (428-652),” in *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. 1, *The Dynastic Periods: From Antiquity to the Fourteenth Century* ed. Richard Hovannisian (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2004), 114; Walter E. Kaegi, *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 67.

references of the aid that Maurice gave to Xusrō II in the endeavor to restore him to the throne. Heraclius, if Pseudo-Sebēos is any indication, sent gifts to Xusrō II and asked the *šahanšah* to dispatch envoys so they could discuss peace. Xusrō II accepted the gifts, but instead of sending envoys, he sent a naval squadron to attack Constantinople.¹⁶⁷ This in turn demonstrates that Pseudo-Sebēos believed that on some level, Xusrō II was an untrustworthy man.

Xusrō II's reply is more interesting than his supposed craftiness.

Pseudo-Sebēos' account painted the *šahanšah* as not only waging war against the Romans but also fighting with Christianity itself:

Xosrov [Xusrō II], precious among the gods, lord and king of all the earth, and offspring of the great Aramazd [Ohrmazd], to Heraclius, our mindless and insignificant servant: you have not wished to give yourself to us, but you call yourself lord and king. My treasure that is to you, you spend; and my servants you trick; and having collected an army of robbers, you prevent my rest. So I did not destroy the Greeks? But you claim to trust your god. Why did he not save Caesarea and Jerusalem and the great Alexandria from my hands? And you did not know [that] I have subjugated to the sea and dry land? So it is only Constantinople I will not be able to erase? But now I forgive you of all your trespasses. "Arise, present your wife and children and come here. And I will give you ranches, gardens, and olive trees by which you will live long." And we will look upon you in friendship. Do not let your vain hope deceive you. For that Christ who was not able to save himself from the Jews, but they killed him, hanging him on the wood [a cross], how can he save you from my hands? "If you descend to the depths of the sea," I will stretch out my hand and seize you. And then you will see me in a way you will not desire.¹⁶⁸

167. Sebeos, *The Armenian History* 38, in Thomson, 79.

168. Sebeos, *The Armenian History: Part I*, 38, in Thomson, 79; *Patut' iwn Sebēosi* 17-33 ed. G. V. Abgaryan (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences, 1979), 123: Աստուածոցեալ պատուական և ամեայութիմ մեզ, այլ տէր և թագաւոր և ծնունդ մեծի Արամզգայ խոսրոկ՝ առ Երավոոս անմիտ և անպիտան ծառայոյ մեր: Ոչ կամեալ տալ զանձն ի ձառայութիմ մեզ, այլ տէր և թագաւոր կոչես զքեզ. և զանձ իմ որ առ քեզ են, ծախես, և զծառայս իմ պատրես, և զզաւրս աւագավայց ծողովեալ շտաս ինձ հանգչելի Ո՛չ ապաքէն սպառեցի զՅոննս. Եւ դու ասես վստահանալ յԱստուածն քու. վասն է՞ որ ոչ փրկեին զվեսարիա և զՍրւսաղէմ և զԱղեքսանդրիա մեծ ի ձեռաց իմոց Սիթէ և այծմ ո՛չ գիտես, եթէ զծով և զցամաք ինձ հնազանդեցուցի. իսկ արդ՝ միայն զՎոստանդնուպալիս ոչ վարացից բրել Բայց արդ՝ զամեայն յանս թողում քեզ. արի՛, ա՛յ ո զկին քո և զորդիս և ե՛կ այսրու Եւ տաց քեզ ագարակս, այգիս և ձիթենիս, որով կեցցես. և մեք սիրով նայեսցուք ի քեզ: Սի՛ խաբեսցէ զքեզ սնտոի յոյսն ձեր. զի Քրիստոսն այն, որ զանձն իւր ոչ կարաց ապրեցուցանել ի Հրէիցն, այլ սպանին կախեալ դիպատէ, զքեզ զիս՝ որ կարէ ապրեցուցանել ի ձեռաց իմոց: Չի եթէ իջանիցես յանդուկդս ծովու՝ ձգեցից զձեռն իմ և ըմբռնեցից զքեզ և ապա տեսցես զիս, որպէս գու ոչ կամիցիս: Translation modified from Thomson. According to Thomson, the quotations in this letter are from Isaiah 36.16-20 and Psalms 138.7-10.

This letter contains all of the language that one would expect from a haughty ruler. Xusrō II boasted to Heraclius about his army taking Jerusalem, Caesarea, and Alexandria, conquering the sea and all the earth, and pointedly asked him if he thought that Constantinople is safe from the Sasanian onslaught. Xusrō II even chides Heraclius for spending money from the Roman treasury that had not yet been seized by the Sasanians. Pseudo-Sebēos presented Xusrō II as mocking the Romans and threatening the existence of their state. Xusrō II even arrogantly asked the emperor to step down in exchange for ranches where he could make a living.

The *šahanšah* even attacked Christianity in this letter. If Christ could not save himself from being hung up on the cross, how could Heraclius expect him to save the Romans? Pseudo-Sebēos also depicts Xusrō II as a megalomaniac, much like Nikephoros did with the depiction of the *šahanšah*'s portrait in the fire temple. Xusrō II would be the one to forgive Heraclius for annoying him. By depicting Xusrō II in this manner, Pseudo-Sebēos implied that the Sasanian ruler also mocked the Christian prayer known as the “Our Father” when he wrote, “and I will forgive you of all your trespasses.” This portrayal of Xusrō II is absurd and fantastical and on one level can be described as Armenian anti-Sasanian propaganda,¹⁶⁹ which this letter undoubtedly is. Even the use of the word “Aramazd” casts suspicions that Xusrō II himself wrote the letter. “Aramazd” is Armenian for the supreme Zoroastrian deity, which in Middle Persian is “Ohrmazd.”¹⁷⁰ This in turn suggests that this letter is a

169. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World in Crisis*, 91; Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 124.

170. James R. Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, 1987), 165.

fabrication of Pseudo-Sebēos. On the other hand, if Xusrō II actually wrote this letter, he was confident that his armies would conquer the Roman Empire.¹⁷¹ Either way, there was a reason why Pseudo-Sebēos included this letter in his *History*.

The reason why Pseudo-Sebēos put this letter in his narrative was to elicit a feeling of hatred for the *šahanšah*, even if it was disinformation made by the Romans.¹⁷² To further this aim of propaganda, Pseudo-Sebēos wrote that when the Romans received the letter, Heraclius had it read to the patriarch, and they set the letter on an altar in a church so God could see the insults Xusrō II paid to him, and they wept bitterly at its contents.¹⁷³

By portraying Xusrō II as mocking Christ, Pseudo-Sebēos wanted to trigger an emotional response in his readers' minds and hearts by using Christian language his audience would understand—the use of the “Our Father,” for instance.¹⁷⁴ This is the first piece of evidence that Pseudo-Sebēos did not hold Xusrō II in high regard.

Like Theophylact Simocatta, Pseudo-Sebēos stressed the aid Maurice gave to Xusrō II when Wahrām Čubīn rebelled and the promises he made to the emperor. He wrote that Xusrō II promised to hand over Persarmenia and the rest of the Caucasus to the Romans in return for Maurice's help in regaining the throne.¹⁷⁵ Then, in a

171. Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 65.

172. Howard-Johnston with Greenwood, *The Armenian History Attributed to Pseudo-Sebēos*, 214; Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World in Crisis*, 91-92.

173. Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 38, in Thomson, 80.

174. Tim Greenwood, *Sasanian Reflections in Armenian Sources: Sasanika Occasional Papers 2* (Beverly Hills: Afshar Publishing, 2010), 12-13.

175. Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 11, in Thomson, 18-19.

depiction that seems to be straight out a Roman account of the war of the seventh century CE, Pseudo-Sebēos inserted a warning that Xusrō II was not to be trusted, for he broke his promises with abandon. After Xusrō II regained the throne, members of his court accused an Armenian noble named Mušel Mamikonean of releasing Wahrām Čubīn after capturing him during his rebellion. Xusrō II tried to lure Mušel to him, but the man resisted and eventually fled to the Romans and declared, “Yet if that man is not killed, through him the whole territory of the Roman domain will be destroyed.”¹⁷⁶

Pseudo-Sebēos also wrote that the Roman senate warned Maurice not to give aid to Xusrō II:

It is not proper to agree, for they are an impious nation and all together deceitful. In their distress they make promises, but when they come out into calmer [times], they renege. We have suffered many evils from them. Let them consume each other, and we will have relief.¹⁷⁷

Notice the theme of the wily Persian; they ask for aid when evil assails them and then turn on their benefactors when fortune smiles upon them. The Romans have suffered enough from this situation. Then was the opportunity to settle the matter by letting them kill each other off, thus destroying the empire's rival. This statement is packed with contempt—and a warning for the Romans of the horrors to come

176. Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 12, in Thomson, 27; *Patut’iwn Sebēosi*, 28-30, in Abgaryan, 83: Եթէ ոչ մեռցի ալրն ալն ի նորա ձեռն կորնչելոց է ամեսայն երկիր Հովմայեցւոց տէրութեանդ: Translation modified from Thomson. According to Howard-Johnston, Pseudo-Sebēos' used inflammatory speech only when his sources did. See Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World in Crisis*, 92.

177. Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 11, in Thomson, 11; *Patut’iwn Sebēosi*, 26-29, in Abgaryan, 77: Ոչ է արծան ընդունել, զի ազգ մի անաւրէն են և ամենևին սուտ. ի նեղութեան իւրեանց խոստանան առնել, և յոժամ ը յանգորր ելանենն ստեն. բազում չարիս կրեալ է մեր ի նոցանէ. թո՛ղ սպառեսցեն զմիեանս, և մեք հանգիցուք.

when Xusrō II invaded.

Again, like in the Roman texts, we have the theme of Xusrō II being untrustworthy and dangerous, and because Pseudo-Sebēos was Armenian, he cast his compatriot Mušeł Mamikonean in the role of the one who warned the Romans of this. Thus, we have a case that this author believed that Xusrō II was an enemy of Christianity and someone who could not be trusted because he invaded the Roman Empire after he was reinstated on the throne. There is enough evidence to suggest that like the Roman authors studied in the last chapter, Pseudo-Sebēos felt contempt for the *šahanšah* based on Mušeł's and the senate's warnings. But there is more here. Pseudo-Sebēos was not Roman—but nonetheless experienced the war when the Roman and Sasanian armies clashed in the Caucasus—and he had a different approach than Roman authors. When we look deeper into the text, it becomes apparent that while Pseudo-Sebēos did believe Xusrō II was a bad man, he presented another side to the Sasanian monarch that further illuminated his complexities.

Despite Pseudo-Sebēos' depiction of Mušeł and the senate warning the Romans of the danger Xusrō II posed to them, he maintained that Xusrō II kept his promise to cede to the Romans Persarmenia and a large part of the Caucasus:

Then King Xusrō [II] gave rewards to them according to their station, and dismissed them from him. And he himself set out from Atraptakean to Asorestan, his original royal residence. And he was confirmed on the throne of the kingdom. And he carried out his promise of gifts for the emperor. He gave them all of Arustan to Nisibis, and the land of Armenia, which was under his authority, the *Tanuterakan tun* to the river Harazdan, the province of Kotēik to the town of Garni and up to the shore of lake Bznuik' and to Arestawan, and Gogovit as far as Hats'iwn and Maku.... He also gave a

large part of Georgian territory to the city of Tp'khis.¹⁷⁸

After dismissing the Romans who aided his effort to defeat Wahrām Čübīn, Xusrō II gave them gifts¹⁷⁹ and fulfilled his promise to Maurice by giving him all the lands listed in the quotation.¹⁸⁰ This passage is significant because it denoted that while Pseudo-Sebēos included warnings of the danger posed by Xusrō II, the *šahanšah* actually dismissed the Romans with honor from his service, which is a far cry from how Theophylact Simocatta depicted the supposed disrespect shown to the Romans. What is more, Pseudo-Sebēos also wrote that Xusrō II made good on his promise to give the Romans Persarmenia, which is made more significant by the fact that he listed all of the lands returned to the Romans. This evidence shows that while Pseudo-Sebēos certainly did not like Xusrō II, he subtly demonstrated that he did not just use Maurice for the Roman military to regain the throne. This account suggests that Xusrō II probably felt grateful for Maurice's help. Indeed, in addition to keeping his end of the bargain, he wrote a letter of thanks to the emperor after the war with Wahrām Čübīn was finished.¹⁸¹ Pseudo-Sebēos' depiction of Xusrō II is thus

178. Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 12, in Thomson, 28; *Patut' iwn Sebēosi*, 20-32, in Abgaryan, 84: Յայժամ արքայն խորով ետ ամենեցունն ըստ իւրաքանչիւր չափուց պարգես, և արձակեաց յիւրմէ: Եւ իւր չու արարեալ յԱտրպատականէ՝ գնաց յԱսորեստան, ի բնիկ թագաւորական կայեանս իւր: Եւ Հաստատեցաւ յաթոռ թագաւորութեան. և զխտացեալ պարգևսն կայսերն կատարեաց. ետ նոցա զԱրուաստան գամենայն մինչև ցՄժբին, և զերկիրն Հայոց. ոք ընդ իւրով իշխանութեամբն էր, գտունն Տանուտերական մինչև ցգետն Հուրազգան, և զգաւառն Կոտէից մինչև ցաւանն Գառնի և ցեզր ծովուն Բզնունեաց, և ցԱռեստաւաւան և զԳոգովիտ գաւառ մինչև ցՀացիւն և ցՄակու... Եւ և զմեծ մասն Կրաց աշխարհին մինչև ցՏփիսիս քաղաք: Translation modified from Thomson.

179. Howard-Johnston with Greenwood, *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*, 174.

180. Garsoïan, “The *Marzpanate*,” 108.

181. Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 12, in Thomson, 28; Howard-Johnston with Greenwood, *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebēos*, 171.

far more complex than how he was depicted by the Romans.

Pseudo-Sebēos' characterization of Xusrō II as a man who wrote letters to the Roman emperor insulting the Christian God was untrustworthy but was someone who kept his promise makes sense when one considers that this author was Armenian. The Armenians lived in a region that the Romans and Sasanians fought over for centuries. Warfare over the Caucasus even colored relations between the Romans and the Arsacids, the predecessors of the Sasanians. This situation thus made Armenia into a place that was not quiet Roman nor Sasanian; it was its own region that wielded considerable power in the late ancient world, despite its relative diminutive size when compared to the Roman Empire or *Ērānšahr*.

Whichever side controlled the Caucasus Mountains and the highlands of Armenia had an invasion route to the other's empire,¹⁸² access to the entire Middle East,¹⁸³ and control of the sea routes to the Black Sea.¹⁸⁴ Armenia itself was an

182. For examples of the Sasanians invading the Roman Empire through the Caucasus, see Procopius, *Buildings* 3.2.2, trans. H.B. Dewey *Buildings/General Index* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940) for Justinian's fortifications built in Armenia to slow a Sasanian advance, see *ibid.*, 3.3.1-14; Procopius, *History of the Wars* 1.8.3-4, trans. H.B. Dewey *History of the Wars: Books I-II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); James Howard-Johnston, "Procopius, Roman defences north of the Taurus and the new fortress of Citharizon," in *The Eastern Frontier of the Roman Empire (BAR Int Ser. 553)*, ed. D. H. French and C. S. Lightfoot (Oxford: British Archaeology Reports, 1989), 216-220 reprinted in *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity: Historiographical and Historical Studies* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2006). For Armenia's geography giving Heraclius the upper hand when he invaded *Ērānšahr*, see Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 122.

183. Robert H. Hewsen, "The Geography of Armenia," in *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. 1, *The Dynastic Periods: From Antiquity to the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Richard Hovannisian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), 6.

184. Michael Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian: Theophylact Simocatta on Persian and Balkan Warfare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 201.

important center for trade because of its location.¹⁸⁵ The Armenians, for their part, were aware of their importance to both the Sasanians and to the Romans and would routinely switch allegiances and were richly received by their new allies.¹⁸⁶ They brilliantly played the Romans and Sasanians off one another, in other words.¹⁸⁷

Thomas Sizgorich has brilliantly explained the situation the Romans and the Sasanians experienced trying to control the Caucuses by writing that “applying diplomatic or military pressure to the Lazi [neighbors to the Armenians] was a bit like trying to grasp a bar of wet soap, the more pressure one squeezes the more likely it is to slip away.”¹⁸⁸ Touraj Daryaee has written that “Armenia was to be the main bone of contention between the Iranians and the Romans and remained so until the end of the Sasanian period,”¹⁸⁹ and the Armenians used this to their advantage.

185. Hewsen, “The Geography of Armenia,” 2; George A. Bournoutian, *A Concise History of the Armenian People: From Ancient to the Present* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2002), 30; Beate Dignas and Engelbert Winters, *Rome and Persia: Neighbours and Rivals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007), 174.

186. For example, see Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 8, in Thomson, 4-6; *ibid.*, 16, in Thompson, 32; *ibid.*, 17, in Thompson, 34; Touraj Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 19; Bournoutian, *A Concise History*, 34-35; R. W. Thomson, “Eastern Neighbors: Armenia (400-600),” in *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire: C. 500-1492* ed. Jonathan Shepard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 156.

187. See, for instance, Daryaee, *Sasanian Iran*, 51; Nina Garsoïan, *Interregnum: Introduction to a Study on the Formation of Armenian Identity (ca 600-750): Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium: Subsidia 127* (Leuven: Peeters Publishing, 2012), 109.

188. Thomas Sizgorich, “Reasoned Violence and Shifty Frontiers: Shared Violence in the Late Roman East,” in *Violence in Late Antiquity* ed. H.A. Drake (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2006): 168.

189. Daryaee, *Sasanian Iran*, 27. For examples of Armenia being fought over by the Romans and the Sasanians, see *ibid.*, 25, 78; Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia*, 7-8, 13; Bournoutian, *A Concise History*, 46-47; “The Persian King at War,” in *The Roman and Byzantine Army in the East: Proceedings of a Colloquium Held at the Jagiellonian University, Kraków in September 1992* ed. E. Dabrowa (Kraków: Uniwersytet Jagiellonski, 1992), 227, 239. For Sasanian and Roman political pressures on the Armenians, see Garsoïan, *Interregnum*, 14-18;

Other late antique accounts corroborate Thomas Sizgorich's analogy of the wet bar of soap. For instance, Movsēs Xorenac'i wrote about numerous Roman and Sasanian attempts to control Armenia. This is especially true with the Sasanians. When the *šahanšah* Ardaxšīr I (r. 224 CE-242 CE) rebelled against the Arsacid King Ardavan V (r. 208 CE-224 CE) and started the Sasanian dynasty, the Armenian King Xosrov sent aid to the king, who was a fellow member of the house of Arsacid, the Parthian royal family that ruled Iran from 224 BCE to 224 CE¹⁹⁰ and had had a presence in Armenia since 12 CE.¹⁹¹ But he was too late, as Ardavan died. After Ardavan's death, Xosrov sent letters to the Armenian nobility, trying to rally them to fight the Sasanians.¹⁹² This could be the reason why Ardaxšīr I and his son and successor, Šābūhr I (r. 240 CE-270 CE), believed it was imperative to conquer and annex Armenia.¹⁹³ It is not wise to allow a remnant of the dynasty you toppled and with whom you had a history of enmity¹⁹⁴ survive to trouble you more, especially

Nina Garsoïan, "The Aršakuni Dynasty," in *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. 1, *The Dynastic Periods: From Antiquity to the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Richard Hovannisian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), 73, 86, 89-91.

190. Parvaneh Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: The Sasanian-Parthian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2008), 20.

191. Garsoïan, "The Aršakuni Dynasty," 64. For the relationship between the Arsacids in Iran and Armenia, see Bournoutian, *A Concise History*, 41. For more on the Arsacids in Armenia, see Cyril Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History* (Georgetown: Georgetown University Press 1963), 33-144, especially 113-144. I examine Arsacid and Sasanian relations in detail later in chapter four.

192. Moses Khorenats'i, *History of the Armenians*, II.71-72 *History of the Armenians* trans. Robert W. Thomson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 218-219; Garsoïan, "The Aršakuni Dynasty," 71-72.

193. Moses Khorenats'i, *The History of the Armenian*, II.84; Dignas and Winter, *Rome and Persia*, 179; Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 24.

194. Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 22, 36, 43-44.

when Xosrov invaded *Ērānšahr* and vowed to topple the house of Sāsān in retaliation for overthrowing the Arsacids.¹⁹⁵

Xosrov's successor, Trdat, also caused trouble for the Sasanians by invading numerous times.¹⁹⁶ Movsēs Xorenac'i also suggested that he believed that the Sasanians were an impious people. This is most apparent in his account of the origins of the Arsacid line. Movsēs Xorenac'i wrote that the Arsacids were descended from Abraham of the Old Testament, thus implying their divinity.¹⁹⁷ The Sasanians were not and could not claim any sort of divine sanction for their rule, especially after Šābūhr I pulled down the Arsacid line and installed his son, Hormīzd I, as king of Armenia.¹⁹⁸ Even in 428 CE, however, when Wahrām V Gūr (r. 420 CE-438 CE) installed governors loyal to the Sasanians in *Marzpanate* Armenia,¹⁹⁹ the situation was more complicated than the sources portray. During the *Marzpanate* period, the *šahanšah* appointed a *marzpan* (governor) of Armenia, who could not interfere with the *naxarars*, the ancient Armenian nobility who wielded their own

195. Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians*, ed. and trans. Robert W. Thomson (Albany: State University of New York, 1976), 1.19. It should be noted that Agathangelos was pro-Arsacid. See *The Romance of Artaban and Artašir in Agathangelos' History: Sasanika Occasional Papers 3* ed and trans. Gohar Muradyan and Aram Topchyan (Beverly Hills: Afshar Publishing, 2010), 1. See also Daryae, *Sasanian Iran*, 23-24; Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 42. For the strong ties between Armenia and the Arsacids, see Nina Garsoïan, "Prolegomena to a Study of the Iranian Elements in Arsacid Armenia," in *Handes Amsorya* (Vienna: Zeitschrift für armenische Philologie XC, 1976), 9-11, 39.

196. Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians*, 4.123.

197. Moses Khorenats'i, *History of the Armenians*, II.68.

198. Dignas and Winter, *Rome and Persia*, 22, 180.

199. Daryae, *Sasanian Iran*, 61; Daryae, *Sasanian Persia*, 23; Guisto Traina, *428 AD: An Ordinary Year at the End of the Roman Empire* trans. Allen Cameron (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), 1-6; Bournoutian, *A Concise History*, 58; Thomson, "Eastern Neighbors: Armenia," 160; Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History*, 133.

armies. The Sasanians, in truth, were not constantly trying to destroy Armenia, despite how some sources would like to portray the situation because they often negotiated and worked with the *naxarars*.²⁰⁰

Movsēs Xorenac'i's attempts to link the Arsacids with Abraham was an attempt to erase Armenia's pre-Christian past instead of being merely anti-Sasanian propaganda. If one takes into account how Pseudo-Sebēos portrayed Xusrō II as being hyper anti-Christian, then a theme can be noticed of Armenian authors trying to assert that their past was always Christian. Another Armenian author, Agat'angelos, wrote the following in his introduction of Gregory the Illuminator and the conversion of Armenia from Zoroastrianism, the religion of the Arsacid rulers of Armenia,²⁰¹ to Christianity:

And how by love for God and the power of Christ given him, after the cults of inanity fell and were crushed, and true piety spread the whole land of Armenia. And how churches were built in Armenia, and the cults of inanity were broken, which through the habitual errors of the ancestors had been foolish forms uselessly worked and beguiled into stone and timber, idolatrous fancies of insensibility.²⁰²

Then take this passage from the same author: "From the earliest times we

200. See R. C. Blockley, "The Division of Armenia between the Romans and the Persians at the End of the Fourth Century A.D.," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, Bd. 36, H. 2 (2nd Quarter, 1987): 226. For the myth of the Armenians trying to stop the Sasanian threat, see Nina Garsoïan, "Armenia in the Fourth Century: An Attempt to Re-Define the Concepts «Armenia» and «Loyalty»," *Revue des études arméniennes* VIII (Paris, 1971), 342 reprinted in *Armenia between the Romans and the Sasanians* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985).

201. Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia*, 268-269.

202. Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians*, Prologue 16 *History of the Armenians* ed. and trans. Robert W. Thomson (Albany: State University of New York, 1976), 28, 30: Եւ թէ զիս՛ ըրիզ նորուն աստուածսիրութեամբ և Քրիստոսի զօրութեամբ նմա տուելով՝ անկան փշրեցան ունայնութեան պաշտամունքն, և աստուածպաշտութիւն տարածեցաւ ընդ ամենայն երկիրս Հայոց: Եւ կամ ո՛ր պէս շինեցան եկեղեցիք ի Հայաստան աշխարհիս, և քակեցան ունայնութեան պաշտամունքն, այն որ ի սովորական մոլորութենէ նախնեացն ընդվայրավորչո՞ն, զրթախաղաց քարանցն և փայտիցն յիմարութիւնքն էին, և ուրուսպաշտ թմբրութիւնքն անզգայութեանց: Translation modified from Thomson. For the destruction of temples, see Bournoutian, *A Concise History*, 48.

were lost, enveloped in the forgetfulness [ignorance] of sin, wrapped in mist and fog, made stupid, not being able to see.”²⁰³ The Armenians, in an attempt to distance themselves from the Sasanians, downplayed their pre-Christian past. In the case of Agatʻangelos, the way he painted Zoroastrianism as blinding the Armenians and calling it a cult of “inanity” suggests that he greatly desired to whitewash Zoroastrian Armenia.

Of course, not every Armenian converted to Christianity when Gregory the Illuminator swept through the country.²⁰⁴ For instance, King Xosrov was Zoroastrian when he attempted to seek vengeance against Ardaxšīr I for deposing the Arsacid dynasty. Then King Trdat, while fighting against the Sasanians, imprisoned Gregory the Illuminator for apostasy. This situation suggests the other side of Thomas Sizgorich's wet bar of soap analogy. The Sasanians also sought to secure support from the Armenians based on their shared Zoroastrian heritage.

This would not always work, as we will see shortly, but it is important to realize that for every military action the Sasanians undertook against Armenia, there was also an attempt to use goodwill to bring the Armenians to their side when Hormīzd II (r. 303 CE-309 CE) tried to restrengthen ties to Armenia when people began to convert to Christianity. Hormīzd II for instance married his daughter to

203. Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians*, C.797, in Thomson, 336: Ի վարդնչուց հետէ կորուսեայք, տգիտութեամբ մեղացն պաշարեայք, մառախլապատք, միգապատք, արշեայք, ոչ կարացեալ հայել իմանալ նկատել. Translation modified from Thomson.

204. For more, see Daryae, *Sasanian Iran*, 44-43; Daryae, *Sasanian Persia*, 15-16; Garsoian, “The Aršakuni Dynasty,” 80; Bournoutian, *A Concise History*, 54; Thomson, “Eastern Neighbors: Armenia,” 161; Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia*, 140.

Trdat.²⁰⁵ Even though by converting to Christianity, Armenia became closer to the Roman Empire,²⁰⁶ Hormīzd II chose not to invade and violently stop the spread of the religion. Even after the revolt of 451 CE against Yazdgird II's (r. 438 CE-457 CE) attempts to reimpose Zoroastrianism was crushed when the rebels chose martyrdom over apostasy,²⁰⁷ the Sasanians installed an Armenian *marzpan* with instructions not to hinder the peoples' practice of Christianity.²⁰⁸

Pseudo-Sebēos provides the best example of the Sasanians using Zoroastrian language to woo the Armenians to their side. After Hormīzd IV was assassinated, Wahrām Čubīn asked Mušeł and other Armenian nobles for aid for very anti-Sasanian reasons:

And so I would have thought that while I was fighting against your enemies, you would have come from your region to help me, so that you and I united might remove that universal cancer, the house of Sasan.... As for you Armenians who demonstrate unbearable loyalty, did not the house of Sasan destroy your land and sovereignty? [...] If I am victorious, I swear by the great god Aramazd [Ohrmazd], and by the lord Sun and Moon, and Fire and Water, by Mihr and all the other gods that I will give to you the land of Armenia.²⁰⁹

205. Daryaee, *Sasanian Iran*, 43.

206. Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia*, 21.

207. Łazar P'arpec'i is the best source to cover this. See Ghazar P'arpec'i, *History of the Armenians* 38-39 ed. and trans. Robert Bedrosian (New York: Armenian Tradition, 1985), Garsoïan, *Interregnum*, IX-X; Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia*, 23-24. For details of the rebellion, see Garsoïan, "The *Marzpanate*," 99-100, 108; Bournoutian, *A Concise History*, 59-60; Thomson, "Eastern Neighbors: Armenia," 162-163. For details of the rebellion, see Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia*, 136-139. Moreover, Garsoïan has written that this event fueled Armenian anti-Iranian sentiment, see Nina Garsoïan, "Secular Jurisdiction over the Armenian Church," in *Okeanos: Essays Presented to Ihor Sevčenko on his Sixtieth Birthday by His Colleagues and Students* ed. Cyril Mango, Omeljan Pritsak, Uliana M. Pasicznyk (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Ukrainian Studies 7, 1984), 237-238.

208. Nina G. Garsoïan, "Frontier-Frontiers? Transcaucasia and eastern Anatolia in the pre-Islamic Period," *La Persia e Bisanzio. Atti dei convegni Lincei* 202 (October, 2002): 347-348 reprinted in Nina G. Garsoïan, *Studies on the Formation of Christian Armenia* (Farnham, Surrey: Variorum Collected Series, 2010); Garsoïan, "The *Marzpanate*," 101.

209. Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 11, in Thomson, 20-21; *Patut' iwn Pseudo-Sebēosi*, 20-34, 6-9, in Abgaryan, 77-78: Ես այսպէս կարծէի, եթէ ես յորժամ ընդ թշնամիս ձեր մարտընչիմ, և դուք ի կողմանէ այստի եկեալ ինձ աւգնական լինիցիք. զի ես և դուք միաբանութեամբ բարձցուք ի միշոյ զտիեզերական

Mušēl thusly responded:

Kingship is from God and he gives it to whom he wishes. But you must feel sorry for yourself and not for us. I know you are a braggart. And you do not have confidence in God, but with bravery and the strength of elephants. Yet I will tell you if God wills, tomorrow the combat of valiant people will envelop you and they will burst on you and the multitude of your beasts like the most violent clouds of heaven.²¹⁰

While these nobles rejected Wahrām Čübīn's appeal using Christian language, Wahrām Čübīn's letter nevertheless suggests that he had an audience that was not particularly Christian.²¹¹ Despite Agat'angelos' attempts to portray the Armenians as embracing Christianity, there still was enough Zoroastrian sentiment left for Wahrām Čübīn to swear by the Ohrmazd, Mihr, the sun, moon, fire, water, and all of the other gods to return Armenia to Arsacid control.²¹² Even if this letter was a complete fabrication on the part of Pseudo-Sebēos and he wanted to show that the Armenian nobility could not be swayed by these Zoroastrian and pro-Arsacid overtures,²¹³ why did he include it?

The reason is because it is important to realize that the Sasanians tried to exert more control of their part of Armenia after they and the Romans agreed in 387

պատուհասն, գտունն Սասանայ... ո՞չ ապաքէն տունդ Սասանավան եբարձ գերկիրդ ձերգտերութիւն... Եւ թէ ես յաղթեցից՝ երդուեալ ի մեծ աստուածն Արամազդ, և յԱրեգեգակն տէր և ի Լուսին, ի Հուր և ի Ջուր, ի Միհր և յամենայն աստուածս, եթէ ձեզ տուեալ լիցի զՀայոց թագաւորութիւնն: Translation modified from Thomson. For other Armenian authors using anti-Iranian language, see Garsoïan, “Prolegomena,” 1-4.

210. Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 11, in Thomson, 22; *Patut' iwn Pseudo-Sebēosi*, 26-32, in Abgaryan, 78: Առ Աստոյ է թագաւորութիւնն, և ում կամեցաւ՝ ետ. բայց դու պարտիս յանձն քո ապաշաւել և ոչ ի մեզ: Եւ ծանեայ դքեզ այր պոռոքաբան. և ոչ խրախուսես յԱստուած, այլ ի քաջութիւն և ի փղաց գաւրութիւն: Այլ ես ասմ քեզ. եթէ Աստուած կվմեսցի վաղիւ պատելոց է գքև պատերազմ քաջաց, և ճայթեսցեն ի վերայ քո և ի վերայ բազմութեան փղացդ իբրև զամպս երկնից գազանագոյնս քան զամենեանս: Translation modified from Thomson.

211. Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 128-129.

212. Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 125-126.

213. A point to which I shall return.

CE to split Armenia in a peace treaty.²¹⁴ Still, after that partition, the Armenians never were entirely under Sasanian control. The Armenians were quiet when it suited them, but they were always ready to irritate the *šahanšah* when they had the chance to rebel against them. The Armenian situation for the Sasanians was tricky, at best, and may explain why some Sasanians used Zoroastrian language to entice the Armenians to their side.

This does not imply that the Romans were any more successful at totally controlling Armenia, even after they directly annexed their part of it. What is more, it is also dangerous to assume that just because the Romans and the Armenians were Christians that they felt friendship for each other. The reality of the Roman-Armenian situation was similar to Sasanian-Armenian relations. There were efforts by the Romans to directly control Armenia, and for their part, the Armenians used the Romans as a bulwark against the Sasanians. As we will see, time and time again, the Armenians quickly appealed for Roman aid when they angered the Sasanians, aid which the Romans were quick to give to deprive the Sasanians of control of Persarmenia. Eventually, the Romans grew tired of the Armenians using them; this is perhaps why they directly annexed Armenia in 485 CE during the reign of Emperor Zeno (r. 474 CE-475 CE, 476 CE-491 CE). Furthermore, Justinian I created a new military command for Armenia, *magister militum per Armeniam*, that

214. For the geographical details of the division of Armenia between the two powers, see Nina G. Garsoïan, "L'Interrègne Arménien: esquisse préliminaire," *Le Muséon: Revue d'Etudes Orientales* 122 (2009): 82 reprinted in Nina G. Garsoïan, *Studies on the Formation of Christian Armenia* (Farnham, Surrey: Variorum Collected Series, 2010); Garsoïan, "The Aršakuni Dynasty," 92. The split of Armenia was a long process that took place over decades, and this date is when the treaty was finalized. For more information, see Blockley, "The Division of Armenia between the Romans and the Persians at the End of the Fourth Century A.D.," 223-224, 234, especially 228-229, 231-232 for how Armenian oscillation between the Romans and the Sasanians drove the agreement between the two realms to split Armenia.

supplanted the *satrapies'* (governors) authority and further eroded Armenian sovereignty in the Roman sector;²¹⁵ tried to impose the Council of Chalcedon on the Armenians,²¹⁶ and forced the *naxarars* to bequeath their riches to all of their children, including women, to erode the continuity and longevity of the *naxarar's* power.²¹⁷

Before these measures, however, the Romans on several occasions tried to coax the Armenians to their side. Like the Sasanians, the Romans wanted control of Armenia and the Caucuses because of its strategic importance. There was, however, more to this, for some Romans also tried to use familiarity with the Armenians to foster a closer relationship. Take, for instance, Emperor Diocletian (r. 285 CE-305 CE). He wrote a letter to Trdat before the conversion of Armenia. This letter concerns a Christian girl with whom the emperor desired to have carnal relations. She fled to Armenia, and Diocletian wrote to Trdat asking him to find her.

The interesting thing about this letter is that Diocletian, even before the two

215. Garsoïan, "L'Interrègne Arménien," 83; Garsoïan, "The *Marzpanate*," 95, 104-107; Garsoïan, "Armenia in the Fourth Century," 344; Bournoutian, *A Concise History*, 64-65; Thomson, "Eastern Neighbors: Armenia," 159.

216. Tim Greenwood, "New Light from the East': Chronography and Ecclesiastical History through a Late Seventh-Century Armenian Source," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16, no. 2 (Summer, 2008): 241. For Justinian's view that the Romans had a civilizing mission to convert "barbarians" to Chalcedon Christianity, see Michael Maas, "'Delivered from Their Ancient Customs' Christianity and the Question of Cultural Change in Early Byzantine Ethnography," in *Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Seeing and Believing*, ed. Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton (New York: University of Rochester, 2003), 152, 159-160, 163-166 for the Tzani, Caucasian neighbors to the Armenians, who joined the Roman cultural world by becoming orthodox Christians. See also Michael Maas, "Strabo and Procopius: Classical Geography for a Christian Empire," in *From Rome to Constantinople: Studies in Honour of Averil Cameron*, ed. Hagit Amirav and Bas ter Haar Romeny (Leuven: Peeters and Bondgenotenlaan, 2007), 83; J. A. S. Evans, *The Age of Justinian: The Circumstances of Imperial Power* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 60-65.

217. Maas, "'Delivered from Their Ancient Customs,'" 169-171.

realms for the most part converted to Christianity, used language similarly found in

Wahrām Ćubīn's missive to Mušeł and the other nobles:

Let your fraternity, our comrade in arms, know of the evils that continually befall us from this erring sect of the Christians: in that everything is derided by their religion and our rule is despised by them, and there is no respect in them. For they worship some dead and crucified man, and adore a cross, and worship the bones of those put to death, and they consider their own death for the sake of their god to be glory and honor. They have been condemned by our just laws because they embittered and angered our forefathers, our fathers, and predecessors. Our swords have been blunted and they have not a fear of death. They have gone astray after some crucified Jew, and they teach dishonor for kings and complete disrespect for the images of the divine gods. Similarly they regard as naught the power of the luminaries, the sun, the moon and stars, and hold them to be creatures of the crucified one.²¹⁸

This letter is from one who practiced a non-Christian religion to another. The language degrades Christianity because its adherents worship a “crucified Jew.”

These Christians have gone against tradition shared by both the Romans and Armenians. They were an erring sect that did not honor the sun, moon, and stars.

What is more shocking to Diocletian, at least according to Agathangelos, was that those Christians considered those heavenly bodies to belong to that crucified man, Jesus Christ.

This letter demonstrates that in pre-Christian Armenia, a polytheistic Roman

218. Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians*, B.153-155, in Thomson, 162, 164: Քրիստոսի լիցի եղբայրութեանդ քում նիզավցվի մերում վասն չարեացս, որ անցնեն ընդ մեզ հանապազ իմոյսար աղանդէս քրիստոնէից. զի յամենյնի դարովեալ լինի տէրութիւնս մեր յուխտէ նոցա, և արհամարհեալ լինի արքայութիւնս մեր ի նոցանէ. և ինչ համեստութիւն ոչ գոյ ինոսա: Ջի ինքեանք զմեռեալ ոմո զխաչեալ պաշտեն, և փայտի երկիր պագանեն, և զոսվերս սպանելոցն պաշտեն, որ զիրեանց մահն, որ վասն Աստուծոյն իւրեանց է՝ փառս և պատիւս համարին: Եւ ի մերոց արդար օրինացս դատապարտեալ լինին. վասն զմեր զնախնին, զառաջին հարսն հարսն զթագաւորսն, դառնացուցեալս ձանձրացուցին. զի մեր սուրբս թեցան, և նոքա ոչ զարհուրեցանր ի մեռանելոյ: Ջի ինքեանք զհետ չրէի ուրու մն խաչելոյ մոլորեալ են, և զթագաւորս անպատուել ուսուցանեն, և զլիովին իսկ զպատվերս դիցն զաստուածոց անարգել ուսուցանեն: Նա և զլուսաւորացդ զօրութիւն, զարեգական և զլուսնի աստեղօքդ հանդեդերձ առ ոչինչ համարին, նա և արարած առնեն այնր խաչելոյ: Եւ զլիովին զպատկերս դիցս աստուածոցն անարգել ուսուցանեն. և զաշխարհս ամենայն փոխեցին իպաշտամտնէ դիցն: Translation modified from Thomson.

emperor could write to the king using language to which both parties could relate.²¹⁹

What is more, this letter also suggests that Diocletian believed he could persuade Trdat to find this girl. This in turn demonstrates how a Roman emperor could use commonalities with the Armenians to get something he wanted. In this instance, Diocletian wanted Trdat to find the Christian girl he desired. The emperor then used language that attacked Christianity in an attempt to fraternize with Trdat. Those Christians and the problems they posed were a commonality shared by the pagan Roman emperor and the Armenian king.

Additionally, even if this letter is a fabrication of the path of Agat'angelos, it still is important to look at its implications. Agat'angelos depicted Diocletian practically going out of his way to commiserate with Trdat about those "troublesome" Christians. Diocletian, in other words, had to find something in common with Trdat so he could find that girl. Roman-Armenian relations in the pre-Christian era were lopsided; the Romans had to court the Armenians. It is not inappropriate to wonder who actually wielded more power, the Romans or the Armenians? It is clear who controlled whom.

This uneven relationship is present in Movsēs Xorenac'i's *History*. The Armenians sided with the Romans only when the Sasanians did not give them what they wanted. For instance, King Xosrov withheld tribute from Šābūhr I and went to the Romans for aid. Then after his death, Xosrov's retainer took his son, Trdat, and

219. According to Garsoïan, Trdat could not convert to Christianity and risk the wrath of Diocletian, see "The Aršakuni Dynasty," 82; Bournoutian, *A Concise History*, 49.

again asked the Romans for help to become king.²²⁰ What is important about this is that it denotes that at times, the Armenians cooperated with the Sasanians, and when the moment was right, they fled to the Romans for help.

This is especially true after the partition of Armenia. Much to the chagrin of Šābūhr II (r. 309 CE-379 CE), King Arshak left Persarmenia and fled with his family and other nobles because they wanted to be allied with the Christian Emperor, Theodosius I (r. 379 CE-395 CE). Šābūhr II thusly asked Arshak why he wanted war between the Romans and Sasanians.²²¹ Arshak himself was not above courting the Romans into fighting the Sasanians, for he promised Emperor Arcadius (r. 395 CE-408 CE) that he would break his treaty with the Sasanians and if the emperor sent the Armenians military aid, an offer the emperor declined.²²² Even when the Armenians fought alongside the Sasanians and invaded the Roman Empire, they still made promises to become allied with the Romans, if only someone could take care of their Sasanian problem, if Arshak's letter to Emperor Valens (r. 364 CE-378 CE) is any indication.²²³

A letter from Emperor Julian (r. 361 CE-363 CE) to Arsaces, the satrap of Armenia, sent on the eve of the emperor's disastrous invasion of *Ērānšahr*, demonstrates his frustration with the Armenians. "Be assured that you will be

220. Movses Khorenats'i, *History*, III.10; Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians*, 1.38.

221. Movses Khorenats'i, *History*, III.42.

222. Movses Khorenats'i, *History*, III.50.

223. Movses Khorenats'i, *History*, III.29.

subordinate to the power of the Persians,” wrote Julian, “when your hearth, your whole race, and the realm of the Armenians blaze together.”²²⁴ This quotation demonstrates that undoubtedly, some Armenians tried to court the Sasanians, even if they were satraps of Roman Armenia. Julian, in his frustration, resorted to bombastic predictions of the destruction of Armenia if the Armenians continued to remain allied with the Sasanians.

Fourth-century CE authors were not unique with their portrayal of the peculiar relationship between Armenia and Constantinople. Several later Roman authors also demonstrate that as time went on, the Armenians still managed to vex the Romans. Procopius of Caesarea elucidated background to the partition of Armenia, and more importantly, how the Armenians oscillated between the Romans and the Sasanians hastened it in the first place. King Arsaces bequeathed to both of his sons, Trdat and Arsaces the younger, the throne of Armenia, but he granted Trdat a larger portion. Arsaces went to the Romans and asked Theodosius for help, while Trdat sided with the Sasanians.²²⁵ This division between the brothers resulted in another war for Armenia between the Romans and the Sasanians. Both realms, however, decided it would be best to split Armenia amongst themselves in an effort to stop the fighting.²²⁶

224. Julian, *To Arsaces, Satrap of Armenia*, 57 *Works of the Emperor Julian* ed. and trans. Wilmer Cave Wright (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 198: ἴσθι δὲ ὡς σὺ μὲν πάροργον ἔσθι τῆς Περσικῆς χειρὸς, συναφθείσης σοι παγγενεὶ τῆς ἐστίας καὶ τῆς Ἀρμενίων ἀρχῆς. Translation modified from Wright.

225. Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.1.8-12.

226. Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.1.13-14; Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian*, 204. It should be noted, that the Sasanians had ulterior motives for partitioning Armenia. The Sasanians wanted to depose Arsaces and end the reign of the Arsacids and again impose Zoroastrianism in Armenia. See Traina, 428

This partition, as was seen with the Sasanians, did not go well for the Romans. As with Persarmenia, the Romans also had to contend with powerful *naxarars* and the armies tied to them. The satraps rebelled against Emperor Zeno, and this forced him to annex Armenia, as explained above. Then Emperor Justinian (r. 527 CE-565 CE) in the sixth century further eroded the *naxarars'* power by appointing a general to command their armies and by directly annexing some of their estates, as described above.²²⁷ This did not sit well with the Armenians, and they rebelled. The Romans had to send an army to quell this rebellion, and this caused another war with *Ērānšahr*. The Romans, like the Sasanians, were in a constant dance with the Armenians. The Armenians were constantly keeping the Romans off balance by threatening to leave them for the Sasanians or by outright fighting. As one delves deeper into the research, it becomes apparent that Thomas Sizgorich's soap analogy is perfect for describing how the Armenians constantly evaded Roman and Sasanian attempts to pin them down.

Even after the annexation of Armenia and Justinian's reforms, the Romans found the Armenians to remain unbowed. This had a lot to do with religion and the Christological controversies of late antiquity, and, more importantly, with a joint Roman and Sasanian attempt to once and for all solve the Armenian problem. Understanding the differences in Christianity between the Romans and Armenians is also important to understand how Pseudo-Sebēos could at once be anti-Xusrō II

AD, 3-5.

227. Procopius, *Buildings*, 3.1.16.

but at the same time take the opportunity to criticize the Romans, albeit subtly.

The Armenians on the one hand shared many theological views with the Romans. For instance, they considered diaphysite (where the humanity of Jesus Christ was emphasized over his divinity) Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia to be heretical. But according to Movsēs Xorenac'i, the Armenian kat'olikos did not attend the Council of Ephesus in 431 CE,²²⁸ which denounced diaphysite Christology; but the Armenian Church on the other hand accepted the council.²²⁹ Thus, they shared this commonality with the Romans, although they did not attend the council.

That the Armenians did not send a delegation to the Council of Ephesus suggests there was a partition between Armenian Christianity and orthodox (Jesus Christ had two natures: human and divine) Christianity of the Roman Empire. While this split might seem minute, there were serious consequences from this missed council. As time wore on, the Roman and Armenian churches became further separated, like a garment slowly tearing apart. By the time Pseudo-Sebēos wrote his history, this rupture proved to be palpable enough that, while he did not have any love for Xusrō II, he also was hesitant to fully commit himself to praise the Romans.

228. Garsoïan, "The *Marzpanate*," 98, 112. Moreover, the Armenian Church was not represented at any ecumenical council after Nicaea in the fourth century CE. See Garsoïan, "Frontier-Frontiers?" 350 and Bournoutian, *A Concise History*, 50, 59. But of course, some Armenians who were in communion with the *katholikos* of Constantinople did attend such councils. See Nina G. Garsoïan, "Janus: the formation of the Armenian Church from the IVth to the VIIth Century," in *The Formation of a Millennial Tradition: 1700 Years of Armenian Christian Witness (301-2001)*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 271 ed. R. Taft (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2004), 80-81 reprinted in Nina G. Garsoïan, *Studies on the Formation of Christian Armenia* (Farnham, Surrey: Variorum Collected Series, 2010).

229. Garsoïan, *Interregnum*, 68; Thomson, "Eastern Neighbors: Armenia," 166-167.

In turn, this hesitation also suggests why Pseudo-Sebēos portrayed Xusrō II as fulfilling his promise to Maurice. Pseudo-Sebēos' portrayal of Maurice further demonstrates his unique position as an Armenian.

While Pseudo-Sebēos depicted Xusrō as being an enemy of Christianity, Maurice is depicted as being an enemy to the entire Armenian people. For example, the emperor supposedly sent Xusrō II a letter, complaining about the Armenians. Maurice undoubtedly was frustrated at the Armenians for constantly switching sides between the Romans and the Sasanians. He proposed that he and Xusrō II depopulate Armenia of its *naxarars* and send them to Thrace in order to undermine Armenia's sovereignty, because the *naxarars* provided Armenia with political and cultural stability.²³⁰ According to Pseudo-Sebēos, Maurice wrote the following to

Xusrō II:

They are a perverse and devious nation, he said, they come between us and cause trouble. Now come, he said, I will gather mine and send them to Thrace; and you gather yours and command them to be driven to the east. For if they die, our enemies die; and if they kill, they kill our enemies; but we will live in peace. For if they remain in their own country, we will have no rest.²³¹

The Armenians in the Roman sector, however, discovered this plan and went to

230. For the permanence of the *naxarars*, see Richard G. Hovannisian, "Introduction," in *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. 1, *The Dynastic Periods: From Antiquity to the Fourteenth Century* ed. Richard Hovannisian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), viii; Garsoïan, "The Aršakuni Dynasty," 78-79; Bournoutian, *A Concise History*, 36.

231. Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 15, in Thomson, 31; *Patut' iwn Pseudo-Sebēosi*, 26-31, in Abgaryan, 86: Ազգ մի խոտոր և ունենազանդ են, ասէ, կամ ի միջի մերում և պղտորեն: Բայց ե՛կ, ասէ, ես զիմս ժողովեմ և ի թրակէ գումարեմ. և դու զքոյղ ժողովէ և հրամայէ յԱրևելս տանել: Զի եթէ մեռանին թշնամիք մեռանին. և եթէ սպանանեն զթշնամիս սպանանեն. և մեք կեցցուք խաղաղութեամբ: Զի եթէ դոքա յերկրի իւրեանց լինիցին մեզ հանգչել ոչ լինի: Translation modified from Thomson; Garsoïan, *Interregnum*, 4; Thomson, "Eastern Neighbors: Armenia," 169. Although Howard-Johnston wrote that this letter was probably fabricated, he nevertheless felt that the shifting alliances of Roman Armenians would have forced Maurice to propose such a radical scheme. See Howard-Johnston with Greenwood, *The Armenian History Attributed to Pseudo-Sebēos*, 176-177.

Xusrō II for support, which he gladly gave.²³² This plan, and the *šahanšah's* attempt to woo the Armenians to his side, backfired for both realms because the Armenians then rebelled against both sides. This rebellion was particularly bad for the Romans, because they had to send an army into the Armenian sector to quell it.

Relations between the Romans and their Armenian subjects also were strained by Maurice's levy of Armenian cavalrymen. According to Pseudo-Sebēos, the Armenian nobility balked at supplying the necessary troops because of Maurice's plan to ship them off to Thrace.²³³ Then, Maurice managed to transfer many princes to the Balkans to fight his war, an event that undoubtedly influenced how Pseudo-Sebēos viewed the emperor.²³⁴

Another point of contention between the Romans and Armenians during the lifetime of Pseudo-Sebēos was the issue of Christian orthodoxy. Recall that the Armenians did not send a delegation to the Council of Ephesus, although they did accept it because it anathematized the diaphysite Christological preaching of Theodore of Mopsuestia. The Armenian Church, however, in turn condemned Chalcedon in the Council of Dvin in 607 CE because it considered Chalcedon to be diaphysite.²³⁵ This was another disagreement between the Romans and the

232. Garsoïan, *Interregnum*, 5-6.

233. Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 20, in Thomson, 39; Garsoïan, "The *Marzpanate*," 109.

234. Howard-Johnston with Greenwood, *The Armenian History Attributed to Pseudo-Sebēos*, 176, 190. See also Garsoïan, "L'Interrègne Arménien," 85; Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 24.

235. Garsoïan, "The *Marzpanate*," 111; Garsoïan, *Interregnum*, 56-58; for the details of the Council of Dvin, see *ibid.*, 70-73; Garsoïan, "L'Interrègne Arménien," 83-84; Garsoïan, "Janus," 94-95; Garsoïan,

Armenians and thus demonstrates that their respective churches were separate from each other.

Pseudo-Sebēos, despite being concerned only with the political instead of the ecclesiastical,²³⁶ for instance, wrote that after Xusrō II ceded Persarmenia to the Romans:

Another command came from the Emperor [Maurice] to preach the council of Chalcedon in all the land of Armenia, and to unite them through his army. But the clerics of the Armenian church fled to a foreign country. And many, disregarding the command, stood their ground and remained unmoved. But many others, swayed by ambition, united by joining in communion.²³⁷

This quotation demonstrates that by the time of Maurice, the imperial church and government were trying to bring Armenia under its sway. It is important to realize that while some Armenians accepted, because of ambition,²³⁸ the doctrine of Chalcedon, many more fled and others stayed and refused to be in communion with it.²³⁹

Interregnum, XI; V.A. Arutjunova-Fidanjan, “ի Սմբատայ” or “ի Սպահան”? (“I Smbatay” or “I Spahan? Pseudo-Sebēos, ch. 25)” in *From Byzantium to Iran: Armenian Studies in Honour of Nina G Garsoïan* ed. Jean-Pierre Mahé and Robert W. Thomson (Atlanta: Scholarly Press, 1997), 155; Bournoutian, *A Concise History*, 62; Greenwood, “New Light from the East,” 235. For another Armenian text that criticized orthodox Christianity, see *ibid.*, 154. For an example of the extreme monophysite Christology of the some Armenians, see Garsoïan, *Interregnum*, 74-77, 82-85 and her study of the Armenian *kat'olikos* Komitas.

236. James Howard-Johnston, “Armenian Historians of Heraclius: An Examination of the Aims, Sources, and Working-Methods of Sebeos and Movses Daskhuransti,” in *The Reign of Heraclius (610-641): Crisis and Confrontation* eds. Gerrit J. Reinink and Bernard H. Stolte (Leuven: Peeters Publishing Publishing, 2002): 47.

237. Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 19, in Thomson, 37; *Patut' iwn Pseudo-Sebēosi*, 11-17, in Abgaryan, 91: Հրաման ելնէ դարձեալ ի կայսերէն վերստին այլ քարոզել ըզտողովն Քաղկեդոնի յամենայն եկեղեցիս Հայաստան երկրի, և միաւորել հաղորոթեամբ ընդ զաւր իւր: Իսկ մանկունք ուխտի եկեղեցեացն Հայոց փախստական գնացեալ յաւտար երկիր վարէին: Եւ բազմաց առ ոչինչ համարեալ զհրամանն զտեղի կալան և անշարժ մնացին: Եւ բազումք հաւանեալ փառասիրութեաբ հաղորդեալ միաւորեցան ալինաւր: Translation modified from Thomson; Garsoïan, “Secular Jurisdiction over the Armenian Church,” 223-227.

238. Thomson, “Eastern Neighbors: Armenia,” 170.

239. Garsoïan, “Secular Jurisdiction over the Armenian Church,” 228.

There also was religious violence between the Romans and Armenians.

During the reigns of Xusrō I and Justin II (r. 565 CE-578 CE), the Romans again went to the Armenians' aid when the Sasanians invaded.²⁴⁰ The Roman army captured a church in Dvin that the Sasanians turned into a storehouse. The Romans burned it to the ground, and according to Pseudo-Sebēos, “a great tumult befell them.”²⁴¹

Pseudo-Sebēos then went further and described the Roman army's treatment of the Armenians in Dvin:

Now while such confusion was rousing the crowds in the land of Persia, Yovhan *patrik* and a Greek [Roman] army were keeping the city of Dvin besieged; attacking it with machines [catapults], and were close to destroying the wall. But when this report arrived, they left it and went off, making their way to Atrpatakan. They seized control of the entire country and put all the men and women to the sword. Taking all the plunder and captives and booty, they returned to their land.²⁴²

Actions such as these suggest a tension between the Romans and Armenians.

Additionally, recall that according to Armenian tradition, Gregory the Illuminator brought Christianity to Armenia.²⁴³ The Romans, on the other hand, maintained that it was they who converted Armenia when Constantine (r. 306 CE-337 CE) was emperor, if Theophanes is any indication:

And similarly, the Armenians were completely converted under him [Constantine],

240. Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian*, 262-267.

241. Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 8, in Thomson, 7; *Patut’iwn Pseudo-Sebēosi*, 11-12, in Abgaryan, 68: վասն որոյ եղև նոցա խռովութիւն մեծ; Garsoïan, *Interregnum*, 3.

242. Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 10, in Thomson, 16; *Patut’iwn Sebēosi*, 23-28, in Abgaryan, 74: Արդ՝ մինչև ցայս այսպէս շփոթ ամբոխի ի մէջ Պարսից աշխարհին լեալ՝ Յովհան պատրիկ և զաւրօ Յունաց պատեալ պաշարեալ պահէին զքաղաքն Դրւնայ, մարտուցեալ ընդ նմա մեքենայիւքն՝ մերձէին ի կործանել զպարիսպն: Իսկ իբրև եհաս լուրս այս՝ թողին զնա և գևացին. հանապարհ կալեալ յԱտրպատական լաստեցին զերկիրն ամենայն, հարեալ զամենայն զայր և ղկին բերանով սրոյ իւրեանց, առեալ զամենայն առ և զաւար՝ դարձան երկիրն իւրեանց: Translation modified from Thomson.

243. For the link between the legend of Gregory the Illuminator and Armenian tradition, see Garsoïan, “The Aršakuni Dynasty,” 81-82.

receiving their deliverance through Tirdates [Trdat] their king and Gregory their bishop.²⁴⁴

The suggestion in this source that Gregory the Illuminator converted Armenia under the direction of Constantine demonstrates there was a disconnect between Roman and Armenian Christianity. If the Romans believed they had converted the Armenians, the Armenians would have known of this sentiment. It should be doubted that they thought well of this, for as we have seen, Christianity in Armenia was its own type, independent of the *katholikos* in Constantinople. Thus, we see there was religious, political, and martial tension between Armenia and the Roman Empire. Because of this tension, it makes sense that Pseudo-Sebēos was more willing to portray Xusrō II as keeping his part of the bargain with Maurice instead of just characterizing the *šahanšah* as a cartoonish villain, as is demonstrated by the letter in which he supposedly mocked Christ.

Pseudo-Sebēos' depiction of Xusrō II went further than depicting Xusrō II as fulfilling his promise. Unlike Theophylact Simocatta, who implied that Xusrō II had something to do with his father Hormizd IV's death, Pseudo-Sebēos wrote that the *šahanšah* was only a boy when his father was deposed and murdered. He also stressed that the plot to overthrow Hormizd IV was an Arsacid plot to eradicate the house of Sāsān (as noted earlier in Wahrām Čübīn's letter to Mušeł), instigated without the knowledge of Xusrō II. The following incident occurred after the rebels

244. Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia* AM 5816, in *The Chronicle of Theophanes* trans. Cyril Mango and Roger Scott with Geoffrey Greatrex (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 38; C. de Boor, *Theophanis chronographia*, vol. 1, (Leipzig: Teubner, 1883; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1963): 3-503, 24.18-20: ὁμοίως καὶ Ἀρμένιοι τελείως ἐπὶ αὐτοῦ ἐπίστευσαν, διὰ Τηριδάτου βασιλέως αὐτῶν καὶ Γρηγορίου ἐπισκόπου αὐτῶν τὴν σωτηρίαν δεξάμενοι.

became upset with Hormizd IV for demanding booty that Wahrām Čubīn captured in the east:

United they returned from the east and turned to Asorestan in order to kill Ormizd [Hormizd], and eliminate the house of Sasan and establish Vahram [Wahrām] on the royal throne.²⁴⁵

What is more, according to Pseudo-Sebēos, the Sasanian nobility itself murdered Hormizd IV concurrently with Wahrām Čubīn's rebellion. *Ērānšahr*, in other words, was a mess, with multiple centers of power vying for influence. What is more important in all of this was that Xusrō II did not have his father deposed so he could take the throne. He was only a boy who had no knowledge of it. Hormizd IV's councilors acted on their own, at least according to Pseudo-Sebēos:

And there assembled at the royal hall most of the nobles and generals and troops who were meeting at that hour. And entering the royal chamber, they seized King Ormizd [Hormizd IV]; and immediately they put out his eyes on the spot and then killed him. And they installed his son as king of kings over the land of Persia; and began to make preparations for flight beyond the great river Tigris. And not many days later Vahram [Wahrām Čubīn] rapidly arrived, like the swoop of an eagle. And because Xusrō was a young boy, his uncles Vndoy [Bīndōe] and Vstam [Bīstahm] took him and crossed the great river Tigris.²⁴⁶

Thus, according to Pseudo-Sebēos, there were two separate plots against Hormizd IV—both of which Xusrō II was not part²⁴⁷—and Howard-Johnston has stated that

245. Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 10, in Thomson, 16; *Patut' iwn Sebēosi*, 17-20, in Abgaryan, 74: միաբանեցան և դարձան յարևելից և դիմեցին յԱսորեստան, զի սպանցեն զԹագաւորն իւրեանց զ Որմիզդ, և բարձցեն զտունն Սասանական, և հաստատեսցեն զՎահրամ յաթոռ Թագաւորութեանն: Translation modified from Thomson.

246. Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 10, in Thomson, 17; *Patut' iwn Sebēosi*, 13-22, in Abgaryan, 75: Եւ ժողովեցան ամենայն նախարարք և զաւրագլխք և զաւրք ի դահլիճն արքունի, որ ի ժամուն յայնմիկ հանդիպեցան անդ և մտեալ ի սենեակ արքայի՝ կալան զԹագաւորն Որմիզդ, և անդէն վաղվաղակի փորեցին զաչս նորա և ապա սպանին: Եւ ևստուցին զորդի նորա Թագաւոր ի վերայ աշխարհին Պարսից. և սկսան առնել պատրաստութիւն փախստեան յայնկոյս գետոյն մեծի Դգղաթայ: Եւ ոչ յետ բազուն աւուրց Վահրամն եկն հեհաս փութանակի իբրև զխոյանալ արծուոյ: Եքանզի մանուկ տղայ էր խոսրով ի Թագաւորել իւրում առին զնա քեռիքն իւր Վնդոյ և Վստամ, և անցին յայնկոյս գետոյն մեծի Դգղաթայ ընդ զում: Translation modified from Thomson. See also Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 132-133.

247. Howard-Johnston with Greenwood, *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*, 170;

Wahrām Čubīn minted coins in Xusrō II's name to cast suspicion on him.²⁴⁸ Here, Pseudo-Sebēos demonstrates that in an era of conflicting reports and blame for Hormizd IV's death, Xusrō II more than likely was innocent.

Because Pseudo-Sebēos did not blame Xusrō II for his father's death, we can see that his depiction of the *šahanšah* was not as harsh as in the Roman accounts. On the one hand, Xusrō II was an arrogant Persian who mocked Christ; however, he was an arrogant Persian who did not begin his reign by killing his father, as was described by Theophylact Simocatta. Pseudo-Sebēos corroborated Simocatta's account of Hormizd IV's fall but did blame Xusrō II for Hormizd IV's death,²⁴⁹ which is an important deviation between the two histories.

Pseudo-Sebēos went further than insisting that Hormizd IV's death was committed without the knowledge of Xusrō II. Before the war began with the Romans in the seventh century CE, Xusrō II had decided to seek vengeance against those who murdered his father. But what is interesting about this episode, Pseudo-Sebēos demonstrates that Xusrō II was willing to wage war against his own uncles, Bīstahm and Bīndōe, for their role in the execution of his father:

At this time King Xusrō [II] decided to seek vengeance for the death of his father from the *naxarars* who had killed him. First he wanted to judge his maternal uncles. He commanded Bīstahm, the one I earlier mentioned, to be arrested, bound, and killed.

Bīstahm, however, had escaped and fled to the Arsacids for aid. Xusrō II sent an

Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 127.

248. Howard-Johnston with Greenwood, *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*, 169.

249. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World in Crisis*, 95.

army to capture him for punishment.²⁵⁰

What is important about Pseudo-Sebēos' claim that Xusrō II tried to avenge the murder of his father is that it contradicts Theophylact Simocatta's assertions that he had his father killed after he was deposed. While Pseudo-Sebēos' claims that Xusrō II did not kill his father are not as dramatic as his portrayal of the *šahanšah* in the letter he supposedly wrote to Heraclius, it nevertheless suggests that Pseudo-Sebēos was cognizant of Xusrō II's complexities.

Xusrō II in Pseudo-Sebēos' history is not just a theatrical monster who insulted Heraclius and Christianity and nearly destroyed the Roman Empire. He is also someone who fulfilled his promise to Maurice by returning Persarmenia, and he also wanted to destroy those who murdered his father, even if they were the uncles who had installed him on the throne. Pseudo-Sebēos' depiction of Xusrō II in his history is more complex than how the Romans portrayed him in all of their texts. This depiction could have come only from someone who was outside the Roman world.

What did Pseudo-Sebēos care if the Sasanian army sacked Constantinople or conquered Egypt or put terror in the hearts of Roman subjects all over the empire? Pseudo-Sebēos was Armenian, and he was aware of Roman attempts to impose imperial Christianity upon Armenia, and he knew of Roman attempts to bring their

250. Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 22, in Thomson, 41; *Patut' iwn Sebēosi*, 27-30, in Abgaryan, 94: Յայնմ ժամանակի արկ ի միտս միտս իւր խոսորով արքայն խնդրել զքէն վրիժուց մահուան հաւր իւրոյ ի ձեռաց նախարարացն այնոցիկ. որք սպանին զնա: Եւ նախ կատել զքեռիս իւր: Հրաման տայ ունել զՎնդոյ, զայն որ վերագոյնն ասացի, կապել և սպանանել: Translation modified from Thomson. For the details of Bīstahm's rebellion, see Howard-Johnston with Greenwood, *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebēos*, 179-182; Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 135-136. See also Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia*, 33.

sector of Armenia under the direct rule of Constantinople, whether by legal means that whittled away Armenian identity—such as with Justinian's legal reforms that destroyed the *naxarars*—or by force, such as Maurice's plan to exile all of the remaining Armenian nobility. While he undoubtedly harbored little love for Xusrō II (why else would he portray him in such a manner as in that letter?), Pseudo-Sebēos did not present him as a one-dimensional monster, hell-bent on destroying the Roman world.

There is, however, one more dimension to Pseudo-Sebēos' work. Before one gets the feeling that Pseudo-Sebēos slyly inserted depictions of Xusrō II as a way to assert Armenian independence from the Romans, it should also be noted that he did not like the Sasanians and Zoroastrians in general. Certain quotations from Pseudo-Sebēos demonstrate this fact. We now will discover how Pseudo-Sebēos felt that Sasanian Zoroastrians were a pox upon the earth and were no better than the Romans and their type of Christianity. But in the final part of this study of Pseudo-Sebēos, it also becomes apparent whom he really admired in the war of the seventh century CE: Xusrō II's wife, Šērīn.

Despite Pseudo-Sebēos' subtle portrayal of Xusrō II's complexity, the man was still a Christian who viewed Zoroastrianism with disdain. Again, it must be stressed that Pseudo-Sebēos was not aligned with imperial Roman Christianity. What is important, however, about studying how Pseudo-Sebēos felt about Zoroastrians is that it demonstrates that he was a man who had a unique view of the world that was neither Roman nor Sasanian. In turn, this is a reflection of the

special place Armenia held in the ancient world.

For instance, at the conclusion of one of the many wars over Armenia between *Ērānšahr* and the Roman Empire, Pseudo-Sebēos wrote of the Sasanian defeat at Mitylene. Pseudo-Sebēos listed all of the booty and people captured but concluded with this statement:

Also taken was the Fire, which the king continually took around with him for assistance, which was considered more important than all the other fires; it was called *At'ash*. This was extinguished in the river along with the chief *mōbed* and a further host of the most eminent persons. At all times God is blessed.²⁵¹

The fire about which Pseudo-Sebēos spoke was the sacred fire of the Zoroastrian religion and in this case was the *šahanšah*'s personal flame he took on campaign. The chief *mōbed* was a member of the Zoroastrian clergy and probably tended the sacred fire and counseled the *šahanšah* on spiritual matters of special importance.

While it can be argued that Pseudo-Sebēos reported this incident to his audience only in the interest of history, the last sentence belies how he might have felt about the extinguishing of the sacred fire and the drowning of the *mōbed*. “At all times God is blessed” suggests that Pseudo-Sebēos felt joy that this event occurred. Pseudo-Sebēos did not feel a strong connection with Roman imperial Christianity, but at the same time he was a Christian, albeit from a different *milieu*. We see the best example of this in his depiction of Xusrō II's flight to the Romans after Wahrām Čubīn's rebellion. Recall that the Roman authors of the last chapter depicted Xusrō II

251. Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 8, in Thomson, 8; *Patut'iwn Sebēosi*, 4-8, in Abgaryan, 69: Առաւ և Հրատն, զոր ընդ ինքեան շրջեցուցանէր թագաւորն հանապազորդ յաւգանականությունն իւր, որ մեծագոյն համարեալ էր քան զամենայն կրակ, որ կոչէր ի նոցունց Աթաշ. հեղձա ի գետն հանդերձ մովպետան մովպետաւ և այլ բազմութեամբ մեծամեծ աւագաց: Յամենայն ժամ աւրհնեալ է Աստուած: Translation modified from Thomson.

as calling out to the Christian God to turn his horse in the right direction for help. In this case, Pseudo-Sebēos added the tidbit that Xusrō II's aides advised him to go to the Romans because “for even if there is enmity between [us], they say, but they are Christian and merciful. And when they take an oath they cannot lie.”²⁵² The author, in other words, wanted his audience to read into the fact that Xusrō II fled *Ērānšahr* to the Romans because of their clemency. Thus, we see that Pseudo-Sebēos would have applauded violence committed upon the Zoroastrian religion because he was a Christian but not as a follower of orthodox Christianity.²⁵³ At the same time, however, due to his feelings toward Zoroastrianism, Pseudo-Sebēos might have added this detail to imply the impiety of the Zoroastrians.

We also see that while Pseudo-Sebēos did not graphically depict Heraclius' violent invasion of *Ērānšahr*, he did commit a substantial portion of his narrative of the war in the seventh century CE to it. For instance, Pseudo-Sebēos wrote that Heraclius had Xusrō II's letter read to his troops. Notice how Pseudo-Sebēos portrayed the troops' reaction and their behavior when they invaded *Ērānšahr*:

And he commanded 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, nevertheless they were joyfully happy at his arrival. They wished him victory and said: “Wherever you may go, we are with you to stand and die; and may all your enemies become dust beneath your feet, as the Lord our God annihilates them from the face of the earth and the insults paid to him by men.” Heraclius marched with 120,000 to go to the court of the Persian king. And he traveled through the regions of the north, making directly for the city of Kardin, and having reached Dvin in Ayrarat,

252. Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 10, in Thomson, 18; *Patut’iwn Sebēosi*, 30-31, in Abgaryan, 75: Ջի Թէպէտ և է, ասեհն, թշնմութիւն ի նիջի, սակայն քրիստոնեայ են և ողորմած. և յործամ երդնուն՝ ստել երգման ոչ կարեն: Translation modified from Thomson.

253. For Armenia existing between Roman Christianity and Sasanian Zoroastrianism, see Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History*, 149.

he ravaged it and Naxčawan. Proceeding to Gandzak in Atrpatakan, he also destroyed the altars of the great Fire, which they called Všnasp [Atur Gušnap].²⁵⁴

This passage suggests that while Pseudo-Sebēos was not on the Roman's side during the war of the seventh century CE, he was not keen on the Zoroastrian Sasanians winning it. Thus it makes sense that he would include twice in his narrative references to violence committed against Zoroastrian holy sites by Roman forces. Again, while Pseudo-Sebēos was not a Christian who followed Roman imperial orthodoxy, he was still a Christian who with anxiety viewed Xusrō II's gains during the war.

But he was not concerned with the safety of the Roman Empire; there are no dramatic accounts of the falls of any Roman provinces during the war, with one exception: the return of the True Cross from Jerusalem after Xusrō II's armies captured the city.²⁵⁵

This event would have caused alarm for Pseudo-Sebēos because a toxic relationship already existed between Christianity and Zoroastrianism in Armenia. This toxicity was part of the aftermath of the conversion of Armenia and was exacerbated by Yazdgird II's attempt to reimpose Zoroastrianism on Armenia. Thus,

254. Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 38, in Thomson, 81; *Patut' iwn Sebēosi*, 15-27, in Abgaryan, 124: և կոչել հրամայեաց զամենայն զաւրսն և ընթեռնուլ զհրովովարտակն առաջի նոցա, և պատմէր զելն իւր առ նոսա Իսկ զաւրն թէպէտ և ընդ բանսն խոռովեցան, սակայն խնդութեամբ ուրախ եղեն ի վերայ գալստեան նոր: Աւրհնեցին նմա զյաղթութիւնն և ասեն. «Ամենայն ուեք ո՛ր և երթիցեն՝ ընդ քեզ եմք ի կալ և ի մեռանել. և եղիցին ամենայն թշնամիք քոյ հող ի ներքոյ ոտից քոց ի ջնջել զնոսա յերեսաց երկրէ տեառն Աստուծոյ մերոյ, և ի բառնալ զնախատինս իւր ի մարդկանէ»: Ջուեաց գնաց Երակլոս ճԻ հազարա՝ եթալ ի դուռն թագաւորին Պարաից. և հանապարհ կալեալ ընդ կողմանս հիւսիսոյ ել դէպ ուղիղ ի Կարնոյ քաղաք, և հասեալ ի Դուին այրարատեան աներէ զնա և զՆախահաւան: Եւ դիմեալ ի Գանձակ Ատրպատականի կործանէ և զբագինս Հրատին մեծի, որում Վըշնասպն կոչէին: Translation modified from Thomson; Howard-Johnston with Greenwood, *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebēos*, 215; Garsoïan, *Interregnum*, 38. I studied the Roman army's response to Heraclius' decision to invade *Erānšahr* in the first chapter.

255. Howard-Johnston with Greenwood, *The Armenian History Attributed to Pseudo-Sebēos*, 207-208.

when Xusrō II took the cross from Jerusalem, that toxicity reached higher levels and we see perhaps why Pseudo-Sebēos included Xusrō II's ostensible letter to Heraclius.

Pseudo-Sebēos rejoiced at the return of the True Cross to Jerusalem. His language is exuberant and conveyed to his audience the joy felt by the people of Jerusalem when the cross was returned.²⁵⁶ “There was no little joy on that day as they entered Jerusalem. [There was] the sound of weeping and wailing,” wrote Pseudo-Sebēos.²⁵⁷ Then take this letter written by Armenian bishops to Heraclius when he as in Jerusalem:

The sound of the great evangelical trumpet [blown] by the angel summons us through this letter that has reached [us] from that divinely built city, “which announces great joy to us.” Therefore “the heavens rejoice, and let the earth exult;” let the church and its children delight in their glory. And now let us all with a unanimous voice sing the angelic praises, repeating: “Glory in the highest to God, and peace to earth, and goodwill to mankind.”²⁵⁸

These two passages suggest that some Armenians were ecstatic that Heraclius recaptured Jerusalem, and by extension, the return of the True Cross.²⁵⁹ The

256. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World in Crisis*, 76, 81.

257. Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 41, in Thomson, 90; *Patut’iwn Sebēosi*, 15-16, in Abgaryan, 131: Ապա անդ ոչ ապրեալ ինչ լինէր ուրխութիւն յաւուր յայնմիկ ի մտանել նոցա յերուսաղէմ: Չայն լալոյ և ողբոյ և հեղումն: Translation modified from Thomson; Howard-Johnston with Greenwood, *The Armenian History Attributed to Pseudo-Sebēos*, 226. For the details of Heraclius' march into Jerusalem, see Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 206-207.

258. Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 36, in Thomson, 73; *Patut’iwn Sebēosi*, 10-17, in Abgaryan, 118: Չայն աւետարոր փողոյ մեծի ի հրեշտակէն գոչէ մեզ ի ձեռն թղթոյս այսորիկ, հասելոյ յաստուածակերտ քաղաքէ այսի, որ աւետարանէ մեզ ուրախութիւն մեծ: Վասն այսորիկ ուրախ լինին երկինք, և ցնծասցէ երկիր, գուարճասցին փառաւք իւրովք եկեղեցի և մանկունք իւր: Եւ արդ՝ մեք ամենեքեան միաբան գոչմամբ զհրեշտակական փառաբանութիւնսն երգեսցուք ասելով. «Փա՛ռք իբարձունս Աստուծոյ, և յերկիր խաղաղութիւն, ի մարդիկ հանութիւն»: Translation modified from Thomson. Furthermore, according to Thomson, the three quotations in this passage are from Psalm 95.11, Psalm 95.11, and Luke 2.14, respectively.

259. See Tim Greenwood, “A Corpus of Early Medieval Armenian Inscriptions,” *Dumbarton Oak Papers* 58 (2004): 37, 44 for a study of Armenian rock reliefs depicting the return of the True Cross and favorable depictions of Heraclius.

triumphal language demonstrates the recapture of Jerusalem as an important focus in Pseudo-Sebēos' work.

What is important about Heraclius' march into Jerusalem is that this is one case in which Pseudo-Sebēos unequivocally chose a side in the war of the seventh century CE. He was focused on the reactions of the denizens of Jerusalem and the joy felt by Armenian bishops that the Romans “liberated” the city from the Sasanians. In this case at least, Pseudo-Sebēos seems to have felt a surge of emotion: a trial was passed, a challenge was met, and the Holy City was now once again in Christian hands.

But this is not to say that Pseudo-Sebēos was pro-Roman when he described this event. As we have already seen in this chapter, Pseudo-Sebēos had criticisms of the Romans in general. Nor should we assume that Pseudo-Sebēos had any love for Heraclius himself. While it is true that Pseudo-Sebēos called Heraclius “pious” (սուրբ) and “fortunate” (երջանիկ),²⁶⁰ he used those adjectives only when describing Heraclius' triumphal march into Jerusalem. Pseudo-Sebēos presented Heraclius neutrally in the rest of his narrative, and I suspect that this was only because Heraclius had familial and political ties to Armenia that gave him a network of connections he used in the war of the seventh century CE.²⁶¹ Pseudo-Sebēos' Heraclius was a hohum figure at best, and only was praised in no uncertain terms

260. Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 41, in Thomson, 90; *Patut' iwn Pseudo-Sebēosi*, 9-10, in Abgaryan, 131.

261. Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 21-25, 34, 97-98, as his father was *magister militum per Armeniam*. See also Irfan Shahid, “The Iranian Factor in Byzantium during the Reign of Heraclius,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 26 (1972): 308-312.

when he returned the True Cross to Jerusalem.²⁶² In other words, it seems that according to Pseudo-Sebēos, Heraclius was not worthy to receive any praise outside of the fact that he returned the True Cross to Jerusalem. There was, of course a practical reason why. Heraclius, like Maurice, tried to unite the orthodox and Armenian churches by imposing the Council of Chalcedon after the war was over.²⁶³

So whom did Pseudo-Sebēos admire in his text? The answer demonstrates that Pseudo-Sebēos as an Armenian had a unique view of the war of the seventh century CE. He saved his total praise for Šērīn, the Armenian Christian wife of Xusrō II. Šērīn was of the monophysite (a branch of Christianity that held that Christ had one nature—the divine) persuasion, and for this reason she won admiration from the Armenian Church, which was monophysite as well.²⁶⁴

According to Pseudo-Sebēos, Šērīn built churches and monasteries in *Ērānšahr*, and she preached the gospel at the royal court. Šērīn was such an advocate for Sasanian Christians that no Zoroastrian dared to speak ill will of them. Xusrō II even proclaimed that no Christian should be forced to Zoroastrianism and vice versa on pain of death (he was, after all, Zoroastrian); thus, Šērīn and her Christian friends would read the gospels in her royal apartments every Palm

262. Garsoïan, *Interregnum*, 29.

263. Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 41, in Thomson, 92, 131-132; Howard-Johnston with Greenwood, *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebēos*, 228; Garsoïan, “L’Interrègne Arménien,” 89; Garsoïan, *Interregnum*, 7, 9-12, 58-63; Garsoïan, “The *Marzpanate*,” 113; Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 214-215.

264. Howard-Johnston with Greenwood, *The Armenian History Attributed to Pseudo-Sebēos*, 174-175. I address monophysite Christianity and the Armenian Church below.

Sunday.²⁶⁵

Pseudo-Sebēos demonstrates two things by writing this about Šērīn. One, he showed his audience that despite his blasphemous letter studied earlier in this chapter, Xusrō II could be tolerant of Christianity. This was, of course because, of his love for Šērīn, but this Xusrō II was a far cry from the *šahanšah* who supposedly wrote that letter mocking Jesus Christ. The second thing Pseudo-Sebēos demonstrated in this depiction is that Šērīn wielded influence in *Ērānšahr*, and she used this influence to practice and vitalize Christianity. This is why in all of Pseudo-Sebēos' *History*, Šērīn is the one figure whom he admired.

There is one more example of Šērīn using her influence to help Christians in *Ērānšahr* that demonstrates why Pseudo-Sebēos admired her. Emperor Maurice requested from Xusrō II a body that Roman Christians believed to be the prophet Daniel. The *šahanšah* obliged the request, much to the consternation of Šērīn. She thusly asked the Christians of *Ērānšahr* to pray that the body would not be removed: “Since she could do nothing to change the king's will, she commanded all the Christians of the land to beseech Christ with fasts and prayers that grace should not be removed from the country.”²⁶⁶ Šērīn's command worked. The body became immobile and could not leave *Ērānšahr*. When Xusrō II was informed, he relented and rescinded his order.

265. Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 13, in Thomson, 29-30.

266. Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 13, in Thomson, 30; *Patut'iwn Sebēosi*, 32-34, in Abgaryan, 85-86: իբրև ոչինչ կարաց առնել զկամս թագաւորին դարձուցանել՝ Երաման ետ ամենայն քրիստոնէից աշխարհին, զի պահաւք և աղաւթիւք խնդրեսցեն ի Քրիստոսէ, զի մի՛ շարժեալ գնասցէ յաշխարհէն շնորհն այն: Translation modified from Thomson.

Pseudo-Sebēos wrote about Šērīn for only two chapters. He depicted her, however, as more devout than any Roman Christians depicted in his *History*, and she was a counterbalance to Xusrō II's Zoroastrian proclivities. Šērīn was the only figure of the war of the seventh century CE whom Pseudo-Sebēos unequivocally admired, as he did not like the Romans or the Sasanians. There were no covert reasons why. There was a long history of Sasanian attempts to exert further control of their part of Armenia, and Yazdgird II even went so far as to try to wipe out Christianity and replace it Zoroastrianism, the traditional religion of pre-Christian Armenia. On the other hand, in his narrative, Pseudo-Sebēos did not treat the Romans any better. The Romans tried to impose the Council of Chalcedon, burnt and destroyed an Armenian church in Dvin, and Maurice also wanted to depopulate the *naxarars* in an effort to undermine Armenian sovereignty.

This is why it is important to devote an entire chapter to how Pseudo-Sebēos depicted Xusrō II. While it is right to understand that Xusrō II was more complex than someone who allegedly wrote that blasphemous letter to Heraclius, it does not do Pseudo-Sebēos any justice to ignore him as an Armenian. The Armenians held a special place in antiquity, and it is reflected in Pseudo-Sebēos' *History*.

In this case of Pseudo-Sebēos, it is important not to assume that Pseudo-Sebēos was anti-Sasanian due to how he depicted Xusrō II with the letter he supposedly wrote. At times, Pseudo-Sebēos also demonstrated in his narrative that Xusrō II admired his Armenian supporters, especially Smbat Bagratuni, who

eventually defeated Bīstahm and ended his rebellion.²⁶⁷ Pseudo-Sebēos also undoubtedly was aware that Xusrō II gave allowances to the Armenian Church with its monophysite Christological tendencies, despite it not being the official Church of the East, which was diaphysite.²⁶⁸ This in turn influenced some Armenian bishops to praise Xusrō II for defending the monophysite doctrine.²⁶⁹ This, however, still does not take away from Pseudo-Sebēos' portrayal of Xusrō II as an irreverent ruler. It is important to realize that there was more to his portrayal of Xusrō II than meets the eye.

Pseudo-Sebēos was both pro- and anti-Roman and Sasanian when it suited him the best. Pseudo-Sebēos' portrayal of Xusrō II, therefore, is not so much about the *šahanšah* himself but is a reflection of the special place Armenia held in antiquity. That said, when one takes a deep look at the evidence, Pseudo-Sebēos' initial portrayal of Xusrō II in his *History* should not be taken at face value.

Pseudo-Sebēos showed that the *šahanšah* was a complex man in a complex time,

267. Howard-Johnston with Greenwood, *The Armenian History Attributed to Pseudo-Sebēos*, 184; Greenwood, *Sasanian Reflections*, 14-15; Garsoïan, *Interregnum*, 25-27; Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 137-140; Whitby, "The Persian King at War," 253; Thomson, "Eastern Neighbors: Armenia," 170.

268. Garsoïan, "Secular Jurisdiction over the Armenian Church," 241-242; Garsoïan, "Armenia in the Fourth Century," 352; Garsoïan, *Interregnum*, 27, 55-56; Greenwood, *Sasanian Reflections*, 4, 27-28. For Sasanian *šahanšahs* giving permission to the Armenian Church to hold ecumenical councils and ratifying their patriarchs, see Garsoïan, "Secular Jurisdiction over the Armenian Church," 236-237, 239-241, 246-249. For churches in Armenia that used the regnal years of the *šahanšah* to commemorate their construction, which also showed respect for the *šahanšah*, see *ibid.*, 29-31; Greenwood, "A Corpus of Early Medieval Armenian Inscriptions," 42-43; Garsoïan, "Janus," 85. For other *šahanšahs* not encroaching on the Armenian Church, see Traina, *428 AD*, 130; Garsoïan, "The *Marzpanate*," 110-111. I focus on the diaphysite Church in the East in the third chapter.

269. Greenwood, *Sasanian Reflections*, 26-27. See also Garsoïan, "Frontier-Frontiers?" 349. For the antagonism of the Armenian Church toward the diaphysite Christology, see Garsoïan, "Janus," 89, 92-93. But this is not meant to say that Armenian Christianity was monolithically monophysite. There were some Armenians who were in communion with Constantinople. See *ibid.*, 82-84, 86. Then there also were Armenian Christians who had diaphysite leanings. See *ibid.*, 86-87.

and thus we have a more complete picture of the man who reigned supreme in *Ērānšahr*.

Chapter 3

Xusrō II and the Church of the East in *Ērānšahr*

After his conversion to Christianity, Emperor Constantine (r. 306 CE-337 CE) sent the following letter to *Šahanšah* Šābūhr II (r. 309 CE-379 CE). Constantine wanted to inform Šābūhr II of his conversion to Christianity and implied that it would be a good idea to protect the Christians of *Ērānšahr* to not anger the Christian God:

I believe I do not err, my brother, in confessing this one God to be the creator and father of all, whom many of those who have reigned here, seduced by crazy errors, have attempted to deny. But such punishment finally consumed them that all humanity has since regarded their fate as superseding all other examples to warn those who vie for the same thing. Among them, I believe that one, who was driven from here by divine

wrath as by thunderbolt and was left in yours, where he caused the victory on yourself to become notorious because of the shame he suffered. Yet it seems that it has turned advantageous that even in our own time, the punishment of such people has become notorious.... Consequently, I am convinced that for ourselves also everything is at its best and most steadfast when through their pure and excellent religion and as a result of their concord on divine matters he designs to gather together all men to himself. With this class of people—I mean of course the Christians, my whole concern being for them—how pleasing it is for me to hear that the most excellent parts of Persia too are richly adorned. Therefore may the very best come to you, and the very best to them, since they are yours. For so you will keep the lord of the universe kind, gracious, and benevolent. These therefore, since you are great, I lay before you, putting them in your hands, because you are known for your piety. Love them in accordance with your own humanity. For you will give enormous delight to both yourself and us on account of trust.²⁷⁰

This letter set the tone for relations between the Christians of *Ērānšahr* and Šābūhr II. Constantine wanted to demonstrate to Šābūhr II the power of Christianity over paganism and that he also was responsible for the well-being of Christians in both the Roman Empire and *Ērānšahr*.²⁷¹ The subtle threats of this letter underscore the fact that when Constantine converted to Christianity, relations between the two

270. Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 4.11.1-4.12.1, 4.13.1 *Life of Constantine: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* trans. Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 157-158; F. Winkelmann, Eusebius Werke, *Band 1.1: Über das Leben des Kaisers Konstantin* (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1975): 4.11.1-4.12.1, 4.13.1: Οὐ μοι δοκῶ πλανᾶσθαι, ἀδελφέ μου, τοῦτον ἕνα θεὸν ὁμολογῶν πάντων ἀρχηγὸν καὶ πατέρα, ὃν πολλοὶ τῶν τῆδε βασιλευσάντων μανιώδεσι πλάναις ὑπαχθέντες ἐπεχείρησαν ἀρνήσασθαι. ἀλλ' ἐκείνους μὲν ἅπαντας τοιοῦτον τιμωρὸν τέλος κατανόησεν, ὡς πᾶν τὸ μετ' ἐκείνους ἀνθρώπων γένος τὰς ἐκείνων συμφορὰς ἀντ' ἄλλου παραδείγματος τοῖς παρὰ τούτοις τὰ ὅμοια ζηλοῦσι τίθεσθαι. τούτων ἐκείνων ἕνα ἡγοῦμαι γεγονέναι, ὃν ὡσπερ τις σκηπτὸς ἢ θεία μῆνις τῶν τῆδε ἀπελάσασα τοῖς ὑμετέροις μέρεσι παραδέδωκεν, τῆς ἐπ' αὐτῷ αἰσχύνῃς πολυθρύλητον τὸ παρ' ὑμῖν τρόπαιον ἀποφύνατα. Ἀλλὰ γὰρ ἔοικεν εἰς καλὸν προκεχωρηκέναι τὸ καὶ ἐν τῷ καθ' ἡμᾶς αἰῶνι τὴν τῶν τοιούτων τιμωρίαν περιφανῆ δειχθῆναι... ἐντεῦθεν καὶ ἡμῖν αὐτοῖς πέπεισμαι ὡς ὅτι κάλλιστα καὶ ἀσφαλῆστατα ἔχειν ἅπαντα, ὅποτε διὰ τῆς ἐκείνων καθαρᾶς τε καὶ δοκίμου θρησκείας ἐκ τῆς περὶ τὸ θεῖον συμφωνίας πάντας εἰς ἑαυτὸν ἀγείρειν ἀξιοί. Τούτου τοῦ καταλόγου τῶν ἀνθρώπων, λέγω δὴ τῶν Χριστιανῶν (ὑπὲρ τούτων ὁ πᾶς μοι λόγος), πῶς οἶμαι με ἠδεσθαι ἀκούοντα ὅτι καὶ τῆς Περσίδος τὰ κράτιστα ἐπὶ πλείστον, ὡσπερ ἔστι μοι βουλομένῳ, κεκόσμηται. σοὶ τ' οὖν ὡς ὅτι κάλλιστα ἐκείνοις θ' ὡσαύτως ὑπάρχοι τὰ κάλλιστα, ὅτι σοὶ κάκεινοι. οὕτω γὰρ ἔξεις τὸν τῶν ὅλων δεσπότην πρόαν, ἴλεω καὶ εὐμενῆ. τούτους τοιγαροῦν, ἐπειδὴ τοσοῦτος εἶ, σοὶ παρατίθεμαι, τοὺς αὐτοὺς τούτους, ὅτι καὶ εὐσεβεῖα ἐπίσημος εἶ, ἐγγειρίζων· τούτους ἀγάπα ἀρμοδίως τῆς σεαυτοῦ φιλανθρωπίας· σαυτῷ τε γὰρ καὶ ἡμῖν ἀπερίγραπτον δώσεις διὰ τῆς πίστεως τὴν χάριν. Translation modified from Cameron and Hall. For not angering the Christian God, see Sebastian Brock, "Christians in the Sasanian Empire: A Case of Divided Loyalties," in *Religion and National Identity: Studies in Church History XVIII* ed. Stuart Mews (Oxford, 1982): 1 reprinted in *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1984).

271. T. D. Barnes, "Constantine and the Christians of Persia," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 75 (1985): 131.

realms took a religious bent²⁷² that undoubtedly culminated during the war of the seventh century CE. But because of Constantine's letter, Šābūhr II began to view the Christians in his realm with suspicion and began a persecution against them.²⁷³ This is especially true for high-ranking Zoroastrian officials who converted to Christianity; they suffered because of their apostasy.²⁷⁴

The accounts of these persecutions were written in Syriac, the language of Iranian Christians,²⁷⁵ which is why this chapter examines these sources in details, and provide scholars with a glimpse of how a large population of Christians lived outside the Roman Empire and its imperial church.²⁷⁶ These texts demonstrate that Iranians had at times an antagonistic relationship with the Sasanian government. The martyrologies seem to demonstrate that Šābūhr II was an agent of evil who

272. Barnes, "Constantine and the Christians of Persia," 136.

273. Joel Walker, "Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq," in *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2006), 111; Adam H. Becker, "Martyrdom, Religious Difference, and 'Fear' as a Category of Piety in the Sasanian Empire: The Case of the *Martyrdom of Gregory* and the *Martyrdom of Yazdpaneh*," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 2, no. 2 (Fall: 2009): 318; A. V. Williams, "Zoroastrians and Christians in Sasanian Iran," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University of Library of Manchester* 78 (1996): 40; Philip Wood, *The Chronicle of Seert: Christian Historical Imagination in Iraq* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 33.

274. See the forthcoming volume from the Gorgias Press series, *Persian Martyr Acts in Syriac: Texts and Translation, The Martyrdom and History of Blessed Simeon bar Sabba'e* ed. and trans. Kyle Richard Smith (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2014); *Histoire Nestorienne (Seert Chronicle), Seconde Partie LXXXVI* trans. Addai Scher and Robert Griveau in *Patrologia Orientalis: Tomus Decimus Tertius* ed. R. Graffin and F. Nau (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1919); Wood, *The Chronicle of Seert*, 55-60; "Armenia in the Fourth Century: An Attempt to Re-Define the Concepts «Armenia» and «Loyalty»," *Revue des études arméniennes* VIII (Paris, 1971), 349-351 reprinted in *Armenia between the Romans and the Sasanians* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985); Touraj Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 78.

275. Syriac sources can also be called "non-Chalcedonian." See Sebastian Brock, "Saints in Syriac: A Little-Tapped Resource," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 186.

276. Syriac sources are under-used in late antique history and are our only sources for the non-Roman persecutions. See Brock, "Saints in Syriac," 181-185.

persecuted those who believed in the true faith. When one looks, however, at these texts and digs a little deeper, one may be surprised to realize that the relationship between the Sasanian government and Christianity was not one of total hostility.²⁷⁷

This is true when one looks at the relationship between Iranian Christians and Xusrō II (r. 591 CE-628 CE). By the time of his reign, the Sasanian government officially recognized the Church of the East, which was theologically opposed to the Roman imperial orthodox church based out of Constantinople. The Church of the East followed the diaphysite Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia—often mislabeled as Nestorian²⁷⁸—since the synod of Seleucia-Ctesiphon in 486 CE, which means that these Christians emphasized the humanity of Jesus Christ and the suffering he endured in his human form during the crucifixion.²⁷⁹ On the other hand, the orthodox church of the Roman Empire believed that Jesus Christ was one person with two natures, both human and divine, and it was heresy to emphasize one over

277. See, for instance, Shaul Shaked, *Dualism in Transformation: Varieties of Religion in Sasanian Iran* (London: University of London, 1994), 112; Walker, “Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq,” 112, for Hormīzd IV's (r. 579 CE-590 CE) insistence that toleration of Christians meant a healthy and stable rule.

278. The term “Nestorian” was a pejorative used against anyone's theological opponent, and Theodore of Mopsuestia was held in higher regard by the Church of the East. See Sebastian Brock, “The ‘Nestorian’ Church: A Lamentable Misnomer,” in *The Church of the East: Life and Thought* ed. J. F. Coakley and K. Parry (= Bulletin of the John Rylands University of Manchester 78:3), (Manchester, 1996), 1-14 reprinted in *Fire from Heaven: Studies in Syriac Theology and Liturgy* (Aldershot: Variorum Reprints, 2006); Sebastian Brock, “The Church of the East in the Sasanian Empire up to the Sixth Century and its Absence from the Councils in the Roman Empire,” in *Syriac Dialogue I* (Vienna: Pro Oriente, 1994), 76, 78-79 reprinted in *Fire from Heaven: Studies in Syriac Theology and Liturgy* (Aldershot: Variorum Reprints, 2006); Sebastian Brock, “The Christology of the Church of the East in the Synods of the Fifth and Early Seventh Centuries: Preliminary Considerations and Materials,” in *Aksum-Thyateira: a Festschrift for Archbishop Methodios* ed. G. Dragas (London, 1985): 130 reprinted in *Studies in Syriac Christianity: History, Literature and Theology* (Aldershot: Variorum Reprints, 1992).

279. Brock, “The Church of the East in the Sasanian Empire,” 83; Sebastian Brock, “The Christology of the Church of the East,” in *Traditions and Heritage of the Christian East* ed. D. Afinogenov and A. Muraviev (Moscow: Izdatelstvo “Indrik,” 1996), 172-173, 175-176 reprinted in *Fire from Heaven: Studies in Syriac Theology and Liturgy* (Aldershot, Variorum Reprints, 2006).

the other.

By the time of Xusrō II, the division between the imperial church of the Roman Empire and the Church of the East was large enough that there was no loyalty owed by Iranian Christians to the Christian Roman emperor in the west. We soon shall see that while Christians in *Ērānšahr* had their issues with Xusrō II, which were rooted in political, not ecclesiastical matters, their sources show us that he made an effort to both wage war against the Romans, defend *Ērānšahr* against its enemies, while at the same time pragmatically balance out the interests of all of the different Christians of his realm.²⁸⁰ Before we begin our examination of how Iranian Christian sources portrayed Xusrō II, let us first investigate how Christians in *Ērānšahr* portrayed their situation in the realm when Šābūhr II enacted persecution against them.

The results of our investigation may be surprising, because not every text demonstrates a hatred of the Sasanian government. The authors of these texts, on the other hand, seem stress that while Šābūhr II decreed the persecution of Iranian Christians, it was the *magi* (Zoroastrian clergy) who carried out his orders with fervor. This sentiment is important because it suggests two things. One, even during Šābūhr II's persecution, Iranian Christians already strongly identified with *Ērānšahr*. The split between the orthodox church in Constantinople and the Church of the East already had begun by the time Constantine wrote his letter; and just because there was a Christian on the throne on the Roman side, it did not mean that

280. As was demonstrated by Geoffrey Greatrex, "Khusro II and the Christians of His Empire," *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 3 (2003): 78-88. I shall soon return to this point.

Christians in *Ērānšahr* had any love for him. The second reason why depictions of Šābūhr II in these texts is important is that by the time Xusrō II and Heraclius were fighting the war of the seventh century CE, when some of these texts were written, Iranian Christians were in a complex situation of identity. They had no love for the Zoroastrian religion of *Ērānšahr*, but their monarch fought against a heretical enemy whom they considered had corrupted Christianity. This is a direct reflection on how many Christians in *Ērānšahr* may have felt about Xusrō II. Let us now peek into Iranian Christians and how they viewed their *šahanšah* at a time of persecution.

The Martyrdom of Martha, Daughter of Posi who was a Daughter of the Covenant is a text written about a woman who was arrested by the *magi* for converting to Christianity. The interesting thing about this text is that it depicts Šābūhr II as setting a low parameter for the reconversion of Zoroastrian apostates: convert from Christianity or get married; if either of these two options are not followed, then the person should be put to death. According to this legend, Šābūhr II tells his *mōbed* (chief *magus*):

If she abandons her religion and renounces Christianity, rejoice, if not, she should get married. If, however, she fails at either of these, she should be handed over and destroyed.²⁸¹

Then when the *mōbed* interrogates Martha, he insists to her that the *šahanšah* is

281. *The Martyrdom of Martha, Daughter of Posi who was Daughter of the Covenant* 3.A.233 in *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient: Updated Edition with a New Preface* trans. Sebastian P. Brock and Susan Ashbrook Harvey (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1998), 68; *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum*, vol. 2, ed. Paul Bedjan (Paris and Leipzig, 1890-1897), 233:

لا اشد حزن: انما هو ان لا يزوجها ولا يتركها. ولا يتركها ولا يزوجها.
لا اشد حزن

Translation modified from Brock and Harvey; Brock, “Christians in the Sasanian Empire,” 14-15.

merciful and does not desire anyone's death; he just wants his people to be Zoroastrian. If Martha reconverts, Šābūhr II will grant her anything she desires. Her father, Posi, moreover, was not killed only because he converted to Christianity, but because he acted foolishly at court.²⁸²

Martha's response to the *mōbed* is remarkable because she takes this opportunity to in fact praise Šābūhr II and calls for anyone who imitated her father's behavior at court to be put to death:

And the glorious Martha replied may King Shapur (Šābūhr II) live; and may his graciousness preserve and not leave from him; and may his compassion continue; and may his graciousness and his compassion be rebounded to himself and to people who are worthy of it. May the life that he loves be accorded to all his brethren and friends, but let all who liken to my father meet the evil death you said my father died.

Martha finishes her speech by declaring that if she dies, it will be because of her faith in the Christian God.²⁸³ Šābūhr II then orders Martha's death.²⁸⁴ While it is true that Šābūhr II orders Martha's death, it should be noted that he gave her an

282. *The Martyrdom of Martha, Daughter of Posi who was Daughter of the Covenant* 3.A.234-235 in Brock and Harvey, 68-69.

283. *The Martyrdom of Martha, Daughter of Posi who was Daughter of the Covenant* 3.A.235; *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum*, vol. 2, 235:

ⲟⲩⲧⲏⲛⲟⲩⲓ ⲗⲁ ⲁⲁⲕⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲥ: ⲟⲩⲛⲁⲙⲛⲟⲩⲓ ⲉⲃⲁⲣⲓ ⲛⲉⲥ ⲡⲉⲥⲁⲃⲁⲛⲉⲥ ⲧⲏⲛⲟⲩⲓ ⲗⲁ
ⲉⲛⲟⲩⲛⲟⲩⲓ ⲛⲉⲥ: ⲛⲉⲃⲁⲣⲓ ⲛⲉⲥ ⲡⲉⲥⲁⲃⲁⲛⲉⲥ ⲧⲏⲛⲟⲩⲓ ⲗⲁ ⲁⲁⲕⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲥ
ⲛⲉⲥ ⲡⲉⲥⲁⲃⲁⲛⲉⲥ ⲧⲏⲛⲟⲩⲓ ⲗⲁ ⲁⲁⲕⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲥ: ⲛⲉⲃⲁⲣⲓ ⲛⲉⲥ ⲡⲉⲥⲁⲃⲁⲛⲉⲥ
ⲧⲏⲛⲟⲩⲓ ⲗⲁ ⲁⲁⲕⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲥ

Translation modified from Brock and Harvey. For another Christian martyr who died proclaiming his loyalty to Šābūhr II, see Brock, “Christians in the Sasanian Empire,” 11.

284. *The Martyrdom of Martha, Daughter of Posi who was Daughter of the Covenant* 3.A.238. For another example of Šābūhr II ordering a Christian's death, see *From the Martyrs of Karka d-Beth Slokh in Holy Women of the Syrian Orient: Updated Edition with a New Preface* trans. Sebastian P. Brock and Susan Ashbrook Harvey (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1998), 77.

magi, on the other hand, who execute his order to suppress the Christians, and they do it with relish.²⁸⁷

Even ordinary Zoroastrians are depicted in an unflattering manner. For instance, *The Story of Mar Pinhas* is a martyrology about a man who was persecuted by a jealous Iranian. In this story, Šābūhr II is mentioned only once in the narrative, in a neutral tone. The villain of this source is not even the *magi* but an Iranian man named Aniḥa. According to the story,

There was a village there called Ganbali. And in it there lived a man called Aniḥa, the wicked, and he was constantly oppressing Mar Pinhas, because the man was an attendant of the prefect of the city of Panak, and whose name was Simun; and he was the king of the city of Panak; and belonged to the family and tribe of Shabur (Šābūhr II), king of the Persians. Also, this (man) was a persecutor of the saints.²⁸⁸

Šābūhr II is not presented in this tale as the enactor of the persecution. The author uses him only to stress that Aniḥa is Iranian and a Zoroastrian. Again, Šābūhr II is not the one who harasses Mar Pinhas; it is Aniḥa who is jealous because of his close relationship to the prefect of Ganbali.

While these three hagiographies are only a small selection of the texts

287. *The Martyrdom of Tarbo, her Sister, and her Servant* 3.B.258-260.

288. *The Story of Mar Pinhas* 4 *The Story of Mar Pinhas* ed. and trans. Adam Carter McCollum (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2013), 7:

ⲕⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ
ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ
ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ
ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲓ

Translation modified from McCollum.

available to study Christian martyrs in *Ērānšahr*, they denote that during a time of great persecution, not every person who wrote about these people was quick to condemn the *šahanšah*. He represented a separate institution; the Sasanian government was apart from the Zoroastrian clergy. Šābūhr II might have ordered the persecution to begin with, but it was the *magi* who executed it with glee.

These martyr tales are a reflection of the cultural complexity of the Iranian world of this time. Šābūhr II was worried about a number of Christians who were loyal to Constantine because of his letter, and thus he ordered the death of people who turned their backs upon Zoroastrianism. This does not imply, however, that just because a persecution began against the Christians of *Ērānšahr* that the persecuted people would hate the very state in which they were subjects. Yes, the *magi* are presented in a bad light and the texts do not ignore that Šābūhr II in fact ordered the persecution, but depictions of him trying to get people to save themselves by just worshipping the sun or getting married cannot be ignored. Even the existence of Martha's extolment of Šābūhr II's kindness in these same texts denotes that the author was aware of the complex relationship between the *šahanšah* and Iranian Christians. This relationship, in turn, is even more apparent in texts concerning Xusrō II written by Christians of his era.

Before we turn our examination to that aspect, however, it is important to note that on the other hand, other texts do demonstrate their vitriol of Šābūhr II. Thus we have the other side of how Iranian Christians might have hated the Sasanian government.

The History of the Holy Mar Ma'in is a tale of one of Šābūhr II's generals who converts to Christianity from Zoroastrian and suffers for it. After his conversion, Mar Ma'in is arrested and subjected to horrible treatment. Then when Constantine discovers what is happening to Christians in *Ērānšahr*, he sends Šābūhr II a letter commanding him to stop or the Roman army will invade and he will personally kill the *šahanšah*.²⁸⁹ Šābūhr II eventually receives the letter and becomes afraid at Constantine's threats, which suggests that the author of the text believed that Constantine was a protector of Iranian Christians.²⁹⁰ While it is important that the author of this text portrays Constantine as a hero, this martyrology is more important because it portrays Šābūhr II as a harsher light than do the other martyrologies.

For instance, Šābūhr II takes personal charge of Mar Ma'in's questioning and promises him that if he turns away from Christianity, then he will be returned to his former place and rewarded greatly. If Mar Ma'in does not choose to do this, he will be put to death.²⁹¹ After Mar Ma'in is released from prison, we see how the author perceives Šābūhr II, demonstrating that some Iranian Christians believed the *šahanšah* was evil. After retreating to a cave, a troop of demons comes and harasses him: "The demons first came upon him in the form and likeness of King Šabur

289. *The History of the Holy Mar Ma'in* 49-50 *The History of the Holy Mar Ma'in: With a Guide to the Persian Martyr Acts* ed. and trans. Sebastian Brock (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2008); Brock, "Christians in the Sasanian Empire," 10.

290. *The History of the Holy Mar Ma'in* 57.

291. *The History of the Holy Mar Ma'in* 55.

Zoroastrianism itself.

Another text shows us that an Iranian Christian named Aphrahat, who lived through the persecutions, also hated Šābūhr II²⁹⁵ and did not hold his realm in high regard. Aphrahat wrote that the Achaemenid Empire was the ram in the prophet Daniel's vision. The ram had conquered many lands, but a goat—Alexander of Macedon—rose and broke the ram's horns.²⁹⁶ In Aphrahat's view, although the goat beat the ram, it still tried to go against another beast, Rome, which will smite the ram and rule until Jesus Christ returns.²⁹⁷ This in turn suggests that Aphrahat wrote his *Demonstrations* right before Constantine was about to invade *Ērānšahr* with the aim of conquering it,²⁹⁸ because he minted coins with the image of his half-nephew Hannibaliannus, implying that he would replace Šābūhr II as *šahanšah*.²⁹⁹ Aphrahat's hostility toward Šābūhr II underscores the fact that some Christians in *Ērānšahr* did feel hatred toward the state for the persecutions. We can safely surmise that at least two Iranian Christians, Aphrahat and the author of *The History of the Holy Mar Ma'in*, wanted Constantine to bring divine wrath to *Ērānšahr* and punish Šābūhr II for his persecutions against Christians.³⁰⁰

295. Brock, "The Church of the East in the Sasanian Empire," 72.

296. Aphrahat *The Demonstrations on Wars* 5.5 *Demonstrations* trans. Kuriakose Valavanolickal (Kerala, India: HIRS Publications, 1999).

297. Aphrahat *The Demonstrations on Wars* 5.6.

298. Although he was not aware that by the time he wrote his *Demonstrations*, Constantine was already dead. See Barnes, "Constantine and the Christians of Persia," 130, 133.

299. Barnes, "Constantine and the Christians of Persia," 132.

300. For Iranian admiration of Constantine, see Barnes, "Constantine and the Christians of Persia," 133; Brock, "Christians in the Sasanian Empire," 8; Wood, *The Chronicle of Seert*, 2.

What should be taken away from this is that in *Ērānšahr*, a large minority of Christians had a complex relationship with the *šahanšah* during a time of persecution. Some people saved their hatred for the *magi* who actually carried it out while being cognizant that Šābūhr II gave people the chance to avoid a martyr's death. On the other hand, some people felt contempt for the *šahanšah* and considered him just as bad as the *magi*. This was a complex situation that for centuries to come colored relations between the Church of the East and the *šahanšah*.

This complexity reached a crescendo during the reign of Xusrō II when his realm was engaged in a fight to the death with the Romans. In turn, this complex relationship demonstrates that Iranian Christians had complicated notions of identity that burst forth from the sources written during the Roman-Sasanian War of the seventh century CE. The best example of this is *The Legend of Mar Qardagh*, which although was written in the seventh century CE³⁰¹ is about a Sasanian noble who converted to Christianity during the reign of Šābūhr II. It is thus a reflection of the situation in which Christians in *Ērānšahr* found themselves in the reign of Xusrō II.

Mar Qardagh is a general and marzbān (a border governor) who persecutes Christians until a man named Adbišo converts him.³⁰² Like the martyrologies

301. Walker, "Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq," 118; Wood, *The Chronicle of Seert*, 170.

302. *The History of the Heroic Deeds of Mar Qardagh the Victorious Martyr* 6-28 trans. Joel Walker *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2006).

This passage reflects the complex situation of Heraclius' invasion of *Ērānšahr*. A Christian army invaded a predominantly non-Christian realm, but caught in the middle was a group of Christians who felt no loyalty to the Christian emperor in Constantinople, especially when his army harasses them during combat operations. This is why Mar Qardagh prays to the Christian God and vows to tear down fire temples and build martyr shrines in their place.³⁰⁶ Mar Qardagh, in other words, prayed to his God, the same God of the invaders, for help to drive them out of *Ērānšahr*, while promising to destroy the religious institutions of the realm in which he lived; thus, a diaphysite Christian waged holy war against a heretical invader of his land.³⁰⁷

Furthermore, it also is worth noting that before he begins his prayer, Mar Qardagh dons a cross with a piece of the True Cross, taken by the Sasanian army after it captured Jerusalem in 614 CE.³⁰⁸ Thus, Christians in *Ērānšahr* actually felt an

ܘܥܠܝܢ ܕܡܪ ܩܪܕܘܓܗ ܕܡܪ ܩܪܕܘܓܗ ܕܡܪ ܩܪܕܘܓܗ ܕܡܪ ܩܪܕܘܓܗ ܕܡܪ ܩܪܕܘܓܗ
 ܕܡܪ ܩܪܕܘܓܗ ܕܡܪ ܩܪܕܘܓܗ ܕܡܪ ܩܪܕܘܓܗ ܕܡܪ ܩܪܕܘܓܗ ܕܡܪ ܩܪܕܘܓܗ ܕܡܪ ܩܪܕܘܓܗ
 ܕܡܪ ܩܪܕܘܓܗ ܕܡܪ ܩܪܕܘܓܗ ܕܡܪ ܩܪܕܘܓܗ ܕܡܪ ܩܪܕܘܓܗ ܕܡܪ ܩܪܕܘܓܗ ܕܡܪ ܩܪܕܘܓܗ
 ܕܡܪ ܩܪܕܘܓܗ ܕܡܪ ܩܪܕܘܓܗ ܕܡܪ ܩܪܕܘܓܗ ܕܡܪ ܩܪܕܘܓܗ ܕܡܪ ܩܪܕܘܓܗ ܕܡܪ ܩܪܕܘܓܗ

Translation modified from Walker.

306. The destruction of Zoroastrian temples and the conversion of so many people was one reason why the *magi* believed the Church of the East was a threat. Not only were Christians trying to overthrow Zoroastrianism for political favor from the *šahanshah*, they were in competition for the souls of *Ērānšahr*. Thus the Zoroastrian authorities were keen on keeping Christianity in *Ērānšahr* in check. See Williams, “Zoroastrians and Christians,” 39, 41-44; Wood, *The Chronicle of Seert*, 46. See also Becker, “Martyrdom, Religious Difference, and 'Fear' as a Category of Piety,” 301, 318-319, 321-323, for the efforts of Iranian Christians to erect firm borders around their community to demonstrate their supremacy over the Zoroastrians. See also Richard E. Payne, “Christianity and Iranian Society in Late Antiquity: ca. 500-700 CE” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2010), 172.

307. Walker, “Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq,” 149-150.

308. I cover the capture of Jerusalem in the first chapter.

affinity for holy items taken from Roman lands by Xusrō II's armies in the war of the seventh century CE. This is important because it suggests that some Christians in *Ērānšahr* realized that by having the True Cross in Sasanian possession, they had a valuable advantage over the "heretical," orthodox Christians in the Roman Empire.

This tension between the orthodox Christians of the Roman Empire and the diaphysite Christians of *Ērānšahr* is apparent when Mar Qardagh faces the Romans in battle:

Then he (Mar Qardagh) appeared like a powerful lightning bolt against them, brilliantly (triumphant) over his enemies, like the rising sun, like a champion who exults running his course. And he cried out thrice in an angry voice, "This is the day of your retribution, you impure dogs!"³⁰⁹

Then Mar Qardagh kills scores of Romans "and their corpses fell into the Khabur River like contemptible locusts."³¹⁰

Mar Qardagh prays to the Christian God and is filled with a righteous fury and attacks the Romans. There is more, however, to his strike against the Romans than his desire to free his family and bondsmen. Mar Qardagh's exclamation that the Romans are "impure dogs" highlights the rift between the imperial Christian Church

309. *The History of the Heroic Deeds of Mar Qardagh the Victorious Martyr* 46, in Walker 52; *Acta Mar Qardaghi* 46, in Abbeloos, 66:

ܨܘܪ ܥܠ ܥܘܕܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ
ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ
ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ

Translation modified from Walker.

310. *The History of the Heroic Deeds of Mar Qardagh the Victorious Martyr* 46, in Walker 52; *Acta Mar Qardaghi* 46, in Abbeloos, 66:

ܘܥܘܕܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ
ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ
ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ ܥܠܡܝܗ

Translation modified from Walker.

and the diophysite Church of the East, which in turn considered itself to be the true orthodox faith.³¹¹ While some authors who wrote about Šābūhr II's persecution of Christians admired Constantine, Iranian Christians of Xusrō II's era felt no such thing for Heraclius, and any love for the Roman emperor was a distant memory. By the seventh century CE, these two Christian churches were split apart so much that there was open fighting between the two amidst the backdrop of the great war between Constantinople and *Ērānšahr*. This text is invaluable because it demonstrates that when Heraclius invaded *Ērānšahr*, a large number of Christians suffered.³¹² There is no question why the author of this text included Mar Qardagh's prayer to God and his violent strike against the Romans. The orthodox Christian forces of Heraclius committed acts of violence upon the Christians of *Ērānšahr*, and thus they felt no love for the Romans.

On the other hand, *The Legend of Mar Qardagh* also demonstrates Xusrō II's position during the war of the seventh century CE. Because this text is a martyrology set during the reign of Šābūhr II, there is the inevitable arrest of Mar Qardagh by the *magi*, followed by his trial and execution. There are, however, some strands of useful information found in the text that suggest Xusrō II's relationship with the Zoroastrian hierarchy. After his victory against the Roman invaders, Mar Qardagh fulfills his vow to God and destroys the Zoroastrian fire temples in his

311. Walker, "Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq," 91-94.

312. Walker, "Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq," 145.

as this: “I will not obey a wicked heathen king.”³²² Several other Iranian Christian sources also label Xusrō II as being “wicked,” which denotes that there was at least some tension between him and the Christians of his realm. Before we explore that, however, it is important to examine one aspect of *The Legend of Mar Qardagh* that elucidates an unstudied aspect of Xusrō II's reign: the steps he took to protect *Ērānšahr* from Heraclius' invasion. This text is more than a martyrology; it is a testament to Xusrō II's handling of his realm's defenses.

Recall that the when the *magi* go to the *šahanšah* about Mar Qardagh's conversion, he replied, “How (can) you say these things? Have you not heard of that great victory Qardagh made, with two hundred and thirty four men he laid waste to thousands of Romans and tens of thousands of Arabs?”³²³ While it is true that during Šābūhr II's reign, the forces of Constantius II (r. 337 CE-361 CE) raided the Roman-Sasanian border, this quotation during Mar Qardagh's time, this statement, actually demonstrates the reality of Heraclius' invasion of *Ērānšahr* and how Xusrō II was aware of the threat the Romans posed.

But what concrete evidence do we have about Xusrō II's planned defense of

322. *The History of the Heroic Deeds of Mar Qardagh the Victorious Martyr* 59, in Walker 63; *Acta Mar Qardaghi* 59, in Abbeloos, 92:

ܠܚܠܝܩܐ ܕܡܪ ܩܪܕܘܓܝ ܕܡܪܝܩܝܐ ܕܡܪܝܩܝܐ ܕܡܪܝܩܝܐ ܕܡܪܝܩܝܐ

Translation modified from Walker.

323. *The History of the Heroic Deeds of Mar Qardagh the Victorious Martyr* 48, in Walker 54; *Acta Mar Qardaghi* 48, in Abbeloos, 69:

ܕܡܪܩܕܘܓܝ ܕܡܪܩܕܘܓܝ ܕܡܪܩܕܘܓܝ ܕܡܪܩܕܘܓܝ ܕܡܪܩܕܘܓܝ ܕܡܪܩܕܘܓܝ ܕܡܪܩܕܘܓܝ
ܕܡܪܩܕܘܓܝ ܕܡܪܩܕܘܓܝ ܕܡܪܩܕܘܓܝ ܕܡܪܩܕܘܓܝ ܕܡܪܩܕܘܓܝ ܕܡܪܩܕܘܓܝ

Translation modified from Walker.

Ērānšahr? The tenth-century CE Caucasian historian Movsēs Kałankatuac'i³²⁴—who wrote a history of ancient Albania, modern Azerbaijan—provides us with a glimpse at how Xusrō II defended his realm from the Roman onslaught. More importantly, this text also demonstrates the lengths the Christian subjects of *Ērānšahr* fought against the invading Romans.

After Heraclius invaded *Ērānšahr* through the Caucasus, his army chased out Xusrō II's troops from the area before wintering in the mountains.³²⁵ Movsēs Kałankatuac'i wrote that after Heraclius settled with his army, he sent demands for aid to the Christian kingdoms of Albania and Georgia. The leaders' reply to Heraclius' demands demonstrates, as discussed in the study of *The Legend of Mar Qardagh*, that many Christians in *Ērānšahr* resisted Heraclius' invasion:

Therefore for these reasons he wrote to the princes and authorities of these lands requesting them to come forward and meet him voluntarily and that they might receive him and serve him with their forces during the winter; then if they did not, he said, he would consider them as heathens and would capture their fortresses and enslave their kingdoms. Hearing this, all the chiefs and princes of the land of Albania abandoned the great city of Partaw at the command of Xosrov (Xusrō II) and fortified themselves in various places.

A Sasanian army under the general Šahbarāz then drove the Romans out of towns and cities they had captured during the initial invasion.³²⁶

324. For more on Movsēs Kałankatuac'i, see James Howard-Johnston, "Armenian Historians of Heraclius: An Examination of the Aims, Sources, and Working-Methods of Sebeos and Moses Daskhurantsi," in *The Reign of Heraclius (610-641): Crisis and Confrontation* eds. Gerrit J. Reinink and Bernard H. Stolte (Leuven: Peeters Publishing, 2002), 49-62.

325. As discussed in chapter one.

326. Movsēs Dasxuranci 10 *The History of the Caucasian Albanians* trans. C. J. F. Dowsett *The History of the Caucasian Albanians* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 79-80; Movsēs Kaghankatuats'i 10 *Patmut'iwn Aghuanits' Ashharhi* ed. N. O. Ēmin *Patmut'iwn Aghuanits' Ashharhi* (T'iflis: Ēlĕkratparan ōr. N. Aghaneani, 1912), 149: Ուստի և դիր արարեալ առ իշխանս և առաջնորդս աշխարհաց, զի ինքնակամ կամօք ելցեն ընդ առաջ նորա և ընկալնուցուն և պաշտեսցեն զնա հանդերձ զօրօքն իւրովք յաւուրս ձմերանւոյ. ապա եթէ ոչ համարեսցին առաջի նորա իբրև հեթանոսք, առցին ամուրք նոցա և գերեսցին

This quotation is significant because it demonstrates an important aspect of Xusrō II's actions during the Roman invasion: He ordered Partaw to be abandoned, and the Christian client kings of Albania and Georgia complied. This statement is even more remarkable due to the fact that they obeyed Xusrō II's order in the face of Heraclius' aggressive terms, which were to aid his army or face destruction and enslavement. This episode suggests that many Christian subjects of Xusrō II were loyal to him and obeyed him during the war of the seventh century CE at the expense of the Christian emperor, Heraclius.

We also see that in Georgia, the inhabitants of Tiflis (modern Tbilisi) took an active role in defending their city from Heraclius when they too refused his terms. When Xusrō II heard that Heraclius and the Turkish king met at the siege of Tiflis, he sent his general Šahrapłakan to relieve the city.³²⁷ Like the inhabitants of Partaw, who abandoned their city at Xusrō II's command, it is remarkable that the people of Tiflis also did not surrender their city to Heraclius when he demanded it, since Georgia was a Christian client kingdom of the *šahanšah*. We can see that the Georgians felt loyal to Xusrō II because of the way they way they mocked the Turkish king, Ĵebu Xak'an and Heraclius. According to Movsēs Kałankatuac'i, the inhabitants of Tiflis created a caricature of Ĵebu Xak'an with a pumpkin for a head, and they paraded it atop the city walls. As for Heraclius, they mocked him and said

սահմանք աշխարհացն այնոցիկ ՚ի զօրաց նորա: Իբրև լուան դալս ամենայն պետք և իշխանք աշխարհիս Ադուանից, ՚ի նոյն ինքն ՚ի հրամանէ խոսրովու թողեալ զմեծ քաղաքն Պարտաւ, ելեալ գնացին ամրացան ՚ի տեղիս տեղիս: Translation modified from Dowsett.

327. Movsēs Dasxuranci, *The History of the Caucasian Albanians*, 11.

he practiced buggery.³²⁸ The reaction of the people of Tiflis demonstrates that they did not care one bit for Heraclius and that they felt comfortable being in the Sasanian sphere of influence.

Movsēs Kałankatuac'i *History* further elucidates Xusrō II's defense of the realm when Heraclius' Turkish allies invaded *Ērānšahr*. When the Turks first invaded, Xusrō II sent envoys to parlay with them, thus demonstrating his ability to project Sasanian military power when he threatened the Turks:

In large crowds (hoards) the Khazars came out and marauded our country at the command of Heraclius. And Xosrov (Xusrō II), the Persian king, sent envoys to them. "At whose command have you entered my country? The same, who roamed over the isles of the western sea, a fugitive before me. Then if you were in need of gold or silver or precious stone or muslin or purple outfits embroidered with gold and encrusted pearls, I could have given you twice as much as he to satisfy your desire. I tell you: do not repeat your raids on me because of his vain demands. Then if you do have it your own way, but I will not tell you in advance what I will do. In order to make him abandon to me in alliance with you, I will summon from his land my great, victorious general Šahvaraz [Šahbarāz] and my two brave warriors Šahēn and K'rakerēn and my chosen, fully armed soldiers in their thousands and tens of thousands when I directed them against the west. Now I will turn their reins towards the east, and you will realize all the senseless and disastrous nature of your undertakings."³²⁹

328. Movsēs Dasxuranci, *The History of the Caucasian Albanians* 11. For details of the siege of Tiflis, see See James Howard-Johnston,). For the background of Heraclius' march toward Tiflis, see James Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World in Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 114; Walter E. Kaegi, *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 144.

329. Movsēs Dasxuranci, *The History of the Caucasian Albanians* 11, in Dowsett, 81-82; Movsēs Kaghankatuats'i, *Patmut' iwn Aghuanits' Ashharhi*, 11, in Ēmin, 151-152: Սասանիկ ամբոխիս ելին խազիրք ասպատակել յաշխարհս մեր՝ հրամանաւ Հերակլի: Եւ պատգամատրք առ նոսա խոսրովու Պարսից արքայի. «Եթէ դուք ո՞ր հրամանաւ եկիք յաշխարհս իմ. այ՛նմ, որ թափառական շրջէր յերեսաց իմոց՝ ի կղզիս ծովուն արևմտից: Ապա եթէ կարօտացայք՝ ի նմանէն ոսկոյ կամ արծաթոյ կամ ականց պատուականաց, կամ ոսկեման մարգարտայեռ հանդերձից՝ բեհեզաց և ծիրանեաց, կարող էի ես առաւել կրկին քան զնա հաճել զմիտս ձեր: Վասն որոյ ասեմ քեզ՝ մի՛ կրկնել առ իս կասն դորա ունայն խնդրոյն, ապա թէ ոչ, եղիցին կամք քո: Բայց ահա կանխաւ ասացից քեզ, զոր ինչ ես գործելոց եմ յառաջագոյն: Վի թողացուցանելն ինձ նմա ըստ բանիդ քում, կոչեցից ես յերկրէ նորա զյաղթող զմեծ դորակարն իմ զՇահվարազ հանդերձ երկու քաջ զօրականօքն իմովք՝ Շահենով և Քրտակարինով, և զդօրս իմ զբիւրաւորս և զհազարաւորս և զընտիր սպառազէնս իմ, զոր յօրինեցի ընդդէմ արևտից: Արդ ահա դարձուցից զերասանակս նոցա ընդդէմ արևելից, և յարեայց ամենայն զօրութեամբ իմով՝ ի վերայ քո, ոչ թողից զքեզ և ոչ տաց քեզ դուլ և դադար, մինչև հանից զքեզ ընդ ծաղս տիեզերաց. ապա գիտասցես և ի միտ առցես զանիմացական զտրտմեցուցիչ անձին քո զխնդիրն, զոր առնես:» Translation modified from Dowsett.; Howard-Johnston, "Heraclius' Persian Campaigns," 41; Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World in Crisis*, 114; Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 158.

It is obvious from this passage that Xusrō II felt the gravity of the Turkish invasion of *Ērānšahr*. But there is more to this passage than that. When Xusrō II's envoys told the Turks of his threat of unleashing the might of the Sasanian military against them, it suggests that indeed Xusrō II was aware of his and his army's accomplishments. By the time Heraclius and his Turkish allies invaded *Ērānšahr*, the Sasanian army already had captured large portions of the Roman Empire.³³⁰ Of course, when Heraclius took the war to the Sasanians, everything changed in the Romans' favor; but at this moment, with his armies striking at the Roman Empire, Xusrō II felt enough confidence in his army to recall them from the west to route the Turks from *Ērānšahr*.

Despite Xusrō II's threats to the Turks, they still invaded *Ērānšahr* in 628 CE, the last year of the war. The reaction to this invasion demonstrates an important aspect of the war of the seventh century CE that has not been touched by historians: its effect on ordinary people in *Ērānšahr*. Additionally, the following passage also demonstrates measures taken by Xusrō II and the *šahanšahs* before him to fortify the Caucasus to protect *Ērānšahr* from its enemies. This quotation is long, but it is worth reading to understand how dire the situation was for ordinary people in *Ērānšahr* when Heraclius' Turkish allies invaded:

In the thirty-eighth year of Xosrov's [Xusrō II] miserable murder, he who we have already mentioned, he that was Ĵebu Xak'an, arrived with his son and no one could count the number of his forces. As the horrific and sorrowful news came to the country of the Albanians, it was decided to fortify our country in the great capital and fortress of Partaw; and then this was done at the command of a man named Gayšak,

330. This implies that Heraclius had to enter into an alliance with them because he was in such a bad spot. See Howard-Johnston, "Heraclius' Persian Campaigns," 40.

who had been sent by Xosrov [Xusrō II] as governor and prince of the country and he sealed within it the inhabitants of the surrounding provinces and made to oppose the Khazars, strengthening his position with an alliance with the nobles of the country and the inhabitants of the town. But he prepared to see what would happen to the guardians of the great town of Čoṭay and the battalions [of soldiers] on the magnificent walls, which the kings of Persia had built at great expense, bleeding their nation and recruiting architects and procuring many different materials for the construction of the wonderful works with which they blocked [the passage] between mount Caucas and the eastern sea [the Caspian]. When the universal wrath confronting us all came, however, the waves of the sea flooded over and struck it down and destroyed it to its foundations at the very onset. Their terror increased at the sight of the ugly, insolent, broad-faced, eyelash-less crowd in the shape of women with flowing hair who descended upon them, and they trembled before them, especially when they saw their bent and well-aimed bows, the arrows of which rained down upon them like heavy hail stones, and when they fell upon them like shameless and ravenous wolves, and unsparingly they slaughtered them in the lanes and streets of the town. Their eyes did not distinguish between the beautiful and the gorgeous, the children, the men and the women, nor the vile and the useless, they did not leave the lame nor the old, or have compassion for the children who clutched their mothers and sucked blood from the breast instead of milk.³³¹

It is apparent from this passage that while Movsēs Kaṭankatuac'i wrote his *History* in the tenth century CE, the memory of the terror felt by the people of Albania during the war of the seventh century CE survived.³³² They too suffered like the Romans did when Xusrō II's armies captured cities and territories.

331. Movsēs Dasxuranci, *The History of the Caucasian Albanians* 11, in Dowsett, 83-84; Movsēs Kaghankatuats'i, *Patmut'iwn Aghuanits' Ashharhi*, 11, in Ēmin, 153-154: Արդ յամին երեսներորդի ութերորդի, որ ամ էր տագգնապի աղետից սպանմանն խոսրովու՝ եկեալ նոյն ինքն, զոր վերագոյնն ասացաք, որ էր նա Ջեբու խաքան, ւնելոկ ընդ և զորդին իւր, և զհամար զօրուն նորա ոչ ոք կարէր արկանել ընդ թուով: Իբրև եհաս յերկիրս Աղուանից բօժն ահագին, կամեցան ամրացուցանել զաշխարհս մեր ՚ի մեծ մայրաքաղաքին Պարտաւաբերդի. և լնէր այն ՚ի հրամանէ առն միոյ, որում անուն էր Գայլաք՝ որ առաքեալ էր ՚ի խոսրովայ պետ և իշխան աշխարհիս. որ փակեաց ՚ի ներքս զբազմութիւն շրջակայ զաւառաց և կամէր պնդեալ զինքն միաբանութեամբ հանդերձ մեծամեծաց աշխարհիս և բնակչաց քաղաքին կալ ընդդէմ նոցա: Բայց հայէր տեսանել, եթէ զի՞նչ անցք անցանիցեն ընդ պահապանս մեծ քաղաքին Չողայ և ընդ գումարտակս սքանչելի պարսպաց նորա, զոր բազում ծախիւք թագաւորացն Պարսից մաշեալէր զաշխարհս իւրեանց՝ գումարելով հարտարապետս և հնարելով ազգի ազգի նիւթս ՚ի շինուածս մեծասքանչ գործոյն, որով փակեցին աղիւսցին ընդ լեառն Կովկաս ընդ մեծ ծուն արևելից: Արդ ՚ի մօտել տիեզերական ցասմանն՝ որ առաջի էր մեզ ամենեցուն, նախ զնա բաղիւսցին ալիք ծովուն ծաւալեալ և ՚ի հիմանց տապալեալ. քանզի տեսանելով զահն սաստկացեալ ժանտատեսիլ, ժըպրհերես, լայնադէմ, անարտևանուն բազմութեանն ՚ի ձև իգականգիսարձակս դիմեալս ՚ի վերայ, դողումն կալաւ զնոսս առաջի նոցա. մանաւանդ աեսանելով զպնդաքարշ կորովածիգսն, որք իբրև կարկուտ սաստիկ տեղային ՚ի վերայ նոցա, իբրև գայլք գիշախանձք անամօթացեալ դիմէին ՚ի վերայ նոցա և անխնայ կոտորէին յանցս և ՚ի փողոցս քաղաքին: Եւ ոչ խնայէր ակն նոցա ՚ի դեղեցկատես պայծառագեղ մանկահասակս արուի կամ իգի, և ոչ յանպիտանս և յանօգուտս, ոչ թողուին զհաշմս կամ զծերս և ոչ զթային կամ դալարէին աղիք նոցա ՚ի խանդաղատանս տղայոց, որ զկոտորեալ մարքքն փարէին և դիէին զարիւն ստեանց նոցա իբրև զկաթն: Translation modified from Dowsett; Howard-Johnston, "Heraclius' Persian Campaigns," 23.

332. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World in Crisis*, 103-104.

What is more important about this passage, however, is that it suggests Xusrō II's defense plan for *Ērānšahr*. This is evidenced by him dispatching Gayšak to Partaw to organize its defenses against invasion, even though Gayšak became paralyzed with fear when he saw the oncoming Khazar hordes, and the city had to be abandoned. Xusrō II, in other words, did not leave his realm to its fate when he left *Ērānšahr* to conquer the Roman Empire, and one can miss this important fact if they study only texts written from a Roman point of view. Not even did Pseudo-Sebēos, another inhabitant of the Caucuses, write about the measures taken by Xusrō II to protect his kingdom. For this reason, Movsēs Kałankatuac'i is an important source because it highlights the fact that Xusrō II cared for his country.

While this source shows us that ordinary people in *Ērānšahr* suffered because of the war of the seventh century CE,³³³ and that Xusrō II actually planned some sort of defense of his realm, there is another part of Movsēs Kałankatuac'i that suggests that the relationship between Iranian Christians and Xusrō II was complicated. This is important because Movsēs Kałankatuac'i, like Pseudo-Sebēos, wrote from the perspective of a monophysite Christian (a Christian who believed that Jesus Christ had one, divine nature).³³⁴ He underscored an important fact about how Xusrō II extended favors to the monophysite Christians of *Ērānšahr*, at the expense of the diophysite Christians of the Church of the East. Pseudo-Sebēos, the

333. This happened to the Sasanian army as well, because their morale flagged when news of the Turkish invasion reached them. See Howard-Johnston, "Heraclius' Persian Campaigns," 21.

334. The Albanians shared the monophysite Christology with the Armenian Church. See Movsēs Dasxuranci, *The History of the Caucasian Albanians*, 3 for Movsēs Kałankatuac'i blasting Nestorius and Theodore of Mopsuestia as being heretical. See also Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World in Crisis*, 105.

focus of chapter two, did not write about this aspect of Xusrō II, even though he was part of the Armenian Church that undoubtedly reaped the benefits of the *šahanšah's* favors. In turn, this last part of our examination aides us in discovering why so many diaphysite Christian texts tend to focus on the “evil” nature of Xusrō II.

During Xusrō II's reign, the monophysite Albanians revolted against him, and many of its leaders were put to death. Viroy, the *kat'otikos* of Albanian Church, however, did not take part in the rebellion and fled to Xusrō II's court. What happened next is interesting because it demonstrates how Xusrō II could keep a tight reign on the Christian leaders of his realm. On the other hand, Viroy's tale suggests that Xusrō II treated those same leaders with respect:

But he [Viroy] fled to the court of the king, and fortune favored him by the mark of his Holy Cross and threw open the way to the door of the queen's [Šērīn] palace. She was able, after much trouble, to save his life as a gift from the king [Xusrō II]. But the king swearing a mighty oath, had resolved never to let him return to his land for all the years of his life, but to keep him under arrest at court. And he did not withhold from him what was due to him by virtue of his princely throne, nor did he deprive him the title of *kat'otikos*, but kept him like some precious vessel, tending him like a courageous horse for war.³³⁵

This passage indicates that while Xusrō II was not pleased with the Albanians for their rebellion, he was not keen on punishing the leader of their Christians. Of course, Xusrō II had to punish the Albanians by imprisoning their *kat'otikos*, but he did not strip them of their leader, nor did he restrict his authority.

335. Movsēs Dasxuranci, *The History of the Caucasian Albanians* 14, in Dowsett, 93; Movsēs Kaghankatuats'i, *Patmut'iwn Aghuanits' Ashharhi*, 14, in Ēmin, 171: Իսկ նա փախստեայ անկանէր 'ի դուռն արքունի, և յաջողեցաւ առաջի նորա. զի շնորհք սրբոյ նշանի նորա յորդեցին նմա հանապարհ 'ի դուռն թագունէոյն, որ մեծաւ ջանիւ կարաց գտանել 'ի պարգևի զկեանս նորա 'ի թագաւորէն: Բայց մեծաւ երդմամբ հաստատէր յանձն իւր թագաւորն վասն նորա՝ յամս կենաց իւրոց ոչ դատնալ նմա յերկիր իւր. այլ կալ նմա 'ի դիպակոջն առ դրանն: Եւ ոչ արգելոյր 'ի նմանէ զհասս իշխանութեան անտոյ նորա և ոչ զանուն կաթողիկոսութեան եբարձ 'ի նմանէն. այլ պակէր զնա իբրև զանօժ ինչ ընտիր և խնայէր 'ի նմա իբրև յերկար քաշընթաց յօր մարտի և պատերազմի: Translation modified from Dowsett.

Xusrō II could have enacted a scorched earth policy in regards to the Albanians because of their rebellion. Xusrō II was not interested in alienating the Christians of Albania, even if they rebelled against him. The example of Viroy demonstrates that even when Xusrō II could have punished a group of Christians in *Ērānšahr* by stripping them of their leader, he did not.

There are two reasons for Xusrō II's actions toward Viroy. The first is romantic. As stated above, the Albanian Church was monophysite Christian, like the Armenian Church. Recall that in the previous chapter, we established that the Armenians admired Xusrō II's wife, Šērīn, for her monophysite leanings. The situation was the same with the Albanian Church, which is evidenced by Viroy fleeing to Šērīn after his countrymen rebelled against Xusrō II. This passage thus demonstrates that even in this situation, Šērīn was able to intervene on Viroy's behalf and saved his life and station after the Albanians rebelled.

The second reason why Xusrō II did not execute Viroy is practical. Xusrō II could not risk further antagonizing the Albanians by stripping them of their patriarch. Yes, the Albanians had just rebelled against him, but because Albania was in the Caucuses, Xusrō II could not lose that strategic point by inciting its wrath into further rebellion. In this case, the Albanians enjoyed protection similar to that of the Armenians. Thus, one can argue that on some level, Xusrō II respected Albanian Christianity because he kept its *kat'olikos* in power instead of deposing him in punishment. We can see that despite the sources portraying Xusrō II as being God-abhorred and an enemy of Christianity, he realized that keeping the Albanian

kat'olikos in power was smarter than making the Albanians angry.

Despite these suggestions, the ultimate reason why Movsēs Kałankatuac'i's passage is important is because it demonstrates that Xusrō II was willing to work with a significant population of Christians in his realm. Xusrō II was an astute politician who realized that an imprisoned *kat'olikos* with his power intact was better than a dead *kat'olikos* who might have angered the Albanians into further discontent.

If we take this passage further, it also sets the background into Xusrō II's relationship with the diaphysite Church of the East. In this case, Xusrō II actually deposed those Christians of their patriarch. This event in turn influenced how those Christians portrayed Xusrō II in their sources. Then, as the Romans and Albanians portrayed him, the reality of the situation is more complicated than an "evil" Xusrō II meddling in Iranian Christian affairs.

A person who witnessed firsthand the war of the seventh century CE wrote the *Khuzistan Chronicle* in the late seventh century CE. This text presents us a vignette of Christian-Sasanian relations during Xusrō II's reign and how the circumstances surrounding Xusrō II's ascension to the throne—Wahrām Čubīn's (r. 590 CE-591 CE) rebellion and Emperor Maurice (r. 582 CE-602 CE) sending aid to Xusrō II—colored how the *šahanšah* dealt with the Church of the East. We see in the *Khuzistan Chronicle* that the reaction of the patriarch of the Church of the East, Išo' Yahb I (r. 582 CE-595 CE), influenced how Xusrō II felt toward Iranian Christians. As the *Khuzistan Chronicle* demonstrates, Xusrō II felt mistrust toward the *katholicos* of

immediate concerns: the protection of his Christians, no matter who claimed the title of *šahanšah*.³³⁷ We can see that during Wahrām Čubīn's rebellion, Išo Yahb I was in a delicate position.

Xusrō II, on the other hand, was left in an undesirable position. According to the *Khuzistan Chronicle*, Maurice was not pleased that the patriarch of the Church of the East did not accompany Xusrō II. Did Maurice want to palaver with Išo' Yahb I in the hope of bringing the Church of the East under Constantinople's ecclesiastical jurisdiction? We may never know, and the answer is not important if we consider that Xusrō II was left in a bad spot when he appealed to Maurice for aid to reclaim his throne.

Because of Maurice's reaction to Išo Yahb I's absence, we can see that he was not as willing to help Xusrō II reclaim his throne, as other sources have depicted. It is then apparent that after Xusrō II defeated Wahrām Čubīn and regained his throne, he harbored so much hatred and mistrust for Išo Yahb I that the *katholicos* actually went into hiding in Hīra to escape the *šahanšah's* wrath.³³⁸ In response, Xusrō II summoned an ecumenical council and demanded that the diophysite bishops of *Ērānšahr* elect Sabrišo (r. 596 CE-604 CE)—who was beloved by Xusrō II, Šērīn, and his other Christian wife, Mariam—as their *katholicos*.³³⁹

337. Išo Yahb I, however, did say that he prayed for Xusrō II's safety. See Wood, *The Chronicle of Seert*, 188.

338. *The Khuzistan Chronicle (First Part)*, 230.

339. *The Khuzistan Chronicle (First Part)*, 229, 230; *Histoire Nestorienne* LXV. For more on the personal relationship between the *katholicos* and the *šahanšah*, see Shaked, *Dualism in Transformation*, 110-111.

Xusrō II had a good relationship with Sabrišo. Xusrō II sent the patriarch to Nisibis when the city rebelled after a bitter Christological dispute³⁴⁰ and asked if he would join the Sasanian army's campaign against the Romans at the start of the war of the seventh century CE.³⁴¹ The *Khuzistan Chronicle*, with the example of Sabrišo, suggests that Xusrō II as *šahanšah* of *Ērānšahr* did not hesitate to embrace the support of the patriarch of the Church of the East. Xusrō II knew the benefit of having the support of a good patriarch and was ready to use this support to bring a city in line or to legitimize a campaign against the Christian Roman Empire. What is more, Xusrō II also was well aware that by asking Sabrišo to accompany him on the campaign against the Romans, he would demonstrate to Iranian Christians the legitimacy of a war against a “heretical” Christian empire.³⁴²

One important aspect of the *Khuzistan Chronicle* is that it demonstrates that on some level, other Christians were cognizant of Xusrō II's favorable dealings with the Christians of his realm. After Phocas (r. 602 CE-610 CE) usurped Maurice and had him and his family murdered, Xusrō II invaded the Roman Empire, thus starting the war of the seventh century CE. Xusrō II's army immediately began besieging Dara. The example of Nathaniel, the bishop of Dara, is interesting because it

340. *The Khuzistan Chronicle (First Part)*, 231; *Histoire Nestorienne* LXXV; “Khusro and the Christians of His Empire,” 80-81.

341. As was introduced in the first chapter. See also *The Khuzistan Chronicle (First Part)*, 232; Yuri Stoyanov, *Defenders and Enemies of the True Cross: The Sasanian Conquest of Jerusalem in 614 and Byzantine Ideology of Anti-Persian Warfare* (Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2011), 39-40; W.A. Wigram, *An Introduction to History of the Assyrian Church or the Church of the Sassanid Persian Empire, 100-640 A.D.* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004), 224.

342. For a *katholicos* on military campaigns with a *šahanšah*, see Brock, “The Church of the East in the Sasanian Empire,” 77 and Greatrex, “Khusro and the Christians of His Empire,” 80.

kindness to the Christians because of Maurice, he was, however, the enemy of our people.”³⁴⁵ The language of this quotation, like the passages studied thus far in this dissertation, initially suggest that Xusrō II was an enemy of Christians everywhere for what he had done to Nathaniel. What is more surprising about this quotation is that it was written by an Iranian Christian who lived during Xusrō II’s reign. This sentiment, therefore, could indicate that Xusrō II was at times hostile to the Church of the East.

Of course, there is more to the *Khuzistan Chronicle*'s labeling of Xusrō II as an enemy to “[their] people.” When we dig deeper into why the author did so, we can see that Xusrō II had to use the weight of his throne to bring the Church of the East in line for political, not ecclesiastical reasons. All of these problems between the church and the *šahanšah* had to do with Xusrō II's choice for patriarch of the Church of the East.

Sabrišo's death in 604 CE triggered a crisis that strained the relationship between Xusrō II and the Church of the East. In 605 CE, Xusrō II once again summoned an ecumenical council to elect a new patriarch, where the bishops praised him as being their protector.³⁴⁶ At the urging of Šērīn, Xusrō II wanted the

345. *The Khuzistan Chronicle (First Part)*, in Greatrex and Lieu, 232; *Chronica Minora I*, 21:

𐭠𐭣𐭠𐭮 𐭠𐭮 𐭠𐭮𐭠𐭮 𐭠𐭮𐭠𐭮 𐭠𐭮𐭠𐭮 𐭠𐭮𐭠𐭮 𐭠𐭮𐭠𐭮 𐭠𐭮𐭠𐭮 𐭠𐭮𐭠𐭮 𐭠𐭮𐭠𐭮 𐭠𐭮𐭠𐭮 𐭠𐭮𐭠𐭮
𐭠𐭮𐭠𐭮 𐭠𐭮𐭠𐭮 𐭠𐭮𐭠𐭮 𐭠𐭮𐭠𐭮 𐭠𐭮𐭠𐭮 𐭠𐭮𐭠𐭮 𐭠𐭮𐭠𐭮 𐭠𐭮𐭠𐭮

Translation modified from Greatrex and Lieu.

346. Walker, “Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq,” 119-120. For a survey of synods and ecclesiastical letters invoking the *šahanšahs* as protectors starting with the 410 Synod of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, see Richard E. Payne, “Christianity and Iranian Society in Late Antiquity,” 3-4, 151-152; Wood, *The Chronicle of Seert*, 32.

bishops of *Ērānšahr* to elect Gregory of Portath (r. 605 CE-609 CE) as patriarch.³⁴⁷

The bishops, however, wanted to have Gregory of Kašgar as their leader. The bishops did so, but because of Šērīn's support of Gregory of Portath, the *Khuzistan Chronicle* labeled him as a drunkard and an ineffectual patriarch.³⁴⁸ After Gregory died, the Church of the East did not listen to Xusrō II and refused to elect his choice for patriarch.

Xusrō II retaliated against the Church of the East by not allowing it to elect anyone as patriarch. Thus, diophysite Christians in *Ērānšahr* were without a leader until 628 CE when Xusrō II was assassinated, as is demonstrated by Thomas, Bishop of Maraga:

[Xusrō II] had heard that the Christians did not place Gregory as *katholicos*, whom he had commanded, but craftily elected in his place another, he forgot all his love and friendship for the Christians, especially that which he had for Sabrišo. And he cursed them angrily, "Gregory will not minister as head." And he swore by the sun, his god, saying, "As long as I live I will never have another patriarch in the country of the east." ... Thus until he [Xusrō II] died by the sword of the Christian children of the church, the holy church remained without a patriarch.³⁴⁹

347. Thomas, Bishop of Maraga, *The Book of Governors: The Historia Monastica of Thomas Bishop of Maraga, A.D. 840*, vol. 2, ed. and trans. E. A. Wallis Budge (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press: 2003), XXV; *Histoire Nestorienne* LXXX; Walker, "Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq," 104; Brock, "The Christology of the Church of the East," 127. For details of the selection, see Wood, *The Chronicle of Seert*, 206-210.

348. *The Khuzistan Chronicle (First Part)*, 233.

349. Thomas, Bishop of Maraga XXVI *The Book of Governors*, vol. 2, 89; Thomas, Bishop of Maraga, *The Book of Governors: The Historia Monastica of Thomas Bishop of Maraga, A.D. 840*, vol. 1, ed. E. A. Wallis Budge (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press: 2003), 50-51:

ܐܘܪܘܫܝܡܘܢܐ ܕܥܢܢܘܢܐ ܕܩܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܐܒܝܗܘܢ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܩܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ
ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ
ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ
ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ ܕܩܝܥܘܢܐ

Translation modified from Budge.

The reason why Xusrō II took this course of action was simple politics and had nothing to do with religion. As has been demonstrated before, Xusrō II was aware that he could not infuriate the Christians in the Caucuses. With the Church of the East, the bishops, however, disobeyed his order, and he had to punish them.

What is more, there is also another component behind the lack of leadership for the Church of the East. In the background of this drama, Gabriel of Šiggar, a staunch monophysite and Xusrō II's doctor,³⁵⁰ undermined the diaphysite Church of the East by urging Xusrō II to not allow them to elect a patriarch. With this event, Šērīn's urging of Xusrō II to have Gregory of Portath elected as patriarch, and Xusrō II's relatively soft handling of the Albanian church's rebellion, we can see that Xusrō II at this time favored the monophysite brand of Iranian Christianity.

Why did Xusrō II do this? Was it because of the love of his wife Šērīn?³⁵¹ Was it because he was aware that the Christians of the Caucuses were monophysite, and he could not risk being seen as favoring the diaphysites and incite a rebellion? This explanation suggests that Xusrō II took a pragmatic approach to dealing with the Christians of *Ērānšahr*.³⁵² Or was it because Xusrō II sought to gain the favor of monophysite West Syrian Christians, who resided in lands his generals had

350. J. M. Fiey, *Jalons pour une Histoire de l'Église en Iraq: Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 310: Subsidia, Tomus 36* (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO Waversebaan, 49, 1970), 134-137.

351. See Daryae, *Sasanian Persia*, 56.

352. Greatrex, "Khusro and the Christians of His Empire," 79. Greatrex wrote Xusrō II's reign was "passive and benign." See *ibid.* 82-83.

conquered from the Roman Empire?³⁵³ Or could Xusrō II have wanted to stop the tensions in the Church of the East and the bishops' efforts to use the Sasanian government either to prop up or depose a *katholicos* or even persecute non-diophysite Christians?³⁵⁴

The reasons behind Xusrō II's actions undoubtedly were complex because at the height of the war of the seventh century CE, he ruled over “what was undoubtedly the largest empire of Christians in the world” and was filled with monophysite, orthodox, and diophysite Christians.³⁵⁵ But these reasons were not so important when we consider that Christians of the Church of the East reacted strongly to Xusrō II's actions toward their church. This is similar to how Christians in the Roman Empire reacted to the sophist Libanius' attempts to have Emperor Theodosius II stop Christian attacks on pagan temples, as has been discussed by Thomas Sizgorich: “the Roman emperor—even a Christian emperor—was always a persecutor.”³⁵⁶ The threat of persecutions was forever lurking in the shadows of

353. This is the common explanation for Xusrō II's actions. See Greatrex, “Khusro and the Christians of His Empire,” 79. This is, moreover, an avenue of research I will save for a later project. For more on the separation between the West Syrian Christians and the imperial orthodox faith, see S. Ashbrook Harvey, “Remembering Pain: Syriac Historiography and the Separation of the Churches,” *Byzantion: Revue Internationale des Études Byzantines* tome LVIII, fasc. 2 (1998): 295-308. For the persecution of these Christians by the orthodox church, see Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre *Chronicle: Part III 22-3 Chronicle: Part III* trans. Witold Witakowski (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996); Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis: John of Ephesus and the Lives of the Easter Saints* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1990), 63. For the gains made by that church under Xusrō II, see Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World in Crisis*, 326, 330; Wood, *The Chronicle of Seert*, 200, 210-211. For West-Syrian sources being anti-Heraclius, see Watt, “The Portrayal of Heraclius in Syriac Sources,” 74-75.

354. Greatrex, “Khusro and the Christians of His Empire,” 82.

355. Greatrex, “Khusro and the Christians of His Empire,” 78; Watt, “The Portrayal of Heraclius in Syriac Sources,” 63.

356. Thomas Sizgorich, “Not Easily Were Stones Joined by the Strongest Bonds Pulled Asunder’: Religious Violence and Imperial Order in the Later Roman World,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 15, no. 1 (2007): 96.

Roman memory,³⁵⁷ much like when Xusrō II punished the Church of the East, the memory of Šābūhr II came back to haunt seventh-century CE Iranian Christians.³⁵⁸ A *šahanšah*—even a sympathetic one—was always a persecutor.

Similarly to Roman accounts, Iranian Christian sources immediately reached into the same bag of tricks to portray Xusrō II as being an irreverent, blasphemous megalomaniac in response to him not allowing them to elect a patriarch. In the *Khuzistan Chronicle*, for instance, Šērīn called Xusrō II “God” (ahlaha) and told him not to fear when he and his court fled Heraclius’ onslaught during the Roman invasion of *Ērānšahr*.³⁵⁹ Xusrō II then vowed to leave no church standing in *Ērānšahr* if he were to defeat Heraclius.³⁶⁰

Despite these portrayals of Xusrō II being an enemy of Christianity, these same sources also were aware that Xusrō II was anything but. Yazdīn, for instance, was influential in Xusrō II’s court as minister of finance and was an advocate for diaphysite Christians in *Ērānšahr*.³⁶¹ The situation for Iranian Christians was not as bad as the *Khuzistan Chronicle* would have liked to portray it to be.

There is one final aspect to how diaphysite Christians in *Ērānšahr* portrayed

357. Sizgorich, “Not Easily Were Stones Joined by the Strongest Bonds Pulled Asunder,” 78-79.

358. Walker, “Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq,” 109-111.

359. *The Khuzistan Chronicle (First Part)*, in Greatrex and Lieu, 233; *Chronica Minora I*, 28.

360. *The Khuzistan Chronicle (First Part)*, 233.

361. *The Khuzistan Chronicle (First Part)*, 234; Fiey, *Jalons pour une Histoire de l'Église en Iraq*, 134-135; Greatrex, “Khusro and the Christians of His Empire,” 81; Wood, *The Chronicle of Seert*, 211-212.

trouble he caused the Christians in *Ērānšahr*, actually had treated the religion with respect, it was his ideology, no matter what the sources say.

Chapter 4

A Dream Deferred: Xusrō II in Ferdowsī's *Shahnameh* and

Al-Ṭabarī's History

The last group of sources that features anything of length on Xusrō II (r. 591 CE-628 CE) are Persian and Arabic texts. The authors of the Persian sources—Hakīm Abu'l-Qāsim Ferdowsī Tūsī and Abū 'Alī Muḥammad Bal'amī—portray Xusrō II as a man caught up in events beyond control and his downfall as a tragedy. The Arabic authors—Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī and Abu Mansūr 'Abd ul-Malik ibn Mahommed ibn Isma'il (known as al-Tha'alībī) portray Xusrō II as a crazed monarch, drunk on power who got what he deserved.

This polarity exists because of the milieu of the different authors.³⁶⁶ Although all authors were Muslim, each had different backgrounds and aims in the composition of their texts. Ferdowsī wrote from a pre-Islamic/Shia Muslim point of view. Bal'amī not only translated al-Ṭabarī from Arabic into Persian, he added

366. Indeed, there were tensions in the Islamic community in the years after the conquest of *Ērānšahr*, especially over the question of the proper successor of Muḥammad and the role of non-Arabs in Islam. See Fred M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, 1998), 26; Patricia Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 6-7, 9-11, 17-22, 74-75, 114-118, 160-162; Hugh Kennedy, *When Baghdad Ruled the Muslim World: The Rise and Fall of Islam's Greatest Dynasty* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2004), 38.

material found in the *X^wadāy-Nāmag*, the lost Persian *Book of Lords*, not found in the Arabic source.³⁶⁷ On the other hand, al-Ṭabarī wrote a history of *Ērānšahr*, but as a Muslim, he portrayed Xusrō II in a bad manner to undermine and slander the last great dynasty of late antique Iran, the house of Sāsān, in an effort to justify the Islamic conquest of *Ērānšahr*.³⁶⁸ Al-Tha‘ālibī, another non-Persian Muslim, also portrayed Xusrō II in bad light but with more nuance. By examining how each of these sources portrayed Xusrō II, we can see that tension exists between the these authors. Ferdowsī and Bal‘amī desired to present their Persian background by denying that Xusrō II was a bad ruler who had his father killed. Al-Ṭabarī and al-Tha‘ālibī sought to portray Xusrō II as a despot as a way to demonstrate the superiority of Islamic culture.

Before we begin this study, it is important to understand that all of the main authors of this chapter were Muslim and viewed everything from that point of view. In no way does this chapter seek to make the claim that Persian culture went in decline after the Arab conquest or that either culture is better than the other. This chapter seeks only to highlight how portrayals of Xusrō II differ when two different

367. Elton L. Daniel, “Manuscripts and Editions of Bal‘amī’s ‘Tarjamah-i Tāriḫ-i Ṭabarī,’” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* no. 2 (1990): 284-285; Howard-Johnston, “Al-Tabari on the Last Great War of Antiquity,” in *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity: Historiographical and Historical Studies* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2006), 10; DJ. Khaleghi-Motlagh, *Encyclopedia Iranica*, vol 1, fasc. 9 (New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 1989), s.v. “Amīrak Bal‘amī.”

368. Howard-Johnston, “Al-Tabari on the Last Great War of Antiquity,” 2, 7; Walter E. Kaegi, *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 152; Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, 130-131. For al-Ṭabarī Muslim piety, including his memorization of the Qur’an see Franz Rosenthal, “The Life and Works of al-Ṭabarī,” in *The History of al-Ṭabarī, Volume 1: General Introduction and From the Creation to the Flood* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), 15, 33, 43. For al-Ṭabarī’s intellectual development, see Claude Gilliot, “La Formation Intellectuelle de Tabari,” *Journal Asiatique: Périodique Trimestriel* CCLXXVI no. 3-4 (1988): 203-244.

ethnic groups lived side by side in a cultural borderland. By “borderland,” I use

Thomas Sizgorich's brilliant definition:

[Borderlands are] a space in which no cultural force is able to exercise uncontested hegemony and in which one is likely to encounter discursive economies that incorporate (but do not necessarily assimilate) the influences of various cultural traditions and political interests.³⁶⁹

The pillar of any study of how Xusrō II is portrayed in Iranian culture is Ferdowsī's *Shahnameh*, the Iranian epic poem akin to Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and Virgil's *Aeneid*.³⁷⁰ What is interesting about Ferdowsī's portrayal of Xusrō II is that he focused a lot of attention on the *spahbed* (general) Wahrām Čubīn's (r. 590 CE-591 CE) rebellion and Xusrō II's efforts to regain the throne. Ferdowsī immediately established that *Šahanšah* Hormīzd IV (r. 579 CE-590 CE) was engaged in a long war with the Turkish nomads of the north, and he needed a *spahbed* to deal with this threat. Wahrām Čubīn was that *spahbed*, and he answered his *šahanšah*'s call to defend the realm.³⁷¹

According to Ferdowsī, Wahrām Čubīn acted with valor and defeated the Turkish hoards, which pleased Hormīzd IV.³⁷² As Wahrām Čubīn gained more

369. Thomas Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 149.

370. It must be stated that according to Howard-Johnston, the *Shahnameh* “flunks” the test as “real” history because it is an epic poem, a claim with which I have reservations, as will be shortly seen. See “Al-Tabari on the Last Great War of Antiquity,” 4, 19. On the other hand, Pourshariati wrote that *Shahnameh* is actually a good source to study because Ferdowsī slavishly followed his sources. See Parvaneh Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: The Sasanian-Parthian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2008), 14-15.

371. Firdausī *Hormuzd* 7 trans. Arthur George Warner and Edmond Warner, *The Shāhnāma of Firdausī*, vol. 8 (London and New York Routledge, 2002).

372. Firdausī *Hormuzd* 8-18.

victories against the Turks, however, Hormīzd IV became suspicious of him.³⁷³ Then when Hormīzd IV learned that Wahrām Čubīn had kept the most valuable pieces of booty for himself, he sent him women's clothes.³⁷⁴ Wahrām Čubīn, infuriated by this insult, then rallied his army and the Iranian nobility, rebelling against the *šahanšah*.³⁷⁵

Ferdowsī demonstrated that Wahrām Čubīn took immediate action to spread disinformation and to place a wedge between Hormīzd IV and Xusrō II. Wahrām Čubīn

then had his men make a mint and stamp coins in the name of Xusrō [II], and gave to innocent merchants, as spokesmen for the deed, bags of these newly stamped coins and said, "Buy from Tīsfun rich Roman silk ware with figures in gold and silver." He wanted to take the coins to the King [Hormīzd IV, so he would notice them].³⁷⁶

Wahrām Čubīn then sent a letter to Hormīzd IV himself in order to turn father against son:

Xusrō [II], your precious [and] fortunate son, sits on the throne. At his command, I

373. Firdausī *Hormuzd* 19.

374. Firdausī *Hormuzd* 20; A. Sh. Shahbazi, *Encyclopedia Iranica*, vol III, fasc. 5 (New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 1988), s.v. "Bahrām VI Čōbīn."

375. Firdausī *Hormuzd* 21, 24; Touraj Daryae, *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 32; Touraj Daryae, *Sasanian Iran (224-651CE): Portrait of a Late Antique Empire* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers: 2008), 81.

376. Firdausī *Hormuzd* 26 *The Shāhnāma of Firdausī*, in Warner and Warner, 173; Abu'l-Qasem Ferdowsī, *Hormuz Nušīn-ravān* 1712-1717 ed. Dajal Khaleghi-Motlagh and Abdolfazl Khatibi *The Shahnameh (The Book of Kings)*, vol.7 (New York: Bibliotheca Persica, 2007), 609:

[...]	[...]
بسازند و آرایشی نو کنند	درم مهر بر نام خسرو کنند
ز بازارگان آنک بد پاک مغز	سَخْن گوی و اندر خور کار نغز،
به مهر آن درم ها به بندره اندرون	بیاورد و گفت: آنچه از طیسغون،
بیانی ز پرمايه دیبای روم	که پیکر بریشم بریشم بُد و زر بوم،
بخريد تا آن درم نزد شاه	برند.

Translation modified from Warner and Warner; Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 132.

will make mountains [into] plains! I will make deserts like Jihun with enemy's blood!
Even though his character is that of a boy, but he is fit to rule today!"³⁷⁷

These quotations demonstrate that as far as Ferdowsī was concerned, Xusrō II had nothing to do with the rebellion against Hormīzd IV. Xusrō II had no designs on the throne, and he was unaware of any sort of discontent against his father. Wahrām Čubīn made a concerted effort to spread disinformation to conceal his desire to overthrow the *šahanšah* and to divert his attention to killing Xusrō II and painting his cause as just. Why else would Wahrām Čubīn rebel? All he wanted to do, according to his disinformation, was to put a worthy man on the throne and overthrow a tyrant. Thus, by pretending to be fighting for Xusrō II's "cause," Wahrām Čubīn could cover his true intentions by placing blame on the unaware Xusrō II.

Wahrām Čubīn's efforts worked. Hormīzd IV grew suspicious of Xusrō II and planned to have him murdered at night. Xusrō II, however, discovered this plan and fled to Azerbaijan with a number of supporters,³⁷⁸ while Hormīzd IV dispatched an army to deal with Wahrām Čubīn. This army, however, was destroyed, and Hormīzd IV became inconsolable.³⁷⁹ It was at this time that Xusrō II's maternal uncles, Bīndōe

377. Firdausī *Hormuzd* 27, in Warner and Warner, 174; Ferdowsī, *Hormuz Nušīnrawān* 1723-1725, in Motlagh and Khatibi, 610:

پسرت آن گرانمایهی نئک بخت،	هر آنکه که خسرو نشیند به تخت
بیابان ز دشمن چه جیحون کنم!	به فرمان او کوه هامون کنم!
سرآرد مگر نی گنه روزگار!	همی خواست تا بر پسر شهریار

Translation modified from Warner and Warner.

378. Firdausī *Hormuzd* 27.

379. Firdausī *Hormuzd* 28-29.

and Bīstahm, decided to act on their own to correct what they saw wrong with *Ērānšahr*, the stagnation of the state.³⁸⁰ This act had serious consequences for everyone involved.

Again, Ferdowsī placed Xusrō II far away from this event. He had nothing to do with it as he had already fled to Azerbaijan when he discovered his father wanted him dead. It was his uncles, who according to Ferdowsī were imprisoned by Hormīzd IV due to their close relation to Xusrō II,³⁸¹ who blinded the *šahanšah*, not Xusrō II. Ferdowsī even went further to say that after his general was killed in the battle with Wahrām Čubīn, Hormīzd IV became depressed and went into seclusion, while Bīndōe and Bīstahm broke out of prison, donned armor, and rallied *Ērānšahr* into rebellion. Then they took the crown from Hormīzd IV's head, cast him down from his throne, and blinded him with a red-hot iron.³⁸²

How Ferdowsī portrayed Xusrō II's reaction when he heard about his father's misfortune is important because it suggests that he believed Xusrō II to be innocent in Hormīzd IV's blinding. When a messenger reached Xusrō II in Azerbaijan and told him what happened, the prince paled at the news and said the following:

If the evil you say pleases me, my food and sleep will turn into fire! And yet what time my father set hand to blood, I cannot reside in Iran, his house! Yet I am a slave to him, and must harken to his words!³⁸³

380. According to Pourshariati, however, Xusrō II's uncles rebelled against Hormīzd IV to avenge their father's murder at the *šahanšah*'s hands. See Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 127.

381. Firdausī *Hormuzd* 27.

382. Firdausī *Hormuzd* 29.

383. Firdausī *Hormuzd* 30, in Warner and Warner, 184; Abolqasem Ferdowsī, *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings* trans. Dick Davis (New York: Penguin Group, 2006), 774; Ferdowsī, *Hormuz Nušīnrvān* 1908-1910, in Motlagh and Khatibi, 627:

Xusrō II lamented what happened to Hormīzd IV and acknowledged that he no longer could stay in *Ērānšahr*. Xusrō II revealed that he was “slave” to his father and must obey him. In this sense, “harkening to his words” undoubtedly means that Xusrō II must come to Ctesiphon and tend to his father after he was blinded. Ferdowsī suggests that the ties between father and son were strong, especially when Xusrō II, with an army at his back and being greeted by the nobility, entered Ctesiphon “mournfully” to visit his father.³⁸⁴

During this meeting, Hormīzd IV made Xusrō II promise to seek vengeance against those who blinded him– a promise his son made with one reservation: Wahrām Čubīn was the greater threat because he threatened the house of Sāsān and would be taken care of first. After he dealt with Wahrām Čubīn, Xusrō II promised his father that he would avenge him,³⁸⁵ a promise he kept after the end of the war.³⁸⁶ Then Xusrō II sat upon the throne and offered general amnesty to any rebel

گر این بد که گفתי خوش آمد مرا خور و خواب در آتش آمد مرا!
و لیکن پدر چون به خون آخت دست از ایران نکردم سرای نشست!
هم او را کنون چون یکی بنده ام سخن هرچ گوید نیوشنده ام!

Translation modified from Warner and Warner; and Davis.

384. Firdausī *Hormuzd* 30, in Warner and Warner, 185; Ferdowsī, *Hormuz. Nušīnrvān* 1918, in Motlagh and Khatibi, 628: درد بد

385. Firdausī *Khusrau Parwīz* 3 trans. Arthur George Warner and Edmond Warner *The Shāhnāma of Firdausī*, vol. 8 (London and New York Routledge, 2002).

386. Firdausī *Khusrau Parwīz* 44.

noblemen still in Ctesiphon.³⁸⁷

When Wahrām Čubīn heard about Hormīzd IV's blinding, he ordered his army to march to Ctesiphon and attack Xusrō II.³⁸⁸ When these two men met to parlay, we can see that Ferdowsī wanted to portray Xusrō II as innocent in not only the rebellion against Hormīzd IV but in his disfigurement as well.

Wahrām Čubīn told Xusrō II:

As for Hormuz [Hormīzd IV], I will avenge him! Otherwise I will be king of Iran! Now tell me the story that everyone agrees on, that you put hot irons on the eyes of the king, or that you gave the command for someone to have this done.³⁸⁹

Wahrām Čubīn's speech further elucidates that he wanted to keep hitting on the fact that Xusrō II was innocent of the ill fortune that befell his father. If Xusrō II could be linked in anyway to the rebellion and blinding of Hormīzd IV, it was because Wahrām Čubīn kept pumping out disinformation that tainted Xusrō II's reputation. Wahrām Čubīn then repeated these accusations to the Iranian nobility when Xusrō II fled to Constantinople to ask Emperor Maurice (r. 582 CE-602 CE) for military aid after his army was defeated in battle.³⁹⁰

387. Firdausī *Khusrau Parwīz* 2.

388. Firdausī *Khusrau Parwīz* 4; Ferdowsī, *Shahnameh*, 775-776.

389. Firdausī *Khusrau Parwīz* 5 *The Shāhnāma of Firdausī*, in Warner and Warner, 212; Ferdowsī, *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*, in Davis, 781; Abu'l-Qasem Ferdowsī, *Xusrō Parwīz* 269-271 ed. Dajal Khaleghi-Motlagh and Abdolfazl Khatibi *The Shahnameh (The Book of Kings)*, vol. 8 (New York: Bibliotheca Persica, 2007), 22-23:

همان کین هر مز کنم خواستار! دگر کاندرا ایران منم شهریار!
کنون نازه کن بر من داستان که از راستان گشت همداستان،
که تو داغچشم شاهان نهی، کسی کو نهد نیز فرمان دهی.

Translation modified from Warner and Warner, and Davis.

390. Firdausī *Khusrau Parwīz* 11.

This parley between Wahrām Čubīn and Xusrō II also demonstrated that Ferdowsī painted the renegade *spahbed*'s actions as being anti-Sasanian. As the two men insulted each other and asked why each deserved to rule *Ērānšahr*, Xusrō II said that he got his right to rule from his father and that he justly inherited the throne. Wahrām Čubīn, on the other hand, said the following about the house of Sāsān:

Did Ardešīr [Ardaxšīr I, the first *šahanšah*, r. 224 CE-242 CE] kill Ardavan [the last Arsacid king, r. 208 CE-224 CE] and take his throne? Now five hundred years have passed since and the Sāsāniān crown has grown cold!... I will trample the Sāsāniān crown! The Aškāniāns [the Arsacids] should be great, if a man listens to what is true!³⁹¹

This passage suggests that Wahrām Čubīn did not rebel against Hormīzd IV because he was accused of not turning over all of the booty from the war against the Turks to the *šahanšah*; he also was vehemently anti-Sasanian and wanted to restore the Arsacid dynasty to its former glory.³⁹²

Because Ferdowsī portrayed Wahrām Čubīn as wanting to overthrow the Sasanian dynasty, we can assume that he wanted to portray the battle between him and Xusrō II to demonstrate the tension between the Arsacids and Sasanian in

391. *Khusrau Parwīz* 5 Firdausī *The Šáhnáma of Firdausī*, in Warner and Warner, 224; Ferdowsī, *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*, in Davis, 781-782; Ferdowsī, *Xusrō Parwīz* 308-309, 313-314, in Motlagh and Khatibi, 25-26:

به چون اردشَر آردوان بکشت به نیرو شد و تختش آمد به مِشت؟
کنون سال پانصد برگذشت سرِ تاجِ ساسانیان سرد گشت!
[...]
بزرگی مر اشکانیان را سزاست اگر بشنود مردِ داننده راست!

Translation modified from Warner and Warner, and Davis. For Wahrām Čubīn's Arsacid heritage, see Theophylact Simocatta, *The History of Theophylact Simocatta: An English Translation with Introduction and Notes* 3.18.6 ed. and trans. Michael and Mary Whitby (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1986).

392. For the tension between the Arsacid and Sasanian in late-Sasanian *Ērānšahr*, see chapter two; See Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 95-96, 122, 125-126, 397-398, 458.

pre-Islamic Iran. Thus, by portraying Xusrō II as not killing his father and as we shall see, as behaving valiantly in the war with Wahrām Čubīn, Ferdowsī wanted to suggest that Xusrō II was the last defender of the house of Sāsān, the last mighty dynasty of late antique Iran.

For instance, Ferdowsī did not sugarcoat that Wahrām Čubīn defeated Xusrō II the first time they fought one on one and that Xusrō II had to flee and seek succor from Maurice. Ferdowsī, however, took the opportunity to show that even though Xusrō II did receive aid from the Romans, he was able to act valiantly and defeat the usurper in a later battle. When Xusrō II returned to *Ērānšahr* with a Roman army at his back and a Roman princess as a bride, he and Wahrām Čubīn once again engaged in combat. This time, however, Xusrō II scored a hit with his lance on Wahrām Čubīn's breastplate and with his sword upon his helmet. Wahrām Čubīn's army then abandoned him, and he fled to China.³⁹³ Xusrō II, due to his bravery and strength in battle, defeated the rebellious *spahbed*, Wahrām Čubīn.

Ferdowsī's casting of Xusrō II as the one who defeated Wahrām Čubīn was a way for him to show Xusrō II as the defender of Sasanian honor. The reasons for this will become clear when we examine how al-Ṭabarī portrayed Xusrō II, but for now it will suffice to at least be aware that at this moment in his text, Ferdowsī wrote that the last great Sasanian *šahanšah* defeated a challenger from the Arsacid dynasty. Because Ferdowsī portrayed Wahrām Čubīn's rebellion as being based in part on

393. Firdausī *Khusrau Parwīz* 26; Ferdowsī, *Shahnameh*, 789-791.

anti-Sasanian sentiment and Xusrō II's single-handed defeat of the *spahbed*, it is a strong possibility that he considered the house of Sāsān, not the Arsacids, to be the legitimate rulers of *Ērānšahr*.

The best piece of evidence we have is that when Ferdowsī wrote about the Arsacids, he described them as being only a clan³⁹⁴ and used them as a placeholder in between Alexander of Macedon's conquest of the Achaemenid Empire (331 BCE) and Ardaxšīr I, the first Sasanian *šahanšah*. The Parthians, in other words, were not a part of Iranian national identity and represented an interregnum in Iranian history.³⁹⁵ Furthermore, the propagandistic, pro-Sasanian *Letter of Tansar* numerous mentions that the Arsacids were tyrants³⁹⁶ that corrupted the world and let it fall into ruin.³⁹⁷

Ferdowsī used Wahrām Čubīn to demonstrate that an Iranian needed to

394. Ferdowsī, *Shahnameh*, 529.

395. Olga M. Davidson, *Poet and Hero in the Persian Book of Kings* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 15. It should be noted that Parvaneh Pourshariati and Touraj Daryaee have postulated that attempts to purposefully forget the Arsacids was an attempt by Sasanian *šahanšahs* to undercut the power of the nobility, but at the same time these same *šahanšahs* were keen on linking themselves to past Iranian dynasties, including the Arsacids, but highlighted the supremacy of the Sasanians over previous ruling dynasties of Iran. See Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 33-34, 46; Touraj Daryaee, "The Fall of the Sasanian Empire to the Arab Muslims: From Two Centuries of Silence to Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: the Partho-Sasanian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran," *Journal of Persianate Studies* 3 (2010): 242, 244-246. What is more, the support of Arsacid noble families helped secure the Sasanians as the ruling dynasty of Iran, and when this alliance fell apart, so did the Sasanian Empire at the end of the Roman-Sasanian War of the seventh century CE. See Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 159-160.

396. *The Letter of Tansar* 11 trans. M. Boyce (Roma: Istituto Italiano Per Il Medio Ed Estremo Oriente, 1968).

397. *The Letter of Tansar* 43.

embrace the Sasanian dynasty because they were the ones who reclaimed the idea of Iran from the Parthians. For instance, when Ferdowsī wrote that when Ardaxšīr I rose to power, people recognized that Ardaxšīr I was descended from Keyanid kings, the early mythical rulers of early Iran,³⁹⁸ a dynasty of which the Parthians were not part.³⁹⁹ Ferdowsī even went further than stressing that Ardaxšīr I was descended from the Keyanids: A priest called Ardaxšīr I the restorer of the monarchy and implored him to cleanse the province of Pars.⁴⁰⁰ I take this cleansing to mean that Ardaxšīr cleansed Pars of the Parthians and restored the Keyanid dynasty, thus restoring Iran to its previous glory.⁴⁰¹ If we examine *The Letter of Tansar*, it also becomes apparent that the Sasanians viewed the Parthians as neglecting and corrupting Zoroastrianism; it was then the job of Ardaxšīr I to restore Ērānšahr to the practice of Zoroastrianism.⁴⁰²

It seems that Ferdowsī tapped into a shared Iranian national identity by embracing the Sasanians as the true Keyanid rulers of Iran,⁴⁰³ and Ferdowsī helped

398. Ferdowsī *Shahnameh* 538.

399. This is not to say, however, that the Parthians disappeared after the rise of the house of Sasan. Several Parthian families aided Ardaxšīr I during his overthrow of the Arsacid dynasty and served loyally in the Sasanian army as heavy cavalry and generals. See Scott McDonough, "The Legs of the Throne: Kings, Elites, and the Subjects in Sasanian Iran," in *The Roman Empire in Context: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* ed. Johann P. Arnason and Kurt A. Raaflaub (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011): 298-301, 307; Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 5, 9-10, 37, 42-43, 96, 115.

400. Ferdowsī *Shahnameh* 539.

401. For more on Ardaxšīr I possessing the "glory" of the Keyanids, see Márkus Takeshita, "From Iranian Myth to Folk-Narrative: The Legend of the Dragon-Slayer and the Spinning Maiden in the Persian Book of the Kings," *Asian Folklore Studies* 60, no. 2 (2001): 206. For Ardaxšīr I's glory being greater than that of the Parthians, see *ibid.* 212.

402. *The Letter of Tansar* 7, 11-12, 22.

403. For Sasanian emperors attempting to link themselves to the Keyanids, see Touraj Daryaei, "National History or Keyanid History?: The Nature of Sassanid Zoroastrian Historiography," *Iranian Studies*

to perpetuate this aspect of this identity by repeating and reinforcing it in his text.⁴⁰⁴

The usurper Wahrām Čubīn then violated proper Iranian behavior by stating that the Arsacids deserved to rule.

This ties into the larger question of how Ferdowsī interpreted what it meant to be Iranian when he wrote the *Shahnameh*. As was established earlier, Ferdowsī was a Shia Muslim who wrote about the pre-Islamic past of Iran. While Mahmoud Omidasalar already has demonstrated that Ferdowsī was a product of this cultural hybridity, it cannot be denied that Ferdowsī also was keen on highlighting that as *šahanšah*, Xusrō II adhered to his ancestral religion—Zoroastrianism.⁴⁰⁵ This is important because as was established earlier in this dissertation, Xusrō II accommodated and bestowed patronage on the Christian subjects of his realm.

Recall that Emperor Maurice gave Xusrō II aid to regain his throne from Wahrām Čubīn. After Xusrō II defeated the *spahbed*, Maurice sent him treasures and kingly clothes as a way to legitimize his claim to the throne.⁴⁰⁶ What is interesting

28, no. 3-4 (Summer/Fall: 1995): 136-38; Touraj Daryaee, “The Construction of the Past in Late Antique Persia,” *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 55, H. 4 (2006): 502. And more importantly, see Touraj Daryaee, “Ardaxšīr and the Sasanians’ Rise to Power,” *Anabasis: Studia Classica et Orientalia* 1 (2010): 246, 250 for Ardaxšīr I falsifying his link to the Keyanids.

404. For the common Indo-Iranian narrative about the Keyanids as reflected by Ferdowsī, see Davidson, *Poet and Hero*, 6-7, 11, and 15.

405. For the link between Sasanian *šahanšahs* and Zoroastrianism, see McDonough, “The Legs of the Throne,” 291, 294; R. N. Frye, “The Political History of Iran under the Sasanians,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran, Volume 3 (1): The Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian Periods* ed. Ehsan Yarshater (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983): 134.

140. For *šahanšahs* visiting fire temples during their reign, see Arthur Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides* (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1944), 166-167; Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia*, 69-97. For the link between Iranian culture and Zoroastrianism, see Jonathan P. Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 27, 29.

406. As discussed in chapter one. See Theophylact Simocatta, *The History of Theophylact Simocatta*, 5.3.7 Matthew P. Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual Kingship Between Rome and Sasanian*

about how Ferdowsī portrays this incident is that he brings in the religious element of Maurice's gift to Xusrō II not found in the Roman sources. Ferdowsī, for instance, wrote that when Xusrō II received the clothes, he was dismayed to find that they had Christian crosses sewn on them. He thus complained to a minister:

These robes of Rome are not just the clothes of rich farmers, but of Christian priests!
If on our garments there were crosses, it may seem like there were Christian
[garments]! And if I wear [them], the magnates might say "The king of the flock has
become a Christian who has become involved in the Cross!"⁴⁰⁷

This passage demonstrates that Ferdowsī's Xusrō II was someone who was not ready to abandon Zoroastrianism for Christianity, despite the help Maurice, a Christian, may have sent him, because it may get the nobility talking that he converted. Xusrō II did not want to appear to flirt with the idea of wearing Christian garments. He eventually did wear them when that same minister advised him that if he did not, it may anger Maurice. So in the end, Xusrō II relented and wore the clothes to the banquet he held in the Romans' honor.⁴⁰⁸

Xusrō II's devotion to Zoroastrianism is more apparent when Maurice wrote

Iran (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2009), 187.

407. Firdausī *Khusrau Parwīz* 28 *The Shāhnāma of Firdausī*, in Warner and Warner, 308; Ferdowsī, *Xusrō Parwīz* 2079-2074, in Motlagh and Khatibi, 158:

[...] این جامه ی روم گوهرنگار،
به آیین پرمايه دهقان بود کجا جامه ی جاثلیقان بود!
چو بر جامه ی ما چلیپا بود بشست اندر آیین ترسا بود،
و اگر پوشم، این بامداران همه بگوین کین شهریار رمه،
مگر کز پی چیز ترسا شده ست که اندر میان چلیپا شده ست!

Translation modified from Warner and Warner.

408. Firdausī *Khusrau Parwīz* 30. The *Histoire Nestorienne* went further and stated that Xusrō II rehabilitated Christian churches in *Ērānšahr* as a way to say thank you to Maurice. See *Histoire Nestorienne (Seert Chronicle)*, *Seconde Partie* LVIII trans. Addai Scher and Robert Griveau in *Patrologia Orientalis: Tomus Decimus Tertius* ed. R. Graffin and F. Nau (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1919).

a letter to Xusrō II, congratulating him on the birth of his and Maryam's son, Šīroē. What is interesting about this letter is that Maurice asked Xusrō II to return the cross of Jesus Christ's crucifixion.⁴⁰⁹ Here, Ferdowsī rewrote history and whitewashed the fact that in reality, Xusrō II took the True Cross from the Romans when his armies captured Jerusalem in 614 CE during the war of the seventh century CE. Xusrō II acknowledged all that Maurice had done for him, but he refused to send back the True Cross to the Romans and told him not to worry about not having it.⁴¹⁰ Xusrō II stated that *Šahanšah* Ardaxšīr I took the True Cross to Ctesiphon, so by the time of his reign, the cross already had been in *Ērānšahr* for about four hundred years, instead of being taken from Jerusalem in 614 CE. Ferdowsī wanted to show his audience that, for centuries, the Iranians had the most important relic of Christianity while the Romans—officially a Christian empire—did not.

With this in mind, it may seem that Ferdowsī wanted to say that the Iranians, at least in the case of them possessing the True Cross, were superior to the Romans. But there is more to Xusrō II's reply to Maurice than that. Ferdowsī also wanted to demonstrate that Xusrō II was a staunch Zoroastrian who refused Maurice's request because again, he did not want to appear to the nobility that he converted to Christianity as a way to repay the Romans for their help.⁴¹¹ Xusrō II, in other words,

409. Firdausī *Khusrau Parwīz* 53.

410. Firdausī *Khusrau Parwīz* 54.

411. Firdausī *Khusrau Parwīz* 54.

was not only the last defender of the house of Sāsān because he defeated Wahrām Čubīn but because he remained faithful to Zoroastrianism.

This is especially true at the banquet he held in the Romans' honor. The Roman commander, Niatius, became angry at Xusrō II because he did not perform Christian rites at the start of the meal while wearing the cross-festooned clothes Maurice had sent him. Maryam, Xusrō II's wife, defused the situation when she told Niatius that Xusrō II never promised to convert to Christianity.⁴¹² Clearly, at least according to Ferdowsī, Xusrō II's dedication to Zoroastrianism was never an issue, because he never converted to Christianity, despite tolerating it, and witnessing its rites.⁴¹³

While it seems that Ferdowsī wanted to portray Xusrō II as a good man, and the examples cited are just a few from a large selection, there is one more important thing to consider when scrutinizing Ferdowsī's representation of Xusrō II: Did he think Xusrō II had anything to do with Hormīzd IV's death? This question is significant because as we will see later in this chapter, different authors with different agendas say whether Xusrō II did or not.

Recall that in their first clash, Wahrām Čubīn defeated Xusrō II, and the latter fled to Rome to ask Maurice for succor. When Xusrō II and his remaining companions fled Wahrām Čubīn's pursuing army, his uncles, Bīstahm and Bīndōe,

412. Firdausī *Khusrau Parwīz* 29. Christensen and Frye wrote that Xusrō II did not convert. See *L'Iran sous les sassanides*, 487; Frye, "The Political History of Iran under the Sasanians," 172. Xusrō II even visited the fire temple of Atur Gušnap after he defeated Wahrām Čubīn. See Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*, 15.

413. *Histoire Nestorienne* LIX.

urged him to keep riding to Constantinople, because Wahrām Čubīn would write to Maurice to warn him that Xusrō II was a rebel and to not help him.⁴¹⁴ This warning worked; Xusrō II rode faster while his uncles lagged behind. Things then took an evil turn for Hormīzd IV:

When he [Xusrō II] passed by, those two cruel ones returned [to Ctesiphon], eager for revenge, they arrived from the road and sought the palace of the king, full of distress and hearts full of sin. When they came near the throne, they took a string from a bow and wrapped it around his neck and hung him, the dear one. Thus became the crown and throne of the *šahanšah*; you would say that “Hormuz [Hormīzd IV] was not in the world!”⁴¹⁵

The evidence is clear: Ferdowsī did not believe that Xusrō II had anything to do with his father's death. Bīstahm and Bīndōe acted on their own and urged Xusrō II out of *Ērānšahr* so they could do the deed, and although he suspected they were hiding a secret when they caught up to him, Xusrō II was unaware of what his uncles did to his father. That Ferdowsī considered Xusrō II innocent of patricide is important because as we have seen already, he depicted the *šahanšah* as a valiant defender of the last mighty dynasty that ruled Iran before the advent of Islam. Ferdowsī's belief colored how he viewed Xusrō II, and we can see this being played out over and over again in the *Shahnameh*.

414. Firdausī *Khusrau Parwīz* 8.

415. *Khusrau Parwīz* 8 Firdausī *The Shāhnāma of Firdausī*, in Warner and Warner, 232; Ferdowsī, *Xusrō Parwīz* 643-637, in Motlagh and Khatibi, 51:

چن او بر گذشت این دو بیدادگر	از و باز گشتند پُرکینه سر،
ز راه اندر ایوان شاه آمدند	پر از رنج دل پُرگناه آمدند،
ز در چون رسیدند نزدیک تخت	زهی از کمان باز کردند سخت،
فگندند باگاه در گردنش	بیاویختند آن گرامی تنش،
شد آن تاج و تخت شاهنشهان	تو گفتی که هرمز نبد در جهان!

Translation modified from Warner and Warner.

Even when Xusrō II was arguably at fault for doing something wrong, Ferdowsī found a way to downplay this and cast the blame on someone else. For instance, Ferdowsī does not hide the fact that later in his reign, Xusrō II milked the lower classes to fill his treasury and surrounded himself with bad advisers. This action, however, had no effect on *Ērānšahr* until a group of conspirators decided to write to the Roman emperor, who was undoubtedly Heraclius (r. 610 CE-641 CE), asking him to invade with the promise of their help.⁴¹⁶ This is significant because it suggests that Ferdowsī chose to ignore the entire war of the seventh century CE, with all of Xusrō II's gains early in the war, and more importantly, the suffering of the Iranian people when Heraclius and his army slaughtered thousands of people in gruesome ways, including the emperor cutting open the bellies of pregnant women and dashing the fetuses against rocks⁴¹⁷ and the destruction of Zoroastrian fire temples.⁴¹⁸

All of this this evil inflicted upon the people of *Ērānšahr*, according to Ferdowsī, did not happen because Xusrō II first invaded the Romand Empire and almost conquered it, and the Romans responded in kind. It was Xusrō II's incompetent advisers who invited the Romans to take *Ērānšahr*.⁴¹⁹ With this in

416. Firdausī *Khusrau Parwīz* 63; Ferdowsī, *Shahnameh*, 816-817.

417. Thomas Sizgorich, "Sanctified Violence: Monotheist Militancy as the Tie That Bound Christian Rome and Islam," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 77, no. 4 (December: 2009): 905.

418. For Heraclius' atrocities committed upon the subjects of *Ērānšahr*, which had religious overtones, see Chapter one.

419. Ferdowsī's account also confirms, in a roundabout way, what the Roman, Armenian, and Albanian sources had to say about the downfall of Xusrō II: it was a conspiracy of the highest order. For communication between Šīroē and Heraclius after the murder of Xusrō II, see Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia* AM 6118, in *The Chronicle of Theophanes* trans. Cyril Mango and Roger Scott with Geoffrey

mind, it is amazing that Ferdowsī even referenced Xusrō II's love of treasure, and I suspect this is because Xusrō II's opulence was well known in the Iranian world, if this section from the *māh ī frawardīn rōz ī hordād* is any indication: “In the month of Fravardin on the day of Hordad, eighteen things in eighteen years came to Xusrō [II], son of Hormazd [Hormīzd IV].”⁴²⁰

Because he came from an Iranian background, Ferdowsī was more inclined to present Xusrō II in a good light. While the *Shahnameh* itself is a trove of how at least one Iranian in the tenth century CE interpreted the larger framework of Iranian history, it is important to look beyond Ferdowsī to understand that he is not a singularity. There is another author named Bal‘amī who translated the Arabic *History* of al-Ṭabarī into Persian and included events from the *X^wadāy-Nāmag* that differ from the original source.⁴²¹ Bal‘amī, like Ferdowsī, held the opinion that Xusrō II did not kill or have his father killed.

How Bal‘amī depicted Xusrō II's return to Ctesiphon is important, because it demonstrates that like Ferdowsī, he wanted to show that Xusrō II had nothing to do

Greatrex (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), Nikephoros, *Breviarium* 15-16 ed. and trans Cyril Mango, *Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople: Short History* (Washington, D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1990); *Chronicon Paschale* 628 *Chronicon Pascale, 284-628 AD: Translated with Notes and Introduction* by Michael Whitby and Mary Whitby (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1989); Movsēs Dasxuranci 13 *The History of the Caucasian Albanians* trans. C. J. F. Dowsett *The History of the Caucasian Albanians* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961); Pseudo-Sebēos *The Armenian History* 39; Howard-Johnston, “Al-Tabari on the Last Great War of Antiquity,” 13-14, 18; Daryae, *Sasanian Persia*, 33, 35; Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 148; Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 174-175, 178; Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 159, 173.

420. *Māh ī frawardīn rōz ī hordād* 27 *Corpus of Pahlavi Texts* ed. Jamaspji Dastur Minocherji Jamasp-Asana (Bombay, 1902), 323: *māh frawardīn rōz hordād haštadā čišpad haštadā sāl ō huraw ohrmazdān rasēd*. Special thanks to Soodabeh Melakzadeh-Eradji from the History Department of UC Irvine for help with this translation. See also Daryae, *Sasanian Iran*, 90.

421. Bal‘amī modified all of his sources. See Andrew Peacock, *Mediaeval Islamic Historiography and Political Legitimacy: Bal‘ami's Tarikhnama* (London: Routledge, 2007), 73-76. For Bal‘amī's modification of al-Ṭabarī in general, see *ibid.*, 76-88, 135-136.

with the blinding of Hormīzd IV. According to Bal'amī, after being welcomed by the people of Ctesiphon and accepting the crown:

Parvīz [Xusrō II] descended the throne and went near [to] his father on foot, and prostrated in front of Hormuz [Hormīzd IV] and kissed the earth at his feet, and cried and shed a lot of tears for what had happened to him, and swore that "I had no idea about what they had done to you and know nothing about the coins that Bahrām [Wahrām Čubīn] had minted, I did not know and I did not order it and it was all done by Bahrām [Wahrām Čubīn]. He wanted to cut me off from you and I did not approve of what these people did, but if I had not accepted this kingdom, people would have taken the kingship out of this family and your offspring."⁴²²

This passage suggests that Bal'amī, like Ferdowsī, believed that Wahrām Čubīn set up Xusrō II and that he was caught up in events beyond his control. What is more, based on Xusrō II's emotional pleas, we can safely surmise that indeed, he was not behind the rebellion and took the crown only because he believed that Arsacid usurper Wahrām Čubīn threatened the kingly house of Sāsān.

While it may seem that this quotation suggests that Xusrō II's apology to Hormīzd IV was self-serving and that he actually rebelled against him, Bal'amī wanted to make sure his audience knew that Hormīzd IV, at least, knew that his son had nothing to do with what happened to him:

422. Bal'amī 2-8 *Tarīkh-nāmah-yi Ṭabarī* ed. Moḥammad Rawshan *Tarīkh-nāmah-yi Ṭabarī* (Tehran: Nashr-i Naw, 1366 šamsī [1987]), 782; Bal'amī *Chronique de Abou-Djafar-Mo'hammed-Ben-Djarīr-Ben-Yezid Tabari, traduite sur la version Persane d'Abou-'Ali d'après les manuscrits de Paris, de Gotha, de Londres et de Canterbury*, vol. 2, ed. and French trans. M. Hermann Zotenberg (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1869), 274-275 (Here after cited as Bal'amī, *Chronique de Tabari*):

و پرویز از تخت فرود آمد و نزد پدر پیاده، و هرمز را زمین بوسه داد و بسیار جزع کرد و بگریست بدانکه بر وی رسید، و سوگند خورد که من از آن حدیثها که بر تو برداشتند و از آن درمها که بهرام زده بود آگاهی نبودم و ندانستم و نفرمودم و آن بهرام کرد و خواست که مرا از تو ببرد؛ و این کار که این مردمان کردند من نپسندم و نخواستم، ولیکن اگر این مُلک نپذیر فتمی مردمان این مُلک از این خاندان بیرون بردندی ق از فرزندان تو بشدی.

Translation based off Zotenberg, with special thanks to Soodabeh Melakzadeh-Eradji from the History Department of UC Irvine for her help.

Afterwards, Hormuz [Hormīzd IV] accepted his [Xusrō II's] apology and said, "I knew that you did not approve of what Bahrām [Wahrām Čubīn] did, and what the people did, and what you did well to accept the kingship."⁴²³

Because Bal'amī wrote that Hormīzd IV forgave Xusrō II and acknowledged that he was innocent, we can safely surmise that Bal'amī wanted his audience to understand that Xusrō II had no culpability in the rebellion against his father.

But what about the murder of Hormīzd IV? Again, like Ferdowsī, Bal'amī believed that Xusrō II was innocent and that the guilt of this crime lay at the feet of Bīstahm and Bīndōe. After Xusrō II fled to the Roman Empire to ask Maurice for help, Bal'amī wrote:

When they were a bit away from Madayen [Ctesiphon, literally "the cities"], his relatives [Bīstahm and Bīndōe] stopped and thought to themselves that "What we have done is not wise, now Bahrām [Wahrām Čubīn] will enter Madayen and enthrone Hormuz [Hormīzd IV] and take matters into his hands and send an army after us and arrest us. And if he does not find us, Hormuz [Hormīzd IV] will send some troops to the Caesar [Maurice] to arrest us. The best thing is to wipe Hormuz [Hormīzd IV] off the earth." They said to Parvīz [Xusrō II], "You head on, we will head back to the city to take care of some business and do what is best doing, and bid our wives farewell, and then follow you." And they did not say what [they] wanted to do. Parvīz [Xusrō II] thought that they were going to abandon him and turn towards Bahrām [Wahrām Čubīn]. So he rode his horse and left with those ten people and his heart was unhappy with his relatives. So they both went back and entered the city and went into the palace. They saw the women and slaves all weeping because of Parvīz's [Xusrō II] departure and others busy with other stuff. So they said, "We have something to do with the king alone, and we have brought a message from Parvīz [Xusrō II]." They entered and no one in the house paid attention to them, as they were weeping and mourning for Parvīz [Xusrō II], and they cuffed Hormuz's [Hormīzd IV] hands and put his headgear around his neck and strangled him and came out mounted [their horses] and went after Parvīz [Xusrō II] and found him. Parvīz [Xusrō II] rejoiced upon [seeing them] and they said, "We took some things from home and bid our wives farewell," and did not say that they had murdered Hormuz [Hormīzd IV].⁴²⁴

423. Bal'amī 8-10 *Tarīkh-nāmah-yi Ṭabarī* ed. Moḥammad Rawshn *Tarīkh-nāmah-yi Ṭabarī* (Tehran: Nashr-i Naw, 1366 *šamsī* [1987]), 782; Bal'amī, *Chronique de Tabari*, in Zotenberg, 275:

پس هرمز عذر وی بپذیرفت و گفت: دانستم که تو از آن کار که بهرام کرد خبر نداشتی، و این کار که مردان کردند نپسندیدی، و نیک کردی که ملک را پذیرفتی.

Translation based off Zotenberg, with special thanks to Soodabeh Melakzadeh-Eradji from the History Department of UC Irvine for her help.

424. Bal'amī 13-20, 1-3 *Tarīkh-nāmah-yi Ṭabarī* ed. Moḥammad Rawshn *Tarīkh-nāmah-yi Ṭabarī* 167

This passage is remarkable because it suggests that Bal'amī believed that Xusrō II's uncles killed Hormīzd IV without his knowledge. They lied to him and returned to Ctesiphon to save themselves by assassinating Hormīzd IV. What is even more, just because Bal'amī wrote that Xusrō II was happy that Bīstahm and Bīndōe returned to him does not imply that Xusrō II knew what his uncles were doing. Xusrō II's joy is indicative of his dire situation: His entire army had deserted him, save for ten men. Xusrō II was happy to have anyone by his side, even if two of those men harmed his father.

It is clear that Bal'amī and Ferdowsī shared a common belief that Xusrō II was innocent of harming Hormīzd IV and rebelling against him. Xusrō II was drawn into a series of events that were beyond his control, and he reacted accordingly to

(Tehran: Nashr-i Naw, 1366 *šamsī* [1987]), 785-786; Bal'amī, *Chronique de Tabari*, in Zotenberg, 278-279:

چون لختی از مداین بر رفتند، خالانش بیستادند و با خویشتن گفتند این نه یدبیر است که ما کردیم. اکنون بهرام به مداین اندر آید و هرمز را به ادشاهی بنشاند و خود کار نگیرد و از پس ما سپاه فرستد و ما را بگیرد، و اگر بیابد هرمز به قیصر کس فرستد تا ما را بگیرد. صواب آن است که ما هرمز را از روی زمین کم کنیم. اینسان پرویز را گفتند: تو بر و که ما به شهر باز خواهیم شدن تا کاری بسازیم و آنچه ببايد کردن بکنیم و عیالان را بدرود کنیم از پس شما بیاییم: و نگفتند که ما همی چه خواهیم کردن پریز پنداشت که ایشان از وی همی باز ایستند و سوی بهرام خواهند شدن. است براند و برقت با آن ده تن و دلش از خالان آزرده بود. و ایشان هر دو باز گشتند و به شهر آمدند و به کوشک اندر شدند. زبان و کنیزکان بدیدند مشغول شده به گریستن از بهر رفتن پریز و هر کسی به شغلی دیگر. پیش ایشان گفتند ما را با شاه حدیثی است تنها و پیغام آوردهایم از پرویز بدیشان نپردخت. و هرمز را دستها بپستند و عمامه به گردنش افگندند و خبه کردند؛ و بیرون آمدند و بر نشستند و از پس پرویز بر رفتند و او را اندر یافتند. پرویز شاد شد بدیشان و ایشان او را گفتند ما از خانه نفقات بر گرفتیم و عیالان را بدرود کردیم، و نگفتند که هرمز را کشتیم.

Translation based off Zotenberg, with special thanks to Soodabeh Melakzadeh-Eradji from the History Department of UC Irvine for her help. For Madayan as Ctesiphon, see Frye, "The Political History of Iran under the Sasanians," 120; Stefan R. Hauser, "Vēh Ardashīr and the Identification of the Ruins at al-Madā'in," in *Facts and Artefacts, Art in the Islamic World: Festschrift for Jens Kröger on his 65th Birthday* ed. Annette Hagedorn and Avinoram Shalem (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007): 461.

save his family, the Sasanian dynasty. Of course, it is possible that Xusrō II was a rebel and had his father killed so he could take the throne during the confusion of Wahrām Čubīn's revolt. To be fair, neither Bal'amī nor Ferdowsī offer us any evidence of Xusrō II's innocence; they imply he did not do anything wrong. To get an alternate point of view, we must leave the "pure" Iranian sources behind and examine a source written in Arabic, the *History* of al-Ṭabarī.

Al-Ṭabarī was born in the ninth century CE in Ṭabīristān, modern Mazandaran, Iran.⁴²⁵ It is important to understand that just because he was born in the Iranian world does not mean he shared the same sentiments of Bal'amī and Ferdowsī. Al-Ṭabarī came from a family of Muslim colonists who settled in the former *Ērānšahr* after the conquests, and his devotion to Islam colored how he wrote about Sasanian history.⁴²⁶ While it is true that all three authors pulled from the *X^wadāy-Nāmag*, al-Ṭabarī presents us with a different version of Xusrō II not found in the other sources.⁴²⁷ Al-Ṭabarī's Xusrō II is a man who wanted the throne so badly that he committed the sin of patricide.

425. Rosenthal, "The Life and Works of al-Ṭabarī," 10.

426. Kennedy, *When Baghdad Ruled the Muslim World*, xx-xxi; Rosenthal, "The Life and Works of al-Ṭabarī," 12.

427. For more on the *X^wadāy-Nāmag* and how it influenced all four authors, see James Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World in Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 341-348; Zeev Rubin, "Al-Ṭabarī and the Age of the Sasanians," in *Al-Ṭabarī: A Medieval Muslim Historian and His Work* ed. Hugh Kennedy (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 2008): 60-62; Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 13. For al-Ṭabarī and the *X^wadāy-Nāmag*, see "Al-Ṭabarī on the Last Great War of Antiquity," 8; Mohsen Zakeri, "Al-Ṭabarī on Sasanian History: A Study in Sources," in *Al-Ṭabarī: A Medieval Muslim Historian and His Work* ed. Hugh Kennedy (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 2008): 28. For Ferdowsī and the *X^wadāy-Nāmag*, see Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World in Crisis*, 348-353; Omidsalar, *Poetics and Politics*, 26-46, 58-66. For the alternate view that Ferdowsī got most of his information from oral sources, see Davidson, *Poet and Hero*, 3-7, 29-44. For al-Tha'ālibī, see Omidsalar, *Poetics and Politics*, 51-52. For Bal'amī, see Omidsalar, *Poetics and Politics*, 68.

Al-Ṭabarī's account of Wahrām Čubīn's rebellion and Xusrō II's flight from *Ērānšahr* to Azerbaijan follows that of Bal'amī and Ferdowsī,⁴²⁸ including his apology to Hormīzd IV.⁴²⁹ We need to consider, however, one important detail. After Xusrō II's army deserted him and before his journey to Constantinople, Bīstahm and Bīndōe became worried that Wahrām Čubīn would restore Hormīzd IV to the throne and write to Maurice to send Xusrō II and his companions back to *Ērānšahr* so they may be put to death.⁴³⁰ Xusrō II's uncles asked his permission to kill Hormīzd IV, a request he ignored. Bīstahm and Bīndōe returned to Ctesiphon, strangled, Hormīzd IV to death, and then meet up with Xusrō II on the road. They told Xusrō II that he could proceed on his quest under the best possible circumstances.⁴³¹ Al-Ṭabarī wanted to imply that Bīstahm and Bīndōe murdered Hormīzd IV to absolve Xusrō II of any blame, but the young *šahanšah* still played a role in the murder of his father by tacitly allowing it.⁴³²

Al-Ṭabarī's assertion is shocking because when he began his description of Xusrō II, the author called him mighty, brave, and farsighted.⁴³³ It is important,

428. Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī *The History of al-Ṭabarī: An Annotated Translation: Volume V, The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen* trans. C. E. Bosworth (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), 295-305.

429. Al-Ṭabarī, *The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen*, 306-307.

430. Al-Ṭabarī, *The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen*, 309.

431. Al-Ṭabarī, *The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen*, 309-310.

432. Al-Ṭabarī, *The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen*, 310, note 725; Christensen, *L'Iran sous les sassanides*, 444.

433. Al-Ṭabarī, *The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen*, 305.

however, to realize that when one undercuts someone else's legacy, it is sometimes a better tactic to imply that that person committed egregious deeds, such as tacitly allowing one's father to be murdered. This is al-Ṭabarī's strategy in portraying Xusrō II the way he does; there are little hints here and there in the narrative that demonstrate to the reader of the text that Xusrō II was an unseemly character.

This is especially true in how al-Ṭabarī depicted the war of the seventh century CE. He gets the origins of the war correct: A rebellion in the Roman Empire occurred; Maurice and his family were killed; afterwards, Phocas (r. 602 CE-610 CE) assumed the emperorship, and then Xusrō II gave Maurice's son, Theodosius, sanctuary and invaded Roman territory to avenge the man who had aided him years before.⁴³⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, however, used the war of the seventh century CE to suggest that Emperor Heraclius (who deposed Phocas in 610 CE) was divinely sanctioned to defeat Xusrō II.

According to al-Ṭabarī, Heraclius had a dream where a supernatural figure cast down Xusrō II and put a chain around his neck.⁴³⁵ In another episode, when the Sasanian army was unstoppable and had the Romans in retreat early in the war, the polytheists of Arabia mocked the prophet Muḥammad and his followers. The Muslims replied that God was behind the Romans because they were Christian and they soon would defeat the Zoroastrian Iranians.⁴³⁶ The God of Abraham, in other

434. Al-Ṭabarī, *The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen*, 315-316.

435. Al-Ṭabarī, *The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen*, 320; Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 124.

436. Al-Ṭabarī, *The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen*, 324-327; Nadia Maria El-Cheikh, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 26-30; Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, 207-210; Lawrence I. Conrad, "Heraclius in Early Islamic

words, supported his children, the Christian Romans, against the pagan Iranians. This episode suggests that al-Ṭabarī wanted to demonstrate for his audience the inferiority of Persian Zoroastrianism to the God of the Christians, who is the same God worshipped by Muslims.

Al-Ṭabarī also used Xusrō II as an example of a monarch who knew that Muḥammad was a prophet but refused to hear the message. Over the course of his reign, an angel supposedly visited Xusrō II and told him that a prophet was ascendant (Muḥammad) and to accept God, but Xusrō II became frightful and chased away the apparition.⁴³⁷ What is remarkable about this is another Muslim historian, Ibn Ishāq, also said the same thing about Heraclius. After the Romans defeated the Sasanians, Heraclius recognized Muḥammad as the last prophet of God, but he could not convert to Islam because of pressures from the Roman political elite.⁴³⁸ The two leaders of two mighty realms were thus portrayed as people who were exposed to Islam but failed to recognize it.

Because al-Ṭabarī wanted to paint Xusrō II as a stubborn Zoroastrian who rejected Islam, the rest of his narrative is a showcase for the *šahanšah's* shortcomings. Like Ferdowsī, al-Ṭabarī also wrote about Xusrō II's covetousness; but with al-Ṭabarī's hostility to Xusrō II, this portrayal takes a malevolent bent not found

Kerygma,” in *The Reign of Heraclius (610-641): Crisis and Confrontation* eds. Gerrit J. Reinink and Bernard H. Stolte (Leuven: Peeters Publishing Publishing, 2002): 114-130.

437. Al-Ṭabarī, *The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen*, 335-338.

438. See, for instance, Ibn Ishāq, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ishāq's Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* ed. and trans. Alfred Guillaume (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 654-656; Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 69-70.

in the *Shahnameh*. In al-Ṭabarī's account, Xusrō II is driven to collect more taxes (the bane of all civilized people) from the subjects of *Ērānšahr*.⁴³⁹

Moreover, al-Ṭabarī also wrote that as the war with the Romans dragged on, the Sasanians sustained a string of defeats, and Xusrō II demanded the soldiers who survived be put to death.⁴⁴⁰ Even Xusrō II's high command allegedly was not spared his suspicions. According to al-Ṭabarī, the *spahbed* Šahbarāz had a dream where he was *šahanšah*. Xusrō II got word of this, became jealous, removed him from command, and ordered his death.⁴⁴¹ Šahbarāz, in turn, wrote to Heraclius and proposed an alliance to fight against Xusrō II.⁴⁴² In al-Ṭabarī's point of view, Xusrō II's jealousy led to the events of his downfall, which confirms Ferdowsī's account that a conspiracy toppled the *šahanšah*.

This anti-Xusrō II conspiracy emerged from the darkest shadows of Iranian society and freed Xusrō II's son, Šīroē, from prison (Xusrō II had him imprisoned based on an omen that he would end the Sasanian dynasty⁴⁴³) and declared him *šahanšah* the following morning. Xusrō II fled to the palace garden in terror,

439. Al-Ṭabarī, *The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen*, 375-376.

440. Al-Ṭabarī, *The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen*, 378; "Al-Tabari on the Last Great War of Antiquity," 16.

441. Al-Ṭabarī, *The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen*, 328; Walter E. Kaegi and Paul M. Cobb, "Heraclius, Šahrbarāz, and al-Ṭabarī," in *Al-Ṭabarī: A Medieval Muslim Historian and His Work* ed. Hugh Kennedy (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 2008): 95-112; Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 145. According to Kaegi, it was Šahbarāz's failure to hold back the Romans that led to Xusrō II's anger with him. See Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 149, 151.

442. Al-Ṭabarī, *The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen*, 329-330.

443. Al-Ṭabarī, *The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen*, 380.

according to al-Ṭabarī, where he was arrested and charged with overtaxing the people, killing his political enemies, and putting too many soldiers on the Roman-Sasanian border.⁴⁴⁴ This depiction is in opposition to Ferdowsī and Bal‘amī, who wrote that when his wife, Šērīn, awoke him with the news of the revolt, Xusrō II donned his armor and awaited his captors in the gardens, where several had to turn back because they were too afraid to arrest him.⁴⁴⁵ Even at the end of Xusrō II's reign, al-Ṭabarī wants to paint him in a bad manner that differs from the Persian accounts.

While al-Ṭabarī by himself offers us enough evidence to show that his version of Xusrō II is different from those of Bal‘amī and Ferdowsī, another author who wrote in Arabic, al-Tha‘ālibī, corroborates the slanderous claim made by al-Ṭabarī that Xusrō II was implicitly involved in Hormīzd IV's death. Al-Tha‘ālibī's *History* suggests that al-Ṭabarī was not alone in how he portrayed Xusrō II. A careful reading, however, of al-Tha‘ālibī shows that he did not want to paint Xusrō II in a bad light as did al-Ṭabarī. But as we shall see, even if al-Tha‘ālibī wanted to provide his audience with the “true” Xusrō II, he still believed the *šahanšah* committed patricide.

Al-Tha‘ālibī follows the same trajectory as the other sources studied in this chapter when he wrote about Xusrō II's actions after Hormīzd IV was blinded. Xusrō

444. Al-Ṭabarī, *The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen*, 379. Xusrō II's response to these charges are studied in the conclusion to this dissertation.

445. Firdausī *Khusrau Parwīz* 64; Ferdowsī, *Shahnameh*, 820; Bal‘amī, *Chronique de Tabari*, 331.

II returned to *Ērānšahr*, came before his father, and wept. Hormīzd IV then forgave him.⁴⁴⁶ Wahrām Čubīn defeated Xusrō II in battle, and Xusrō II fled to the Romans for help.⁴⁴⁷ Like Ferdowsī, Bal‘amī, and al-Ṭabarī, al-Tha‘ālibī wrote that on the journey to the Roman Empire, Bīstahm and Bīndōe became worried that Wahrām Čubīn would reinstate Hormīzd IV on the throne and write to Maurice to have them arrested. The two asked Xusrō II for permission to kill his father, and he refused. They killed Hormīzd IV anyway and told Xusrō II that God gave him the opportunity to succeed.⁴⁴⁸

This demonstrates that al-Tha‘ālibī believed that Xusrō II was involved in his father's death, as al-Ṭabarī wrote in his *History*. Al-Tha‘ālibī, on the other hand, went further and wrote that after he secured his throne, Xusrō II realized that he had a kingly duty and could not let the murders of his father remain unpunished; so he ordered them to be strangled.⁴⁴⁹ While Xusrō II's actions could be labelled as “too little too late” because he avenged his father's murder after his uncles aided him against Wahrām Čubīn, it should be noted that it is remarkable that al-Tha‘ālibī even attempted to say that Xusrō II did anything to punish his uncles. Al-Tha‘ālibī could have been like al-Ṭabarī and chosen to highlight all of Xusrō II's bad qualities, but he

446. Al-Tha‘ālibī, *Histoire des rois des perses par Aboū Manšoūr ‘abd Al-Malik ibn Moḥammad ibn Ismā‘il al-Tha‘ālibī* ed. and French trans. M. Herman Zotenberg (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1900), 662.

447. Al-Tha‘ālibī, *Histoire des rois des perses*, 665.

448. Al-Tha‘ālibī, *Histoire des rois des perses*, 666.

449. Al-Tha‘ālibī, *Histoire des rois des perses*, 670; Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 155.

strove for a balanced depiction of the *šahanšah*.

Even al-Tha‘ālibī's description of Xusrō II's wealth, which is massive and spans several pages in the French translation,⁴⁵⁰ corroborates al-Ṭabarī, with a major exception. Al-Tha‘ālibī claimed that Xusrō II got much of his treasure when the Sasanians invaded the Roman Empire to avenge his patron, Maurice.⁴⁵¹ Al-Tha‘ālibī went far beyond other authors and wrote that Xusrō II thanked God for giving him the riches of the Roman Empire, including the True Cross.⁴⁵²

Al-Tha‘ālibī is important because while he was a Muslim author who ostensibly wanted to portray Xusrō II in a bad light, he was more concerned with presenting different aspects of the *šahanšah*. Thus, al-Tha‘ālibī is an example of a Muslim, who although he wrote about the bad characteristics of Xusrō II, he did not do so in a malicious manner. Al-Tha‘ālibī wanted to present Xusrō II's complexities, even if that meant linking him with Hormīzd IV's murder.

The disparity between the two groups of sources suggests that the figure of Xusrō II was part of a larger struggle between two groups of Muslims in what was *Ērānšahr*: people such as Ferdowsī and Bal‘amī, and to a lesser extent, al-Tha‘ālibī, who depicted Xusrō II as a young man caught in the turmoil of his realm and had nothing to do with the rebellion against Hormīzd IV or his death. These authors represented people who were Muslim, but they still retained the memory of Iranian

450. Al-Tha‘ālibī, *Histoire des rois des perses*, 687-689, 698-711. For more on Xusrō II's possessions, see Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*, 146-147.

451. Al-Tha‘ālibī, *Histoire des rois des perses*, 700-701.

452. Al-Tha‘ālibī, *Histoire des rois des perses*, 701.

culture that predated Islam. That is why Xusrō II is presented as a noble figure in these texts.

Al-Ṭabarī, on the other hand, was someone who, although he was born in the former territory of *Ērānšahr*, traced his lineage to Muslim settlers who came to Tabīristān; thus, it makes sense why as an outsider, he would be more hostile to pre-Islamic Iranian culture, especially the Zoroastrian Xusrō II. Al-Ṭabarī's *History* was an effort, in part, to undermine the legacy of pre-Islamic Iran. That is why his version of Xusrō II is not especially flattering and why he championed the Romans over the Iranians during the war of the seventh century CE. Then, if we shift our view to how al-Ṭabarī imagined the Islamic conquest of *Ērānšahr*, we can understand why he projected such negativity onto Xusrō II and why Ferdowsī and Bal'amī presented the better aspects of Xusrō II's character.

Al-Ṭabarī, for instance, wrote that the Arabs fought against the Iranians with the ferocity of a lion and were stricken with awe and fear.⁴⁵³ According to al-Ṭabarī, the Iranians were able to hold back the Arab advance only with difficulty, and the Arabs kept pressing forward. When al-Ṭabarī wrote his work in the ninth-century world, in other words, the cultural environment was that Arabs were the lions, the beasts of the jungle, while the Sasanians were the lions' prey, and these lions did not falter in the hunt.

453. Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī *The History of al-Ṭabarī: An Annotated Translation: Volume XII, The Battle of al-Qādisiyyah and the Conquest of Syria and Palestine* trans. Yohanan Friedman (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), 7.

The theme of Arab hunter versus Sasanian prey was repeated once more in al-Ṭabarī's work. In a report to the last *šahanšah* Yazdgird III (r. 632 CE-651 CE), the *spahbed* Rostam Farroxxād described the Arabs as attacking the Iranians like wolves attacking an unsuspecting shepherd.⁴⁵⁴ The tenacity of the Arabs manifested itself as being described as being animal-like, while the Sasanians, no matter what, could not stop the beast that wanted the lands of *Ērānšahr* and the blood of the Iranians and their sons if they did not convert to Islam.⁴⁵⁵ This suggests that at least in the minds of the Arabs, spreading Islam is what drove the Arabs to conquer *Ērānšahr* like lions and wolves. The compilers of the *Dēnkard* (the compendium of Zoroastrian knowledge compiled in the ninth century CE⁴⁵⁶) referenced the Muslim invaders as being merciless.⁴⁵⁷

In the seventh book of the *Dēnkard*, for instance, there is reference to the stages of the Islamic invasion, and these references suggest that the compilers of the *Dēnkard* believed that the Arab invasion of *Ērānšahr* was violent and that Zoroastrianism was under threat. The compilers wrote that during the invasion, the *magi* no longer could speak the truth about Zoroastrianism and that the sacred fires

454. Al-Ṭabarī, *The Battle of al-Qādisiyyah and the Conquest of Syria and Palestine*, 43; Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 224.

455. Al-Ṭabarī, *The Battle of al-Qādisiyyah and the Conquest of Syria and Palestine*, 50; Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, 177-178.

456. Farhang Mehr, *The Zoroastrian Tradition: An Introduction to the Ancient Wisdom of Zarathustra* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2003), 13.

457. *Dēnkard, Book Seven: Wonders of Zoroastrianism* 7.7.29 trans. E. W. West 7.7.25 in *Sacred Books of the East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1897).

burning in temples were disturbed.⁴⁵⁸ The Arab invaders were called evil, and it was written that they spread misery, pestilence, strife, and demon worship in *Ērānšahr*.⁴⁵⁹ Based on the violent events of the seventh century CE, it is not hard to see why the compilers of the *Dēnkard* would portray their world in stark terms. But this is not to say that the Sasanians allowed to Muslims to advance unobstructed, as is evidenced by the fierce resistance of the people of Ctesiphon to the Arab siege of the city after the decisive Arab victory at the battle of al-Qādisiyyah (637 CE).⁴⁶⁰ But the Muslims kept pressing their advance through *Ērānšahr* without pause.⁴⁶¹

A memory of violence, however, is not the only traumatizing part to Zoroastrian identity in the ninth century CE. After the death of Yazdgird III, the Arab conquest was complete and thus began the decay of Zoroastrianism. Zoroastrians began to convert to Islam whether by force, or what was perhaps more likely, voluntarily in order for Sasanians to align themselves with their Arab conquerors to better their position in life. Despite Peter Clark's assertion that Muslims persecuted Zoroastrians, the former Sasanian world was not entirely one of forced conversion to Islam, and there was toleration of non-Muslims in the centuries after the conquests,⁴⁶² but the new world

458. *Dēnkard* 7.7.32.

459. *Dēnkard* 7.7.36.

460. Daryaee, *Sasanian Iran*, 96-97; Dignas and Winter, *Rome and Persia*, 48; Jonathan P. Berkeley, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 73.

461. For the advance of the Arabs, see Daryaee, *Sasanian Iran*, 98-101.

462. For Clark's view, see Peter Clark, *Zoroastrianism: An Introduction to an Ancient Faith* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1998), 89-90; Mehr, *The Zoroastrian Tradition*, 17. For the alternate view, see especially Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief*, 233; Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge, 1987), 149-150; Berkeley, *The Formation of Islam*, 91. Indeed, the Muslims during this time were more concerned with combatting Manichaeism, not Zoroastrianism. See Berkeley, *The*

order was clearly pro-Muslim. While the public use of most fire temples was prohibited, private Zoroastrian worship still was allowed. But the fact remains that Islam became the grease that lubricated the wheels of post-conquest Iran. In order to get ahead in the world, one had to be Muslim, and that required conversion from Zoroastrianism in order to do so.⁴⁶³

That process began even before the conclusion of the Islamic conquest of *Ērānšahr* when Zoroastrians began to convert to Islam. Most converts in this period were Sasanian prisoners of war captured in battle. Al-Ṭabarī, if he is to be believed at all, reported that after one battle, 120,000 men converted to Islam.⁴⁶⁴ These conversions only accelerated as time marched on, and more and more Zoroastrians apostatized to Islam, and thus we see statements such as the followers of false religions end up only in hell.⁴⁶⁵

These voluntary conversions were cause for alarm in the compilers of the *Dēnkard*. As more people converted from Zoroastrianism to Islam, the loss of followers of the good religion who voluntarily left was the shock that forced Zoroastrians after the conquest to re-evaluate their position in the world. As more and more people converted

Formation of Islam, 32.

463. For the marginalization of Zoroastrians, see Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings in Early Islam* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1997), 241. It should be noted that many people in newly conquered lands converted to Islam for privilege's sake. See Jacques Waardenburg, "The Medieval Period 650-1500," in *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions: A Historical Survey* ed. Jacques Waardenburg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999): 36; Crone, *The Nativist Prophets*, 13.

464. Al-Ṭabarī, *The Battle of al-Qādisiyyah and the Conquest of Syria and Palestine*, 60.

465. *Dēnkard: Acts of Religion* 3.78.

to Islam, the scenes described by Thomas, Bishop of Maraga, became commonplace:

And while a man was passing at night along the road, at the side of a fire temple [literally “house of fire”] of the Magians, which had been a ruin for some time, demons went out after him in the form of black ravens.⁴⁶⁶

Or, what was probably the most common, the fire temples, where people honored Ohrmazd (the Zoroastrian deity) and where *šahanšahs* celebrated their coronation, were converted into mosques, one temple at a time.⁴⁶⁷ This is perhaps the reason why the compilers of the *Dēnkard* wrote, “The adversary of religion is bad religion and non-Iranian behavior.”⁴⁶⁸ The compilers were responding to an environment tainted with holy war and conversion by creating strong communal ties within the Zoroastrian community.⁴⁶⁹

Again, if we look to Arab sources, we see that the Zoroastrians’ worst fear coming true. The Muslim thinker Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal became upset when his students asked him

466. Thomas, Bishop of Maraga VI *The Book of Governors*, vol. 2, ed. E. A. Wallis Budge (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press: 2003), 599; Thomas, Bishop of Maraga 6.6 *The Book of Governors: The Historia Monastica of Thomas Bishop of Maraga, A.D. 840*, vol. 1, ed. E. A. Wallis Budge (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press: 2003), 344:

وَجَبَلًا: بَقِيَّة
دَكَهَسَ وَنَفَا كَرَهَبًا دَهْجًا اِهْجَبًا:

Translation modified from Budge. For the destruction of fire temples in *Ērānšāhr*, see Berkeley, *The Formation of Islam*, 100; C. E. Bosworth, “The Coming of Islam to Afghanistan,” *Islam and Asia I, South Asia* ed. Y. Friedman (Jerusalem, 1984): 13-14 reprinted in *The Arabs, Byzantium and Iran: Studies in Early Islamic History and Culture* (London: Variorum, 1996). See also Michael G. Morony, “Religious Communities in Late Sasanian and Early Muslim Iraq,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 17, no. 2 (May, 1974): 121-122.

467. For the slow process of Muslim authorities confiscating fire temples, see Bürgel, “Zoroastrianism as Viewed in Medieval Islamic Sources,” 203; Berkeley, *The Formation of Islam*, 100-101; Boyce, *Zoroastrians*, 147. For fire temples used as coronation of Sasanian emperors, see Matthew P. Canepa, *Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual Kingship Between Rome and Sasanian Iran* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2009), 16-17.

468. Aturpāt-I Ēmētān, *The Wisdom of the Sasanian Sages (Dēnkard VI)* 6.246 trans. Shaul Shaked (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979), 97.

469. Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory* trans. Rodney Livingstone (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 10, 38. For the use of trauma as a communal agent, see Bernard Giesen, *Triumph and Trauma* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2004), 48-54.

if nonbelievers were a part of Muḥammad's community. Ibn Ḥanbal's reaction that no one should ask this question leads one to believe that indeed, nonbelievers, especially Christians and Jews, were in Muḥammad's community.⁴⁷⁰ The world of Ibn Ḥanbal was one of communal mixing, and thus we can see that indeed, the Zoroastrians were mixing with Muslims during the ninth century CE.⁴⁷¹

Another question was posed to Ibn Ḥanbal concerning Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians who took part in raids against the Christian Roman Empire. Were these people allowed booty? If so, how much? Ibn Ḥanbal replied that these people were allowed only a small share.⁴⁷² Then after Ibn Ḥanbal's death, it was reported that Muslims, Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians all mourned.⁴⁷³ Clearly, Zoroastrians were interacting with Muslims in the ninth century CE. While Ibn Ḥanbal was concerned with maintaining religious boundaries, the Zoroastrians reacted with horror because every Zoroastrian who apostatized or interacted with a non-Zoroastrian, then Zoroastrianism was deprived of someone to aid in the battle against Ahriman, its malevolent deity.⁴⁷⁴ If

470. Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief*, 244.

471. Kennedy, *When Baghdad Ruled the Muslim World*, 6.

472. Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief*, 253.

473. Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief*, 245. For more on the blending between Muslim Arab and Zoroastrian cultures, see Hoyland, *Seeing Islam and Others Saw It*, 20.

474. Shaul Shaked, *Dualism in Transformation: Varieties of Religion in Sasanian Iran* (London: University of London, 1994), 52, 64-65; Saul Shaked, "Esoteric Trends in Zoroastrianism," in *Proceedings from the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 3 (Jerusalem: 1969): 190 reprinted in *From Zoroastrianism to Islam Studies in Religious History and Intercultural Contacts* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1995); *Dēnkard: Acts of Religion* 3.49, 3.192 ed. and trans. Peshotun Dastoor Behramjee Sanjana (Bombay: D. Ardeshir & Co., 1874); Aturpāt-I Ēmētān 6.77 *The Wisdom of the Sasanian Sages (Dēnkard VI)*; Mehr, *The Zoroastrian Tradition*, 95-96; James Howard-Johnston, "The Two Great Powers in Late Antiquity: A Comparison," in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East. III: States, Resources and Armies* ed. A. Cameron (Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, 1995): 226 reprinted in *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity: Historiographical and Historical Studies* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2006); Boyce, *Zoroastrians*, 20; Jes P. Asmusen, "Some Remarks on Sasanian Demonology," in *Hommage Universel* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 237-238.

we glance at another Zoroastrian text compiled in the ninth century CE, the *Ardā Virāz Nāmag*, the souls of apostates would be sent to hell:

And I saw the soul of a man who, in hell, stood in a column, in the manner of a snake. And his head was like the head of a man and the other [the rest of the body] was like a snake. And I asked thus, “What crime did this body do?” Sroš the righteous and Ādur the angel said thus, “This is the soul of that evil man who, in the world, did heresy; and he fled into hell in the form of a snake.”⁴⁷⁵

Then in the eighth book of the *Dēnkard*, the book concerning Zoroastrian religious law, there is a reference to specific modes of action to be taken to erase the “deceptions” of apostates, although we are left wondering what these actions may be.⁴⁷⁶ The post-Sasanian world of Zoroastrianism is a stark one indeed.

While Ferdowsī and Bal‘amī were decidedly not Zoroastrian, it is not outside the realm of possibility that they remembered not only the Islamic conquest of Iran but what *Ērānšahr* was before the arrival of Islam. The memory of violence left an imprint on these two men, and this is perhaps why they did not write about the Roman-Sasanian War of the seventh century CE. In their minds, perhaps the Islamic conquests overshadowed what Heraclius and his armies did when they invaded *Ērānšahr* and destroyed Zoroastrian fire temples because the Zoroastrians were able to recover from that disaster. They were unable, however, to recover from the slow process of

475. *Ardā Virāz Nāmag* 36.1-4 *Arda Viraz (Pahlavi)* Accessed April 26, 2014 <http://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etcs/iran/miran/mpers/arda/arda.htm>; *The Book of Arda Viraf* 36.1-5 and trans. Martin Huag with assistance by W. W. West *Sacred Books and Literature of the East, Volume II: Ancient Persia* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1917): *u-m dīd ruwān mard-ē kē andar dušox pad ēwēnag ī mār-ē ī čand stūne-e bē ēstād u-š sar ō sar ī mardōmān ud abārīg tan ō mār homānāg būd u-m pūrsīd kū ēn tan čē wināh kard gōwēd srōš-ahlaw ud ādur-yazad kū ēn ruwān ī ōy druwand mard kē-š pad gētīg ahlomōyīh kard u-š andar dušox [pad] mār-kirbīh dwārist*. Translation modified from Huag. For supernatural reward and punishment in Zoroastrianism, see Clark, *Zoroastrianism*, 64.

476. *Dēnkard, Book Eight: Contents of the Nasks (Ancient Canon of Zoroastrianism)* 8.5.58 trans. E. W. West 8.5.58 in *Sacred Books of the East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1897), 31.

conversion that began after Yazdgird III fled *Ērānšahr* and became a beggar king, roaming from province to province of his former empire in an attempt to rally men to his cause; he even went to the Chinese for military support.⁴⁷⁷

Thus, we see that Ferdowsī and Bal‘amī were aware of the fall of the Sasanian dynasty and the efforts of some people, such as al-Ṭabarī, to defame Xusrō II by making him into a patricide and a greedy man who was so paranoid that he began liquidating the nobility when they could not push back against the Roman advance. Then maybe in their point of view, the Islamic conquest of *Ērānšahr* was more damaging than Heraclius' invasion because many Zoroastrians began to convert to Islam, and Iranian culture began to change slowly over time. This is more important because it was the war of the seventh century CE that weakened both the Roman Empire and *Ērānšahr* and allowed the Arab Muslims to rise.⁴⁷⁸ G.W. Bowersock has even stated that Heraclius' defeat of Xusrō II was a "gift" to Muḥammad because the Arabs were able to fill the power vacuum that existed in areas "liberated" from the Sasanians.⁴⁷⁹ Thus, we see that Bal‘amī and Ferdowsī demonstrated to their audiences the good characteristics of Xusrō II

477. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, 243; Boyce, *Zoroastrians*, 145; Crone, *The Nativist Prophets*, 3-5.

478. James Howard-Johnston, "Pride and Fall: Khusro II and His Regime, 626-628," in *La Persia e Bisnazio (Atti dei Convegni Lincei 201)* ed. G. Gnoli (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 2004): 113 reprinted in *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity: Historiographical and Historical Studies* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT.: Ashgate Variorum, 2006); G. W. Bowersock, *Empires in Collision in Late Antiquity* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2012) 58; Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, 32, 139-141, 144, 150-151; Daryaee, *Sasanian Iran*, 88. For the shock of the Muslim advance between both realms, see Berkey, *The Formation of Islam*, 73; Crone, *The Nativist Prophets*, 1. For the Islamic belief that God gave them the right to conquer *Ērānšahr* and the Roman Empire, see Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief*, 1-13.

479. For Heraclius' "gift" to Islam, see Bowersock, *Empires in Collision*, 75. For the power vacuum, see *ibid.*, 58, 71.

because of the slander and libel of al-Ṭabarī as a way to preserve Iranian culture in a changing world.

This is not to imply in any way, shape, or form that Iranian culture declined after the Islamic conquest.⁴⁸⁰ As with every culture, Iranian culture changed with time and circumstance, and it must be noted again that Bal‘amī and Ferdowsī were Muslims, but at the same time they were Iranians who were aware of their people's history and culture. That is why when they looked at their pasts, they saw the good aspects of Xusrō II, while an outsider such as al-Ṭabarī saw the *šahanšah's* flaws. Each of these authors looked at their sources and decided which aspects of Xusrō II to focus upon, depending on how each viewed the past. In the centuries after the Islamic conquest of *Ērānšahr*, the Islamic community was sorting out what was and what was not in the narratives written by people who had different points of view.⁴⁸¹ Thus, the different depictions of Xusrō II were part of the wider world of borderlands in the early Islamic world, as both sides were competing for legitimacy in a messy world.

480. Omidšalar, *Poetics and Politics*, 18; Zakeri, “Al-Ṭabarī on Sasanian History,” 39-40. Sasanian court behavior influenced even the Abbasid court. See Berkey, *The Formation of Islam*, 126; Kennedy, *When Baghdad Ruled the Muslim World*, 243; Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 35.

481. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, 4.

Conclusion

Xusrō, We Hardly Knew Ye

Throughout this dissertation, we have studied how different sources portrayed *Šahanšah* Xusrō II (r. 591 CE-628 CE). In the first chapter, we examined how Roman sources strove to depict Xusrō II as a wicked man, hellbent on eradicating Christianity. While these depictions make for good reading because of their hyperbole, the only reason why Roman authors said such things about Xusrō II is because his armies nearly conquered the Roman Empire. These authors experienced terror when news reached them of Xusrō II's armies conquering swaths of Roman territory. This terror reached its apex with the siege of Constantinople in 626 CE. Fear bred outrageous depictions of Xusrō II.

In Chapter two we shifted our gaze to an Armenian writer, Pseudo-Sebēos. We discovered that while his *History* provides us with a dramatic letter supposedly written by Xusrō II in which he mocks Christianity and blasphemes Jesus Christ, Pseudo-Sebēos was not only anti-Xusrō II because the history of Sasanian meddling in Armenian affairs, he did not like the Romans either. Thus, Pseudo-Sebēos' *History* is an exemplum of the delicate position Armenia was in during late antiquity: perpetually balancing between two superpowers and playing both sides off the other.

The third chapter is where we began to scrutinize how a group of Sasanian subjects—diaphysite Christians—depicted in their sources Xusrō II. Again, we saw how on the surface many of these sources seemed to paint the *šahanšah* as a despot, drunk with power. When we dig a little deeper, however, it becomes apparent that these sources

demonstrate their hatred of Xusrō II only when he became legitimately angry with the Church of the East, removed their *katholikos*, and did not let them elect a new one for several years. But despite this hatred of Xusrō II for refusing them to elect a new patriarch, sources written by Iranian Christians demonstrate how well Xusrō II took care of them when they invoked his name at the start of their ecumenical councils. More importantly, these sources demonstrate the respect Xusrō II showed the True Cross of Jesus Christ's crucifixion when the Sasanian army captured it at the fall of Jerusalem in 614 CE.

The fourth and last chapter of this dissertation was an examination of sources written after the Islamic conquest of *Ērānšahr*. Sources written by Ferdowsī and Bal'amī demonstrated a kinder Xusrō II not found in other sources. Ferdowsī and Bal'amī showed us a different view of the *šahanšah* and that he was a temperate ruler who did not have his father killed. On the other hand, the Muslim historian al-Ṭabarī depicted Xusrō II as tacitly allowing his uncles to kill his father, Hormīzd IV (r. 579 CE-590 CE) and haughtily rejecting Islam. Ferdowsī and Bal'amī depicted Xusrō II in a better light than al-Ṭabarī because of their Iranian heritage, meaning they were kinder to pre-Islamic Iranian culture than was the devout Muslim al-Ṭabarī. But just because an author wrote a history of Xusrō II from a purely Islamic point of view does not mean that author would be hostile to Xusrō II. Al-Tha'alībī presented us with a balanced Xusrō II who might have allowed his father's assassination. Of all of the sources studied in this dissertation, perhaps al-Tha'alībī gave us the most nuanced depiction of Xusrō II because he demonstrated both the good and evil he was capable of.

Through these four chapters, it is clear that the aim of this dissertation is to understand why so many sources harshly portrayed Xusrō II. Several histories demonstrate the bad characteristics of Xusrō II, but we should not accept them as fact. It behooves us as historians to do a little digging to understand why these sources portrayed him as they did. Time and time again, we see that the people who wrote about Xusrō II had reasons to do so—whether it was the Roman authors who were afraid that he would conquer their realm or whether it was diaphysite Christians in *Ērānšahr* who were angry he would not let them elect a new leader. Just because several sources were hostile to Xusrō II it does not mean he was worthy of such scorn.

Xusrō II ruled *Ērānšahr* for thirty seven years. The course of his reign would be marked with benevolent actions and bad choices; dark and light; black and white; good and evil. Xusrō II was human, and he could not please everyone in *Ērānšahr* with his actions. The sources studied in this dissertation are a testament to that fact; they highlight Xusrō II's bad qualities over and over again. It seems that the only time someone would write anything about Xusrō II's reign was when they had something bad to say about him, even though in reality Xusrō II was infinitely more complex than how he was portrayed.

Thus, the following question emerges: Could we strip away the vitriol and libel found in these sources to discover the real Xusrō II? If we look at all of the available sources on Xusrō II's life, it becomes clear that we are dealing with a man with a larger-than-life personality who had a vision, a man who yearned for greatness and immortality available only to those who are brave enough to seize what they want.

In 626 CE, Xusrō II's power seemed to be limitless.⁴⁸² His armies nearly toppled the Iranians' ancient foe, the Roman Empire.⁴⁸³ In battle after battle, the Sasanian war machine conquered more and more Roman territory. Slowly, the Roman state began to atrophy with the loss of tax revenue while the Sasanian treasury began to swell with captured Roman booty.⁴⁸⁴ What is unknown to most people is that Xusrō II, who was not a Christian and was decidedly Zoroastrian, ruled over the largest empire of Christians the world had ever seen during the height of his conquest of the Roman Empire.⁴⁸⁵ Xusrō II was the ruler of Iranian diaphysite Christians, monophysite Christians in the Caucuses, and orthodox Christians who lived in what had been part of the Roman Empire. Clearly in 626 CE, Xusrō II had the right to take the Middle Persian epithet “Aparvez,” which morphed into the modern Persian form “Parvīz,” meaning victorious.

If we keep in mind that Xusrō II's accomplishments in 626 CE had surpassed any Persian *šah* in any dynasty⁴⁸⁶—Achaemenid, Parthian, or Sasanian—then we can understand that maybe in his dealings with other people, Xusrō II might have come

482. James Howard-Johnston, “Pride and Fall: Khusro II and His Regime, 626-628,” in *La Persia e Bisnazio (Atti dei Convengi Lincei 201)* ed. G. Gnoli (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 2004): 93 reprinted in *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity: Historiographical and Historical Studies* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT.: Ashgate Variorum, 2006).

483. Howard-Johnston, “Pride and Fall,” 94; James Howard-Johnston, “Heraclius' Persian Campaigns and the Revival of the East Roman Empire, 622-630 CE,” *War and History* 6 (1999): 1-4 reprinted in *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity: Historiographical and Historical Studies* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT.: Ashgate Variorum, 2006).

484. Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī *The History of al-Ṭabarī: An Annotated Translation: Volume V, The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen* trans. C. E. Bosworth (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), 394.

485. Geoffrey Greatrex, “Khusro II and the Christians of His Empire,” *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 3 (2003): 78.

486. Howard-Johnston, “Pride and Fall,” 94-95.

across as arrogant. He knew his accomplishments would back up his rhetoric. He talked the talk because he walked the walk.

The primary sources provide us with a snapshot of the rise of Xusrō II's pride and victories. In *The Chronicle of AD 1234*, for instance, it is stated that Xusrō II became harsh and prideful as his general Šahbarāz conquered more and more Roman territory.⁴⁸⁷ Movsēs Kałankatuac'i corroborates this assertion by stating that Xusrō II became arrogant because of his gains in the war of the seventh century CE.⁴⁸⁸ We have two authors who had linked Xusrō II's behavior with the success against the Romans.

So why did Xusrō II even wage war with the Romans? As stated earlier in this dissertation, the Roman Emperor Maurice (r. 582 CE-602 CE) aided Xusrō II during the rebellion of Wahrām Čubīn (r. 590 CE-591 CE). Xusrō II did not take any action against the Romans until the rebel Phocas (r. 602 CE-610 CE) murdered Maurice and his family and plunged the Roman Empire into the horrors of civil war.

According to several sources, Xusrō II used his benefactor's murder as a pretext to invade the Roman Empire. Pseudo-Sebēos wrote that Xusrō II declared that the Roman Empire was his and set out to install Maurice's son, Theodosius, on the throne.⁴⁸⁹ Theophylact Simocatta and Theophanes Confessor agreed with Pseudo-Sebēos and

487. Extract from the *Anonymous Chronicle of AD 1234, with Supplementary Material in the Notes from the Chronicle of the Jacobite Patriarch Michael (Died AD 1199)* 30 trans. Andrew Palmer *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles, including Two Seventh-Century Syriac Apocalyptic Texts* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993).

488. Movsēs Dasxuranci 11 *The History of the Caucasian Albanians* trans. C. J. F. Dowsett *The History of the Caucasian Albanians* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).

489. Sebeos, *The Armenian History* 34, *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos: Part I. Translation and Notes* ed. and trans. R. W. Thomson with commentary by James Howard-Johnston with Tim Greenwood (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 66.

wrote that he used the death of Maurice as an excuse to launch his conquest of the Roman Empire.⁴⁹⁰ In the *Histoire Nestorienne*, it is stated that Xusrō II wept at news of Maurice's assassination and vowed to avenge his patron.⁴⁹¹ It is thus possible that Maurice's death forced Xusrō II's hand.

Xusrō II was clearly grateful for Maurice's help, as suggested by Evagrius Scholasticus⁴⁹² and Ferdowsī⁴⁹³ when they wrote that Xusrō II sent gifts to Maurice after the war with Wahrām Čubīn. Theophylact Simocatta included in his *History* a letter Xusrō II wrote to Maurice asking for his help against Wahrām Čubīn and said he was the emperor's son.⁴⁹⁴ Xusrō II felt affinity for Maurice, so maybe Xusrō II did feel the desire to avenge Maurice's death by invading the Roman Empire to punish Phocas. But as his armies successfully penetrated the Romans' lines of defense, the urge to make his domain stronger pushed Xusrō II into believing that he defeat the Romans and extend *Ērānšahr* from the Iranian plateau, to Khuzistan, to Bactria (modern Afghanistan), to

490. Theophylact Simocatta, *The History of Theophylact Simocatta: An English Translation with Introduction and Notes* 15.7 ed. and trans. Michael and Mary Whitby (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1986); Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia* AM 6095, in *The Chronicle of Theophanes* trans. Cyril Mango and Roger Scott with Geoffrey Greatrex (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

491. *Histoire Nestorienne (Seert Chronicle), Seconde Partie* LXX, LXXIX trans. Addai Scher and Robert Griveau in *Patrologia Orientalis: Tomus Decimus Tertius* ed. R. Graffin and F. Nau (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1919).

492. Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 21 Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.17, *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus* ed. and trans. Michael Whitby (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000).

493. Firdausī *Khusrau Parwīz* 54 trans. Arthur George Warner and Edmond Warner *The Shāhnāma of Firdausī*, vol. 8 (London and New York Routledge, 2002).

494. Theophylact Simocatta, *The History of Theophylact Simocatta: An English Translation with Introduction and Notes* 4.11.11 ed. and trans. Michael and Mary Whitby (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1986).

parts of Italy, to North Africa, to Egypt, to Asia Minor and the Levant, to the Caucasus.⁴⁹⁵

So it seems that the desire to avenge the death of the man who helped him retake the throne changed into a desire to obtain glory.

We see that it is entirely possible that Xusrō II could write a letter like the one described by Pseudo-Sebēos when he mocked Christianity and told Heraclius he would forgive the emperor of his sins.⁴⁹⁶ Or it is equally possible that Xusrō II might have told Maurice not to care about the True Cross of the Crucifixion when Ferdowsī anachronistically wrote that the Sasanians had had the True Cross since the reign of the first *šahanšah*, Ardaxšīr I (r. 224 CE-242 CE).⁴⁹⁷ Thus, while this dissertation has suggested that there are reasons for how many sources described the outrageous behavior of Xusrō II, the common thread of Xusrō II's supposed arrogance could be explained by his success in the war of the seventh century CE.

Xusrō II probably did get haughty when the collapse of the Roman Empire seemed imminent. As time passed from the end of the war and Xusrō II's defeat, different writers with different points of view portrayed the ugly parts of Xusrō II's personality. The important thing to take away from this is that just because a group of writers depicted Xusrō II as an enemy of God,⁴⁹⁸ there is a good reason why they did so that did not actually accurately reflect the real Xusrō II. We also should be aware,

495. Howard-Johnston, "Heraclius' Persian Campaigns," 3.

496. Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, 38, in Thomson, 79-80.

497. Firdausī *Khusrau Parwīz* 54.

498. See, for instance, *Chronicon Paschale 628 Chronicon Pascale, 284-628 AD: Translated with Notes and Introduction by Michael Whitby and Mary Whitby* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1989).

however, that the root of the root of these depictions might have been grounded in reality, when Xusrō II might have gloated when his victory seemed imminent.

We can see that Xusrō II's personality was irreverent, as suggested by Bal'amī. After Maurice gave Xusrō II a Roman army to help him get back the throne from Wahrām Čubīn, the Roman commander Theodosius asked Xusrō II why he did not challenge the usurper to one on one combat. Xusrō II did not respond, and a Roman called out Wahrām Čubīn. The fight did not go well for the warrior. Wahrām Čubīn killed him. Xusrō II laughed and told the Romans that they now knew how much a threat Wahrām Čubīn posed. Xusrō II then sent the Roman's body back to Maurice with a letter stating here was his "champion" who had insulted him.⁴⁹⁹ In a sympathetic source such as Bal'amī, we see that Xusrō II had a wicked sense of humor; thus, it is not hard to see that maybe Xusrō II did have an irreverent streak about him that could be misinterpreted as arrogant.

So perhaps Xusrō II did become arrogant at the apex of his power in 626 CE as the Roman Empire was about to crumble. Xusrō II was poised to subdue the ancient foes of the Iranian people, and he was on the cusp of ensuring his name would be remembered by countless generations. In two years time, however, Heraclius was able to turn the tide and execute "one of the most astonishing reversals of fortune in the annals of war."⁵⁰⁰ Heraclius rallied his army against Xusrō II by successfully marrying the

499. Bal'amī *Chronique de Abou-Djafar-Mo'hammed-Ben-Djarīr-Ben-Yezid Tabari, traduite sur la version Persane d'Abou-'Ali d'après les manuscrits de Paris, de Gotha, de Londres et de Canterbury*, vol. 2, ed. and French trans. M. Hermann Zotenberg (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1869), 293-294.

500. R. W. Thomson, "Introduction," in *The Armenian History 32, The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos: Part 1. Translation and Notes* ed. and trans. R. W. Thomson with commentary by James Howard-Johnston with Tim Greenwood (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), xxiv; Howard-Johnston, "Pride

concept of holy war with the survival of the Roman Empire. Of course, Xusrō II posed a threat to the Roman state, but he was hardly a threat to the survival of Christianity. Xusrō II was tolerant of Christianity in *Ērānšahr* and had no desire to molest the Christians who lived in areas of the Roman Empire his armies conquered.⁵⁰¹ Heraclius' disinformation worked, and the Roman world was rallied to defeat the Persian threat.⁵⁰²

Heraclius' invasion of *Ērānšahr* was the catalyst for Xusrō II's downfall. All of Xusrō II's gains did not matter when the Roman army burned and sacked sacred Zoroastrian fire temples in the heart of *Ērānšahr*.⁵⁰³ What good was almost conquering the Roman Empire if Heraclius himself ripped out fetuses from the bellies of Iranians and dashed their head against rocks?⁵⁰⁴ The Roman invasion of *Ērānšahr* was as traumatic to the Iranian people as was the Sasanian invasion of the Roman Empire. Then, if Movsēs Kałankatuac'i is any indication, Heraclius designed to undercut Xusrō II's support in *Ērānšahr* by invading and harassing its subjects so they would rise and depose him.⁵⁰⁵

If Movsēs Kałankatuac'i is right about Heraclius' aim, then the emperor was successful with his stratagem. War weariness set in with the people of *Ērānšahr*, and

and Fall," 96-97.

501. Howard-Johnston, "Pride and Fall," 103.

502. Howard-Johnston, "Pride and Fall," 102.

503. Howard-Johnston, "Pride and Fall," 107; Howard-Johnston, "Heraclius' Persian Campaigns," 16-17.

504. Thomas Sizgorich, "Sanctified Violence: Monotheist Militancy as the Tie That Bound Christian Rome and Islam," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 77, no. 4 (December: 2009): 905.

505. Movsēs Dasxuranci *The History of the Caucasian Albanians* 11.

when faced with the destruction brought upon Heraclius' army and Turkish allies,⁵⁰⁶ the sacrifices of all of those people who died fighting the Romans did not seem to be worth the cost.⁵⁰⁷ Remember, the war of the seventh century CE lasted from 602 CE-628 CE, a total of twenty-six years. The war went well for Xusrō II for twenty-four of those years, but the shock of Heraclius' swift and nimble invasion⁵⁰⁸ and the collapse of the Sasanian defense network proved to be fatal to Xusrō II's reign.⁵⁰⁹

How Xusrō II reacted to Heraclius' invasion demonstrates why he lost support. According to Theophanes Confessor, Xusrō II refused to believe Heraclius and his armies crossed the Caucasus Mountains.⁵¹⁰ When the Romans breached the boundaries of *Ērānšahr*, Xusrō II fled to his palace in Dastagerd and then to the capital of Ctesiphon, where Heraclius pursued him further.⁵¹¹ Xusrō II's ignoble flight from the advancing Roman army cost him a great deal of support; thus the coup against him described in Chapter four was born.

The defeat of the Sasanian army at the Battle of Nineveh (627 CE) was the death knell of Xusrō II. He tried to rally a defense of Ctesiphon; the nobility responded by

506. Howard-Johnston, "Pride and Fall," 105; Nikephoros, *Breviarium* 12.49-52 ed. and trans. Cyril Mango, *Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople: Short History* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1990).

507. Howard-Johnston, "Pride and Fall," 110-111; Howard-Johnston, "Heraclius' Persian Campaigns," 27.

508. Howard-Johnston, "Pride and Fall," 106.

509. Howard-Johnston, "Heraclius' Persian Campaigns," 42.

510. Theophanes Confessor *Chronographia* AM 6114.

511. For Xusrō II's flight from Heraclius, see Theophanes Confessor *Chronographia* AM 6118; *The Khuzistan Chronicle (First Part)* ed. and trans. Geoffrey Greatrex and Samuel N. C. Lieu *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars, Part II AD 363-630: A Narrative Sourcebook* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 236; Howard-Johnston, "Heraclius' Persian Campaigns," 25.

releasing his son Šīroē (r. 628 CE) from prison and arresting him in the palace gardens. The conspirators brought several charges against Xusrō II, including stationing troops along the borders of *Ērānšahr*, keeping them away from their families, draining the treasury by doing so, and having to raise taxes on everyone. Xusrō II responded to these charges, saying that he kept a permanent military force on the border to attack *Ērānšahr*'s enemies to keep the realm and its inhabitants safe, and the spoils from these engagements actually put money in the treasury.⁵¹² The interrogator also charged Xusrō II with conspiring with Bīstahm and Bīndōē and rebelling against his father, Hormīzd IV. Xusrō II replied that while his uncles did risk their lives for him, he was aware they killed his father. He first had to take care of the threat posed by Wahrām Čubīn and then could order his uncles' execution.⁵¹³

Xusrō II's response demonstrates that the cocky *šahanšah* actually kept the safety of his realm first and that he was aware of his duty to his father by punishing his murderers, even though they helped him gain the throne. This vignette shows us a different side of Xusrō II. Despite the bombastic sovereign depicted in other accounts, Xusrō II's behavior and rationale at his "trial" suggests he was aware of the needs to protect his realm, subjects, and kingly family. The arrogance of Xusrō II when he mocked his enemies and their religion was that of someone who knew that he was on the cusp of inscribing his name in history. Xusrō II undoubtedly knew that if he could conquer

512. Firdausī *Kubād (Commonly Called Shīrwī)* 1 trans. Arthur George Warner and Edmond Warner *The Shāhnāma of Firdausī*, vol. 9, (London and New York Routledge, 2002).

513. Firdausī *Kubād (Commonly Called Shīrwī)* 1.

Constantinople and end the line of Caesars, he would be remembered until the end of time. Underneath that sentiment, however, was a desire to protect his people.

The question remains: Was Xusrō II as arrogant as he was portrayed in the sources? Did pride color his reign and influence him to launch an all-out assault on the Roman Empire in order to secure his legacy? Yes to both but with good reason. Xusrō II was as prideful as a master craftsman who takes pride in his work. Xusrō II's *magnum opus*, of course, was ensuring *Ērānšahr's* supremacy in the world. Like the master artist who knows in their heart of hearts that the project they are working on is what will define them, Xusrō II's attempt to take out the Romans was an attempt to secure his and *Ērānšahr's* place in history. The result, unfortunately, was that he failed in this endeavor. Xusrō II could not foresee the consequences of his war against the Romans. The power dynamics in late antiquity were altered forever. The twin powers of Constantinople and Ctesiphon were weakened forever by Roman-Sasanian War of the seventh century CE, and neither power could contend with the threat posed by Muḥammad's ascendant armies.⁵¹⁴

While Xusrō II's war against the Romans was a watershed moment in Roman and Iranian history, there was more to this man than his vision of *Ērānšahr's* supremacy. What else drove him? Was it anger at the murder of Maurice? Was it sorrow at Hormīzd IV's misfortune? Was it simple arrogance? Was it the desire to indelibly shape his legacy? What thoughts ran through his head as he woke up everyday? What was his

514. James Howard-Johnston, "Pride and Fall: Khusro II and His Regime, 626-628," in *La Persia e Bisnazio (Atti dei Convengi Lincei 201)* ed. G. Gnoli (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 2004): 113 reprinted in *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity: Historiographical and Historical Studies* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Variorum, 2006); Nikephoros, *Breviarium*, 6.

source of strength? As a human being, Xusrō II was complex, and in order to understand him we should shift our gaze and look at Xusrō II at his most vulnerable and how he loved. Only then can we grasp more of his personality.

We can see the source of how important Šērīn was to him. I already have discussed that Xusrō II gave a bejeweled cross to the Shrine of Saint Sergius as a token of thanks for her pregnancy.⁵¹⁵ I have described how Xusrō II ordered the corpse of the prophet Daniel to be given to the Romans, and how Šērīn and her fellow Christians prayed to keep the body in *Ērānšahr*. Xusrō II then countermanded his order, and the body stayed with the Iranians.⁵¹⁶ The important thing here is that Xusrō II did not get angry at Šērīn; he reversed himself for her sake. Xusrō II's love for Šērīn was a paramount concern for him above how he projected himself to others in *Ērānšahr*; only she, and no one else, was important to him. The biggest indication that Xusrō II cared only about Šērīn was that after the capture of the True Cross, he presented it to her and placed it in her personal palace.⁵¹⁷

Xusrō II and Šērīn met when they were young. Xusrō II's war with Wahrām Čubīn separated the two for many years. Xusrō II and Šērīn were to be reunited when they met while Xusrō II was on a hunt with his entourage. When she knew he was near, Šērīn donned a golden dress, put blush on her cheeks, and placed a crown on her head. The lovers wept when they beheld each other. Xusrō II brought Šērīn to Ctesiphon with

515. See Chapter one and Wilhelm Baum, *Shirin: Christian–Queen–Myth of Love: A Woman of Late Antiquity: Historical Reality and Literary Effect* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004), 30-36.

516. See Chapter two and Baum, *Shirin*, 38-39.

517. Baum, *Shirin*, 47-48.

trumpets blaring and joyous singing. The couple then went to the *mōbed* (the chief Zoroastrian priest), and Xusrō II requested that they be married with Zoroastrian rites and to let the world know the joyous news.⁵¹⁸

Not everyone, however, was happy with Xusrō II and Šērīn's marriage. The nobility in particular found it worrisome because Šērīn was an outsider. They asked Xusrō II if there was another woman in all of *Ērānšahr* whom he could love, as they believed that Šērīn polluted the kingly house of Sasan. Xusrō II's answer suggests he was willing to go against the nobility and fight for Šērīn. There was a bowl of water adulterated with blood. He offered the bowl to the blue bloods, and they disgustingly turned their heads. Xusrō II then passed the mixture from hand to hand, cleansing it. He scoured the bowl with earth and filled it with scented wine. The *mōbed* was astonished and praised Xusrō II for cleansing the bowl, for turning what was ugly into something beautiful. He responded that people may have considered Šērīn to be as disgusting as the polluted water, but he cleansed her as he did the water and restored her reputation. The nobility then praised Xusrō II for his greatness and wisdom.⁵¹⁹

Xusrō II's message to those noble gentlemen was clear: He loved Šērīn and was prepared to do anything, even “cleanse” her, so they could be together. We can see that Xusrō II was willing to go against the nobility to stay with his beloved. We can see that even if we remove all of the examples of Xusrō II's supposed arrogance and greed, his

518. Firdausī *Khusrau Parwīz* 54; Abolqasem Ferdowsī, *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings* trans. Dick Davis (New York: Penguin Group, 2006), 810-811; Baum, *Shirin*, 66.

519. Firdausī *Khusrau Parwīz* 57; Ferdowsī, *Shahnameh*, 811-813.

love for Šērīn, an outsider, caused strife between him and the nobility of *Ērānšahr*. Maybe Xusrō II's insistence on marrying Šērīn led to his downfall because he went against the wishes of the nobility.

We see how Xusrō II and Šērīn were inseparable during the war of the seventh century CE. As Xusrō II came closer to toppling the Romans, he had Šērīn by his side through it all. How must have those two felt after every victory of the Sasanian army, what joy coursed through their souls? What fear passed from one to another as Heraclius and his army shed Iranian blood throughout *Ērānšahr*? How many scared glances did they share with each other as the news of Heraclius' advances reached them? Even in the *The Khuzistan Chronicle*, which libelously reported that Xusrō II was struck with diarrhea when it was certain they had to flee before Heraclius,⁵²⁰ we can see how much Šērīn might have given Xusrō II strength: Do not fear, she told him.⁵²¹ How did the two lovers feel when they heard the shouts of Šīroē being declared as *šahanšah* the morning of the coup?⁵²² We know, thanks to Ferdowsī, that Šērīn warned Xusrō II that fateful morning. He awoke and asked why, in all her beauty, did she wake him with her talking? She told him about the coup and said he needed to save himself for the sake of his kingdom, because his enemies were closing in quickly.⁵²³

520. For the author of *The Khuzistan Chronicle*'s focus on the scandalous parts of Xusrō II's reign, see James Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World in Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 130.

521. *The Khuzistan Chronicle (First Part)*, 236.

522. Al-Ṭabarī, *The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen*, 379.

523. Firdausī *Khusrau Parwīz* 64; Ferdowsī, *Shahnameh*, 819-820.

The conspirators killed Xusrō II. His death, however, was not the end of the romance between him and Šērīn. The usurper, Šīroē, wanted to marry Šērīn in order to secure his claim to the throne. He abused her and called her a filthy magician and told her her days walking in the palace unobstructed were now over.⁵²⁴ Šērīn, while veiled, went to the Shadegan garden in the palace with several nobility and told them that when she was queen of *Ērānšahr*, she always supported the army as if its soldiers were her sons. Everything she did, she told those nobles, was with a pure heart. She removed the veil, and the nobility gasped at her beauty, and she told Šīroē she would marry him.⁵²⁵

Šērīn then told the crowd that Šīroē could not avoid death for having his father murdered and that the request to marry him filled her with sorrow. The nobles openly wept for her and Xusrō II.⁵²⁶ Šērīn then asked for Xusrō II's tomb to be opened, and she walked in and sat beside him. She lay her head next to his and spoke to him like a lover should, with soft, tender words that only two people in love can speak to one another. Although Ferdowsī is silent on what was actually said, we can only assume Šērīn spoke of their lives together and when they met each other on that fateful hunting trip, and maybe, she spoke of the time when they almost won and thought they could outlast fate and be with each other forever in the kingdom Xusrō II had almost built. What joy did she find in reliving all of their good memories? What sadness might have crushed her when she realized she could never go back to the way things were? Šērīn then drank

524. Firdausī *Kubād (Commonly Called Shīrwī)* 5; Ferdowsī, *Shahnameh*, 826-828.

525. Ferdowsī, *Shahnameh*, 828-829.

526. Ferdowsī, *Shahnameh*, 830.

poison and died next to the man she loved.⁵²⁷ If one were to quantify all the love in the world, it would not be enough to describe how Šērīn and Xusrō II felt about each other.

Clearly, Šērīn loved Xusrō II. Did anyone else admire him? What can be said about his legacy in *Ērānšahr*? Šīroē had all of his half brothers killed,⁵²⁸ reversed all of Xusrō II's policies, and reverted the style of his coinage to that of his great-grandfather, Xusrō I (r. 531 CE-579 CE).⁵²⁹ Šīroē, however, soon was assassinated and Xusrō II's daughter, Bōrān (r. 630 CE-631 CE), was installed on the throne because she was the only legitimate Sasanian heir.⁵³⁰ Bōrān consolidated imperial power, stabilized *Ērānšahr*,⁵³¹ and restored the style of coinage to that of her father by advertising how she increased the royal glory (*x^warrāh*) of the Sasanian dynasty.⁵³² Bōrān's coins, like her father's,

527. Ferdowsī, *Shahnameh*, 830; Baum, *Shirin*, 58.

528. Baum, *Shirin*, 54.

529. Touraj Daryaee, *Sasanian Iran (224-651CE): Portrait of a Late Antique Empire* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers: 2008), 90-91; Touraj Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 35.

530. Firdausī *Pūrāndukht* 1 trans. Arthur George Warner and Edmond Warner *The Shāhnāma of Firdausī*, vol. 9, (London and New York Routledge, 2002); Al-Tha'ālibī, *Histoire des rois des perses par Abou Manṣūr 'abd Al-Malik ibn Moḥammad ibn Ismā'il al-Tha'ālibī* ed. and French trans. M. Herman Zotenberg (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1900), 735; Touraj Daryaee, "The Last Ruling Woman of *Ērānšahr*: Queen *Āzarmīgduxt*," in *A. Shapur Shahbazi Memorial Volume* ed. K. Abdi (Tehran: Iran University Press, 2009): 2; Haleh Emrani, "Like Father, Like Daughter: Late Sasanian Imperial Ideology & the Rise of Bōrān to Power," *e-Sasanika* 9 (2009): 6; Hodge Mehdi Malek and Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis, "History and Coinage of the Sasanian Queen Bōrān (AD 629-631)," *The Numismatic Chronicle (1966-)* 158 (1998): 115; Antonio Panaino, "Women and Kingship: Some Remarks about the Enthronisation of Queen Bōrān and Her Sister **Āzarmīgduxt*," in *Ērān ud Anērān: Studien zu den Beziehungen zwischen dem Sasanidenreich und der Mittelmeerwelt (Beiträge des Internationalen Colloquiums in Euti, 8-9)* ed. Josef Wiesehöfer and Philip Huyse (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006): 226; Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia*, 36, 59.

531. Touraj Daryaee, "The Coinage of Queen Bōrān and Its Significance for Late Sāsānian Imperial Ideology," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 13 (1997): 44.

532. Daryaee, *Sasanian Iran*, 92; Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia*, 35; Malek and Curtis, "History and Coinage of the Sasanian Queen Bōrān," 118. For a study of the coins of Xusrō II and his focus on *x^warrāh*, see Touraj Daryaee, "The Use of Religio-Political Propaganda on the Coinage of Xusrō II," *American Journal of Numismatics* 9 (1997): 44-48; Daryaee, "The Coinage of Queen Bōrān," 77-81.

featured the Zoroastrian deity Wahrām, the god of offensive victory. She wanted to link herself to the memory of Xusrō II's gains against the Romans to solidify her claim to the throne.⁵³³ Clearly, at least in the mind of Bōrān, Xusrō II's reign was something she could emulate; it was the template for all reigns to follow.

After Bōrān was assassinated, her sister, Āzarmīgduxt (r. 631 CE-632 CE), took the throne, and she too minted coins in her father's style.⁵³⁴ Her coins even featured his image.⁵³⁵ Āzarmīgduxt sought to project the memory of her father's successes against the Romans and her own link to the glory of the house of Sasan by putting Xusrō II's face on her coins.⁵³⁶ Tellingly, when she became ruler of *Ērānšahr*, Āzarmīgduxt declared that people should emulate her victorious father.⁵³⁷ Āzarmīgduxt purposely invoked her father's name and his victories because she admired him.

This is especially important because it suggests both women admired Xusrō II and wanted to restore his legacy. Clearly, not everyone in *Ērānšahr* hated Xusrō II. Even though Bōrān and Āzarmīgduxt were his daughters—and it should not be surprising that a daughter would want to restore her father's legacy—the fact that they honored Xusrō II's memory in their short reigns is indicative that not everyone disliked Xusrō II. There

533. Emrani, "Like Father, Like Daughter," 7; Daryae, "The Use of Religio-Political Propaganda on the Coinage of Xusrō II," 49-51. According to Daryae, Xusrō II put a depiction of Wahrām and the word *x'arrah* on his coins after he defeated Wahrām Čubīn for pro-Sasanian propaganda.

534. Daryae, "The Last Ruling Woman of Ērānšahr," 3.

535. Daryae, "The Last Ruling Woman of Ērānšahr," 4.

536. Daryae, "The Last Ruling Woman of Ērānšahr," 5-6; Panaino, "Women and Kingship," 230, 238.

537. Al-Ṭabarī, *The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen*, 406; Daryae, "The Last Ruling Woman of Ērānšahr," 6.

was one bastion of affection for Xusrō II's memory held by his kin in a troubled time.

The years after Xusrō II's assassination were a disaster for *Ērānšahr*. Several *šahanšahs* came and went, with many reigns only lasting a few months. Pretenders to the throne vied with legitimate heirs to the Sasanian legacy for the right to rule *Ērānšahr*, culminating with the reign of Yazdgird III (r. 632 CE-651 CE) and his flight to China to escape the conquering Muslim Arab armies. What happened after the Islamic conquest of *Ērānšahr* and how this influenced the memory of Xusrō II is touched upon in Chapter four.

This dissertation is an attempt to shine a light on an understudied part of late antique history, to show scholars that a powerful ruler existed who was not a Roman emperor. This project peeled back the slander and the libel found in the sources, but kept the author's intent intact, to suggest that a study on how different sources portrayed Xusrō II can show the man behind the depictions, and how some people constructed their view of their world.

Xusrō II had a vision, and he sought to extend *Ērānšahr* across the Mediterranean and supplant the Roman Empire. He did not do this out of pride or arrogance, but he thought he could rule better and more justly than anyone who came before him. Perhaps he would have been right. He did not care about which type of Christianity anyone in *Ērānšahr* practiced, so it is doubtful there would have been any persecutions in his reign. He would have tolerated all of the Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians in his extended domain like he did in *Ērānšahr*. Xusrō II would balance all of their interests like he did the Christians of his realm.

It is too bad that we could never see what Xusrō II's uninterrupted reign might have looked like. For now, all scholars can do is study his reign as the last mighty *šahanšah* of *Ērānšahr* who dared to try and conquer the Roman Empire. Hopefully, this dissertation has provided other scholars with an glimpse of the man Xusrō II truly was during this troubled time.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Abolqasem Ferdowsī. *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*. Translated by Dick Davis. New York: Penguin Group, 2006.
- Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī. *The History of al-Ṭabarī: An Annotated Translation: Volume V, The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen*. Translated by C. E. Bosworth. New York: State University of New York Press, 1999.
- _____. *The History of al-Ṭabarī: An Annotated Translation: Volume XII, The Battle of al-Qādisiyyah and the Conquest of Syria and Palestine*. Translated by Yohanan Friedman. New York: State University of New York Press, 1992.
- Abu'l-Qasem Ferdowsī. *Hormuz Nušīnraṯān in The Shahnameh (The Book of Kings)*. Vol.7. Edited Dajal Khaleghi-Motlagh and Abdolfazl Khatibi. New York: Bibliotheca Persica, 2007.
- _____. *Xusrō Parvīz in The Shahnameh (The Book of Kings)*. Vol. 8. Edited by Dajal Khaleghi-Motlagh and Abdolfazl Khatibi, New York: Bibliotheca Persica, 2007.
- Acta Mar Ḳardaghi, Assyriae Praefecti, Qui Sub Sapore II Martyr Occubuit: Syriace Juxta Manuscriptum Amidense, Una cum Versione Latina*. Edited and translated by J. B. Abbeloos, S. T. D. Bruxells: Société Belge de Libairie, 1890.
- Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum*. Vol. 2. Edited by Paul Bedjan. Paris and Leipzig, 1890-1897.
- Agathangelos. *History of the Armenians*. Edited and translated by Robert W. Thomson. Albany: State University of New York, 1976.
- Agathiae Myrinaei historiarum libri quinque*. Edited by R. Keydell. Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae. Series Berolinensis 2. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1967.
- Agathias Scholasticus. *Agathias: The Histories*. Translated by Joseph Frendo. Berlin: Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae, 1975.

Al-Tha‘ālibī. *Histoire des rois des perses par Abou Manṣūr ‘abd Al-Malik ibn Moḥammad ibn Ismā‘il al-Tha‘ālibī*. Edited and translated by M. Herman Zotenberg. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1900.

Ammianus Marcellinus. *History*. Edited and translated by John C. Rolfe. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.

The Anonymous Byzantine Treatise on Strategy in Three Byzantine Military Treatises. Edited and translated by George T. Dennis. Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library Collection, 2008.

Aphrahat. *The Demonstrations on Wars in Demonstrations*. Translated by Kuriakose Valavanolickal. Kerala, India: HIRS Publications, 1999.

Ardā Virāz Nāmag. Accessed April 26, 2014. <http://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/texte/etcs/iran/miran/mpers/arda/arda.htm>

Aturpāt-I Ēmētān *The Wisdom of the Sasanian Sages (Dēnkard VI)*. Translated by Shaul Shaked. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979.

Bal‘amī. *Chronique de Abou-Djafar-Mo‘hammed-Ben-Djarīr-Ben-Yezid Tabari, traduite sur la version Persane d’Abou-‘Ali d’après les manuscrits de Paris, de Gotha, de Londres et de Canterbury*. Vol. 2. Edited and translated by M. Hermann Zotenberg. Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1869.

_____. Bal‘amī. *Tarīkh-nāmah-yi Ṭabarī*. Edited by Moḥammad Rawshan. Tehran: Nashr-i Naw, 1366 šamsī [1987].

The Book of Arda Viraf in Sacred Books and Literature of the East, Volume II: Ancient Persia. Translated by Martin Huag with assistance by W. W. West. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1917.

The Bundahshin (“Creation”), or Knowledge from the Zand in Sacred Books of the East. Vol. 5. Translated by E.W. West. Oxford University Press, 1897.

Chronica Minora I: Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium: Scriptores Syri, Tomus I. Edited by Ignazio Guidi. Louvain: Secrétariate du CorpusSCO Waversebaan, 49, 1960.

Chronicon Pascale, 284-628 AD: Translated with Notes and Introduction by Michael Whitby and Mary Whitby. Translated by Michael and Mary Whitby. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1989.

Chronicon paschale. Vol. 1. Edited by L. Dindorf. Corpus scriptorum historiae Byzantinae. Bonn: Weber, 1832.

Dēnkard: Acts of Religion. Edited and translated by Peshotun Dastoor Behramjee Sanjana. Bombay: D. Ardeshir & Co., 1874.

Dēnkard, Book Seven: Wonders of Zoroastrianism in Sacred Books of the East. Translated by E. W. West. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1897.

Dēnkard, Book Eight: Contents of the Nasks (Ancient Canon of Zoroastrianism) in Sacred Books of the East. Translated by E. W. West. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1897.

The ecclesiastical history of Evagrius with the scholia. Edited by L. Parmentier. London: Methuen, 1898.

Eusebius. *Life of Constantine: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary.* Translated by Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999.

Eusebius. *Werke Band 1.1: Über das Leben des Kaisers Konstantin.* Edited by F. Winkelmann. Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1975.

Evagrius Scholasticus. *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus.* Edited and translated by Michael Whitby. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000.

Extract from the Anonymous Chronicle of AD 1234, with Supplementary Material in the Notes from the Chronicle of the Jacobite Patriarch Michael (Died AD 1199) in The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles, including Two Seventh-Century Syri-

ac Apocalyptic Texts. Translated by Andrew Palmer. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993.

Firdausí *Hormuzd* in *The Sháhnáma of Firdausí*. Vol. 8. Translated by Arthur George Warner and Edmond Warner. London and New York Routledge, 2002.

_____. *Kubád (Commonly Called Shírwí)* in *The Sháhnáma of Firdausí*. Vol. 9. Translated by Arthur George Warner and Edmond Warner. London and New York Routledge, 2002.

_____. *Khusrau Parwíz* in *The Sháhnáma of Firdausí*. Vol. 8. Translated by Arthur George Warner and Edmond Warner. London and New York Routledge, 2002.

_____. *Púrándukht* in *The Sháhnáma of Firdausí*. Vol. 9. Translated by Arthur George Warner and Edmond Warner. London and New York Routledge, 2002.

From the Martyrs of Karka d-Beth Slokh in *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient: Updated Edition with a New Preface*. Translated by Sebastian P. Brock and Susan Ashbrook Harvey. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1998.

George of Pisidia. *De Expeditione Persica* in *Poemi. I. Panegirici epici*. Edited by Agostino Pertusi. *Studia patristica et Byzantina* 7. Ettal: Buch-Kunstverlag, 1959.

_____. *Heraclias* in *Poemi. I. Panegirici epici*. Edited by Agostino Pertusi. *Studia patristica et Byzantina* 7. Ettal: Buch-Kunstverlag, 1959.

Ghazar P'arpec'i. *History of the Armenians*. Edited and translated by Robert Bedrosian. New York: Armenian Tradition, 1985.

Histoire Nestorienne (Seert Chronicle), Seconde Partie. Translated by Addai Scher and Robert Griveau. In *Patrologia Orientalis: Tomus Decimus Tertius*, edited by R. Graf-fin and F. Nau, 435-639. Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1919.

The History of the Heroic Deeds of Mar Qardagh the Victorious Martyr in *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq*. Translated by Joel Walker. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2006.

The History of the Holy Mar Ma'in: With a Guide to the Persian Martyr Acts. Edited and translated by Sebastian Brock. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2008.

Ibn Ishāq. *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ishāq's Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*. Edited and translated by Alfred Guillaume. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Julian. *To Arsaces, Satrap of Armenia in Works of the Emperor Julian*. Edited and translated by Wilmer Cave Wright. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.

The Khuzistan Chronicle (First Part) in The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars, Part II AD 363-630: A Narrative Sourcebook. Edited and translated Geoffrey Greatrex and Samuel N. C. Lieu. London and New York: Routledge, 2002.

The Letter of Tansar. Translated by M. Boyce. Roma: Instituto Italiano Per Il Medio Ed Estremo Oriente, 1968.

Māh ī frawardīn rōz ī hordād in Corpus of Pahlavi Texts. Edited by Jamaspji Dastur Minocherji Jamasp-Asana. Bombay, 1902.

The Martyrdom and History of Blessed Simeon bar Sabba'e. Edited and translated by Kyle Richard Smith. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2014.

The Martyrdom of Martha, Daughter of Posi who was Daughter of the Covenant in Holy Women of the Syrian Orient: Updated Edition with a New Preface. Translated by Sebastian P. Brock and Susan Ashbrook Harvey. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1998.

The Martyrdom of Tarbo, her Sister, and her Servant in Holy Women of the Syrian Orient: Updated Edition with a New Preface. Translated by Sebastian P. Brock and Susan Ashbrook Harvey. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1998

Maurice. *Maurice's Strategikon*. Edited and translated by George T. Dennis. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984.

Moses Khorenats'i. *History of the Armenians*. Translated by Robert W. Thomson. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978.

Movsēs Dasxuranci. *The History of the Caucasian Albanians*. Translated by C. J. F. Dowsett. London: Oxford University Press, 1961.

Movsēs Kaghankatuats'i. *Patmut'iwn Aghuanits' Ashharhi*. Edited by N. O. Ēmin. T'iflis: Ēlēkratparan ōr. N. Aghaneani, 1912.

Nikephoros. *Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople: Short History*. Edited and translated by Cyril Mango. Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1990.

Patut'iwn Sebēosi. Edited by G. V. Abgaryan. Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences, 1979.

Procopius. *Anecdota* in *The Anecdota or Secret History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.

_____. *Buildings* in *Buildings/General Index*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940.

_____. *History of the Wars* in *History of the Wars: Books I-II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006

_____. *The Persian War* in *History of the Wars: Books I-II*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre. *Chronicle: Part III*. Translated by Witold Witakowski. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996.

The Romance of Artaban and Artasir in Agathangelos' History: Sasanika Occasional Papers 3. Edited and translated by Gohar Muradyan and Aram Topchyan. Beverly Hills: Afshar Publishing, 2010.

Sebeos. *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos: Part 1. Translation and Notes*. Edited and translated by R. W. Thomson with commentary by James Howard-Johnston with Tim Greenwood. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999.

The Story of Mar Pinhas. Edited and translated Adam Carter McCollum. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2013.

Thomas, Bishop of Maraga, *The Book of Governors: The Historia Monastica of Thomas Bishop of Maraga, A.D. 840, Volumes 1&2*, edited and translated by E. A. Wallis Budge. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press: 2003.

Theophanes Confessor. *The Chronicle of Theophanes*. Translated by Cyril Mango and Roger Scott with Geoffrey Greatrex. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.

Theophanis chronographia. Vol. 1. Edited by C. de Boor. Leipzig: Teubner, 1883; reprint Hildesheim: Olms, 1963.

Theophylact Simocatta. *The History of Theophylact Simocatta: An English Translation with Introduction and Notes*. Edited and translated by Michael and Mary Whitby. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1986.

Theophylacti Simocattae historiae. Edited by C. de Boor. Leipzig: Teubner, 1887; reprint. Stuttgart, 1972.

Secondary Scholarship

Arutjunova-Fidanjan, V.A. “Ի Սմբատայ” or “Ի Սպահան”? (“I Smbatay” or “I Spahan”? Pseudo-Sebēos, ch. 25).” In *From Byzantium to Iran: Armenian Studies in Honour of Nina G. Garsoïan*, edited by Jean-Pierre Mahé and Robert W. Thomson, 151-164. Atlanta: Scholarly Press, 1997.

Asmusen, Jes P. “Some Remarks on Sasanian Demonology.” In *Commemoration Cyrus Hommage Universel*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974.

Assmann, Jan. *Religion and Cultural Memory*. Translated by Rodney Livingstone. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006.

Baca-Winters, Keenan. *Memoria Hannibalis: Constructing Memories of Punic War Violence from the Second Century BCE Through the Fifth Century CE*. Master's thesis: San Diego State University, 2010.

- Barnes, Timothy D. *Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representation of Historical Reality*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.
- Barnes, T.D. "Constantine and the Christians of Persia." *The Journal of Roman Studies* 75 (1985): 126-136.
- Baum, Wilhelm. *Shirin: Christian–Queen–Myth of Love: A Woman of Late Antiquity: Historical Reality and Literary Effect*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004.
- Becker, Adam H. "Martyrdom, Religious Difference, and 'Fear' as a Category of Piety in the Sasanian Empire: The Case of the *Martyrdom of Gregory* and the *Martyrdom of Yazdpaneh*." *Journal of Late Antiquity* 2, no. 2 (Fall: 2009): 300-336.
- Berkey, Jonathan P. *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Blockley, R. C. "The Division of Armenia between the Romans and the Persians at the End of the Fourth Century A.D." *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, Bd. 36, H. 2 (2nd Quarter, 1987): 222-234.
- Bosworth, C. E. "The Coming of Islam to Afghanistan." In *Islam and Asia 1, South Asia*, edited by Y. Friedman, 1-22. Jerusalem, 1984. Reprinted in *The Arabs, Byzantium and Iran: Studies in Early Islamic History and Culture*. London: Variorum, 1996.
- Bournoutian, George A. *A Concise History of the Armenian People: From Ancient to the Present* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2002)
- Bowersock, G. W. *Empires in Collision in Late Antiquity*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2012.
- Boyce, Mary. *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*. London: Routledge, 1987.
- Brock, Sebastian. "Christians in the Sasanian Empire: A Case of Divided Loyalties." In *Religion and National Identity: Studies in Church History XVIII*, edited by Stuart

- Mews, 1-19. Oxford, 1982. Reprinted in *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity*. London: Variorum Reprints, 1984.
- _____. "The Christology of the Church of the East." In *Traditions and Heritage of the Christian East*, edited by D. Afinogenov and A. Muraviev, 159-179. Moscow: Izdatelstvo "Indrik," 1996. Reprinted in *Fire from Heaven: Studies in Syriac Theology and Liturgy*. (Aldershot, Variorum Reprints, 2006.
- _____. "The Christology of the Church of the East in the Synods of the Fifth and Early Seventh Centuries: Preliminary Considerations and Materials." In *Aksum-Thyateira: a Festschrift for Archbishop Methodios*, edited by G. Dragas, 125-142. London, 1985. Reprinted in *Studies in Syriac Christianity: History, Literature and Theology*. Aldershot: Variorum Reprints, 1992.
- _____. "The Church of the East in the Sasanian Empire up to the Sixth Century and its Absence from the Councils in the Roman Empire." In *Syriac Dialogue I*, 69-86. Vienna: Pro Oriente, 1994. Reprinted in *Fire from Heaven: Studies in Syriac Theology and Liturgy*. Aldershot: Variorum Reprints, 2006.
- _____. "The 'Nestorian' Church: A Lamentable Misnomer." In *The Church of the East: Life and Thought*, edited J.F. Coakley and K. Parry, 1-14. Manchester: *Bulletin of the John Rylands University of Manchester* 78:3, 1996. Reprinted in *Fire from Heaven: Studies in Syriac Theology and Liturgy*. Aldershot: Variorum Reprints, 2006.
- _____. "Saints in Syriac: A Little-Tapped Resource." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 181-196.
- Bürgel, J. Christoph. "Zoroastrianism as Viewed in Medieval Islamic Sources." In *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions: A Historical Survey*, edited by Jacques Waardenburg, 202-212. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Cameron, Averil. *Agathias*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970.
- _____. "Agathias on the Sasanians." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 23/24 (1969/1970): 67-183.
- _____. *Procopius and the Sixth Century*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985.
- Canepa, Matthew P. *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual Kingship Between Rome and Sasanian Iran*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2009.
- Christensen, Arthur. *L'Iran sous Les Sassanides*. Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1994.

- Clark, Peter. *Zoroastrianism: An Introduction to an Ancient Faith*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1998.
- Conrad, Lawrence I. "Heraclius in Early Islamic Kerygma." In *The Reign of Heraclius (610-641): Crisis and Confrontation*, edited by Gerrit J. Reinink and Bernard H. Stolte, 113-156. Leuven: Peeters Publishing Publishing, 2002.
- Crone, Patricia. *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Daniel, Elton L. "Manuscripts and Editions of Bal'amī's 'Tarjamah-i Tāriḫ-i Ṭabarī'." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* no. 2 (1990): 282-321.
- Daryaee, Touraj. "Ardaxšīr and the Sasanians' Rise to Power." *Anabasis: Studia Classica et Orientalia* 1 (2010): 236-255.
- _____. "The Coinage of Queen Bōrān and Its Significance for Late Sāsānian Imperial Ideology." *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 13 (1997): 77-82.
- _____. "The Construction of the Past in Late Antique Persia." *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 55, H. 4 (2006): 493-503.
- _____. "The Fall of the Sasanian Empire to the Arab Muslims: From Two Centuries of Silence to Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: the Partho-Sasanian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran." *Journal of Persianate Studies* 3 (2010): 239-254.
- _____. "The Last Ruling Woman of Ērānšahr: Queen Āzarmīgduxt." In *A. Shapur Shahbazi Memorial Volume*, edited by K. Abdi, 1-6. Tehran: Iran University Press, 2009.
- _____. "National History or Keyanid History?: The Nature of Sassanid Zoroastrian Historiography." *Iranian Studies* 28, no. 3-4 (Summer/Fall: 1995): 129-141.
- _____. *Sasanian Iran (224-651CE): Portrait of a Late Antique Empire*. Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers: 2008.
- _____. *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire*. London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2009.
- _____. "The Use of Religio-Political Propaganda on the Coinage of Xusrō II." *American Journal of Numismatics* 9 (1997): 41-53.
- Davidson, Olga M. *Poet and Hero in the Persian Book of Kings*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994.

- Dignas, Beate and Engelbert Winter. *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Donner, Fred M. *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing*. Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, 1998.
- El-Cheikh, Nadia Maria. *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.
- Emrani, Haleh. "Like Father, Like Daughter: Late Sasanian Imperial Ideology & the Rise of Bōrān to Power." *e-Sasanika* 9 (2009): 1-20.
- Evans, J. A. S. *The Age of Justinian: The Circumstances of Imperial Power*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Fiey, J. M. *Jalons pour une Histoire de l'Église en Iraq: Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 310: Subsidia, Tomus 36*. Louvain: Secrétariate du CorpusSCO Wa-versebaan, 49, 1970.
- Frye, Richard N. *The History of Ancient Iran*. München: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1983.
- Frye, R. N. "The Political History of Iran under the Sasanians." In *The Cambridge History of Iran, Volume 3 (1): The Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian Periods*, edited by Ehsan Yarshater, 116-178. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Garsoïan, Nina. "Armenia in the Fourth Century: An Attempt to Re-Define the Concepts «Armenia» and «Loyalty»." *Revue des études arméniennes* VIII (Paris, 1971): 341-352. Reprinted in *Armenia between the Romans and the Sasanians*. London: Variorum Reprints, 1985.
- _____. "The Aršakuni Dynasty." In *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*. Vol. 1. *The Dynastic Periods: From Antiquity to the Fourteenth Century*, edited by Richard Hovannisian, 63-94. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004.
- _____. "Frontier-Frontiers? Transcaucasia and eastern Anatolia in the pre-Islamic Period." *La Persia e Bisanzio. Atti dei convegni Lincei* 202 (October, 2002): 327-352.

Reprinted in Nina G. Garsoïan, *Studies on the Formation of Christian Armenia*. Farnham, Surrey: Variorum Collected Series, 2010.

- _____. "L'Interrègne Arménien: esquisse préliminaire." *Le Muséon: Revue d'Etudes Orientales* 122 (2009): 81-92. Reprinted in Nina G. Garsoïan, *Studies on the Formation of Christian Armenia*. Farnham, Surrey: Variorum Collected Series, 2010.
- _____. *Interregnum: Introduction to a Study on the Formation of Armenian Identity (ca 600-750): Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium: Subsidia* 127. Leuven: Peeters Publishing, 2012.
- _____. "Janus: the formation of the Armenian Church from the IVth to the VIIth Century." In *The Formation of a Millennial Tradition: 1700 Years of Armenian Christian Witness (301-2001)*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 271, edited by R. Taft, 79-95. Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2004). Reprinted in Nina G. Garsoïan, *Studies on the Formation of Christian Armenia*. Farnham, Surrey: Variorum Collected Series, 2010.
- _____. "The Marzpanate (428-652)." In *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*. Vol. 1. *The Dynastic Periods: From Antiquity to the Fourteenth Century*, edited by Richard Hovannisian, 95-116. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004.
- _____. "Prolegomena to a Study of the Iranian Elements in Arsacid Armenia." In *Handes Amsorya*. Vienna: Zeitschrift für armenische Philologie XC, 1976.
- _____. "Secular Jurisdiction over the Armenian Church." In *Okeanos: Essays Presented to Ihor Sevčenko on his Sixtieth Birthday by His Colleagues and Students*, edited by Cyril Mango, Omeljan Pritsak, Uliana M. Pasicznyk, 220-250. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Ukrainian Studies 7, 1984.

Giesen, Bernard. *Triumph and Trauma*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2004.

Gilliot, Claude. "La Formation Intellectuelle de Tabari." *Journal Asiatique: Périodique Trimestriel* CCLXXVI no. 3-4 (1988): 203-244.

Greatrex, Geoffrey. "Khusro II and the Christians of His Empire." *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 3 (2003): 78-88.

Greenwood, Tim. "A Corpus of Early Medieval Armenian Inscriptions." *Dumbarton Oak Papers* 58 (2004): 27-91.

- _____. "'New Light from the East': Chronography and Ecclesiastical History through a Late Seventh-Century Armenian Source." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16, no. 2 (Summer, 2008): 197-254.

- _____. *Sasanian Reflections in Armenian Sources: Sasanika Occasional Papers 2*. Beverly Hills: Afshar Publishing, 2010.
- Haldon, John. "The Reign of Heraclius: A Context for Change?" In *The Reign of Heraclius (610-641): Crisis and Confrontation*, edited by Gerrit J. Reinink and Bernard H. Stolte, 1-16. Leuven: Peeters Publishing, 2002.
- Harvey, S. Ashbrook. "Remembering Pain: Syriac Historiography and the Separation of the Churches." *Byzantion: Revue Internationale des Études Byzantines* tome LVIII, facsimile 2 (1998): 295-308.
- Harvey, Susan Ashbrook. *Asceticism and Society in Crisis: John of Ephesus and the Lives of the Easter Saints*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1990.
- Hauser, Stefan R. "Vēh Ardashīr and the Identification of the Ruins at al-Madā'in." In *Facts and Artefacts, Art in the Islamic World: Festschrift for Jens Kröger on his 65th Birthday*, edited by Annette Hagedorn and Avinoram Shalem, 461-488. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007.
- Hewsen, Robert H. "The Geography of Armenia." In *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*. Vol. 1. *The Dynastic Periods: From Antiquity to the Fourteenth Century*, edited by Richard Hovannisian, 1-18. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004.
- Hovannisian, Richard G. "Introduction." In *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*. Vol. 1. *The Dynastic Periods: From Antiquity to the Fourteenth Century*, edited by Richard Hovannisian, vii-xi. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004.
- Howard-Johnston, James with Tim Greenwood. *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos: Part 2. Historical Commentary edited and translated by R. W. Thomson with commentary by James Howard-Johnston with Tim Greenwood*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999.
- Howard-Johnston, James. "Al-Tabari on the Last Great War of Antiquity." In *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity: Historiographical and Historical Studies*, 1-22. Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2006.

- _____. "Armenian Historians of Heraclius: An Examination of the Aims, Sources, and Working-Methods of Sebeos and Movses Daskhuransti." In *The Reign of Heraclius (610-641): Crisis and Confrontation*, edited by Gerrit J. Reinink and Bernard H. Stolte, 41-62. Leuven: Peeters Publishing Publishing, 2002.
- _____. "The Two Great Powers in Late Antiquity: A Comparison." In *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East. III: States, Resources and Armies*, edited by A Cameron, 157-226. Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, 1995. Reprinted in *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity: Historiographical and Historical Studies*. Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2006.
- _____. "Heraclius' Persian Campaigns and the Revival of the East Roman Empire, 622-630 CE." *War and History* 6 (1999): 1-44. Reprinted in *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity: Historiographical and Historical Studies*. Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2006
- _____. "The Official History of Heraclius' Persian Campaigns." In *The Roman and Byzantine Army in the East: Proceedings of a Colloquium Held at the Jagiellonian University, Kraków in September 1992*, edited by E. Dabrowa, 57-87. Kraków: Uniwersytet Jagiellonski, 1992. Reprinted in *East Rome, Sasanian Persia, and the End of Antiquity: Historiographical and Historical Studies*. Aldershot: Variorum, 2006.
- _____. "Procopius, Roman defences north of the Taurus and the new fortress of Citharizon." In *The Eastern Frontier of the Roman Empire (BAR Int Ser. 553)*, edited by D. H. French and C. S. Lightfoot, 203-229. Oxford: British Archaeology Reports, 1989. Reprinted in *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity: Historiographical and Historical Studies*. Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2006.
- _____. "Pride and Fall: Khusro II and His Regime, 626-628." In *La Persia e Bisnazio (Atti dei Convegni Lincei 201)*, edited by G. Gnoli, 93-113. Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 2004). Reprinted in *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity: Historiographical and Historical Studies*. Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2006.
- _____. "The Siege of Constantinople in 626." In *Constantinople and its Hinterland*, edited by C. Mango and G. Dagron, 131-142. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1995. Reprinted in *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity: Historiographical and Historical Studies*. Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2006.
- _____. "The Two Great Powers in Late Antiquity: A Comparison." In *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East. III: States, Resources and Armies* ed. A Cameron, 157-226. Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, 1995. Reprinted in *East Rome, Sasanian Persia and the End of Antiquity: Historiographical and Historical Studies* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2006);
- _____. *Witnesses to a World in Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

- Hoyland, Robert G. *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings in Early Islam*. Princeton: Darwin Press, 1997.
- Jones, A. H. M. *The Later Roman Empire 284-602: A Social and Economic Survey*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964.
- Kaegi, Walter E. *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Kaegi, Walter E. and Paul M. Cobb. "Heraclius, Shahrbarāz, and al-Ṭabarī." In *Al-Ṭabarī: A Medieval Muslim Historian and His Work*, edited by Hugh Kennedy, 95-112. Princeton: The Darwin Press, 2008.
- Kaldellis, Anthony. "The Historical and Religious Views of Agathias: A Reinterpretation." *Byzantion: Revue Internationale des Études Byzantines* 69, facsimile 1 (1999): 206-252.
- _____. *Procopius of Caesarea: Tyranny, History, and Philosophy and the End of Antiquity*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.
- _____. "Things Are Not What They Are: Agathias 'Mythistoricus' and the Last Laugh of Classical Culture." *The Classical Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (May, 2003): 295-300.
- Kelly, Gavin. *Ammianus Marcellinus: The Allusive Historian*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Kennedy, Hugh. *When Baghdad Ruled the Muslim World: The Rise and Fall of Islam's Greatest Dynasty*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2004.
- Khaleghi-Motlagh, DJ. In *Encyclopedia Iranica*, vol 1, fasc. 9. New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 1989), s.v. "Amīrak Bal'amī."
- Louth, Andrew. "Justinian and His Legacy (500-600)." In *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire: C. 500-1492*, edited by Jonathan Shephard, 99-129. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Maas, Michael. "'Delivered from Their Ancient Customs' Christianity and the Question of Cultural Change in Early Byzantine Ethnography." In *Conversion in Late Antiquity*

- and the Early Middle Ages: Seeing and Believing*, edited by Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton, 152-188. New York: University of Rochester, 2003.
- _____. "Strabo and Procopius: Classical Geography for a Christian Empire." In *From Rome to Constantinople: Studies in Honour of Averil Cameron*, edited by Hagit Amirav and Bas ter Haar Romeny, 67-83. Leuven: Peeters and Bondgenotenlaan, 2007.
- Malek, Hodge Mehdi and Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis. "History and Coinage of the Sasanian Queen Bōrān (AD 629-631)." *The Numismatic Chronicle (1966-)* 158 (1998): 113-129.
- Matthews, John. *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*. London: Duckworth, 1989.
- McDonough, Scott. "The Legs of the Throne: Kings, Elites, and the Subjects in Sasanian Iran." In *The Roman Empire in Context: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, edited by Johann P. Arnason and Kurt A. Raaflaub, 290-321. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.
- _____. "Where the Sasanians Barbarians? Roman Writers on the 'Empire of the Persians'" In *Romans, Barbarians, and the Transformation of the Roman World: Cultural Interaction and the Creation of Identity in Late Antiquity*, edited by Ralph W. Mathisen and Danuta Shanzer, 55-66. Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2011.
- Mehr, Farhang. *The Zoroastrian Tradition: An Introduction to the Ancient Wisdom of Zarathustra*. Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2003.
- Moorhead, John. "Western Approaches (500-600)." In *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire: C. 500-1492*, edited by Jonathan Shepard, 196-220. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Morony, Michael G. "Religious Communities in Late Sasanian and Early Muslim Iraq." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 17, no. 2 (May, 1974): 113-135.
- Peacock, Andrew. *Mediaeval Islamic Historiography and Political Legitimacy: Bal'ami's Tarikhnama*. London: Routledge, 2007.
- Panaino, Antonio. "Women and Kingship: Some Remarks about the Enthronisation of Queen Bōrān and Her Sister *Āzarmīgduxt." In *Ērān ud Anērān: Studien zu den*

Beziehungen zwischen dem Sasanidenreich und der Mittelmeerwelt (Beiträge des Internationalen Colloquiums in Euti, 8-9), edited by Josef Wiesehöfer and Philip Huyse, 221-240. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006.

Payne, Richard E. "Christianity and Iranian Society in Late Antiquity: ca. 500-700 CE." PhD diss., Princeton University, 2010.

Potter, David S. *The Roman Empire at Bay (AD 180-395)*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004.

Pourshariati, Parvaneh. *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: The Sasanian-Parthian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran*. London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2008.

Reinink, Gerrit J. "Heraclius, the New Alexander: Apocalyptic Prophecies During the Reign of Heraclius." In *The Reign of Heraclius (610-641): Crisis and Confrontation*, edited by Gerrit J. Reinink and Bernard H. Stolte, 81-94. Leuven: Peeters Publishing, 2002.

Rohrbacher, David. *The Historians of Late Antiquity*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Rosenthal, Franz. "The Life and Works of al-Ṭabarī." In *The History of al-Ṭabarī, Volume 1: General Introduction and From the Creation to the Flood*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1989.

Rubin, Zeev. "Al-Ṭabarī and the Age of the Sasanians." In *Al-Ṭabarī: A Medieval Muslim Historian and His Work*, edited by Hugh Kennedy, 41-71. Princeton: The Darwin Press, 2008.

Russell, James R. *Zoroastrianism in Armenia*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, 1987.

Shahbazi, A. Sh. "Bahrām VI Čōbīn." In *Encyclopedia Iranica*, volume III, fasc. 5. New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 1988.

Shahbazi, A. Shapour. "Bestām o Bendōy." In *Encyclopedia Iranica*, vol IV, fasc. 2. New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 1989.

Shahid, Irfan. "The Iranian Factor in Byzantium during the Reign of Heraclius." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 26 (1972): 293-320.

Shaked, Shaul. *Dualism in Transformation: Varieties of Religion in Sasanian Iran*. London: University of London, 1994.

_____. "Esoteric Trends in Zoroastrianism." In *Proceedings from the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 3 (Jerusalem: 1969): 175-221. Reprinted in *From Zoroastrianism to Islam Studies in Religious History and Intercultural Contacts*. Aldershot: Variorum, 1995.

Sizgorich, Thomas. "'Not Easily Were Stones Joined by the Strongest Bonds Pulled Asunder': Religious Violence and Imperial Order in the Later Roman World." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 15, no. 1 (2007): 75-101.

_____. "Reasoned Violence and Shifty Frontiers: Shared Violence in the Late Roman East," in *Violence in Late Antiquity*, ed. H.A. Drake, 167-176. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2006.

_____. "Sanctified Violence: Monotheist Militancy as the Tie That Bound Christian Rome and Islam." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 77, no. 4 (December: 2009): 895-921.

_____. *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.

Stoyanov, Yuri. *Defenders and Enemies of the True Cross: The Sasanian Conquest of Jerusalem in 614 and Byzantine Ideology of Anti-Persian Warfare*. Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2011.

Thomson, R. W. "Eastern Neighbors: Armenia (400-600)." In *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire: C. 500-1492*, edited by Jonathan Shepard, 156-173. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

_____. "Introduction." In *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos: Part 1. Translation and Notes* edited and translated by R. W. Thomson with commentary by James Howard-Johnston with Tim Greenwood, xi-lxxvii. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999.

- Takeshita, Márkus. "From Iranian Myth to Folk-Narrative: The Legend of the Dragon-Slayer and the Spinning Maiden in the Persian Book of the Kings." *Asian Folklore Studies* 60, no. 2 (2001): 203-214.
- Thompson, Martyn P. "Reception Theory and the Interpretation of Historical Meaning." *History and Theory* 32, no. 3 (Oct., 1993): 248-272.
- Traina, Guisto. *428 AD: An Ordinary Year at the End of the Roman Empire*. Translated by Allen Cameron. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009.
- Treadgold, Warren. *A History of Byzantine State and Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007.
- Toumanoff, Cyril. *Studies in Christian Caucasian History*. Georgetown: Georgetown University Press 1963.
- Waardenburg, Jacques. "The Medieval Period 650-1500." In *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions: A Historical Survey*, ed. Jacques Waardenburg, 18-69. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Walker, Joel. "Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq." In *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq*, 86-290. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2006.
- Watt, John W. "The Portrayal of Heraclius in Syriac Sources." In *The Reign of Heraclius (610-641): Crisis and Confrontation*, edited by Gerrit J. Reinink and Bernard H. Stolte, 63-80. Leuven: Peeters Publishing Publishing, 2002.
- Whitby, Mary. "Defender of the Cross: George of Pisidia on the Emperor Heraclius and His Deputies." In *The Propaganda of Power: The Role of Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, edited by Mary Whitby, 247-275. Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 1998.
- _____. "George of Pisidia's Presentation of the Emperor Heraclius and his Campaigns: Variety and Development." In *The Reign of Heraclius (610-641): Crisis and Confrontation*, edited by Gerrit J. Reinink and Bernard H. Stolte, 157-175. Leuven: Peeters Publishing, 2002.

- _____. "George of Pisidia and the Persuasive Word: Words, Words, Words..." In *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, edited by Elizabeth Jeffreys, 173-186. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003.
- _____. "A New Image for a New Age: George of Pisidia on the Emperor Heraclius." In *The Roman and Byzantine Army in the East: Proceedings of a Colloquium Held at the Jagiellonian University, Kraków in September 1992*, edited by E. Dabrowa, 197-225. Kraków: Uniwersytet Jagiellonski, 1992.
- Whitby, Michael. *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian: Theophylact Simocatta on Persian and Balkan Warfare*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.
- _____. "The Persian King at War." In *The Roman and Byzantine Army in the East: Proceedings of a Colloquium Held at the Jagiellonian University, Kraków in September 1992*, edited by E. Dabrowa, 227-263. Kraków: Uniwersytet Jagiellonski, 1992.
- Whitby, Michael and Mary Whitby. "Introduction." In *The History of Theophylact Simocatta: An English Translation with Introduction and Notes*, xiii-xx. Edited and translated by Michael and Mary Whitby. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986.
- Wigram, W.A. *An Introduction to History of the Assyrian Church or the Church of the Sasanid Persian Empire, 100-640 A.D.* Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004.
- Williams, A.V. "Zoroastrians and Christians in Sasanian Iran." *Bulletin of the John Rylands University of Library of Manchester* 78 (1996): 37-53.
- Wood, Philip. *The Chronicle of Seert: Christian Historical Imagination in Iraq*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Zakeri, Mohsen. "Al-Ṭabarī on Sasanian History: A Study in Sources." In *Al-Ṭabarī: A Medieval Muslim Historian and His Work*, edited by Hugh Kennedy, 27-40. Princeton: The Darwin Press, 2008.