

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND IDENTITY IV



WRITING HISTORY ACROSS MEDIEVAL EURASIA

Edited by
Walter Pohl and Daniel Mahoney

BREPOLS

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND IDENTITY IV

CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS IN
LATE ANTIQUITY AND THE MIDDLE AGES

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VOLUME 30

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND IDENTITY

The six-volume sub-series *Historiography and Identity* unites a wide variety of case studies from Antiquity to the late Middle Ages, from the Latin West to the emerging polities in Northern and Eastern Europe, and adding a Eurasian perspective that includes the Islamic World and China. The series aims to develop a critical methodology to harness the potential of identity studies to add to the understanding of the construction and impact of historiography.

VOLUME 4

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND IDENTITY IV

Writing History Across Medieval Eurasia

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PREFACE

This is the fourth in a series of six volumes exploring ways in which medieval historiography could contribute to the construction of identities (see the list below). Although they address the whole chronological range from Antiquity to the fifteenth century, they do not cover the entire field of medieval historiography in equal depth. The well-studied areas of later medieval English, French, German, and Italian historiography have not been considered at length. The first volume offers some introductory essays and a number of spotlights on history writing in Classical and Late Antiquity, and discusses ancient and early Christian models for medieval historiography. Volumes 2 and 3 deal with early medieval, mainly Latin historiography in the post-Roman and Carolingian periods. Volume 5 focuses on the early histories of the emerging polities in Scandinavia, Eastern Central, and Eastern Europe. The sixth volume continues this concern for relatively neglected eastern parts of Europe, concentrating on the manifold Latin and vernacular historiography in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Eastern Central Europe. The present volume has a much wider horizon, ranging from China to the Iberian Peninsula. Many of its chapters concentrate on the late first millennium CE, while some include somehow earlier or slightly later periods. They do not offer synthetic narratives on the history of different Eurasian historiographies, but probe into particular texts or historiographic strategies. However, as I try to show in my concluding ‘Essay in Comparison’, taken together they offer fascinating comparative perspectives.

The project from which this and the other five volumes originated was part of the research cluster ‘Visions of Community: Comparative Approaches to Ethnicity, Region and Empire in Christianity, Islam and Buddhism (400–1600 CE) (VISCOM)’, funded by the Austrian Research Fund (FWF).¹

¹ The FWF (Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung in Österreich) funded the cluster as SFB (Spezialforschungsbereich) F 42-G 18. Open access for this volume was supported by the FWF in the project PUB 788-G.

In this cluster medieval historians, social anthropologists, and philologists worked together from 2011 to 2019 to compare the role of universal religions in the formation of particular communities in medieval Europe and Asia.² We are very grateful to the FWF and to the cluster's two host institutions, the University of Vienna and the Austrian Academy of Sciences, for their support. The Institute for Medieval Research of the Austrian Academy provided an excellent institutional hub for our work. We would also like to thank both the staff and guests at the institute and its VISCOM partner institutions for their help in organizing the workshops and preparing the volumes for publication. Nicola Edelmann, Christina Pössel, and Thomas Gobbit helped with copy editing and correcting non-native speakers' English, Veronika Wieser and Cinzia Grifoni with coordinating the preparation of the volume. Our thanks also go to the publishers and their copy-editor, Tim Barnwell, for smooth and efficient collaboration. Finally, we are very grateful to the scholars for their participation in the workshops and their contributions in this volume, and their patience with the lengthy publication process.

Volumes of the Series

- Historiography and Identity*, I: *Ancient and Early Christian Narratives of Community*, ed. by Walter Pohl and Veronika Wieser (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019)
- Historiography and Identity*, II: *Post-Roman Multiplicity and New Political Identities*, ed. by Helmut Reimitz and Gerda Heydemann (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020)
- Historiography and Identity*, III: *Carolingian Approaches*, ed. by Helmut Reimitz, Rutger Kramer, and Graeme Ward (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020)
- Historiography and Identity*, IV: *Writing History across Medieval Eurasia*, ed. by Walter Pohl and Daniel Mahoney (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021).
- Historiography and Identity*, V: *The Emergence of New Peoples and Polities in Europe, 1000–1300*, ed. by Walter Pohl, Francesco Borri, and Veronika Wieser (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming)
- Historiography and Identity*, VI: *Competing Narratives of the Past in Central and Eastern Europe, c. 1200–c. 1600*, ed. by Pavlína Rychterová, with the assistance of David Kalhous (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming)

² Walter Pohl and Andre Gingrich, 'Visions of Community. Comparative Approaches to Ethnicity, Region and Empire in Christianity, Islam and Buddhism (400–1600 CE)', *Medieval Worlds*, 1 (2015), 138–47, <http://www.medievalworlds.net/medieval_worlds?frames=yes> [accessed 1 August 2020].

INTRODUCTION: HISTORIOGRAPHY AND IDENTITY IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Walter Pohl

This is the fourth of six volumes in a book series exploring constructions of identity in medieval historiography, from ancient and early Christian precedents to late medieval vernacular histories in Central and Eastern Europe.¹ They are a result of the ‘Visions of Community’ project funded by the Austrian Research Council FWF from 2011 to 2019.² The present volume extends the mainly European focus of the series to probe into a more global perspective, exploring the historiographic cultures of a number of different Eurasian macro-regions: China, Japan, Iran, South Arabia, Syria, Byzantium, Lotharingia, and Spain. Of course, this experimental crossing of disciplinary boundaries cannot do the vast range of Chinese or Islamic medieval historiography justice. Yet a broader, Eurasian perspective can contribute to a deeper understanding of the very different ways in which works of historiography could communicate, promote, and negotiate ‘visions of community’ and concepts of belonging. For historians of medieval Europe, there is a lot to learn

¹ Pohl and Wieser, eds, *Historiography and Identity*, I; Reimitz and Heydemann, eds, *Historiography and Identity*, II; Reimitz, Kramer, and Ward, eds, *Historiography and Identity*, III; Pohl, Borri, and Wieser, eds, *Historiography and Identity*, v; Rychterová, ed., *Historiography and Identity*, vi.

² The research was supported by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), Project F 42-G 18 — SFB ‘Visions of Community’ (VISCOM).

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from this wider context. A closer look at different historical cultures or ‘régimes d’historicité’ (F. Hartog) can defamiliarize the prevailing and rather linear narrative of the dialectic progress from classical through Christian/medieval and humanist writing of history to enlightened and modern historiography.³

By these efforts at broad comparison, we hope to change the views of European historiography, to assess in what ways early medieval Latin history writing differed from other cultures of memory, and to discover hitherto ignored undercurrents beneath familiar European patterns that we only notice because we can see the important role they played in other historiographic cultures.⁴ Furthermore, such decentring of European history can help to approach Asian historiography on its own terms, without using European developments as a benchmark. Crucially, however, the comparative perspective we propose here should not be taken to imply that there were unified Western, Islamic, or Chinese ‘cultures’ defined as different entities from the start, each with their intrinsic characteristics. On the contrary: the web of similarities and differences is more complex than simple cultural typologies could express, and there were several options for writing about the past in all Eurasian macro-regions.

Problems of Identity in Historiography

‘Historiography and identity’ is a difficult topic, although it may seem — or perhaps because it seems — fairly obvious.⁵ It has been amply demonstrated that highly selective representations of the past help a community to establish the significance of past and present events, and to have confidence in those of the future.⁶ What happened in history is contingent and constantly challenges our values and expectations.⁷ Powerful cultural codes are needed to pro-

³ Hartog, *Régimes d’historicité*.

⁴ A number of recent studies and handbooks have sought to contextualize European historiography within a global perspective, e.g. Feldherr and Hardy, eds, *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, I; Foot and Robinson, eds, *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, II; Rösen, Gottlob, and Mittag, eds, *Die Vielfalt der Kulturen*; Göller and Mittag, *Geschichtsdenken*; Schmidt-Glintzer, Mittag, and Rösen, eds, *Historical Truth*. I have not been able to consult the forthcoming collection Van Nuffelen and Van Hoof, eds, *Clavis historicorum antiquitatis posterioris*.

⁵ Pohl, ‘Historiography and Identity — Methodological Perspectives’.

⁶ Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*.

⁷ Cf. Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme*, pp. 426–29. Luhmann’s model is that social systems in general aim for a reduction of contingency by channelling expectations for human action. Identities can be a way in which such expectations become more reliable. He makes that point by differ-

vide reassuring explanations for these incoherent and often confusing chains of events. Identification and othering are basic strategies by which contingency can be reduced, and allegiances to social groups constructed and reaffirmed (or challenged). Jörn Rüsen, a leading German theorist of history, has maintained that ‘every historical narrative is related to identity’.⁸ According to him, ‘the representation of the past is a necessary medium of conceiving of oneself, of expressing and constructing one’s identity, and simultaneously, of forming the otherness of the others’. Some scholars may disagree with this twofold claim that historiography is necessarily related to identity, and identity necessarily relies on representations of the past. Yet it would be hard to argue that they had nothing to do with each other.

Efforts to root social identities of the present in a shared past are particularly important in overarching social groups that stretch far beyond face-to-face encounters. Histories dealing with peoples, polities, or large territories have emerged in several parts of the medieval world. They have often been defined as ‘national histories’, which, however, may imply unwelcome assumptions about the ‘national’ character of these large units.⁹ Indeed, to what extent histories emphasize the significance of the polity, of ruler(s) or their people(s), of a particular territory, or of religious institutions as constituting a particular supra-regional community varies greatly. The term ‘nation’ suggests a more stable union of these aspects than we should take for granted in the second half of the first millennium.¹⁰ What these histories have in common is that they transcend local communities, and adopt a wider-ranging narrative perspective. Events in the deep past or in far-away regions matter to the author and his readers. The connective structure established in these texts may be fictitious or reflect actual relations. In either case, it expresses the author’s efforts to bridge temporal and geographic distances, and to establish an overarching perspective that the text promotes (or, in rare cases, challenges). These are the type of works discussed in the present volume.

It is more or less generally acknowledged that histories do not simply reflect past and present identities, but actually help to create, reaffirm, modify, and legitimize them, and to project them into the future. As G. E. R. Lloyd argues

entiating between various ‘Identifizierungs-Gesichtspunkte’ (identificational perspectives), but does not extend the argument to social identities.

⁸ Rüsen, ‘Einleitung’, pp. 27 and 23 (my translation).

⁹ Pohl, ‘Debating Ethnicity’.

¹⁰ Cf. Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung*, criticizing the use of the term ‘nation’ for medieval Europe, but defending his use of ‘national history’ for the period.

in his epilogue to the first volume of *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, ‘The groups that the historian sees as the main agents in events are all constructs.’¹¹ However, it is less clear how exactly these efforts of construction can be traced in a given work of historiography, and to what extent the category of ‘identity’ is useful for doing that. I have explained why we use this controversial term in the title of this series in my contributions to the first and second volumes.¹² ‘An historian’s account of events will not be just in terms of individuals, but of groups’, as Lloyd puts it.¹³ Then as now, collective agency can either be ascribed to rulers or other representatives of the group, or to (mostly named) groupings. The difference is that in most premodern languages, states or institutions could hardly be endowed with agency.¹⁴ The cohesion of groups that assume agency in historical narratives can hardly be envisaged without any identification of the members with the group.¹⁵

In the approach chosen in the present series of volumes, ‘identity’ is used as a category that allows critical assessments of the cohesive (or disruptive) strategies of identification in texts. There may be other approaches, but the more they are based on an outright refutation of the concept of identity, the more they risk losing their heuristic potential. It is absolutely reasonable to argue that we should not take the unproblematic existence of the respective groups (Brubaker’s ‘groupness’) for granted, and to maintain that these are socially constructed.¹⁶ Yet that does not mean that such groups could not exist.¹⁷ If we exaggerate the flexibility, permeability, and malleability of social groupings, we cannot explain the considerable cohesion of some historical groups. Their composition might change, but their ‘identity’ persisted. Jews have maintained their ‘identity’ for thousands of years under adverse conditions, and in spite of the many different ways of being a Jew. We can also attribute that to a strong ‘sense of belonging’

¹¹ Lloyd, ‘Epilogue’, p. 607.

¹² Pohl, ‘Historiography and Identity — Methodological Perspectives’; Pohl, ‘Debating Ethnicity’.

¹³ Lloyd, ‘Epilogue’, p. 607.

¹⁴ Pohl, ‘Introduction: Strategies of Identification’.

¹⁵ Lloyd, ‘Epilogue’, p. 606.

¹⁶ Against ‘groupness’: Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*; abandon the term identity: Brubaker and Cooper, ‘Beyond “Identity”’. For a balanced critique of Brubaker, Jenkins, *Social Identity*, pp. 13–15.

¹⁷ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, argue that socially constructed or ‘imagined’ communities became real by these acts of construction and imagination. Pohl, ‘Introduction: Meanings of Community’.

which would perhaps remove some unwelcome overtones of the more complex term 'identity'. However, this would be at the cost of losing many levels of inquiry that 'identity' implies. An individual may have a sense of belonging to several groups, and to a different extent. On the level of the group, however, 'belonging' carries a strong binary meaning: somebody belongs to a group or not. Identities can be more complex; the term circumscribes a wide field of discourses and practices, hopes and memories that may inspire or subvert a sense of belonging. Identities may even continue to haunt you after you have lost your sense of belonging. For instance, Jewish identity is one of the richest and most-debated fields of complex identifications. Ultra-orthodox fundamentalists and radical Jewish intellectuals may both have a strong sense of belonging, but in itself that tells us little about their very different forms of identification as Jews, and about the ways in which concepts of Jewishness evolve and change.

Historiography is our main source for reconstructing the meaning and impact of social groups of all kinds in the distant past. We can only write histories dealing with the Franks, the Arabs, the Roman or the Chinese Empire on the basis of contemporary historical accounts. Source criticism and the history of historiography have addressed many aspects of the process of textual transmission in differentiated ways. Yet the ways in which medieval historical works have dealt with social identities have received relatively little attention. Much that has been said about Livy and Sima Qian as historians of the rise of imperial Rome and China, respectively, is in fact rather self-evident: they affirm, explain, and glorify these empires. To say that particular historians construct identities — of Romans, Franks, or Chinese — is an easy one-size-fits-all interpretation for a considerable range of historiographic strategies. It should not be taken as a sufficient answer. Identity as a heuristic concept is only productive if it keeps generating further questions, and helps us to uncover a text's internal tensions and contradictions, its subtle shifts and adaptations, and the multiplicity of voices and the internal diversity of large social groupings.

Modern historiography has tended to use the designations transmitted for peoples and other named social groupings of the past as containers for diverse evidence taken from written and material remains, and has taken the all-inclusive results for granted: 'the Romans' subdued Britain, built roads, produced high-quality *terra sigillata*, and used 'Roman law'. 'The Arabs' were converted to Islam, established the caliphate, subdued many peoples, built mosques, and advanced learning. History told like this can, to an extent, still offer valid narratives. But we need to be aware that this approach uses modern synthetic categories of 'Roman', 'Arab', 'Frankish', or 'Chinese' that are only more or less reliable reconstructions achieved by stretching different types of sources to make them

overlap. Categories such as these presume the existence of clear-cut collective actors in historiographic narratives — in contemporary historical scholarship just as they did in the past. Yet these categories do not necessarily correspond to the (same or different) terms used by historians at the time, and hardly give us any clues as to what ‘Frankishness’ or ‘Chineseness’ may have meant in the period under scrutiny, and how that changed.

For instance, a closer look at the term ‘Romanus’/‘Romani’ reveals that it was used rather rarely in ancient Roman historiography, and more frequently as an adjective than as a noun. Does that mean it was taken for granted, or, by contrast, that identification as ‘Romans’ was not as straightforward as we may think? Furthermore, the uses of the label ‘Romani’ were surprisingly varied. It could mean the inhabitants of the city of Rome, the functionaries of the state, the elites, the speakers of Latin, the citizens, the military, or vaguely defined compounds of some of these groups.¹⁸ In early Islam, ‘Arabs’ (hard to distinguish from an almost homonymous term denoting the Bedouin population of the desert) only seems to become widely attested as a category of self-identification in the Abbasid period, and its political significance becomes less salient again from the late ninth century CE onwards.¹⁹ The use of the term ‘Franks’ for the military elites of Gaul had some strong advocates amongst early medieval historians (for example, ‘Fredegar’ in the seventh, and early Carolingian authors in the eighth century), but Gregory of Tours in the late sixth century almost completely writes their name out of his history.²⁰ And our Western notion of ‘China’ as a monolithic historical entity for more than two thousand years is misleading as compared with the more complex terminology for the land, state, and people used by Chinese historians during the first millennium CE.²¹

Although that may sound counter-intuitive, the silences, ambiguities, and contradictions in historiographic texts do not mean that identities did not matter in them. On the contrary, hesitant or controversial identifications make looking at these texts from that angle more interesting. However, it does require reflection about the potential and the limits of the category of ‘identity’. There is no easy way to extrapolate from a text’s strategies and intentions to the extent to which it actually helped to establish a sense of identity in its readers.²²

¹⁸ Pohl, ‘Romanness’.

¹⁹ Webb, *Imagining the Arabs*.

²⁰ Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity*, pp. 52–65.

²¹ Abramson, *Ethnic Identity in Tang China*.

²² Pohl, ‘Historiography and Identity — Methodological Perspectives’; Pohl, ‘Debating Ethnicity’.

Cultural Memory, Truth, and Identity

Using the concept of ‘identity’ to frame questions and approaches to a trans-cultural comparison of historiography faces a number of potential obstacles. On a basic level, it is of course fairly easy to note that works of history reflected and contributed to constructions of identity. History is, as Jörn Rüsen maintains, ‘a universal cultural practice of re-presenting memories of the past’ (he uses the German word *Vergegenwärtigung*, literally ‘re-presentization’).²³ Identities are always particular, and so history can only be told from a specific perspective.²⁴ However, as Rüsen argues, such particular perspectives of identification also require an awareness of other identities and the ways in which they were different.²⁵ Identity presupposes difference. The way to incorporate identity and difference in a work of history is to link the text to an overarching master narrative, which is necessarily universal.²⁶ This poses a twofold methodological problem to those writing the history of historiography. Both medieval historical narratives and modern studies (at least until fairly recently) are ethnocentric: not by ignoring everything that is different, but by presenting one’s own order of things as the natural order, as the structure of the world at large.²⁷

The fusion of particular identity constructions and universal master narratives in historiography was not an innovation of the period studied in this volume, but the second half of the first millennium CE saw some key developments. In Europe and the Middle East, three elements laid the basis for the spread of this multi-level approach to history. First, the Hebrew Bible framed the history of Israel as a series of interventions of a universal God in human history — an ethnocentric universalism that was to have lasting impact. Second, Greek and

²³ Rüsen, ‘Einleitung’, p. 22: ‘Geschichte ist eine universelle kulturelle Praxis der erinnernden Vergegenwärtigung der Vergangenheit’. The following is my summary of Rüsen’s argument. Translations are my own; I quote the German original in the footnotes, because this is an example where translation necessarily leads to a loss of differentiation.

²⁴ Rüsen, ‘Einleitung’, p. 26: ‘Da jede historische Erzählung auf Identität bezogen ist und Identität immer partikular ist, rückt die Vergangenheit historisch grundsätzlich in eine Perspektive’.

²⁵ Rüsen, ‘Einleitung’, p. 23: ‘Historische Erzählungen präsentieren nicht nur die eigene kulturelle Identität, sondern sie beschreiben zugleich auch die Differenz zu den anderen und deren Anderssein’.

²⁶ Rüsen, ‘Einleitung’, p. 23: ‘Meistererzählungen sind immer Universalgeschichten’.

²⁷ Rüsen, ‘Einleitung’, p. 24 (taking the Bible and the Popol Vuh as examples): ‘Beide sind universal, weltumspannend, indem sie die je eigene, religiös fundierte Lebensordnung als Struktur der Welt im Ganzen, als Ordnung des Kosmos präsentieren’.

Hellenistic 'ethnographic' historiography established the model of an outward-looking civilization that systematically collected knowledge about foreigners and their past.²⁸ Hellenistic 'auto-ethnography' in the works of the Egyptian Manetho, the Babylonian Berossus, and the Jew Flavius Josephus adopted this model to establish a respectable position for one's own people within a hegemonic alien discourse.²⁹ And third, the spectacular success of the Abrahamic religions relied on the canonical assumption that universal truth had been revealed to particular and therefore privileged recipients, who assumed the responsibility to spread it across the world.

The Christian appropriation of the Jewish message of a divine revelation, and the claim that it should be universally propagated, created a new aggregate of discourses of identity which incorporated multiple narratives of the past to bolster the claims of particular groups in the present. Western, Byzantine, Syriac, and Islamic historiography made use of this master narrative of universal history.³⁰ Large-scale universal chronicles were, of course, only one historiographic genre among others, but with their strong basis in biblical history they offered a frame for other types of historiographical narrative, from local history to sacred biography.³¹ And whereas Western historiography from the eighteenth century onwards strove to shed its roots in divine revelation, it retained its sense of universal mission. The West established its universal hegemony through a dynamic master narrative of historical progress, superior civilization, and colonial expansionism. In China, the motif of superior civilization had already been a core element of historiography in the beginning of the imperial period over two thousand years ago. Whereas a similar Roman sense of cultural superiority then gave way to a Christian world view, Chinese narratives of the past were never subsumed into transcendental narratives of universal religion (in particular, Buddhism). Instead, the master narrative of Chinese history was geared towards an idealized Confucian frame of empire and moral rule. It seems that the Christian construction of universal history created a sense of a wider mission that also survived its modern secularization, while Chinese historiography remained solidly anchored in its imperial frame.

This results in two related problems for our comparison of the historiographies of different macro-regions. On the one hand, we have to deal with the

²⁸ Hartog, *Le miroir d'Hérodote*; Almagor and Skinner, eds, *Ancient Ethnography*.

²⁹ Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*; Dench, 'The Scope of Ancient Ethnography'; see also below.

³⁰ Marsham, 'Universal Histories'.

³¹ Deliyannis, *Historiography*.

particular identity constructions in medieval histories and assess the role of universalist master narratives in shaping historiographic projects altogether.³² On the other hand, we have to be aware of the problems with our own universal categories of historiography, and of the particular perspectives that they imply. Still, abandoning these universal pretensions at the very moment that the world has become overwhelmingly (and in some respects, disquietingly) global would mean renouncing the potential to critically address the overall picture. ‘Provincializing Europe’ should not mean provincializing scholarship.³³ How, then, do we create a non-ethnocentric perspective that can accommodate cultural difference?³⁴ The risk in doing comparative research on historiography is that our sources tend to reaffirm the ethnocentric universalism of the modern scholarly tradition. A cautious empiricism that simply takes note of commonalities and differences in the ways in which identities were being negotiated in our sources is a valid approach, but not an end in itself. Such positivism in history always risks approaching the past without awareness of all the assumptions and theoretical models that the historian brings to it and has come to take for granted.³⁵ The sources do not simply speak for themselves — and even less so if we compare different macro-regions. ‘Every comparison requires an organizing parameter.’³⁶ This surely holds true if the question is in what way works of history constructed, reaffirmed, or undermined identities — a term and concept that was not part of the mindset of historians a thousand years ago or more.

So how can we approach our topic? There would be many angles from which we could hope to find answers. In the present volume, our focus is limited to exploring ‘texts which consistently represent supraregional communities and identities’ written across Eurasia more than a thousand years ago. The issues we address include: ‘What role do ethnic, political, territorial, or religious identifications play in a text? What is the shape of the “entangled identities” that the text proposes, and which other options for identification are present in it?’³⁷ In

³² Goetz, ‘On the Universality’; Campopiano and Bainton, eds, *Universal Chronicles*.

³³ Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*.

³⁴ For a critical and balanced overview of the problem of addressing the ‘Global Middle Ages’, see Holmes and Standen, ‘Introduction’, and the other chapters in the same volume; Belich and others, *The Prospect of Global History*.

³⁵ Cf. Veyne, *Writing History*.

³⁶ Rösen, ‘Theoretische Zugänge’.

³⁷ Pohl, ‘Historiography and Identity — Methodological Perspectives’, pp. 10–11.

particular, I would like to emphasize two lines of comparison that emerge from the individual chapters of this book.

The first issue is the relationship between particular identifications and distinctions on the one hand, and the master narratives and wider frames that structure the work on the other. How were identities placed within a 'larger social whole'?³⁸ In some cases, the Christian, Islamic, or imperial framing of a text's 'strategies of identification' is pretty obvious. Yet the case studies in this volume show that there was in fact a number of ways in which particular identities and differences could be accommodated within a shared matrix. Straightforward positive affirmation (for instance, 'we' are God's people or the only legitimate empire) was not the only option. The 'larger social whole' could also be pictured as 'the empire as it once was', 'the Islamic *umma* as it should have been', 'the true Christian society we have to fight for', or 'the catastrophic turmoil we have to face for salvation history to reach its ultimate goal'. Such constructions of identity are not always explicit, but implied through a particular employment, narrative strategies, or half-hidden remarks.

The second issue is how narratives of identity seek to establish their claim to truth. Narratives have to achieve some degree of plausibility and consensus to meet their audience's expectations of a valid account of the past. History is a 'realm of intended truth', as Averil Cameron put it.³⁹ Jörn Rüsen has maintained that 'strategies of self-identification and of interpreting the world in historical narratives always contain methodological features for making their presentation and interpretation of the past plausible.'⁴⁰ Authors can derive claims for the truth of their accounts of particular events from their narrative's universal framing. The universal grounding of these strategies of truth not only makes it possible to affirm one's own identity, but also to integrate multiple perspectives and identities, and thus acknowledge their validity.⁴¹ Thus universal framing does not require simply accepting that all perspectives are equally true. Claims for truth are a common feature in all historiographic cultures and thus make them comparable. Yet they are complex, multiple, and relational, and can be

³⁸ See Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity*, pp. 1–24.

³⁹ Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, p. 118.

⁴⁰ Rüsen, 'Einleitung', p. 25: 'Deshalb enthalten die Strategien der Selbstverständigung und der Weltdeutung durch historisches Erzählen stets methodische Elemente, mit denen diese Präsentation und Deutung der Vergangenheit plausibel gemacht werden.'

⁴¹ Rüsen, 'Einleitung', p. 28: 'Wahrheit befähigt die Menschen, die ihre Identität in einer bestimmten historischen Perspektive ausdrücken, eine oder mehrere andere Perspektiven zu akzeptieren, in denen andere Menschen ihre unterschiedliche Identität zu Ausdruck bringen.'

based on a great variety of strategies of truth — from the ‘truth effect’ largely achieved by repetition⁴² to truth claims based on circumstantial information⁴³ and complex rhetorical strategies.⁴⁴

Ancient and early medieval authors reflected much about truth in history, or at least used certain topoi to assert the truthfulness of their accounts. They were aware of the problem of convincing their audience of their veracity. Gregory of Tours quoted Sallust: ‘arduum videtur res gestas scribere’, it seems hard to write a history of events — because a critical view of historical actors risked being attributed merely to the author’s malevolence.⁴⁵ We may have many reasons to doubt that any medieval historian actually wrote the truth and nothing but the truth. Yet the ancient and medieval claim to write an accurate *narratio rerum gestarum* was not just based on literary devices intended to enhance the credibility of a text. It was rooted in fundamental social codes that established how truth could be found, as well as how and when claims to truth could be called into question.⁴⁶ Ancient and medieval authors were also aware that truth and what we call identity were related. As an example, I would like to present one of the strongest statements on how truth could be guaranteed in a historiographic community that we have from the first millennium CE. It combined Jewish and Hellenistic traditions of historiography in a unique set of methods to assert the truth of a narrative about the past.

Guardians of the Past: A Case from the Ancient Mediterranean

Towards the end of the first century CE, Flavius Josephus wrote his treatise *Against Apion*.⁴⁷ It represents a point of intersection of several currents of historiography in the ancient Mediterranean world. Yosef ben Mattityahou, as his Jewish name was, had been a commander in the Jewish War of 69/70, but had been captured and subsequently switched to the Roman side. He then wrote an

⁴² Béna, Carreras, and Terrier, ‘L’effet de vérité induit par la répétition’.

⁴³ ‘Enargeia’: Ginzburg, *Threads and Traces*.

⁴⁴ Kempshall, *Rhetoric*, pp. 350–427.

⁴⁵ Sallust, *Catilina*, III; Gregory, *Decem libri historiarum*, ed. by Krusch and Levison, iv.13, p. 145; cf. Reimitz, ‘Genre and Identity’.

⁴⁶ Kempshall, *Rhetoric*, pp. 354–55. See also Foucault, *L’ordre du discours*.

⁴⁷ Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion*, trans. by Barclay, particularly the section 1.7.24–1.8.43, pp. 24–32, with extensive commentary; or Flavius Josèphe, *Contre Apion*, ed. by Reinach and trans. by Blum. Excerpts of the text in Hartog, ed., *L’Histoire*, pp. 240–55. See also Pohl, ‘Historiography and Identity — Methodological Perspectives’.

account in Greek of the Jewish War and a history of the Jews, *Jewish Antiquities* (finished in 93 CE), to defend his own role in the war and the position of the defeated Jews in the Hellenistic world.⁴⁸ His work drew some harsh criticism, both from the Jewish priesthood condemning the renegade, and from Helleno-Egyptians who criticized Josephus for making false claims about the Jews as the most ancient people in the world.

The introductory sections of *Against Apion*, then, both refute anti-Semitic arguments and try to appease Jewish critics by a sustained defence of the Jewish historical tradition.⁴⁹ It is a remarkable piece of reflection about ways of attaining truth in historical writing.⁵⁰ The points are first rehearsed in the negative, claiming that the Greeks could not possibly realize their own requirements for writing true history. Then, Josephus argues that, by contrast, the Jewish tradition ensures a trustworthy account of the past.⁵¹ He uses the following arguments:

1. Priests as guardians of historical memory: The Jews have entrusted the keeping of records to priests. Josephus argued that this had been general practice in the ancient Near East: 'Among both the Egyptians and Babylonians, from extremely early times, the priests [...] were entrusted with taking care over the records and conducted philosophical enquiry on that basis.'⁵²
2. Ancient literacy, archival practice, and the use of documents: Again, this had been, according to Josephus, fairly widespread in the Near East. The Jewish priests guarded archives in which documents had been kept since time immemorial. 'The greatest proof of precision is this: our chief-priests for the last 2000 years are listed in the records by name, in line of descent from father to son.'⁵³ This, Josephus emphasizes, had been different in Greece. For the early history of the Greeks, 'no-one would be able to produce any record [...], preserved either in temples or on public monuments.'⁵⁴

⁴⁸ For an analysis of the methods applied in Josephus's works, see Villalba i Varneda, *The Historical Method of Flavius Josephus*, esp. pp. 242–89.

⁴⁹ Cohen, 'History and Historiography', p. 11; Rajak, 'The *Against Apion*'; Rajak, *Josephus*.

⁵⁰ Rajak, 'Josephus and the "Archaeology" of the Jews'; Rajak, *Josephus*; Cohen, 'History and Historiography'; Edmondson, Mason, and Rives, eds, *Flavius Josephus*; Barclay, 'Judaean Historiography'.

⁵¹ For an analysis in the vein of postcolonialism, see Barclay, 'Judaean Historiography', pp. 39–42.

⁵² Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion*, trans. by Barclay, 1.6.28, p. 23.

⁵³ Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion*, trans. by Barclay, 1.7.36, p. 27.

⁵⁴ Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion*, trans. by Barclay, 1.2.12, p. 15.

Elsewhere he writes, ‘From the outset the Greeks did not bother to create public records of contemporary events.’⁵⁵ Jewish history, by contrast, was not based on myths, but on documents. In this way, Josephus diligently tapped into earlier Roman polemic against vain and mendacious Greeks, ‘mendacia Graecae vanitatis.’⁵⁶ The Romans also maintained that their early annals were firmly based on the archives of the *pontifices maximi*.⁵⁷

3. Ethnic purity as a precondition for undiluted historical memory: ‘They [the Jewish priests] took great care that the priestly stock should remain unalloyed and pure (*amiktoi kai katharoi*); ‘for anyone who takes a share in the priesthood must father children by a woman from the same nation (*homoethnous gynaikos*) [...] he should examine her pedigree, procuring her genealogy from the archives and supplying many witnesses.’⁵⁸ The ancient genealogical records ensured ethnic purity, which in turn guaranteed the reliability of the records.
4. Divine truth transmitted unchanged: The Jews derived their knowledge of the past from sacred books, written first by Moses and subsequently by the prophets as his successors.

It is clear in practice how we approach our own writings. Although such a long time has now passed, no-one has dared to add, to take away, or to alter anything; and it is innate in every Judean, right from birth, to regard them as decrees of God, to remain faithful to them and, if necessary, gladly to die on their behalf.⁵⁹

According to Josephus, belief in God and respect for Scripture are innate and thus guaranteed by the ethnic community.

5. Greek historical methodology: In spite of this emphatic claim to all the strengths of a canonical priestly memory, Josephus’s polemic owes much to his Hellenistic erudition. His *Jewish Antiquities* belong to a genre of Hellenistic appropriations of ‘alien wisdom’, as Arnaldo Momigliano has called it.⁶⁰ Or were they ‘auto-ethnographies’ that ‘flipped’ the Greek tradition, as

⁵⁵ Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion*, trans. by Barclay, 1.4.20, p. 20.

⁵⁶ Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, xxviii.112; Barclay, *Against Apion*, pp. 8–10 (cited under Flavius Josephus).

⁵⁷ Frier, *Libri annales pontificum maximorum*; Barclay, *Against Apion*, p. 10.

⁵⁸ Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion*, trans. by Barclay, 1.7.30–31, p. 25. See Rajak, ‘Ethnic Identities’.

⁵⁹ Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion*, trans. by Barclay, 1.8.42, pp. 31–32.

⁶⁰ Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*.

Emma Dench has argued?⁶¹ Centuries before, Berossus had written in Greek about Babylonian history, and Manetho about the history of Egypt. Josephus criticizes the latter's anti-Jewish sentiment, and to him we owe the only surviving direct quotes from Manetho's lost work. The method employed by Josephus as well as his claims to factual history are also in accord with the standards of classical historiography: Barclay lists these as 'accuracy, eyewitness evidence, impartiality, reliable sources, facts versus rhetoric.'⁶² Josephus even claims that in his work he had been more heedful of the methods of Greek and Roman historiography than the Greeks themselves.

6. Consensus instead of debate: Josephus accuses Greek historians of only paying lip-service to their lofty principles: 'those who hastily set about writing did not bother about the truth — although they were always quick to make this their promise — but displayed their literary prowess,' working 'on the basis of their individual conjectures about events.'⁶³ The Greeks have an innumerable multitude of books, but they deliberately contradict each other. Historical truth, according to Josephus, cannot emerge from a polyphony of opinions, but only from consensus.

Many of the criteria on Josephus's list could also appear elsewhere in discussions about historical method, ancient and modern. What is striking in the context of the topic of this volume is how closely he links truth about the past to identity, both ethnic and religious. Safeguarding their past is what has ensured the survival of the Jews through all the adversities that they have encountered. Ethnic purity is decisive for the social status of a priesthood entrusted with guarding the foundational memories of the people. They preserve the records of divine intervention at decisive moments of Jewish history, such as the exodus myth, re-enacted in ritual and codified in the sacred books.⁶⁴ This conjunction of history and identity is a consistent model in which Jewish identity is both based on and guarantees historical truth. It is interesting to note, although unsurprising, that the kingdom or the land play little role in Josephus's argument — the Jewish kingdom had disappeared, and the people had to survive in diaspora and under Roman rule. The assertion of identity now had to be based on historical memory. This link is rarely expressed as clearly and directly as here, in a fun-

⁶¹ Dench, 'The Scope of Ancient Ethnography', p. 260.

⁶² Barclay, *Against Apion*, p. 9.

⁶³ Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion*, trans. by Barclay, 1.5.24, p. 21, and 1.3.15, pp. 17–18.

⁶⁴ Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*.

damental crisis of Jewish identity after the destruction of the Second Temple. Yet this very explicit model may help to assess strategies for the preservation of historical memory in other contexts, mainly in the other Abrahamic religions, perhaps also beyond them.

Many ancient societies had sought to monopolize control over the past in a priesthood considered religiously and sometimes ethnically 'pure'. The social logic of Greek and Roman historiography was fundamentally different.⁶⁵ It is remarkable that neither Christians nor Muslims, who owed so much to the Jewish tradition, ever enforced a 'closed circuit' of historical memory similar to the one described by Josephus. They would have had the institutional means to establish a controlled institutional flow, including a specialized elite of guardians of memory entrusted with routine record-keeping, with the preservation and interpretation of foundational prophetic texts and narratives, and with processing these 'phantoms of remembrance' for use in the present and the future.⁶⁶ Biblical *historia* remained a key point of reference and a standard model for the interpretation of past and present throughout the European Middle Ages.⁶⁷ This rooted Christian history writing firmly in the teleological frame of a history of salvation, which also provided a basis for judging the events of the past and the present. Yet their interpretation remained open. For instance, were the 'barbarian invasions' signs of God's wrath, or of the imminent apocalypse? An educated elite of Christian priests and monks monitored theological knowledge and liturgical practice, but not historical truth.

Islamic historiography relied on chains of authorities, *isnād*, derived from Islamic law and the sayings of the prophet. Yet that became a method to arrange a multiplicity of voices from the past and not to establish a consensual historiography.⁶⁸ Only Chinese historiography developed the model of an official elite with the privilege of preserving the past, and attempting to establish centralized control of its documentation, although without the strong ethnic and transcendental flavour found in Josephus's text. However, even if Josephus's model was thus not recreated in any of the historiographies under scrutiny in the present volume, *Against Apion* with its amalgam of history, identity, and truth can nevertheless be useful to assess in which direction historiography did, and did not develop in different cultures of memory.

⁶⁵ Momigliano, *The Classical Foundations*. Social logic: Spiegel, 'History, Historicism and the Social Logic of the Text'.

⁶⁶ Cf. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*.

⁶⁷ De Jong, ed., *The Bible and Politics*.

⁶⁸ See my conclusion, in this volume.

Although Josephus argued in favour of consensus and was critical of historical debates, *Against Apion* also contains sophisticated reflections on the role and methods of historiography. The Greek word *historia* originally meant ‘research’, and the Greek approach to the past also implied a critical assessment of the aims and methods of historiography. Comparing ancient and medieval prologues to historical works, Justin Lake has argued that the focus on the historian’s research fades out in Late Antiquity, and is reduced to mere *topoi* and classical references in many early medieval works.⁶⁹ Many other studies, however, have demonstrated that early medieval writers of history were more aware of what they were doing than previously assumed.⁷⁰ As Helmut Reimitz has emphasized, the critical approach to earlier histories in the Carolingian period was an integral part of the reform efforts of the time.⁷¹ Walahfrid Strabo (d. 849), presented by Richard Corradini in the third volume of this series, provides an example of self-reflectivity and epistemological interest in the role of history.⁷² In Song dynasty China, around 1000 CE, the ‘emergence of a self-conscious historical sensibility’ can be observed, later defined as *shiping*, ‘the weighing of history, historical critique’.⁷³ Around the same time in Baghdad, in the early tenth century, al-Ṭabarī provided a short methodological introduction to his *History*, explaining why he preferred to rely on ‘informants and transmitters’ rather than ‘rational arguments’.⁷⁴ This is followed by a section discussing ‘what is time’.⁷⁵ The intensity of such reflections obviously varied within and between historiographical traditions. Yet we should not simply regard the writing of history in the second half of the first millennium as ‘dark age historiography’.

The present volume will address several constellations in which social context, identities, and the search for truth about the past came into conjunction. Both Christian and Islamic perceptions of the past owed much to Jewish precedent and to classical erudition. In other Asian macro-regions, different constellations unfolded. Historiography in the narrow sense — of texts written for a qualified public, kept, copied, and distributed to promote histori-

⁶⁹ Lake, trans., *Prologues to Ancient and Medieval History*, pp. xvii–xviii; his point about the disappearance of a literary public in the early Middle Ages is somewhat exaggerated.

⁷⁰ The classical statement is Goffart, *Narrators*. See also Reimitz, ‘Genre and Identity’.

⁷¹ Reimitz, ‘Carolingian Approaches to History and Identity’.

⁷² Corradini, ‘Approaches to History’.

⁷³ Hartman and DeBlasi, ‘The Growth’, p. 28; Göller and Mittag, *Geschichtsdenken*, pp. 68–69.

⁷⁴ al-Ṭabarī, *History*, trans. by Rosenthal, I, 170–71.

⁷⁵ al-Ṭabarī, *History*, trans. by Rosenthal, I, 171–72.

cal knowledge — was not the only way in which cultural memory could be transmitted, and each cultural sphere relied on a variety of strategies of remembrance.⁷⁶ Therefore, the aim should not be to create coherent cultural models of Chinese, Islamic, or Indian historiography.⁷⁷ Instead, the individual chapters seek to reveal the variety of approaches to the writing of history that developed in Eurasia during this period. In the concluding chapter, I will sum up the case studies presented in the chapters, and discuss some lines of comparison.

⁷⁶ Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*.

⁷⁷ In a 'culturalist' sense, cf. al-Azmeh, 'Geschichte'.

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‘NATIONAL HISTORY’ IN POST-IMPERIAL EAST ASIA AND EUROPE

Q. Edward Wang

This study derives from my interest in the changing meaning of *Guoshi* 國史, which referred either to a ‘state historian’ or a ‘state/national history’ in China during the post-Han Empire period from the early third century to approximately the eighth century. In co-authoring the book, *Mirroring the Past: The Writing and Use of History in Imperial China* (2005), I have traced the rise and change of historical consciousness and practices from the age of Confucius (551–479 BCE) to the Tang dynasty (618–907 CE) in four chapters, in which the advance of official history writing both during the Han Empire (206 BCE–220 CE) and post-Han periods receives primary attention.¹ As a mainstay of historical writing in imperial China, this form of historiography has distinguished the Chinese tradition from other historiographical practices around the world.² For instance, common wisdom believes that the earliest historical text from ancient China was penned by someone holding the *shi* 史 position in government. As such, *shi* was understood as a scribe or a historian, carrying an official duty. During the Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BCE), as the duties of the *shi* multiplied, new positions were created, such as *Zuoshi* 左史 (Left Historian), *Youshi* 右史 (Right Historian), *Taishi* 太史 (Grand Historian), *Dashi* 大史 (Great Historian), *Xiaoshi* 小史 (Minor Historian), distinguished by adding a prefix to the *shi*. Sima Qian (145–186 BCE), for example, was a

¹ Ng and Wang, *Mirroring the Past*.

² See Woolf, *A Global History*, pp. 61–65, 99–104.

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taishi, or Grand Historian or Grand Astrologer because his assigned duty was to record changes in heavenly behaviour, as was his father. (Most of the *shi* positions were indeed hereditary under the Zhou and afterwards). However, *guoshi* did not appear in the same group of positions in Zhou bureaucracy. Several centuries into Zhou's rule, a text called *Guoyu* 國語 (*Discourses of the States*) was compiled in the fifth century BCE. *Guoyu* preserves historical records of the various kingdoms or states (State of Lu, State of Chu, etc.) ruled by Zhou's vassals within the dynasty. It is interesting to note that *Guoyu* includes not only discourses on all the states but also one discourse on the Zhou dynasty itself. By placing the Zhou royal court on a par with its vassals, *Guoyu*'s organization thus indirectly reflects the decline of the Zhou imperial authority.

If the compilation of the *Guoyu* suggested the rise of local power, then *guoshi*, which adds the prefix *guo* (state, country, or nation) to the *shi*, could also have become a position in state government, carrying the duty for recording the affairs in the state. Yet the first instance of such position was not mentioned until the third century CE, or after the fall of the Han dynasty. Chen Shou's (233–97) *History of the Three Kingdoms* (*San'guozhi* 三國志) records that the government of the kingdom of (Eastern) Wu (222–80) included positions like *zuogoshi* 左國史 (Left Historian the State) and *youguoshi* 右國史 (Right Historian of the State), which clearly derived from the *zuoshi* (Left Historian) and *youshi* (Right Historian) positions in the Zhou period. This variation in nomenclature may be interpreted to mean that *zuogoshi* and *youguoshi* positions were created only for recording the affairs in the kingdom of Wu, rather than that of the entire imperial realm. Perhaps for the same reason, we also may be able to understand why *guoshi* did not appear earlier in Han texts: having inherited the territory of the Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE), which unified China proper, the Han dynasty represented an imperial (rather than a state) power.

Yet there was a noted example that seemed to contradict the above explanation. A century or so after Chen Shou finished his work, Fan Ye (398–445/46) compiled *Later Han History* (*Hou Hanshu* 後漢書), which covered events in the Han dynasty between 9 and 189. Fan records in his book an incident in which Ban Gu (32–92), later a well-regarded historian of the Han period, was accused of compiling a *guoshi* on his own without court permission. Thanks to the intercession of his brother who was a respected general at the Han court, Ban later earned the right from the emperor to continue his writing. What he eventually completed was the *Hanshu* 漢書, or *Han History*, which was a history of the Han dynasty. As such, Ban was regarded as a creator of a new historiographical genre: dynastic history. This instance also suggests that the term

guoshi now refers to the history of a dynasty or a state, rather than a post. After earning permission to continue his work, Ban Gu was given a different title than the *guoshi* by the Han government. In other words, in a period of about a century, or from Chen Shou's writing of *History of the Three Kingdoms* in the third century to Fan Ye's writing of *Later Han History* in the early fifth century, *guoshi* seems to have acquired a new meaning, referring to a type of historical work. Yet meanwhile, it also retained its original meaning as a government post. From the third century to approximately the eighth century, therefore, *guoshi* and its different variations connoted a dual meaning. It could refer to an official title as well as to an emerging new genre of history that covered only a single state or a dynasty, but not the entire realm. In other words, for the sake of comparison, *guoshi* was a 'national history' in China.

In the following pages, I will describe the rise of 'state or national history' after the fall of the Han Empire in China. I also will argue that this shift of focus in historical writing from empire to state and/or nation was not a unique Asian phenomenon. It was rather a cross-cultural occurrence, registering and reflecting the changing view of history and the world in Eurasia during the post-imperial era. When the Han dynasty rose to power, the Romans also established an expansive empire, eventually encompassing the entire Mediterranean world. While the Han fell in the third century, the Roman Empire experienced 'the Crisis of the Third Century', which saw the rise of regionalism. Then, in the later part of the fifth century, the Roman Empire fell apart as well. The disintegration of the Roman Empire was partially due to the invasions of various 'Germanic' and other groups from the north and the east, whom the Romans would refer to as 'barbarians'. This historical transformation, too, was reflected in historical writing. A group of what has been called 'national histories' rose in the wake of the Roman Empire's fall.³ Also categorized by some as 'barbarian histories', those historical works offer accounts of the peoples who occupied Western Europe from the fifth to approximately the eighth centuries, though some of their kingdoms continued in subsequent centuries. For the most part, four such 'national histories' were the primary focus of modern historians. They are Jordanes' (c. 500–54) *Getica* that told the story of the Goths; Gregory of Tours's (538–94) *Histories*, written about the Frankish kingdom; Bede's (672–735) *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*; and Paul the Deacon's (720–99) *History of the Lombards*. Like their Chinese counterparts, these histories, while tracing the origins and deeds of the respective groups, also had a contemporary focus, covering the current situation of the kingdoms and

³ For debates and terminology of these histories, see Pohl, 'Debating Ethnicity'.

states the groups had founded. In the words of Walter Goffart, author of a specific study of the above four authors, ‘the advent of Germanic barbarians, [...] is deemed to be directly mirrored in the history of historiography and result in the emergence of “national history”, a type of writing about the past not practiced until then.’⁴ However, acknowledging the heterogeneity of these four histories, Goffart himself does not necessarily agree that these works altogether represented a new trend in European historiography. In light of the recent debates on the subject discussed by Walter Pohl in his article, we indeed should exercise caution in lumping all the works together as representing a new genre of history. For instance, as we will note below, Gregory of Tours may have entertained a less ethnically focused vision than did Jordanes and Paul the Deacon.⁵

All the same, from a broad and comparative perspective, it remains perhaps possible for us to outline some general parameters shared to varying degrees by the ‘national histories’ in Europe and Asia. In the following, I will present four general characteristics that I believe may help represent the transition in historical vision and writing during the post-Han and post-Roman periods. First of all, as I mentioned earlier, all of them emerged as a new way to record the change of history in post-imperial times. In the case of Europe, several kingdoms emerged from the ruins of the Western Roman Empire. Writing the histories of these kingdoms founded by what the Romans had called the ‘barbarians’, and to some extent of their dynasties, was acceptable. By comparison, the case of China was slightly more complicated, as the term *guoshi* could refer not only to a genre of historical writing but also to an official position for a person whose assigned responsibility was for supervising the compilation. Yet the dual meaning of the *guoshi* actually strengthens my argument that after the dissolution of such all-encompassing empires as the Han dynasty in China and the Roman Empire in Europe, there appeared a new type of historical writing whose purpose was to capture the changes of post-imperial history and provide accounts for the newly established kingdoms. Immediately after the fall of the Han, for instance, China proper entered the ‘Period of the Three Kingdoms’, ruled by Wei, Shu, and (Eastern) Wu for about a century. At first glance, these Three Kingdoms were different from the kingdoms that emerged after the fall of the Roman Empire in Europe because the former were not founded by ‘new invaders’, or different ethnic groups, who came to occupy the former Han territory. But no sooner had the Three Kingdoms Period come to an end in 280 than a migra-

⁴ Goffart, *Narrators*, p. 4. It has to be noted that Goffart does not agree with the approach that he sketches in this sentence.

⁵ For debates and terminology of these histories, see Pohl, ‘Debating Ethnicity’.

tion of peoples took place in mainland Asia, which was characterized mainly by the invasion of China proper by nomads from the Mongolian Steppes in the north, and with a scale comparable to that of the *Völkerwanderung* in Europe. In fact, such nomadic invasion had already occurred as early as the late years of the Han dynasty. Similar to what happened in the Roman army, nomadic soldiers joined and played a visible role in the armed forces as mercenaries both during the late Han and post-Han periods. Toward the end of the third century, in the bloody civil war known as the 'Disorder of the Eight Princes' (291–306) under the Western Jin dynasty (265–317), nomadic soldiers gained even greater military significance. Little wonder that shortly afterwards, these nomadic groups began establishing their own kingdoms: between 304 and 439 North China witnessed the rise of Sixteen Kingdoms and their fall. In the eyes of Chinese historians, these were 'barbarian kingdoms', much as Roman historians would describe peripheral non-Roman polities. Having lost their territory in the north, the Jin court and many of their subjects retreated to the south, or the Yangzi River regions, where they established an exiled regime called the Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420).

The period of division between north and south China continued through the end of the sixth century until the rise of the Sui dynasty (581–618) and its unification in 589. That is, the Sui unification put an end to what was called the Period of the Northern and Southern Dynasties in Chinese history books. As post-imperial Europe saw the emergence of 'national histories', the post-Han period of division also witnessed various attempts by historians to offer accounts for the rise and fall of the states or kingdoms. Chen Shou's *History of the Three Kingdoms* mentioned above was an early example, which was followed by three similar histories: Cui Hong's (478–525) *The Spring and Autumn Annals of the Sixteen Kingdoms* (*Shiliuguo chungiu* 十六國春秋), Shen Yue's (441–513) *History of (Liu) Song* (*Songshu* 宋書), and Xiao Zixian's (c. 489–537) *Southern Qi History* (*NanQishu* 南齊書). In the tradition of Chinese historiography, these histories by Chen, Cui, Shen, and Xiao were known as 'dynastic histories' because they depict the fate of a ruling kingdom. From a comparative perspective, Charles West states that the works by Bede, Paul the Deacon, Jordanes, and Gregory of Tours, too, were 'dynastic histories', sharing much the same characteristics.⁶

Second, if their writings pointed to a new genre of historical writing, the national histories written in post-imperial Asia and Europe were both ethno-

⁶ West, 'Dynastic Historical Writing', p. 498. Dynasties were, however, much less of a structural feature in ordering historiographic accounts than in China.

graphic and geographic. They were histories of states, or 'state histories', as the Chinese term *guoshi* denotes, if we look at their political focus and their authors' appointment by and/or affiliation with the ruling regime. (The latter will be discussed more below.) In Europe, the four major 'national histories' concerned the activities of a particular people in relation to other ethnic groups: where they originated, how they organized themselves, how they migrated from one place to another, and, eventually, how they founded their kingdoms and how large their territories became. One may argue that these ethnographic and geographic descriptions allowed for their classification as 'national history' instead of universal history. When an empire was in place, historians such as Livy, Tacitus, and Polybius tended to develop a universal conception of the world. With perhaps the exception of Tacitus's *Germania*, those historians had desired to write about the entire known world. Livy's work, for example, was entitled *Ab urbe condita libri*. To him, the evolution of Roman history from the founding of the city of Rome was indeed the history of the world. Tacitus, Polybius, and their contemporaries also had shown this tendency of masquerading Roman history as world history. Indeed, to those ancient historians, the Roman Empire was *the* world.

But the narrators of 'national history' in the post-Roman world had a different focus with respect to their historical perception. This transition of historical outlook and historiography has been observed by Donald R. Kelley, author of a trilogy of works on the history of European historiography, as follows: during the late fourth and through the mid-sixth centuries, when the first group of 'national histories' appeared, the vision of Pax Romana featuring the works of Livy and Polybius remained influential, aided by and interacting with biblical cosmology and genealogy. 'But just as the Western Empire itself was undermined and overthrown by peoples from the North and East', Kelley states, 'so mainstream Western historiography was transformed by the particular experiences and fortunes of barbarian peoples entering Roman territories with their own sense of identity and tradition, mythical if not historical.' The work of Gregory of Tours is rather illustrative; in the first volume and drawing on the Bible, he linked the history of Gaul with the genesis of the world. Yet his focus remained on the kingdoms of the Franks, carefully balanced between accepting their rule and defending the prerogatives of the bishops.⁷ 'His summary of biblical history', if we can quote Kelley once again, 'was perfunctory, and he quickly settled into the small Gallic world of his personal experience, six of his ten books being devoted to contemporary history (*gesta praesentia*).'⁸ Needless

⁷ Reimitz, *History*.

⁸ Kelley, *Faces of History*, pp. 104 and 108.

to say, Kelley's observation should be qualified, in that it remains debatable whether or not Gregory of Tours's adaption of biblical history was entirely 'perfunctory'. That is, we need not understand the universal and regional as necessarily forming a binary relationship. Instead, these concepts could well be closely integrated in one way or another.

Nonetheless, in the case of post-Han China, the sense of *guo*, a state, kingdom, or country, gradually became a focus of attention among historians, which somehow marked a contrast to the earlier historiographical tradition. When Sima Qian wrote his magnum opus, *The Records of the Historian* (*Shiji* 史記) under the Han Empire (he completed most of his writing under the reign of Emperor Wu when the Han dynasty was at its peak), he aimed to describe the world known to him as one unity. For that purpose, Sima Qian not only culled as much information as he could, he also crisscrossed the country to experience the world first-hand. In his letter to a friend, Sima famously described his accomplishment as finishing a work that 'explores the boundary between the realm of heaven and the realm of humanity, comprehends the process of changes in times past and present, and establishes the tradition of one family'. That is, if Sima Qian compiled the *Records of the Historian*, it was the records of the *Tianxia* 天下, or 'all under heaven'. After Sima Qian, and especially after the Han, such a grand cosmopolitan vision no longer underpinned the historical works produced by Asian historians. Although the appeal and idea of *Tianxia* persisted, the records the post-Han historians provided were kingdom or dynasty specific, as shown in their titles: *History of Jin* (*Jinshu* 晉書), *History of Chen* (*Chenshu* 陳書), *History of Wei* (*Weishu* 魏書), *History of Sui* (*Suishu* 隋書), etc. They were not entertaining a universal vision. In the Tang period when China saw another unification, Li Yanshou, an outstanding historian of the age, set out to produce a general history that covers the interregnum between the post-Han and pre-Tang period. Drawing on the aforementioned dynastic histories, Li compiled the *History of the Northern Dynasties* (*Beishi* 北史) and the *History of the Southern Dynasties* (*Nanshi* 南史). But the idea of *Tianxia*, or 'all under heaven', once again eluded Li Yanshou's world view. In his portrayal of post-Han China, the realm remained divided; if not so much by kingdoms but clearly demarcated by the worlds of the north and south in geography and culture.

The north and south demarcation in post-Han China was caused by the migration of peoples from the north to the south on the Asian mainland. As mentioned above, the Three Kingdoms Period ended after the Western Jin dynasty at the end of the third century, and a civil war broke out which, among other things, paved the way for the nomadic groups to move en masse into

North China. Here, they subsequently established 'Sixteen Kingdoms'. The rise of the Northern Wei dynasty (386–534), founded by the Tuoba (Tabgatch) clan of the Xianbei (Sārbi), conquered those kingdoms and unified North China. While many Chinese in the north had migrated to the south, together with the Jin royal court, where they contributed to the development of the Yangzi River regions, some of them also either stayed in or moved to the north. Wang Su (464–501) was an example of the latter. Born into a distinguished aristocratic family related to the Jin court, Wang defected to the north after his family became victimized in a political scheme. While serving the Northern Wei, Wang established himself and earned the trust of the Wei emperor. Yet he retained his dietary habit — drinking tea and eating fish — instead of animal meat and dairy products, more favoured by the Xianbei nomads who founded the dynasty.⁹ During the post-Han period, the Asian continent thus saw a large scale of migration and mixture of peoples who were from notably different political and ethnic backgrounds and divergent cultural and culinary traditions. The traditional notion of 'all under heaven' became diversified, politically as well as culturally — the Han imperial world, therefore, was replaced by the emergence of multiple states founded by different ethnic groups.

Third, 'national history' is not only spatial, with a clear awareness of geography, it is also temporal, concerning a specific time period with respect to the beginning and vicissitudes of a given kingdom or dynasty. This characteristic distinguished 'national history' writing from earlier — classic or imperial — models of writings. Many scholars have observed that while ancient historians considered history to be an operation against the 'all-destroying time', or the attempt to preserve memory against its erosion over time, they were not so concerned with the course and sequence of time. In other words, as Donald J. Wilcox puts it, ancient historians had two kinds of conceptions of time: one linear and the other episodic, upon which they developed their narrative. The meaning of time was important only to the extent by which their narratives could be presented and organized.¹⁰

By comparison, the four 'national histories' in Europe demonstrated a clearer intention to structure their narratives chronologically. That is, compared to the works of their predecessors in ancient times, an awareness of the passing of time was displayed in these histories. In this respect, they follow the model of Christian history created by Eusebius and Jerome in the fourth

⁹ Wang Su's experience while serving the Northern Wei dynasty was described in Yang, *Luoyang qielanji*, pp. 125–26.

¹⁰ Wilcox, *The Measure of Times Past*, pp. 51–82 and Hunter, *Past and Process*, p. 254.

century. In the case of Gregory of Tours, his *Histories* cover over six thousand years, corresponding to the week that God used to create the world — one millennium for each day.¹¹ Throughout the ten books of the *Histories*, Gregory of Tours also reminds his readers of the passage of time, using the passing of 'the Lord', or Jesus, as an anchoring point. For instance, in ending the first book, he states that while he covered 5597 years from the creation of the world to the Roman era, he focuses on 412 years from the passing of the Lord to the death of St Martin in the book. Then he repeats the practice in later books by clearly telling his readers how many years were covered in each of them: book II included 112 years, book III thirty-seven years, and so on. Toward the end of his *Histories*, he again informed readers about the grand total of years in the length of time in the world.¹²

In writing his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Bede merged the Christian calendar with the occurrence of major events in the secular world so that he could set his narrative in a rather definitive time frame. For instance, he recorded Julius Caesar's invasion of the British Isles in the following words:

Britain had never been visited by the Romans, and was, indeed, entirely unknown to them before the time of Caius Julius Caesar, who, in the year 693 after the building of Rome, but the sixtieth day before the incarnation of our Lord, was consul with Lucius Bibulus, and afterwards while he made war upon the Germans and the Gauls, [...] came into the province of the Morini, from whence is the nearest and shortest passage into Britain.¹³

In describing the conquest of Britain by Roman Emperor Claudius, Bede again stated that it occurred in the fourth year of Claudius's reign, which was 'the forty-sixth from the incarnation of the Lord'.¹⁴

In comparison with Gregory of Tours and Bede, Jordanes and Paul the Deacon seemed not to have made such a conscientious attempt to unfold their narratives in a chronology. Nonetheless, the time sequence of their narrative

¹¹ Kelley, *Faces of History*, 108–09.

¹² Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, trans. by Brehaut, I.48, p. 17; II.42, p. 50; III.37, p. 71; x.31, p. 248.

¹³ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. by Sellar, II, p. 8 (ed. by King, II, p. 22: 'Verum etiam Britannia Romania usque ad Gaium Iulium Caesarem inaccessa atque incognita fuit: qui anno ab Urbe condita sexcentesimo nonagesimo tertio, ante vero incarnationis Dominicae tempus anno sexagesimo, functus gradu consulatus cum Lucio Bibulo, dum contra Germanorum Gallorumque gentes [...] bellum gereret [...] venit ad Morinos, unde in Britanniam Proximus et brevissimus transitus est').

¹⁴ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. by Sellar, III, p. 9.

remains rather apparent, so much so that later readers can easily identify the exact year of the events entered in their writings.

By presenting history within a specific frame of time, the authors of 'national history' in Europe also invariably extended their narratives to their own age. That is, while all of them covered previous history, the main content constituting their accounts was more of a contemporary history. Gregory of Tour's *Histories* again provide a good example. Although he began his narrative from the Creation, he devoted much more space to the events in his own times. Of the ten books, for example, book I and book II included thousands and hundreds of years whereas books VII, VIII, IX, and X only covered the events that occurred within one or two years. Jordanes' *Getica* offered the only surviving text on the origin of the Goths and the process of how they moved southward to engage with the Romans. His focus, among other things, lay on how the Goths, pressured by the Huns from the east, played a role in dismantling the Western Roman Empire. While Jordanes might not have personally experienced the process, many of the events he recorded took place a generation or so before his life. By the same token, Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* described events from the time of the Romans all the way down to 731, or four years before Bede's death. Paul the Deacon's *History of the Lombards*, similarly, centred on the eighth century, or his own age, although it stops at the point when Paul had arrived at the royal court after 744.¹⁵

The notion of time had been an integral part in nurturing and developing historical consciousness and writing in ancient China.¹⁶ As alluded to above, the official duties of the *shi* (scribe) often included observing heavenly events, which helped them to organize their historical accounts. It was not surprising, therefore, that annals were the earliest form of historical writing in China, whereby events were entered by following a chronology based on a lunar calendar. While offering many vividly narrated biographies, Sima Qian included a table of chronology in his *Records of the Grand Historian*, with the clear purpose of organizing the biographies according to the time sequence. While tracing the history of China to the remote past, Sima allotted sufficient space to covering the history of the Han dynasty, or his own times. Sima's successor Ban Gu continued his endeavour by concentrating on the history of the Han. By setting up the model for dynasty history writing, Ban Gu was praised for his

¹⁵ See Pohl, 'Historical Writing'.

¹⁶ From a comparative perspective, many contributors to Huang and Henderson, eds, *Notions of Time*, discuss the importance of time in traditional Chinese historical consciousness and writing.

focused attention, which seemed to contrast with Sima Qian's avowed ambition, among other things, 'to comprehend the process of changes in times past and present'. Yet a closer look at Ban Gu's early life and his work reveals that he, too, had been inspired by Sima's ideal and had initially thought about emulating Sima's comprehensiveness.¹⁷ His decision to concentrate only on the Han dynasty might reflect more the imperial will after he was granted permission by the court to continue his writing.

During the post-Han period, when a number of kingdoms emerged to occupy the disintegrated former Han realm, state/national history centring on a passing dynasty gradually became the norm in Chinese historical writing. Post-Han historians took the temporal approach to recording the rise and fall of those regimes, many of which were short-lived when compared with the length of the Han. By the time China proper witnessed another unification under the Sui and Tang periods at the turn of the seventh century, the writing of state/national history became integrated into a government-sponsored system, or Historiography Bureau, whose operation was to churn out, step by step, an official version of a dynastic history for a previous regime.

In his study of official historical writing under the Tang, Denis Twitchett details the process in which court historians worked on compiling an official dynastic history.¹⁸ It was based on a series of records entered, kept, and organized by the historians before they synthesized them into one continuous and comprehensive account. Alongside Court Diary (*Qijuzhu* 起居注), Daily Calendar (*Rili* 日曆), Record of Administrative Affairs (*Shizhengji* 時政記), and Veritable Records (*Shilu* 實錄), National History (*Guoshi*), by Twitchett's definition, 'was the final stage in the compilation of the historical record of the reigning dynasty. It involved nothing less than the writing of a full-scale Standard History, in the annal-biography form of a dynastic history, covering the current dynasty down to a given date'.¹⁹ In other words, *guoshi* stood for a comprehensive record, or a drafted account, of the history of the reigning dynasty; it was a contemporary history compiled by official historians, some of whom also received varied titles of the *guoshi*, suggesting their duty was to compile the work.

Tang historical practices exerted a considerable influence throughout Asia, encompassing regions of today's Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and beyond. With respect to the genre of *guoshi* as a history, the best example seems to be the

¹⁷ See Liu, 'Lun duandaishi', pp. 58–68.

¹⁸ Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History*.

¹⁹ Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History*, p. 160.

Six National Histories (*Rikkokushi* 六國史) that have survived in Japan until today. Indeed, although national history was compiled systematically in Tang China, many were lost thereafter or incorporated into other works. But the Six National Histories have been more or less kept intact, enabling us to peek into the practice of national history writing in East Asia. Of the six, four bear the name 'Japan' or *Nihon*, indicating the geographical confines, and the other two are entitled Veritable Records, a category of historical records of contemporary times established in Tang China, which, according to the Tang standard discovered and discussed by Twitchett, represented another type of work before the compilation of national history in the process of official historical enterprise. These two Veritable Records were about the reigns of the royal houses in Japan in the ninth century. In other words, with the exception of *Chronicle of Japan* (*Nihon Shoki*), which covers Japan's early history through the late seventh century, the remaining five national histories are contemporary history, describing the history of Japan from the seventh to the ninth centuries.

Fourth, as contemporary history, 'national histories' in both Europe and East Asia were written with a practical purpose, which was to preserve and provide useful lessons from the past to help prolong the current government. As such, it was hagiographic, moralistic, and even nationalistic, promoting the pride of the people or nation it covers in relation to others. In medieval Europe, historical writing was not set up as an official enterprise as in Tang China. But the authors of those national histories still wrote them, more often than not, for a political ruler. Bede, for instance, dedicated his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* to the 'Glorious King Ceolwulf (of Northumbria)', with the hope that

if history relates good things of good men, the attentive hearer is excited to imitate that which is good: or if it mentions evil things of wicked persons, nevertheless the religious and pious hearer or reader, shunning that which is hurtful and perverse, is the more earnestly excited to perform those things which he knows to be good, and worthy of God.²⁰

Gregory of Tours also hoped that his work could 'commemorate the past, in order that it may come to the knowledge of the future'. His attention was on 'the struggles between the wicked and the upright', or more particularly, 'the

²⁰ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. by Sellar, preface, p. 1 (ed. by King, preface, p. 2: 'Sive enim historia de bonis bona referat, ad imitandum bonum auditor sollicitus instigatur; seu mala commemoret de pravis, nihilominus religiosus ac pius auditor sive lector devitando quod noxium est ac perversum, ipse sollertius ad exsequenda ea quae bona ac Deo digna esse cognoverit accenditur').

struggles of kings with the heathen enemy, of martyrs with pagans, of churches with heretics'.²¹

The function of history as a useful and practical guide for deeds of the present and future was well recognized in the Chinese tradition of historiography. Yet it was during the Tang period when national history writing was firmly institutionalized that such a function became heightened to an unprecedented high degree. At the funeral of Wei Zheng (580–643), his chief advisor who also took a leadership role in historical compilation, Emperor Taizong (598/99–649) of the Tang dynasty supposedly made the following remarks:

Bronze as mirror to straighten one's clothes and caps; the past as mirror to illuminate dynastic rise and fall; and individuals as mirror to rectify our judgment — we have always known these three mirrors. [...] Now that Wei Zheng is gone, one of these mirrors has disappeared.²²

Interestingly, if Emperor Taizong of Tang China was interested in learning from history, his interest seemed comparable to that of King Ceolwulf (r. 729–37) of Northumberland. In Bede's words, the king would 'industriously take care to become acquainted with the actions and sayings of former men of renown, especially of our own nation (*gens*)'²³ and he was 'being deeply sensible' and 'desirous that the said history should be more fully made familiar to yourself, and to those over whom the Divine Authority has appointed you governor, from your great regard to their general welfare'.²⁴

Among the Chinese, the idea that the function of history could be compared to a mirror had been rather proverbial. Given the high attention of Tang rulers to history's practicality, a system of official history writing was instituted at that time. Indeed, the notion that useful historical lessons could be a mirror that helps guide government performance and ultimately help sustain and extend the rule of a state or dynasty was readily accepted in Asia. Without doubt, that the Japanese court decided to copy the Tang practice and compiled Six

²¹ Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, trans. by Brehaut, I.preface, p. 5.

²² Translated in Ng and Wang, *Mirroring the Past*, p. 108.

²³ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. by Sellar, preface, p. 1 (ed. by King, preface, p. 2: 'satisque studium tuae sinceritatis amplector, quo non solum audiendis Scripturae sanctae verbis aures sedulas accomodas, verum etiam noscendis priorum gestis sive dictis et maxime nostrae gentis virorum inlustrium, curam vigilanter impendis').

²⁴ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. by Sellar, preface, p. 12 (ed. by King, preface, p. 2: 'Quod ipsum tu quoque vigilantissime deprehendens, historiam memoratam in notitiam tibi simulque eis quibus te regendis divina praefecit auctoritas, ob generalis curam salutis latius propalari desideras').

National Histories is a telling example. After the early tenth century, coinciding with the fall of the Tang dynasty, such official history writing came to a halt in Japan; in its place were various historical texts written with private interest and sources. But many privately written histories in Japan after the tenth century often contained the word ‘mirror’ — *kagami* 鏡 — in their titles, suggesting the continuing appeal of the mirror metaphor for the function of history in Asia.

Back in China, historical writing flowered in the Song period (960–1279), in which the notion that history served a valuable mirror for the present prevailed. A prime example for such prevalence was that Sima Guang (1019–86), a scholar-official, took it upon himself to compile a massive study of history, in hopes of extracting useful lessons from the past to help guide the present. His project later received imperial endorsement; after completion, Sima, therefore, presented his *Comprehensive Mirror of Aid for Government* (*Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑒), a general history in the form of annals covering nearly 1400 years, to Emperor Shenzong (1048–86) of the Song dynasty. In fact, it was Emperor Shenzong who coined the title for Sima Guang’s work, which further suggests the persistent and wide appeal of the history-as-mirror idea in imperial China. At this point, we must note that the idea of regarding history as a mirror also gained traction in medieval Europe. Vincent of Beauvais’s (c. 1190–1264) compilation of *Speculum maius*, which consisted of *Speculum historiale*, or the ‘mirror of history’, was a case in point. In surveying the development of European historical writing in the Middle Ages, modern historiographers like Ernst Breisach (1923–2016) and Donald Kelley also use the ‘mirror’ metaphor to discuss the characteristics of medieval historiography.²⁵ Indeed, writes Daniel Woolf, the ‘mirror’ metaphor had a universal appeal, turning up ‘periodically throughout the globe.’²⁶ This emphasis on the practical function of historical writing engendered its content to focus on the deeds and words of the monarch because these accounts would serve as a mirror for showing the nature of exemplary rule to future rulers. In so doing, it necessitated a moralist position taken by the historian against which wicked and evil behaviours were pit and exposed. In medieval Europe, such a moral standard was undoubtedly based on Christian creed, whereas in East Asia, it was on Confucian doctrine. ‘Because the laws of the state were to promote moral politics according to Confucian teaching’, observed Sakamoto Tarō on the characteristic of the Six National Histories, ‘historical records were entered for this ideal. It therefore recorded every act of the monarch because it was intended to show respect for his behav-

²⁵ Breisach, *Historiography*, pp. 121–37 and Kelley, *Faces of History*, pp. 99–129.

²⁶ Woolf, *A Global History*, p. 64.

ious as exemplary to his subjects, as well as provide a mirror for guiding future monarchs.²⁷ The four national histories in Europe of course do not record every act of a monarch. But without question, monarchic acts and accomplishments figure centrally in the accounts. That is, hagiography entails moralism in historiography, as exemplified by 'national history' writing.

What happens if an egregious moral deviation was committed by one of the monarchs? Then divine or celestial punishment would follow. In his account of the more recent changes occurring in the Frankish kingdoms, Gregory lamented because he witnessed some sort of decline. Then he attributed such decline to the immoral behaviour of the Franks, especially the internal clashes and bloody fratricides among their leaders. Gregory warned that these wicked doings would cause the Franks to lose God's grace and then lead to the destruction of the Franks.

In the Asian case, God's will or grace was conceived and construed as the Mandate of Heaven. The legitimacy of a government, therefore, depended on whether or not it could convince others that its rule possessed and presented the Mandate of Heaven. By the time the Tang dynasty was founded in the seventh century, China itself had gone through the post-Han shockwave, while cascades of nomadic invasions wreaked havoc on North China. Having seen the rise and fall of many dynasties, historians considered the 'legitimacy question' (*zhengtong lun* 正統論) as a key issue in historical explanation and writing. They debated among themselves over which post-Han regime would be regarded as a legitimate successor to the great and glorious Han Empire. When the Tang rulers came to power, they of course believed that their dynasty would be the legitimate successor of the Han because it had reunified China proper and controlled an even larger territory than its predecessor. But they were also keenly aware that something could go wrong and they could lose power because there had been many short-lived regimes before them. Emperor Taizong's remarks that the past was a 'mirror to illuminate dynastic rise and fall' reflected this type of thinking. Overall, this perspective underpinned the establishment of official history writing under the Tang, of which National History was an integral part. The same thinking was also behind the continual compilation of the Six National Histories in Japan. By producing a National History that demonstrates exemplary behaviour of the ruler in power, it helps project the image that the regime is endowed with heaven's mandate. Covering the histories of previous states also served a dual purpose: it offered not only valuable lessons from the past that could benefit the current rule but also various counterexam-

²⁷ Tarō, *Nihon no shūshi to shigaku*, p. 23.

ples, revealing how unfortunate dynasties in the previous ages had lost their mandate whereas the current dynasty received it in their place.

Now let us briefly discuss the significance of the writing of 'national history' in medieval Europe and East Asia in both history and historiography. First, I would like to say that this practice represented a meaningful attempt to cope with the rupture associated with the collapse of imperial powers in both regions. In the midst of the influx of migration and the turnover of political power, there appeared a strong need to reshape one's identity. To this end, it was incumbent on historians to assume the task not only to record and recount what had happened to the glorious days of the imperial past, but, more importantly, also to trace and describe the origins of the peoples who had entered the former imperial realm and established their kingdoms on its ruins. The latter, needless to say, was quite desirable for those newly founded regimes because it helped to demonstrate and confirm the legitimacy of their rule. In the European case, it was clear that those narrators of national history generally accomplished their goal; as 'first historians of Europe',²⁸ their works helped to construct the conception of Europe as a plurality of peoples and states, within as well as beyond the Roman imperial realm. In Japan, the Six National Histories supplied the early notion of Japan as a country and independent land for its inhabitants. The *Chronicle of Japan* not only records Japanese exchanges with rulers in China but also clashes with those on the Korean Peninsula, portraying both as 'foreign powers'. In so doing, it gave shape to Japanese identity.

After the fall of the Han, China proper was seriously divided, marked by what historians refer to as a period of division/disunity, spanning from the third to the end of the sixth centuries. Historians also characterized the period as one living 'in the shadow of the Han'.²⁹ However, with the rise of the Tang that inherited and expanded the Sui unification of China, a new era was ushered in for Chinese history in the early seventh century. Of course, the appeal of the Han persisted through this and later periods. Yet through its systematic endeavour in writing not only post-Han history but also history of its own, or National History, the Tang succeeded in establishing a new political and cultural identity, which was multi-ethnic and cosmopolitan. As such, it rivalled the Han's influence in Chinese as well as Asian history. Indeed, several centuries after its fall, many Chinese still like to call themselves as the 'Tang people' (*Tangren* 唐人); Chinatowns in the West, incidentally, are traditionally known as 'Tang people's streets' (*Tangren jie* 唐人街). While referring to their home-

²⁸ Kelley, *Faces of History*, pp. 106–11.

²⁹ Holcombe, *In the Shadow*.

land, the emigrated Chinese would also call China *Tangshan* 唐山, which literally means the 'Tang mountains'. As the Tang dynasty exerted a paramount influence in shaping the culture of medieval Japan, the word *Tang* 唐 — *Tō* or *kara* in Japanese — stands for everything foreign. The Japanese also referred to China as *Tōdo* 唐土, or 'Tang land'. Of course, many Chinese today prefer Han to Tang, such as calling themselves the 'Han people' (*Hanren* 漢人), invoking the memory of the Han rather than the Tang. This preference, however, did not become prevalent until the beginning of the twentieth century.

Second, the emergence of 'national history' in medieval Europe and East Asia played a key part in shaping the historiographical practice of later centuries; it consequently also left its imprint in modern historiography. Besides carving up the map of Europe, historically and geographically, 'the chroniclers and historians of medieval Europe', states Donald Kelley, 'all worked in the shadows cast by this quartet of "barbarian" authors' — the 'quartet' refers to Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon.³⁰ In particular, these narrators of the histories of a formative Europe taught their followers and imitators of later ages the importance of allying history with chronology, or the Christian calendar. Such an alliance was indeed a unique contribution of medieval Europe to the development of Western historiography because ancient Greek and Roman authors obviously had been less successful, or less interested, in generating a universal chronology. A more lasting legacy, of course, was the writing of national history itself. In both format and focus, those 'national histories' provided a model for modern historians to build a foundation of historical knowledge for the emerging nation states from the seventeenth century onward.

In East Asia, the tradition of official history writing firmly established in the Tang dynasty was equally significant and consequential because it was taken as a model for historians in China and beyond. Granted, historical writing had often carried an official mission much earlier. But it was during the Tang dynasty that, with the establishment of the Historiography Bureau, it became a collective endeavour, no longer an individual undertaking. Afterwards, it also became an entrenched tradition and continually practised in various dynasties through the early twentieth century. Thanks to the collective work, Tang historians churned out a total of eight dynastic histories for the previous regimes, in addition to compiling the National History of its own time. The National History became the base of another dynastic history — the *Old Tang History* (*Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書), which was finished in the post-Tang period. In other words, if dynastic history was the mainstay of traditional Chinese historiog-

³⁰ Kelley, *Faces of History*, p. 111.

raphy, then of the twenty-four recognized dynastic histories, more than one third resulted from the work of Tang historians. Interestingly, as soon as official history became collectively produced by the History Bureau in the Tang, such practice immediately faced harsh criticisms, rendered by Liu Zhiji (661–721), an erstwhile Tang official historian who chose to leave the Bureau to pursue his own work. In the following centuries as the Tang type of official history writing continued to serve as a model for court historians, there were also a number of histories written privately in China, following Liu Zhiji's example. In post-Tang China, therefore, there was a parallel development of both official and private historical writing. More often than not, private histories were written as a response to and a critique of the official history in a given dynasty. Thus, the Tang tradition of official history also served as a stimulus for the production of historical writing as a whole.³¹

Since the nineteenth century, the Tang model of official history received even harsher criticisms in China and elsewhere. Yet its appeal remained. After the Meiji Restoration, for example, Japan officially entered a new, modern age. The Meiji government, however, quickly established a Historiography Bureau with the aim of expanding on the tradition of Six National Histories. Although it failed to continue, its compilers became the first generation of professional historians in Japan.³² From the early twentieth century, dynastic history became a target of criticism in modern China.³³ But the practice of collective historical writing weathered violent political storms throughout the twentieth century. Beginning in 2002, a stupendous project to compile a multivolume Qing History was launched under government sponsorship. Its aim was to produce an official history of the Qing dynasty in ninety-two volumes with a total of thirty million words. A good number of historians were involved in the project.³⁴ All this suggests that having gone through marked transformations, the Tang tradition of National History remains alive in modern East Asia.

³¹ Cf. Ng, 'Private Historiography', pp. 60–79.

³² See Mehl, *History and the State*. Also, Numata, 'Shigeno Yasutsugu', pp. 264–87.

³³ See Wang, *Inventing China* for a general discussion of the modern transformation of the Chinese historiographical tradition.

³⁴ See *Qingshi* (*Qing History*).

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THE *WARS* OF PROCOPIUS AND THE *JINSHU* OF FANG XUANLING: REPRESENTATIONS OF BARBARIAN POLITICAL FIGURES IN CLASSICIZING HISTORIOGRAPHY

Randolph B. Ford

This paper addresses aspects of the relationship between historiography and identity between roughly CE 500 and 650 at opposite ends of Eurasia.¹ The reason for focusing on this period is because it was then that the imperial fragmentation experienced by the Roman and Chinese Empires proved in the case of the Western Roman Empire, to be permanent, and in that of China, temporary. While the Roman Empire saw the loss of its Western half in the fifth century, it was the north of China that fell to barbarian conquest kingdoms in the fourth. None of the post-Roman kingdoms managed to conquer all of its neighbours; however, one of the foreign regimes of north China managed to unite the Central Plains, defeating its barbarian competitors, and its political descendants would go on to reunify all of China by the late sixth century. The period between the years 500 and 650, to borrow the phrase of Kenneth Pomeranz as others have done, may be described as that of a great divergence, for it exhibits a break in the otherwise remarkably parallel trajectories of the Roman and Chinese Empires.² The territories of the Roman

¹ I would like to thank Charles Pazdernik for his generosity in looking over an earlier draft of this chapter and offering comments. Much of the discussion included here appears also in the author's monograph *Rome, China, and the Barbarians*.

² Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence*. Scheidel, 'From the "Great Convergence" to the "First

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West were only briefly (and incompletely) reunited with the East following the reconquests of Justinian, and a polycentric constellation of kingdoms and states has characterized the region of Western Europe ever since. However, at the end of China's so-called 'period of division', the Sui dynasty managed to reunify all of China after it had been divided for nearly three hundred years following the collapse of the Western Jin dynasty in CE 316. The Sui dynasty was itself swiftly replaced by the Tang dynasty, which ushered in centuries of relatively stable political unity.

How does one account for these radically different outcomes?³ Of course this is an enormous question, albeit surprisingly under-examined, and any single study can only hope to address one or a few of the many relevant factors. This paper will consider the ways in which conceptions of ethnicity and identity in this period, as they are reflected in contemporary historiography, delineated the ideological parameters of political legitimacy. As is well known, the provincials in the Roman West gave up their allegiance to an imperial centre in Constantinople, and eventually any identification with a *populus Romanus*, in favour of loyalties to Frankish, Visigothic, or Anglo-Saxon powers. While claims to inherit the Roman legacy and its political prerogatives in various forms never vanished completely, the ruling elites of the successor kingdoms in the West chose to maintain non-Roman alternative strategies of identification. In contrast, the culturally and ethnically mixed ruling houses of the Sui and Tang dynasties, which ruled over a newly reunified China following centuries of foreign conquest and fragmentation, professed a Chinese identity at the expense of the legacy of various non-Chinese groups — in particular, of the Sārbi 鮮卑, who had dominated northern China since the late fourth century.⁴ This simple fact has left posterity with an impression of a cultural and political rupture with the classical past in Europe in contrast to one of restora-

Great Divergence", p. 12. Christian Gizewski offers a sketch of parallel imperial consolidation and expansion in his study 'Römische und alte chinesische Geschichte', pp. 287–88.

³ See the forthcoming volume Pohl and Wieser, eds, *Shadows of Empire*.

⁴ The name of this people is often Romanized as either Xianbei or Hsien-pei. The most successful branch of the Sārbi, the Tabgach 拓跋 (also Romanized as Tuoba), had founded the Northern Wei dynasty (386–535), which united the north of China for over one hundred years before its division in civil war. On the cultural hybridity of northern China during this period, see Twitchett, 'Introduction', pp. 3–4; and Chen, 'A-Gan Revisited', pp. 51–55. For an example of the culturally pro-Chinese policy of the Sui founder Yang Jian, who reversed the bestowal of Sārbi names during the Northern Zhou dynasty, see Dien, 'The Bestowal of Surnames', esp. pp. 165–66. On the Tang royal family's claim to a Chinese genealogy, see Chen, *Multicultural China*, pp. 4–14.

tion and continuity in China. This paper will discuss the ways in which the practice of historiography in this period of transition serves as a window onto imperial attitudes towards identity and ethnicity. By examining the intersection between these two conceptual categories on the one hand and the exercise of political power on the other, it is hoped that a comparative study may help explain how the ethnological discourse of historiography reflects mentalities that called for the restoration of a unified China under nominally 'Chinese' rule on the one hand and allowed the establishment of legitimate, non-Roman polities on the other.

Due to the constraints of space, it will not be possible to go into detail regarding aspects of the Graeco-Roman and Chinese historiographical traditions that make them uniquely suitable for comparative study. Suffice it to say that both traditions are characterized by 1) a highly rhetorical and idiomatically conservative style,⁵ 2) an overtly moralistic orientation in its treatment of political history,⁶ and 3) a significant body of ethnographic discourse whose tropes and conventions were established prior to, or in the early phases of, the respective imperial periods.⁷ This last shared aspect also includes conceptions of a civilized–barbarian dichotomy in the world views of both traditions, and there are many studies aiming to assess the attitudes of Greeks, Romans, and Chinese towards the peoples that were identified as 'barbarians' in the Graeco-Roman case and as Yi-Di 夷狄, Rong-Di 戎狄, Hu 胡, etc. in China.⁸ Although

⁵ See Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography*, esp. chap. 2; Schaberg, 'Chinese History and Philosophy', pp. 396–403; Durrant, 'The Literary Features', pp. 507–10.

⁶ Roller, 'The Exemplary Past', pp. 216–19. Roller goes on to illustrate, citing Polybius, this same phenomenon in the Greek tradition. An analogous tendency in Chinese historiography has also been noted by Olberding, *Dubious Facts*, pp. 5, 13. Also see Durrant, 'The Literary Features', pp. 507–08; Dien, 'Historiography', p. 509.

⁷ On the ethnographic inheritance in Roman Late Antiquity, see Gillett, 'The Mirror of Jordanes', pp. 392–408. On the Chinese ethnographic tradition in antiquity, see Pines, 'Beasts or Humans', pp. 59–102; and Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and its Enemies*, pp. 93–126, 271–86, 290–93.

⁸ The first two of these terms, Yi-Di and Rong-Di, are composed of what were originally two distinct ethnonyms that were later combined or used singly as more or less pejorative designations for various types of non-Chinese or non-Huaxia 華夏 peoples. These terms were already used in this way prior to the Han dynasty, irrespective of whatever particular connotations either term may once have had, although Rong tended to preserve a western geographical association, and Di a northern one. The use of 'barbarian' as a translation for the frequent and indiscriminate use of these obsolete ethnonyms, though not perfect, is quite apt. I would argue that the most crucial difference is that 'barbarian' is etymologically a behavioural distinction, relating to speech, whereas the Chinese terms have ethnic and/or geographical associations. See Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and its Enemies*, p. 102; and Creel, *The Origins of Statecraft in China*, I, 197–98.

such a dichotomy is more simplistic than a careful reading of many of the relevant texts would suggest, it nevertheless remained a rhetorical possibility or schema for Graeco-Roman and Chinese historians depicting the relationship, particularly in imperial contexts, between those who lived within the borders of the empire and those who lived without.⁹

In both China and the Roman Empire, historiography (and classicizing historiography in later eras) was a literary genre that exhibited a morally prescriptive tendency in its representations of the past; this aspect combined with the genre's intrinsically rhetorical quality to create a literary form that offered a view of past and present realities not just as things really were but as they should be. Such a reading of historical texts is in accord with that of a recent comparative study of Roman and Chinese historiography that argues historical texts 'do not simply mirror the world: to a certain extent they also help to shape, modify, and transform it'.¹⁰ Of central interest here is the way in which the ethnographic discourse of either tradition functions in the representation not just of military campaigns against peoples on the periphery but also of political events at the centre. For by the period CE 500–650, the barbarians had long since penetrated the frontiers and, as political actors in their own right, were claiming to rule legitimate states of their own.

The approach here will be to take two texts — the first texts that were produced following imperial reconquest of the Roman West and the reunification of China in the sixth century — and consider the ways in which the ethnological discourse of the classical era is employed in representations of foreign political actors; in short, the degree to which ethnicity is politicized in the texts. These are the *Wars* of Procopius of Caesarea (c. 500–c. 565) and the *Jinshu* 晉書 attributed to Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (578–648). There are several reasons to support this choice of texts. First, these works were produced by historians close to the centres of power and may be assumed to present world views that, if not outright formally sanctioned by the emperor as in the case of the *Jinshu*, were at least presentable to an imperial readership. Procopius's works were published in Constantinople and, as is clear from both the suppression of his *Secret History* and the publication of the panegyric *Buildings*, he anticipated that his writings would come before the eyes of the emperor or at least his asso

⁹ For contrasting views on xenophobia and exclusivity in Graeco-Roman antiquity, see Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, and Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*. On the emergence of a barbarian–civilized dichotomy in ancient China, see Pines, 'Beasts or Humans', pp. 90–91; and Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and its Enemies*, p. 304.

¹⁰ Mutschler and Mittag, 'Preface', p. xv.

ciates.¹¹ Fang Xuanling was in fact not just an author but the overseer of the *Jinshu* compilation project carried out by the Tang Bureau of Historiography, which had been erected in CE 629.¹² Indeed, the emperor Taizong himself contributed a number of passages to the work. These two texts may thus be taken to provide an imperial perspective on the conquest states that had arisen within imperial borders; and if not an official perspective in the case of Procopius per se, at least a perspective that was not beyond the pale of public and official opinion.

It must be acknowledged that the individual composition of the *Wars*, and the singular perspective of an author who was also highly critical of the regime, complicates the reading of the text as providing a fully representative set of contemporary cultural and political assumptions. Moreover, Procopius's elite readership was not a homogenous group, and there was a wide range of opinion in Procopius's day regarding the character of the Roman Empire and its place in the mid-sixth-century world. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the *Wars* was a popular and broadly disseminated work; even if its perspective is that of individual, as opposed to corporate, authorship, it exhibits a perspective that resonated with a wide audience. The *Wars* and the *Jinshu*, then, are thus among our best sources for the attitudes, perceptions, and world views of the respective imperial literati — crucial components of the ideological construction of imperial landscapes, which were, to some degree, a product of the historiographical exercise itself.

Second, each of these texts employs a classicizing literary style and exhibits a culturally conservative world view. The historians engaged with inherited corpora of ethnographic discourse that had originated in earlier centuries and were poorly suited to the objective description of contemporary realities. Herodotus's inquiries on the peoples north of the Danube would be no better

¹¹ Procopius himself notes the wide circulation of his own writings in the opening lines of book VIII of the *Wars*. Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, VIII.1.1, II, 487 (all further citations from Procopius are from this edition). Procopius's self-proclaimed continuator Agathias of Myrina, refers to Procopius at several points in his own work. The brief summary that Agathias provides of Procopius's *Wars* in his preface (Agathias, *Historiae*, ed. by Keydell, 22–32, p. 7), and his references to Procopius elsewhere in his work (Agathias, *Historiae*, ed. by Keydell, IV.26.4–5, pp. 156–57; IV.30.5, p. 162), suggests an assumption on Agathias's part that Procopius was a well-known author. Kaldellis, *Ethnography after Antiquity*, p. 3, has described Procopius as a “‘benchmark’ writer’ who was ‘admired and imitated by his successors’.

¹² Though commonly attributed to Fang Xuanling, the *Jinshu* was actually the product of a large number of scholars who worked for the Official Bureau of Historiography set up in the early decades of the Tang dynasty. For the most thorough English-language discussion of the compilation and transmission of the *Jinshu* and the texts from which it drew, see Rogers, *the Chronicle of Fu Chien*, pp. 15–22. In Chinese, see Cao Meng, *Jinshu yanjiu shulüe*, pp. 55–56; Li Peidong, *Jinshu yanjiu shang*, pp. 62–69.

guide in the sixth century CE than would Xenophon's description of Persian military culture. Yet the works of such classical authorities continued to serve as reference points for later authors, even if only to demonstrate their erudition before a learned audience. As Anthony Kaldellis has described the classicism of Procopius, 'Classicism was, after all, a way of talking about the present by using ancient paradigms whose store of accumulated meaning could be modulated to respond to new circumstances'.¹³ This same appeal to ancient paradigms is mirrored in the historiography of Tang China. Marc Abramson has said of Tang historical productions that they were

heavily indebted for their style and content to canonical Chinese works of history and thought from earlier dynasties, rendering them often anachronistic and stereotypical but revealing perhaps most clearly the mental framework that shaped Han elites' construction of non-Han ethnic identities and boundaries.¹⁴

The *Wars* and the *Jinshu* are both works that attempt to represent a new political situation, characterized by the influx and political establishment of barbarian peoples, while working within the parameters of a conceptual toolbox inherited from centuries-old ethnographic texts.

This study will assess attitudes towards foreign peoples on the cusp of the 'great divergence' between Rome and imperial China, in a period that was for both empires one of reunification and restoration. The historiographical problem of how to treat barbarian states, almost a contradiction in terms, naturally resulted in an unprecedented confluence of ethnographic rhetoric on the one hand and political discourse of legitimacy on the other. In particular, the focus here will be the representation of individual political figures of barbarian origin (and by extension of their regimes) as these appear in the *Wars* and the *Jinshu*. Regarding the conceptions of the barbarian codified in the canonical historiographical texts that served as models for later historians, the question is this: How do these conceptions manifest themselves in an era when both Rome and China were looking back on an age of division that had witnessed external peoples enter the empire — not to raid and pillage before withdrawing again beyond the frontier or even to settle peacefully, but to establish themselves as legitimate rulers over the Roman and Chinese heartlands? In the age of Justinian and the early decades of the Tang, rejuvenation and *renovatio* of empire were critical components of the political programme.¹⁵ Would such an

¹³ Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea*, p. 15.

¹⁴ Abramson, *Ethnic Identity in Tang China*, p. xxii.

¹⁵ For a discussion of Justinian's political and ideological programme, see Pazdernik,

age favour a cosmopolitan and inclusive quality in its ethnological discourse or, on the contrary, a re-establishment and re-entrenchment of a civilized–barbarian dichotomy?

The Wars

As has frequently been noted by modern scholars, Procopius's history is replete with all of the familiar tropes of ethnography inherited from earlier antiquity.¹⁶ Even the opening sentence of the *Wars*, in homage to Herodotus, introduces Procopius's subject as the conflicts between the Roman emperor Justinian and the barbarians of the East and West.¹⁷ As the fifth century BCE was the age in which it seems that the concept of both a pan-Hellenic identity as well as a barbarian antithesis were first clearly articulated, Procopius prepares his audience to see the coming narrative in the familiar context of Romans (no longer Greeks) fighting against the aggressive Persian Empire in the East.¹⁸ To the greater glory of the emperor, however, *this* history will relate the wars fought against the barbarians of the West as well, thus elevating Procopius's theme to an eminence surpassing that of his predecessors.

The treatment of individual foreign peoples in the *Wars* also abounds with representations of non-Romans that have clear precedents in the ethnographic tradition, and this has often been commented on by modern scholars. For example, in describing Diocletian's ultimately unsuccessful policy of paying the Nobatae and Blemmyes not to cause trouble in Egypt, he concludes with the statement that 'no contrivance will keep all barbarians in good faith towards the Romans without the fear of the soldiers there to keep them at bay'.¹⁹ In his

'Justinianic Ideology', pp. 185–212. On the Tang's self-representation as restorers of the Han dynasty, see Abramson, *Ethnic Identity in Tang China*, pp. xxi, 117; and Wechsler, *Offerings*, p. 18. That the emperor Tang Taizong compared his own achievements with those of the Qin and Han emperors, see Wright, 'T'ang T'ai-Tsung', p. 29.

¹⁶ Benedicty, 'Die Milieu-Theorie', pp. 1–10; Müller, *Geschichte*, pp. 467–79; Cesa, 'Etnografia e geografia', pp. 189–215; Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century*, pp. 218–19; Kaldellis, *Ethnography after Antiquity*, p. 3.

¹⁷ Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, I.1.1, I, 4: Προκόπιος Καισαρέως τοὺς πολέμους ξυνέγραψεν, οὗς Ἰουστινιανὸς ὁ Ῥωμαίων βασιλεὺς πρὸς βαρβάρους διήνεγκε τοὺς τε ἐφόους καὶ ἐσπερίους. All translations in this chapter are the author's.

¹⁸ Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, pp. 1–3; Kim, *Ethnicity and Foreigners*, p. 39.

¹⁹ Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, I.19.33, I, 105–06: βαρβάρους ἅπαντας οὐδέμια μηχανὴ διασώσασθαι τὴν ἐς Ῥωμαίους πίστιν ὅτι μὴ δέει τῶν ἀμυνομένων

approval of the Herulian Pharas's conduct, Procopius pauses to emphasize the familiar stereotypes of barbarian perfidy and intemperance: 'For a Herulian man not to be given over to faithlessness and drunkenness but to lay claim to virtue — that is a difficult thing and worthy of much praise.'²⁰ Lest it seem that this negative treatment is Herulian-specific, the same Pharas himself ascribes his lack of refinement to his general barbarian identity, saying, 'I myself am a barbarian and unfamiliar with letters and speeches, and I am otherwise unskilful.'²¹ In his representation of peoples either still on or beyond the imperial periphery, or whose presence inside the empire was restricted to the capacity of serving as auxiliaries in Roman armies, Procopius is thus comfortable employing the ethnographic tropes and modes employed by his predecessors.²²

Interestingly, however, these modes of discourse do not survive the transfer to the higher levels of the political sphere, to the representation of political actors of barbarian origin. Despite the presence of familiar, and pejorative, barbarian rhetoric throughout — especially in the representation of either tribal groups or individuals of non-Roman origin — the depiction of barbarian political actors exhibits a surprising dearth of ethnological signification. Throughout the *Wars*, there is no ambiguity regarding the fact that Goths and Vandals belong to the barbarian category; collectively they are referred to as barbarians whether in military or civilian contexts. But when Procopius provides portraits of their leaders, these individuals tend not to be labelled as such, even when they are otherwise clearly unviable political alternatives to Roman rule in Procopius's view.

It has been argued regarding fifth- and sixth-century Roman attitudes towards the barbarian that 'the intrusion of outsiders and destruction of the Western Roman Empire did not see the collapse of traditional notions of "Roman" and "barbarian"'.²³ In stronger language, it has been asserted that

στρατιωτῶν. The faithlessness to the Romans of the allied and migrating Visigoths is also pointed out at Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, III.2.7, I, 312: οὐ γὰρ οἶδε βαρβάρους ἐνδιατᾶσθαι ἢ ἐς Ῥωμαίους πίσιτις.

²⁰ Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, IV.4.30, I, 436: ἄνδρα δὲ Ἑρουλον μὴ ἐς ἀπιστίαν τε καὶ μέθην ἀνεισθαι, ἀλλ' ἀρετῆς μεταποιεῖσθαι, χαλεπὸν τε καὶ ἐπαινοῦ πολλοῦ ἄξιον.

²¹ Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, IV.6.15, I, 445: Εἰμὶ μὲν καὶ αὐτὸς βάρβαρος καὶ γραμμάτων τε καὶ λόγων οὔτε ἐθᾶς οὔτε ἄλλως ἐμπειρος γέγονα.

²² See, for example, his treatment of the Hephthalites (at Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, I.3.1–7, I, 10–11), the Tzani (I.15.21–25, I, 77–78), the Heruli (VI.14.1–7, II, 208–09), and the Sclaveni and Antae (VII.14.22–30, II, 357–58).

²³ Heather, 'The Barbarian in Late Antiquity', p. 254.

‘Western kings who ruled over Roman populations and churches [...] ranked in Byzantium solely as repulsive aliens.’²⁴ The remainder of this section will argue that, in what one might assume to be the most appropriate place for the expression of anti-barbarian sentiment, in the representation of the barbarian kings who had abandoned allegiance to the emperor and presumed to claim legal rights of sovereignty over their newly won domains, such ethnographic rhetoric is virtually absent.²⁵ This absence challenges the above assessment regarding the stability of the ‘barbarian’ as a category defined by its concomitant set of general, as well as ethnically specific, *topoi*. For if the Vandals and Goths are barbarians, what does one make of Procopius’s decision to have his barbarian kings, even the bad ones, appear without their ethnographic clothes? As will be argued here, Procopius represents the barbarian rulers of Vandal Africa and Ostrogothic Italy in ethnologically neutral terms, such that in a widely circulated narrative of Justinian’s wars of reconquest, the non-Roman ethnicity of the chief enemies of the empire was not politicized.

The most notorious of the Vandal kings was Gaiseric, who led his people from Spain into Africa and established their kingdom in the city of Carthage.²⁶ Procopius offers a lengthy account of events in the West covering much of the fifth century, including the migration, conquest, and depredations of the Vandals. However, despite his references to Gaiseric’s characteristic cunning and cruelty (as well as prudence and foresight), these qualities are never explicitly correlated with his Vandal, and hence barbarian, ethnicity in the manner seen above in the case of the Herulian Pharas. Short of a general assessment of Gaiseric’s character, Procopius only offers a brief remark when introducing him in the narrative: ‘Gaiseric was most excellently practised in the arts of war and of all men was the most to be reckoned with.’²⁷ The assessments of his two successors, Huneric and Gunthamund, are similarly sparse, saying of Huneric that he ‘turned out to be the most savage and most unjust of all men towards the

²⁴ Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, p. 54.

²⁵ An important exception here is the treatment of the Franks (particularly at Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, VI.25.2–10, II, 261–62), who were the masters of much of Gaul by the mid-sixth century. However, they are only peripheral actors in the *Wars* and not the declared enemies of the empire in the campaigns narrated by Procopius.

²⁶ I will use the conventional spellings of Vandal and Gothic names as they appear in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* or *Cambridge Ancient History* instead of their Greek spellings, i.e., ‘Gaiseric’ for ‘Gizerikos’.

²⁷ Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, III.3.24, I, 322: Πιζέριχος δὲ τὰ τε πολέμια ὡς ἄριστα ἐξήσκητο καὶ δεινότατος ἦν ἀνθρώπων ἀπάντων.

Christians in Libya,²⁸ and of Gunthamund that he ‘fought against the Moors in more battles, and he died of sickness having compelled the Christians to greater sufferings.’²⁹ In the above three examples, Procopius calls no attention to the barbarian identity of the Vandal kings; he is only interested in the political, economic, and military problems they caused for the empire and in their treatment of their orthodox Christian subjects.

Slightly more detail is offered in the portraits of the kings who followed. Thrasamund succeeded Gunthamund and was ‘a man well-endowed with good looks, intelligence, and magnanimity’ who favoured a more underhanded form of persecution of the orthodox Christians, compelling them to ‘change the faith of their fathers, not by harming their bodies as had those before him, but pursuing them with honours and positions of authority and giving large gifts of money.’³⁰ Yet this being the case, we also learn, somewhat surprisingly, that ‘he became a great friend of the emperor Anastasius.’³¹ Though criticized for his religious policy, Thrasamund is not without his positive attributes, not least of which were his friendly relations with the emperor.

This potential for a warm relationship between a Vandal king and a Roman emperor is even more pronounced in the pacific Hilderic, who ‘was both approachable to his subjects and very mild, nor was he harsh towards the Christians or any other person.’³² Not only was Hilderic completely uninterested in warfare, but he also ‘was a great friend of Justinian and became his guest-friend’, and ‘they made great gifts of money to one another.’³³ Hilderic is both free of any charge of barbarism and indeed seems almost a cooperative partner of the emperor Justinian.

²⁸ Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, III.8.3, I, 345: γέγονε δὲ Ὀνώριχος ἐς τοὺς ἐν Λιβύῃ Χριστιανούς ὀμώτατός τε καὶ ἀδικώτατος ἀνθρώπων ἀπάντων.

²⁹ Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, III.8.7, I, 346: οὗτος ὁ Γουνδαμοῦνδος πλείοσι μὲν πρὸς Μαυρουσίους ἐμαχέσατο ξυμβολαῖς, μείζοσι δὲ τοὺς Χριστιανούς ὑπαγαγὼν πάθεισιν ἐτελεύτησε νοσήσας.

³⁰ Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, III.8.8–9, I, 346–47: εἶδους τε καὶ ξυνέσεως ἐς τὰ μάλιστα καὶ μεγαλοψυχίας εὐ ἤκων. τοὺς μέντοι Χριστιανούς ἐβιάζετο μεταβαλέσθαι τὴν πατριον δόξαν, οὐκ αἰκίζόμενος τὰ σώματα ὡσπερ οἱ πρότεροι, ἀλλὰ τιμαῖς τε καὶ ἀρχαῖς μετιῶν καὶ χρήμασι μεγάλοις δωρούμενος.

³¹ Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, III.8.14, I, 347: ἐγένετο δὲ φίλος καὶ Ἀναστασίῳ βασιλεῖ ἐς τὰ μάλιστα.

³² Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, III.9.1, I, 351: ὅς τὰ μὲν ἐς τοὺς ὑπηκόους εὐπρόσодός τε ἦν καὶ ὄλως πρᾶος, καὶ οὔτε Χριστιανοῖς οὔτε τῷ ἄλλῳ χαλεπὸς ἐγεγόνει.

³³ Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, III.9.1, I, 351–52: τὰ δὲ ἐς τὸν πόλεμον μαλθακός τε λίαν καὶ οὐδὲ ἄχρι ἐς τὰ ὄτα τὸ πρᾶγμα οἱ τοῦτο ἐθέλων ἰέναι. [...] Ἰλδέρικος δὲ φίλος ἐς τὰ μάλιστα Ἰουστινιανῷ καὶ ξένος ἐγένετο [...] χρήμασι τε μεγάλοις ἀλλήλους ἐδωροῦντο.

It is easy to see how this representation fits into the narrative of the *Wars*, as it is the deposition of Hilderic by his relative Gelimer that provides the pretext for Justinian to launch his attack on the Vandal kingdom. Yet important to note is that the campaign is not buttressed on the basis of the Vandal state's barbarian illegitimacy but, according to Procopius, on the moral imperative to avenge the injustice committed against Hilderic and the founder of the Vandal state Gaiseric himself³⁴ — a pretext that would seem to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Vandal realm. In any case, Procopius represents the Vandal Hilderic more as an imperial colleague than as a barbarian king ruling a conquest state.

The wars in the West were launched against the tyrant Gelimer, the last of the Vandal kings, and Gelimer is granted a less favourable character assessment despite the praise Procopius allows him for his military prowess.³⁵ It is interesting to note, however, that Gelimer is the only Vandal king to be labelled a 'tyrant' implying the legitimacy of his royal predecessors; indeed, in a letter addressed to Gelimer by Justinian, Procopius quotes the emperor urging the Vandal usurper not to exchange the name of *tyrannos*/τύραννος for that of *basileus*/βασιλεύς by seizing power unlawfully.³⁶ Procopius also describes Gelimer as 'a man to be reckoned with and wicked, knowing full well how to make use of untoward deeds and other people's money'.³⁷ The political motive for a negative characterization has been noted above; however, here, as elsewhere, there is a marked absence of any reference to either barbarian or Vandal identity and its potentially delegitimizing force.

Following the swift destruction of the Vandal kingdom in 534, the imperial armies were next sent against the Ostrogothic kingdom of Italy. If Procopius's representations of Vandal rulers seemed free of ethnographic 'othering', this

³⁴ Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, III.9.19, I, 354.

³⁵ Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, III.9.7, I, 352: ὅς τὰ μὲν πολέμια ἐδόκει τῶν καθ' αὐτὸν ἄριστος εἶναι (He seemed to be the most excellent in warfare among men of his own day).

³⁶ Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, III.9.11, I, 353: μήτε τοῦ βασιλείως ὀνόματος ἀνταλλάξῃ τὴν τοῦ τυράννου προσηγορίαν. The term *tyrannos*/τύραννος is used in several places throughout the *Wars*, but Procopius never indicates that barbarians or non-Romans are somehow more deserving of the label. For example, the Romans Vitalianus, John, Boniface, both Maximus the elder and younger, Stotzas, Maximinus, and Gontharis are all either named tyrants by Procopius or by figures to whom Procopius attributes speeches. Even Roman rule itself is at one point described as a 'bitter tyranny', τυραννίδα πικρὰν, by the Lazi. Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, II.15.19, I, 219.

³⁷ Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, III.9.7, I, 352: δεινός τε ἦν καὶ κακοῦθης καὶ πράγμασί τε νεωτέροις καὶ χρήμασιν ἐπιτίθεσθαι ἄλλοτριούς ἐξεπιστάμενος.

tendency is even more pronounced in his account of the wars to retake the city of Rome and the Italian Peninsula. It is a great irony, when considered in light of xenophobia and exclusivity often said to characterize representations of non-Greeks and non-Romans in classical literature, that the most idyllic depiction of a political figure in the *Wars* is that of the Gothic king Theoderic.³⁸ Following an account of Theoderic's invasion of Italy at the behest of Emperor Zeno and victory over the barbarian king Odoacer, Procopius offers a summary of Theoderic's tenure as ruler of Italy.³⁹ First, he claims that Theoderic neither saw fit to take the imperial title of *basileus*⁴⁰ nor to assume the trappings of imperial office but instead contented himself with the title 'rex', which was preferred by barbarian custom.⁴¹ This being the case, however, Theoderic still ruled his subjects in accordance with the conduct of a man who is an emperor by nature.⁴² In this case, Theoderic's barbarian identity is actually noted in a political context; but what is striking is that it occurs in a wholly neutral sense, and neither disqualifies nor impugns his political legitimacy. A reign characterized by 'extraordinary attention to justice' and a careful and secure preservation of the laws⁴³ leads Procopius to assert that, despite the Gothic partition-

³⁸ This has been pointed out by several scholars, e.g. Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea*, p. 160.

³⁹ Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, v.1.26–31, II, 8–9.

⁴⁰ The term *basileus*/βασιλεύς had already begun to replace the title of *autokrator*/αυτοκράτωρ, the Greek version of Latin *imperator*, in the East during Justinian's reign. McCormick, 'Emperor and Court', p. 142.

⁴¹ Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, v.1.26, II, 8: καὶ βασιλέως μὲν τοῦ Ῥωμαίων οὔτε τοῦ σχήματος οὔτε τοῦ ὀνόματος ἐπιβατεῦσαι ἤξιώσεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ῥήξ διεβίου καλούμενος (οὔτω γὰρ σφῶν τοὺς ἡγεμόνας καλεῖν οἱ βάρβαροι νενομίκασι). Procopius is curiously inconsistent on this point. The only other occurrence of the word *rex*/ῥήξ is in reference to the king of the Heruli, as noted by Chrysos; and even this obscure figure is referred to as a *basileus* in the next sentence (Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, vi.14.38, II, 214). The term *basileus*, the same as that used to describe the office of Justinian, is used throughout the work in reference to Persian, Vandal, and Gothic 'kings' alike. See Arnold for the actual titles employed by Theoderic, *Theoderic and the Roman Imperial Restoration*, pp. 75–76; also Chrysos, 'The Title Βασιλεύς in Early Byzantine Relations', pp. 52–57.

⁴² Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, v.1.26, II, 8: τῶν μέντοι κατηκῶν τῶν αὐτοῦ προὔστη ξύμπαντα περιβαλλόμενος ὅσα τῷ φύσει βασιλεῖ ἤρμοσται. Charles Pazdernik offers an intriguing analysis of this eulogy and the ways in which it borrows key phrases from Thucydides' obituary for Pericles in 'Reinventing Theoderic in Procopius' *Gothic War*', pp. 137–53.

⁴³ Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, v.1.27, II, 8: δικαιοσύνης τε γὰρ ὑπερφῶς ἐπεμελήσατο καὶ τοὺς νόμους ἐν τῷ βεβαίῳ διεσώσατο.

ing of Roman lands originally taken by Odoacer's followers, 'Theoderic was a tyrant in name, but he was a true emperor in deed no less than any of those who have been esteemed in that office from the very beginning; and a great love of him flourished among both the Goths and Italians'.⁴⁴ Despite his belonging to a barbarian people, Theoderic himself 'by nature' possesses the qualities of a Roman sovereign and is worthy to be ranked alongside the likes of Augustus and Trajan. Though it is explicitly noted that he belongs to a barbarian people, his origins do not serve to delegitimize his reign.⁴⁵

Under the stewardship of Theoderic's daughter Amalasuintha, for whose intelligence, justice, and masculine nature Procopius has only the highest of praise, there arises a conflict with members of the Gothic nobility who object to her desire to give her son Athalaric, now king of the Goths following the death of Theoderic, a Roman education.⁴⁶ For the Goths object to Athalaric's being forced to learn his letters and to heed the counsels of senior Gothic men, preferring instead that he be raised to pursue barbarian virtue and to rule in a more barbarous (*βαρβαρικώτερον*) manner, i.e., in such a way that would allow them to abuse their Italian subjects.⁴⁷ Curiously, they cite the example of Theoderic himself who, they claim, had frowned upon the enervating effects of Roman education. And when Athalaric comes of age, he turns out to be, thanks to the exhortations of his Gothic companions, 'exceptionally wicked and less willing to heed his mother on account of his stupidity'.⁴⁸ A reference to 'barbarous custom' as a feature of Athalaric's upbringing is the closest Procopius

⁴⁴ Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, v.1.29, II, 9: ἦν τε ὁ Θεωδέριχος λόγῳ μὲν τύραννος, ἔργῳ δὲ βασιλεὺς ἀληθῆς τῶν ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ τιμῇ τὸ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἡὐδοκιμηκότων οὐδενὸς ἦσσαν, ἔρωσ τε αὐτοῦ ἔν τε Γότθοις καὶ Ἰταλιώταις πολλὸς ἤκμασε.

⁴⁵ There is a contrast here with the image of Justinian in the *Anecdota* (ed. by Haury and Wirth, III.14.2, I, 90), where Procopius says that the emperor 'acted like a barbarian in his speech, manner, and understanding' (τὴν τε γλώτταν καὶ τὸ σχῆμα καὶ τὴν διάνοιαν ἐβαρβαρίζεν). In keeping with the original sense of the word 'barbarian' being indicative not of ethnic origin but rather of corrupt speech, barbarism is in this case not what one is but what one does. While barbaric behaviour clearly stands in opposition to the desired qualities of an emperor in the *Anecdota*, the barbarian *origins* of Theoderic are not worthy of censure.

⁴⁶ Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, v.2.3, II, 10: Ἀμαλασοῦνθα [...] τὴν ἀρχὴν διωκείτο, ξυνέσεως μὲν καὶ δικαιοσύνης ἐπὶ πλείστον ἐλθοῦσα, τῆς δὲ φύσεως ἐς ἄγαν τὸ ἀρρενωπὸν ἐνδεικνυμένη.

⁴⁷ Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, v.2.8–17, II, 11–12.

⁴⁸ Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, v.2.19, II, 13: ἐπειδὴ τάχιστα ἐς ἤβην ἤλθεν, ἔς τε μέθην καὶ γυναικῶν μίξεις παρακαλοῦντες, κακοθήη τε διαφερόντως εἶναι καὶ τῇ μητρὶ ὑπὸ ἀβελτερίας ἀπειθέστερον κατεστήσαντο.

comes to explaining the shortcomings of a Gothic, or Vandal, ruler in reference to his barbarian origin.⁴⁹

However, it should be noted that the customs that are here used to exemplify a barbarian way of life — typified by excesses of wine, women, and violence — are clearly not posed as an innate feature of Athalaric's character. This particular example explicitly indicates that the person the young man will become is determined by his education, for which there are two alternatives: the Roman path of letters and *civilitas* or the barbarism of the Gothic nobility. Implicit, then, is the possibility that, should his mother have had her way, Athalaric would have grown up to emulate the virtues of both his mother and grandfather. A student of Herodotus, Procopius makes clear that *nomos*, not blood, is king.⁵⁰

This is hardly to say that all Gothic kings or nobles appear as exemplars of ethical behaviour in the *Wars*. The Gothic king Theodahad, who rules briefly and indecisively, is noteworthy for his greed, unwarlike nature, and familiarity with Latin literature and Platonic philosophy.⁵¹ But in Theodahad's case as well, Procopius never sees fit to correlate flaws of character or political illegitimacy with Gothic or barbarian origins. It could of course be argued that Theodahad's appreciation of Roman literary culture is a trope of the corrupting effect that the fruits of civilization may have on barbarians who are unable to exercise moderation, as the Vandals' unrestrained enjoyment of baths and fine dining dissipates their vigour.⁵² Likewise, it may be argued that Procopius is here availing himself of a trope whereby what ennobles and refines the Roman leads the barbarian into unwitting slavery as in the case of the Britons under the policies of Agricola.⁵³ However, if Procopius is indeed employing this trope, he does not do so explicitly and limits its use to Theodahad; moreover, there was certainly precedent for well-educated barbarians who were not

⁴⁹ The Goths wish him to be attendant to virtue 'according to barbarian custom' (κατά γε τὸν βάρβαρον νόμον). Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, v.2.17, II, 12.

⁵⁰ Herodotus, *Historiae*, ed. by Rosén, III.38.4, I, 279: καὶ ὁρθῶς μοι δοκεῖ Πίνδαρος ποιῆσαι, 'νόμον πάντων βασιλέα' φήσας εἶναι.

⁵¹ Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, v.3.1, II, 15: Ἦν δέ τις ἐν Γότθοις Θεωδάτος ὄνομα [...] λόγων μὲν Λατίνων μεταλαχῶν καὶ δογμάτων Πλατωνικῶν, πολέμων δὲ ἀμελετήτως παντάπασιν ἔχων, μακρὰν τε ἀπολελειμμένος τοῦ δραστηρίου, ἐς μέντοι φιλοχρηματίαν δαιμονίως ἐσπουδακώς.

⁵² See Kaldellis for a discussion of the rhetorical representation of Vandal luxury, *Ethnography after Antiquity*, pp. 19–21.

⁵³ Tacitus, *Agricola*, ed. by Winterbottom and Ogilvie, 30–32, pp. 21–23.

somehow corrupted by their erudition, not least in the case of Amalasuintha herself.⁵⁴

Guy Halsall reads this episode relating to Athalaric's education, as well as the account of the literary preoccupations of Theodahad, as an ironic satire of barbarian failure at playing Roman.⁵⁵ Yet Halsall overstates the 'heavy, deliberate irony', 'punch line[s]', and 'outright joke[s]' he sees in the text. He assumes that instances in which a barbarian behaves in a stereotypically 'Roman' way are evidence of a deliberate inversion that is intended to be humorous. While citing other Greek and Roman authors, Halsall argues that representing a known barbarian with behaviours typical of Greeks and Romans 'was ludicrous, it was ridiculous, and it could be funny'.⁵⁶ This may well be the case in some instances, whether in Procopius or elsewhere in Graeco-Roman literature, yet it is a simplification to assume that such inversions are always intended to be humorous and to reinforce a conceptual division between civilized and barbarian — nor indeed need they *always* be inversions in the first place. If Halsall is right, then the humour in classical historiography has been massively under-appreciated: we have not realized that Herodotus's recorded debate amongst the Persian Darius and his fellow conspirators over the ideal political constitution is supposed to be comical,⁵⁷ that Xenophon was being ironic when in his eulogy of Cyrus he claims that Persian youth 'learn both to rule and be ruled'.⁵⁸ Even the description of the barbarian usurper Magnentius as 'quick in his eagerness for reading' has not been appreciated for the joke that it must be.⁵⁹ After all, what could be more ridiculous than uncouth barbarians holding forth on topics of political organization or proclaiming, in high oratorical style as does Tacitus's Calgacus, their determination to live free from the slavery of imposed empire?

⁵⁴ See the case of the emperor Julian's teacher whom he identifies as 'a barbarian, by the gods and goddesses, and a Scythian by birth' (βάρβαρος νῆ θεοῦς καὶ θεάς, Σκύθης μὲν τὸ γένος) — and to whom the emperor credits his love of philosophy and virtue. Julian, *Misopogon*, ed. by Hertlein, 352A, p. 454.

⁵⁵ Halsall, 'Funny Foreigners', pp. 106–08.

⁵⁶ Halsall, 'Funny Foreigners', pp. 96–97.

⁵⁷ Herodotus, *Historiae*, ed. by Rosén, III.80–82, I, 306–08.

⁵⁸ Xenophon, *Anabasis*, ed. by Hude and Peters, I.9.4, p. 38: παῖδες ὄντες μανθάνουσιν ἄρχειν τε καὶ ἄρχεσθαι. This very formulation is offered by Seneca as one of the crucial distinctions between barbarians and Romans: 'no one is able to rule but he who is able to be ruled' (nemo autem regere potest nisi qui et regi). Seneca, *De ira*, ed. by Reynolds, II.15.4, p. 74.

⁵⁹ *Epitome de Caesaribus*, ed. by Pichlmayr, XLII.7, p. 169: 'Ortus parentibus barbaris [...] legendi studio promptus'.

It is also problematic to assume that any time a barbarian behaves in a way that we assume to be stereotypically 'Roman' it represents an inversion, yet when a Roman exhibits some flaw in character such as greed, stupidity, perfidy, etc., it is simply a facet of that individual's character. Such an approach takes for granted an absolute stability of a barbarian antithesis in the minds of Greeks and Romans that is not borne out by the evidence in our sources. To take an example from the *Wars*: Halsall claims that Procopius makes 'much play on the traditional barbarian inability to carry on siege warfare', citing an episode in book V when the Goths build a siege engine that, when brought forward, is unable to get close enough to the wall of Rome to do any damage, and the oxen drawing it are all shot by Belisarius's bowmen.⁶⁰ Granted, Procopius attributes this failure to barbarian simplicity, τὴν τῶν βαρβάρων εὐήθειαν,⁶¹ and one may infer that ineptitude in siege warfare is thus a barbarian attribute. Yet in book VIII when the Romans are in despair at their inability to make headway in their siege of the fortress of Petra, they are saved by a device designed by the barbarian Sabiri, a Hunnic people. Procopius notes that such an idea had never occurred to Romans or Persians, peoples with centuries of experience in siege warfare, but had now occurred to these barbarians.⁶² Is this a comical inversion as well? In the following chapter, Procopius notes that the Roman efforts to take the fortress, though eventually successful, were plagued by their own negligence, ὀλιγωρία, in contrast to the diligence, ἐπιμέλεια, of the Persians. If these instances must also be examples of comical irony, one is prompted to ask: In what case could one not make the same argument? To always assume that an inversion, comical or otherwise, is necessarily intended when non-Roman figures do not act or speak strictly in accord with barbarian stereotypes results in a flattening of the text. Such readings would seem to be based on modern assumptions of a conceptual rigidity constraining ancient authors, not on the myriad examples where distinctions have been shown to break down between the civilized and the barbarian.⁶³

Lest it be thought that 'the ludicrously incongruous concept of barbarian education'⁶⁴ was the invention of Procopius, Cassiodorus, the Roman senator

⁶⁰ Halsall, 'Funny Foreigners', p. 110.

⁶¹ Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, v.22.9, II, 109.

⁶² Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, VIII.11.28, II, 539: ἀλλ' αὐτῶν οὐδενὶ τὸ ἐνθύμημα τοῦτο γεγένηται, ὅπερ τούτοις δὴ τοῖς βαρβάροις τανῦν γέγονεν (But this plan had occurred to none of them, which at this very point occurred to the barbarians).

⁶³ On this point, see Kaldellis, *Ethnography after Antiquity*, p. 11.

⁶⁴ Halsall, 'Funny Foreigners', p. 107.

employed by the Gothic regime in Italy, wrote in a letter to the senate in 534 that Amalasuintha was ‘expert in the clarity of Attic diction; she shines with the adornment of Roman eloquence; she exults in the fecundity of her native speech; she excels all on their own terms since she is equally wonderful in all respects’.⁶⁵ Theodohad’s erudition too has corroboration in Cassiodorus, who penned a letter to the senate on behalf of Amalasuintha that introduces the new king to Roman elites. According to Cassiodorus, Theodahad is

resolute in adversity, measured in prosperity, and, what is the most difficult kind of mastery [to obtain], he has been a ruler of himself. He adds to these qualities the much sought after erudition of letters which lends ornament to a very praiseworthy nature.⁶⁶

One doubts that Cassiodorus was trying to be funny. In a case where an author such as Procopius matter-of-factly refers to the erudition of barbarian figures, independently attested in other sources, there is little to suggest an ironic and humorously inverted representation of Roman *civilitas*. Halsall’s reading of Procopius is engaged with at such length here because there is a tendency to embrace the notion of a barbarian dichotomy in Graeco-Roman thought as an absolute principle that may be taken for granted.

Of course, not all of the Goths receive the praise accorded to Theoderic and Amalasuintha, and both Goths and Vandals are collectively referred to as ‘barbarians’ throughout the eight books of the *Wars*; and as has been shown above in the case of the Gothic followers of the young Athalaric, a barbarian origin or Gothic identity could be explicitly correlated with stereotypically barbarian behaviours. However, in only three cases does Procopius use the classifier ‘barbarian’ in association with one of the Gothic rulers. The first of these has been noted above in the case of the Theoderic where Procopius refers to his abstention from taking the imperial title and his choice to style himself as ‘rex’, as the barbarians were accustomed to do. In this case, the use of the term ‘barbarian’ is morally neutral and only serves to qualify a cultural practice, which, while indicating distinction from Romans, does not involve negative moral judgment.

⁶⁵ Cassiodorus, *Variae*, ed. by Mommsen, xi.1.6, p. 328: ‘Atticae facundiae claritate disertae: Romani eloquii pompa resplendet: nativi sermonis ubertate gloriatur: excellit cunctos in propriis, cum sit aequaliter ubique mirabilis’.

⁶⁶ Cassiodorus, *Variae*, ed. by Mommsen, x.3.3–4, p. 299: ‘patiens in adversis, moderatus in prosperis, et, quod difficillimum potestatis genus est, olim rector sui. Accessit his bonis desiderabilis eruditio litterarum, quae naturam laudabilem eximie reddit ornatam’.

The second instance concerns the Gothic king Totila, who becomes the real hero of the final book of the *Wars*.⁶⁷ Upon capturing the city of Naples, Procopius says that Totila ‘showed a humanity to the prisoners that was not to be expected from either a barbarian or an enemy’.⁶⁸ Implicit here is the acknowledgement of barbarian stereotypes, that as a ruler of a barbarian people and being a barbarian himself, Totila ought to behave in a manner that accords with the audience’s preconceived notions associated with this category. The presence of such stereotypical barbarian behaviours in Procopius has already been noted above in the case of the Herulian Pharas. Tellingly, however, this direct correlation between Totila’s barbarian origin and uncivilized behaviour is only introduced in a context that thwarts this very expectation.

The third such example also involves Totila and occurs in a letter he sends to the Roman senate. In this letter, he puts forward a case for the legitimacy of Gothic rule and upbraids the inhabitants of the city for betraying the cause of both Goths *and* Italians to the ‘Greeks’, the term used by enemies of Justinian to refer to his otherwise ‘Roman’ troops.⁶⁹ In this instance, Totila urges his hearers not to make light of his remarks and assume that his reproaches are brought against them because of the ambition of his youth or because, being a leader of barbarians, he makes boastful speeches.⁷⁰ In both of these examples, the pejorative baggage associated with the barbarian label is clear. What is noteworthy is that the assumptions that accompany this category assigned to figures of indisputably barbarian origin are only introduced to be subverted: though Totila is identified, and indeed identifies himself, as a barbarian, he is not only freed of censure on this count but is, if anything, the more worthy of praise for it.

Given the examples cited above of Procopius’s employment of ethnographic discourse in his representation of barbarians ruling over former imperial territories, some former assessments of Procopius need to be reconsidered. For example, it has been argued in a discussion of dominant themes in Procopius

⁶⁷ Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea*, p. 198; Moorhead, ‘Totila the Revolutionary’, p. 382.

⁶⁸ Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Hauray and Wirth, VII.8.1, II, 328: φιλανθρωπίαν ἐς τοὺς ἡλωκότας ἐπεδείξατο οὕτε πολεμίῳ οὕτε βαρβάρῳ ἀνδρὶ πρέπουσαν.

⁶⁹ This term did not always reflect a Western hostility towards Romans from the East, as has sometimes been suggested. It does not seem to be accompanied by any pejorative sense in Priscus, when the historian encounters a man among the Huns who claims to be a ‘Greek’ by birth: ἔλεγεν Γραικὸς μὲν εἶναι τὸ γένος. Priscus, *Excerpta de legationibus*, ed. by Carolla, VIII.97, p. 34.

⁷⁰ Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Hauray and Wirth, VII.9.15, II, 335: ὑμῶν δὲ οἰέσθω μηδεὶς μῆτε ὑπὸ νέου φιλοτιμίας τὰ ὀνειδίη ταῦτα ἐς αὐτοὺς φέρεσθαι μῆτε με ἅτε βαρβάρων ἄρχοντα κομπωδестέρους ποιείσθαι τοὺς λόγους.

that he is much concerned with 'preserving the established order, and for Procopius the established order includes a strong demarcation between civilized people and barbarians'.⁷¹ While this assessment may be true in Procopius's treatment of peripheral peoples such as the Slavs, Kutrigurs, and even Franks, it does not hold up when applied to the representation of barbarian royalty.⁷² Although it is abundantly clear that 'Romans' and 'barbarians' fight in both imperial and Gothic armies and that ethnic affiliation did not determine political allegiance,⁷³ the lack of ethnic hostility even when a Roman–Gothic distinction is made clear, both nominally and in reference to their mutually unintelligible languages, can be striking. In book VI, Procopius describes an episode where a Goth and Roman soldier find themselves trapped together in a pit on the battlefield but, instead of trying to kill one other, end up pledging their friendship and each vowing to ensure the other's safety should they be rescued by soldiers of either army.⁷⁴ This episode is particularly interesting in that it occurs in warfare, the ultimate expression of an otherwise irreconcilable conflict, where Gothic claims to legitimate rule over Italy are pitted against the mission of *renovatio* of Justinian. But more generally, Procopius's comparatively even-handed treatment of barbarian rulers calls for a re-evaluation of the extent to which the classical barbarian–Roman dichotomy determined perceptions and representations of ethnic Others even in rhetorical contexts.

What then does one make of a classicizing historian with a distinctly eastern point of view, who wrote under a Roman state firmly in place and even ascendant, yet who nevertheless minimizes the presence of any such ethno-cultural barrier, at least in the case of barbarian heads of state? It was noted above that the perspective presented in the *Wars* is that of only a single individual, known to have been highly critical of Justinian's political programme, and that it is therefore impossible to assume that his views would have been shared by all members of his readership. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that in a widely circu-

⁷¹ Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century*, p. 239. Cameron recognizes the different treatment accorded to certain barbarian rulers, although this very fact problematizes her assertion that Procopius 'operates with a strong sense of borderlines, which makes his judgments easy', *Procopius and the Sixth Century*, p. 240.

⁷² This discrepancy has been identified most clearly by Cesa, who points out that 'i Vandali e i Goti (ma soprattutto questi ultimi e i loro sovrani) sono caratterizzati con molta equanimità e non senza una certa simpatia' (the Vandals and the Goths (but especially the latter, and their rulers) are characterized with great equanimity and not without a certain sympathy). Cesa, 'Etnografia e geografia', p. 214.

⁷³ This point has been discussed in detail by Greatrex, 'Roman Identity', pp. 267–92.

⁷⁴ Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars*, ed. by Haury and Wirth, vi.1.11–20, II, 151–52.

lated and popular text, written in an age governed by an ideological programme that aimed at reclamation of the West from the barbarians and the restoration of the empire, the historian was willing to suspend any impulse to represent rival claimants to power in ethnological terms and to delegitimize their political claims on ethnic grounds.

The Jinshu 晉書

It is important to note that while the *Wars* of Procopius is the first extensive narrative account of the Vandal and Ostrogothic kingdoms produced following the reincorporation of Italy, North Africa, and part of the Iberian Peninsula within the empire and is a contemporary account, the *Jinshu* is a text produced several centuries after the barbarian kingdoms it chronicles had been destroyed. There is thus a roughly three-hundred-year gap between the actual careers of various conquest states recorded in the *Jinshu*, often referred to as the Sixteen Kingdoms, and the compilation of the text itself by the Tang Bureau of Historiography in the 640s. Moreover, not only was the *Jinshu* produced centuries later than the events it relates, but the text as we have it is also a composition of a large amount of otherwise lost historical materials produced between the fourth and seventh centuries.⁷⁵ When considering the narrative portions of the *Jinshu* that treat the foreign kingdoms then, it is impossible to know if a given passage has been lifted from a work commissioned by one of the barbarian rulers of one of the Sixteen Kingdoms in the fourth century, if it is from a later historical compendium treating all of the conquest states in succession, or if it is rather a new composition by a Tang historian.

Nevertheless, the *Jinshu* offers the first account of the non-Chinese states to be produced *after* China had been unified under the Sui dynasty in the late sixth century, which was itself soon replaced by the Tang. The *Jinshu* is also the first account of imperial fragmentation and the rise of foreign conquest states to be articulated from an imperial perspective that, as was at least symbolically the case in the age of Justinian, had recently witnessed the territorial restoration of the ancient empire.⁷⁶ As with the *Wars*, which were written following

⁷⁵ The most extensive English-language discussion of the *Jinshu*'s sources is that of Rogers, *The Chronicle of Fu Chien*, pp. 15–22. Wang Zhongluo offers a table of all the histories of the Sixteen Kingdoms that were produced between the fourth and sixth centuries in *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi*, pp. 832–33.

⁷⁶ The fact that the Sui and Tang dynasties were both keen to trace their dynastic legitimacy back to the Han, which had collapsed in CE 220, has been noted above, nn. 4 and 15. For

Justinian's reincorporation of Italy, North Africa, and southern Spain into the Roman Empire, the interest here will be the employment of ethnological rhetoric in historiography in the period when lasting 'Chinese' rule was restored to all of China.

A few words also need to be said regarding the structure of the *Jinshu*. The text is formally a historical account of the Western Jin (265–316) and Eastern Jin (316–420) dynasties and is organized in, what was by the seventh century, the standard format of Chinese dynastic histories, consisting of Basic Annals, Biographies, and Monographs devoted to various topics such as astrology, geography, ritual, etc. What is unique about the *Jinshu* is its inclusion of thirty Chronicles or *zaiji* 載記, which form the final section of the work.⁷⁷ These Chronicles are the records of the various illegitimate states that ruled the north of China from the early fourth to the mid-fifth centuries.⁷⁸ As the thirty Chronicles are dedicated to the rise and fall of the various alien dynasties, they will be the focus here. In particular, we will consider the historian(s)'s comments that are appended to the end of each conquest state's account. It is in these colophons, or *lun* 論, that the ethical verdict of the historian(s) is most clearly expressed, and these are among the only passages that may be attributed with confidence to the Tang historians rather than to the lost works of earlier historians.⁷⁹

ways in which legitimate dynastic succession through the period of the Sixteen Kingdoms and the Northern and Southern dynasties was understood, and debated, during the Tang, see Liu Pujiang, 'Nanbeichao de lishi yichan', pp. 127–51.

⁷⁷ On the term *zaiji* and its antecedent in the *Hanshu* 漢書 of Ban Gu 班固, see Ma Tiehao, '*Jinshu* "Zaiji" de zhengtong guan', p. 22.

⁷⁸ Of the so-called Sixteen Kingdoms of this period, thirteen of them were founded by ruling families of non-Chinese ancestry which belonged to either the Xiongnu 匈奴, Jie 羯, Di 氐, Qiang 羌, or Särbi 鮮卑 ethnic groups. Their illegitimacy in the eyes of the Tang historians is clear both from the preface to the Chronicles to be discussed below as well as the frequent use of the words *jian* 僭 and *wei* 偽 in reference to barbarian rulers, terms which indicate illegitimacy and usurpation. These thirteen states are all treated in the Chronicles along with one other state, the Northern Yan, whose founder was of Chinese lineage but which declared itself the successor state of the Särbi Later Yan; the other two Chinese kingdoms of the total sixteen are exempted from treatment in the Chronicles, and their accounts are included in the Biographies section of the *Jinshu*. The most detailed English-language narrative of the period is Corradini's 'The Barbarian States', pp. 163–232.

⁷⁹ 'The *lun* was a short evaluation or appraisal, normally appended to the *lieh chuan* [chapter] biographies and annalistic chronicles, which recorded the direct judgment of the historian on the subject of his account'. Honey, 'History and Historiography', p. 164. On earlier instances of such authorial comments in Chinese historiography, see Chin, 'Defamiliarizing the Foreigner', pp. 314–24.

The *Jinshu* Chronicles function as a work in their own right and comprise the last thirty *juan* or fascicles of the work; as the foreign regimes in the north were contemporaneous with the Eastern Jin dynasty in the south of China, the accounts of these states are collectively appended in a self-contained section. Accordingly, the Chronicles have their own preface, which, like the preface to the *Wars*, situates the subsequent historical accounts in terms of an ancient antagonism between the Chinese and the barbarians:

The ancient emperors gave birth to a strange race: Chunwei, the descendant of the Great Yu; is this not a different race of beings? They wear their hair loose and wear skins; they eat sheep meat and drink milk. Moreover, they shock and terrify the Central Regions; their place of origin is far away. Heaven has not regretted the disaster; their various tribes grow and multiply. Their customs are treacherous and wicked; their nature is agile and they gallop swiftly.⁸⁰

The preface introduces the accounts of barbarian states with Chunwei, the mythical ancestor of the nomadic Xiongnu 匈奴, a people who posed the gravest military threat to the Qin and Han dynasties and around whom the notion of a barbarian archetype antithetical to Chinese civilization crystallized as early as the early first century BCE.⁸¹ There are numerous references here to tropes associated with the northern barbarian, and these will appear in the following examples as well: perfidy, particulars of the nomad economy, and superior employment of cavalry in warfare.⁸² Right from the start, the barbarian threat is represented in terms of foreign practices and an ethnogenealogy that ultimately connects the barbarians to the Chinese but does so through the lineage of the Xiongnu, the greatest enemy to face the first dynasty of a unified Chinese empire in the late first millennium BCE.

As Procopius alludes back to Herodotus and Thucydides in his preface, the *Jinshu* too includes a reference back to the classical era in its preface.

⁸⁰ *Jinshu*, ed. by Zhonghua shuju, 101, p. 2643: 古者帝王乃生奇類，淳維，伯禹之苗裔，豈異類哉？反首衣皮，餐羶飲湏，而震驚中域，其來自遠。天未悔禍，種落彌繁。其風俗險詖，性靈馳突。 Cf. Honey's translation of the preface and *lun* colophons to fascicles 103 and 107 (to be considered below), 'History and Historiography', pp. 175–96.

⁸¹ See Di Cosmo for a discussion of the Xiongnu genealogy going back to Chunwei, *Ancient China and its Enemies*, pp. 297–304; for the notion of the Xiongnu as an antithesis to Chinese civilization, see *ibid.*, pp. 304–06. On the hardening of ideological boundaries in the early imperial period, see Pines, 'Beasts or Humans', pp. 90–91.

⁸² David Honey has provided a study of what he considers to be four primary topoi: the topos of common ancestry, of moral efficacy, of nomad greed, and of nomad disloyalty, 'History and Historiography', pp. 169–74.

A direct quotation from Confucius serves to frame the wars of barbarian invasion and conquest in the fourth to fifth centuries CE as a later manifestation of an ancient pan-Chinese struggle against barbarian encroachments onto the Central Plains:

The Yellow Emperor was troubled by their lawlessness and began to fight them; King Wu scattered them to the outermost wastes, where they lived as birds and beasts. Then in the exposed cold of the wilderness they watched the moon and gazed upon the wind, waiting for a chance to kick up dust, to seize a breach where they could exert their violence. The border fortresses could not relax their belts, and the common people lost their homes. Confucius said, 'Were it not for Guan Zhong, we would all be wearing our hair loose and fastening our clothes on the left'. This statement serves as a principle of instruction for our troops.⁸³

The Yellow Emperor, mythical progenitor of the Chinese people, is shown here in conflict with the barbarians who live like animals beyond the pale of civilization. The quotation from Confucius is in reference to a seventh-century BCE Chinese statesman, Guan Zhong, who urged his lord to come to the aid of another Chinese state being invaded by barbarians from the north, later understood as an early expression of inter-Chinese solidarity against foreign peoples. Had the Chinese not set aside their internecine rivalries in the face of the external threat, Confucius warns, the rules of propriety fundamental to Chinese civilization would have been confounded. While Procopius represents his narrative in terms of a conflict between Greeks-Romans and barbarians, perhaps implicitly from time immemorial but only explicitly back to the fifth-century BCE Persian wars, the preface to the *Jinshu* Chronicles goes much further. It presents an even more ancient opposition, beginning in mythical times, between the northern nomads who were expelled by the progenitors of the Chinese people to the wastes of the north and who have pillaged and plundered China ever since.

Like Procopius, the compilers of the *Jinshu* also had access to a body of ethnographic literature from earlier ages, and, as the introductory preface indicates, this material goes at least as far back as to the age of Confucius in the fifth century BCE. Yet in contrast to the barbarian character portraits cited from Procopius above, the authorial comments on barbarian political actors in the *Jinshu* are not merely influenced by classical conceptions of the barbarian Other — they are often dominated by them. As the following examples will show,

⁸³ *Jinshu*, ed. by Zhonghua shuju, 101, p. 2643: 軒帝患其干紀, 所以徂征; 武王竄以荒服, 同乎禽獸。而於露寒之野, 候月覘風, 覩隙揚埃, 乘間騁暴, 邊城不得緩帶, 百姓靡有室家。孔子曰: '微管仲, 吾其被髮左衽矣'。此言能教訓卒伍。

the assessments of barbarian rulers and regimes presented in the *Jinshu* exhibit a consistent hostility and xenophobia that is expressed in ethnological terms.

It is important to note, however, that in the course of the narrative accounts of the conquest states, praise is in fact offered for a number of barbarian rulers, and these examples of praise and political success serve to temper the overall impression of Chinese hostility towards the notion of barbarian kingship or emperorship.⁸⁴ However, as much of the *Jinshu* was stitched together from a large number of earlier works, some of which were produced under the patronage of the alien dynasties themselves,⁸⁵ it is in the *lun* colophons, which conclude accounts of the individual kingdoms, that we can clearly see the interpretation of the past as it was formulated in the early Tang. Yet even here, we may note that not all of the barbarian rulers are so strongly associated with their non-Chinese ethnicity in the *Jinshu*, and the ethnographic rhetoric tends to be more prominent in the accounts of the first conquest state of a given ethnic group.⁸⁶ However, for the sake of marking the contrast between the *Jinshu* and the *Wars*, I will concentrate on what is a common, albeit not ubiquitous, phenomenon in the former text but that is notably rare in the latter.

The first state to establish itself in the chaos caused by a civil war between members of the Western Jin royal family in the early fourth century was the Former Zhao dynasty, founded by members of the Xiongnu ethnic group.⁸⁷ While its first emperor Liu Yuan is praised at certain points for his adoption of Chinese cultural practices and his efforts at just rule, he is described as ‘the beginning of the catastrophe’ at the end of the preface to the Chronicles.⁸⁸ The *lun* colophon for the Former Zhao begins by contextualizing this Xiongnu dynasty in the tradition of the predatory northern barbarian:

⁸⁴ For example, at *Jinshu*, ed. by Zhonghua shuju, 121, p. 3040, the *Jinshu* describes how the Ba-Di ruler of the Chenghan state, Li Xiong, ‘had a nature that was magnanimous and great; he simplified penal statutes and confirmed the laws [...] therefore he brought stability to both barbarians and Chinese and caused the western land to thrive’: 雄性寬厚，簡刑約法 [...] 由是夷夏安之，威震西土. At *Jinshu*, ed. by Zhonghua shuju, 119, p. 3007, the Qiang ruler Yao Hong of the Later Qin state is described as ‘filial and friendly, magnanimous and peaceful’: 孝友寬和.

⁸⁵ See above, n. 12.

⁸⁶ Thus, for the Sārbi Former Yan dynasty, the *lun* assessments are charged with pejorative references to their ethnicity, whereas for their political descendants, the Later Yan and Southern Yan, there is little interest expressed in their ethnic origins.

⁸⁷ For a brief history of the Former Zhao, see Corradini, ‘The Barbarian States’, pp. 183–87. In Chinese, see Liu Xueyao, *Wubu shilun*, pp. 108–19.

⁸⁸ *Jinshu*, ed. by Zhonghua shuju, 101, p. 2644: 元海為之禍首云.

Who are those who are Rong and Di [i.e., barbarians]?⁸⁹ Those who have the faces of humans and hearts of beasts; seeing profit causes them to abandon loyalty to lord and family; the nearness of wealth causes them to forget benevolence and justice. To expel them to the farthest reaches is to fear their invasions from outside, but to settle them with lands inside the empire causes them to seek for a breach in our central kingdom.⁹⁰

In this way, the Tang representation of the first of the barbarian kingdoms reconstructs and reiterates an ancient antagonism that began in mythological times and had plagued China ever since. Also present here is the familiar trope of representing the barbarians as subhuman.⁹¹ By placing Former Zhao rulers in the context of this antagonism, it is emphasized that although some of them may have exhibited positive qualities, their place in the ethnographic landscape demands a condemnation for their presumption in assuming the reins of state. Moreover, when praise is given to barbarian kings such as the Former Zhao founder, Liu Yuan, what would otherwise be laudable traits lead to disaster:

As for Liu Yuan, he was heroic and must be ranked above the celestial; granting that he had rare talents, he cannot be placed below the mediocre or inferior. In spurring his horses, he soared aloft; he seized the opportunity and rebelled like a leopard; the five [Xiongnu] tribes acclaimed him aloud; once he had been raised up as a warlord [...] there was none to compete with him. [...] When the Chanyu has no thought for the north, when the Xianyun hold their sacrifices in the southern outskirts of the capital — however great are heaven and earth, this is not benevolence!⁹²

⁸⁹ Rong, Di, Yi, etc. are all generic names for non-Chinese whose use in combination signifies something close to 'barbarian' in Greek and Latin. See above, n. 8.

⁹⁰ *Jinshu*, ed. by Zhonghua shuju, 103, p. 2702: 彼戎狄者，人面獸心，見利則棄君親，臨財則忘仁義者也。投之遐遠，猶懼外侵，而處以封畿，窺我中鬻。

⁹¹ This particular trope has antecedents in pre-imperial texts such as the *Guoyu*, ed. by Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2, Zhou zhong, p. 62: 夫戎，狄 [...] 若禽獸焉 (As for the Rong and the Di [...] they are like birds and beasts). It should also be pointed out that ethnonyms for non-Chinese often have a pejorative sense built into the word itself by using characters with the 'dog' radical 犭, which signifies an animal, for example Xianyun 獫狁, Di 狄, etc. At least one modern scholar, while acknowledging the subhuman implications of this signifier, dismisses the phenomenon as simply an indicator of 'a considerable degree of cultural pride' that 'need not imply a general xenophobic attitude'. Poo, *Enemies of Civilization*, p. 46.

⁹² *Jinshu*, ed. by Zhonghua shuju, 103, p. 2702: 況元海人傑，必致青雲之上；許以殊才，不居庸劣之下。是以策馬鴻騫，乘機豹變，五部高嘯，一旦推雄 [...] 未有與之爭衡者矣。[...] 單于無北顧之懷，獫狁有南郊之祭，大哉天地，茲為不仁矣！

This passage praises the military abilities of Liu Yuan, but it is these very qualities that demonstrate the extent of his threat to China. It describes his elevation by his fellow tribesmen who urged him first to take the title of Chanyu 單于, the ancient Xiongnu title accorded to the ruler of their former steppe empire. Not satisfied with this, Liu Yuan went on to take the title of emperor, and it is this that the historians lament. For it is clear to the Tang historians that the Chanyu belongs in the north among the barbarians; for him to abandon the steppe in favour of the plains of China, holding his sacrifices in the southern suburbs of the city in Chinese imperial fashion — that is a disaster. In order to reinforce the inimical alterity of the Xiongnu, the *lun* also refers to Liu Yuan, or the Xiongnu collectively, as Xianyun 獫狁, another ancient ethnonym, obsolete for nearly a millennium, for the northern barbarians.⁹³ As Liu Yuan was one of the most Sinicized of the barbarian rulers, one notes the great contrast here with Procopius's account of Amalasuintha and Theoderic.

The image of the barbarians offering the proper ritual sacrifices is an example of a theme that appears repeatedly in the Chronicles: the notion that a barbarian acting in Chinese fashion *when in a position of independent political power within the empire* is an aberration to be deplored, not a sign of assimilation to be lauded. There is certainly precedent for the assimilated barbarian in Chinese historiography; the otherwise relatively xenophobic first-century CE historian Ban Gu extols the character of the surrendered Xiongnu chieftain Jin Midi, a close confidant of the emperor Han Wudi, as well as that of his descendants, who all held high imperial offices.⁹⁴ Yet a line is crossed when a barbarian is no longer in support of the throne but rather upon it himself. The above quotation also makes clear that the proper place for the Chanyu is not in the south but in the northern lands beyond the frontier, suggesting that different peoples have their proper place and customs, but these are boundaries not to be transgressed.

A further example of an inherent tension between the possibility of barbarian assimilation to Chinese customs and their independent exercise of power follows, when the *lun* goes on to describe the Former Zhao's efforts at proper administration:

⁹³ Sima Qian, writing in the early second century BCE, claims that in ancient times Xianyun 獫狁 was one of the names by which the Xiongnu were known (*Shiji*, ed. by Zhonghua shuju, 110, p. 2880), and this ethnonym appears, also with the variant form 獫 for the first character, in other first millennium BCE-texts such as the *Shijing*, where it refers to enemies of the Chinese (*Shijing*, ed. by Zhonghua shuju, 'Caiwei', p. 464; 'Liuyue', p. 499).

⁹⁴ Ban Gu, *Hanshu*, ed. by Zhonghua shuju, 68, pp. 2959–67.

If they had studied the ways of the Chinese and taken heed of the proper rites of governance while still keeping their old customs — that would have been a remarkable model. [...] In the end it was still an Yi-Di [i.e., barbarian] state that could not distinguish between the ranks of lord and minister. As for the fact that they were not far from the Confucian teachings, that they were selfless and upright, their condition was still what the ancient wise men called ‘those who appropriate benevolence and virtue and yet defraud them.’⁹⁵

This passage reaffirms the distinction between the barbarians and the Chinese, remarking that even if the Xiongnu had adopted Chinese ways, they were still barbarians unable to distinguish the hierarchical proprieties of Confucian orthodoxy; they are thus ultimately unable to rule according to the correct Chinese model. The contrast between this view and Procopius’s ranking of Theoderic alongside the greatest emperors of the Roman Empire is striking. Yet the Xiongnu of the former Zhao came close, and it is noteworthy that, having attained a state of uprightness and disinterestedness, it is these very achievements that are made to serve as part of their condemnation. Explicit in the case of Liu Yuan and the Former Zhao is the notion that the barrier between the Chinese and the barbarians is insurmountable and that attempts to cross this divide result in the perversion of virtue itself. While the adoption of *romanitas* by barbarian rulers such as Theoderic and Amalasuintha is a matter of praise for Procopius, the efforts of the Former Zhao to adopt Chinese ways are seen to deserve censure.

The Former Zhao state was succeeded by the Later Zhao, whose founder, Shi Le, was a member of the Jie 羯 ethnic group.⁹⁶ In some ways Shi Le is not an unsympathetic figure in the *Jinshu*,⁹⁷ and he at least rules without the outrageous abuses demonstrated by his adopted son Shi Hu. Irrespective of the particular flaws or achievements of the dynasty, the *lun* that concludes the account of the Later Zhao nevertheless makes his ethnicity a central concern:

Shi Le was a descendent from Qiangqu [a Chanyu of the Xiongnu]; he revealed his remarkably hideous race. [...] Although he is called wicked and cruel, he was also

⁹⁵ *Jinshu*, ed. by Zhonghua shuju, 103, p. 2702: 若乃習以華風，溫乎雅度，兼其舊俗，則罕規模。[...] 終為夷狄之邦，未辯君臣之位。至於不遠儒風，虛襟正直，則昔賢所謂并仁義而盜之者焉。

⁹⁶ On the Jie Later Zhao dynasty, see Corradini, ‘The Barbarian States’, pp. 187–90. In Chinese, see Liu Xueyao, *Wuhu shilun*, pp. 125–34.

⁹⁷ Though perhaps illiterate himself, he seems to have taken care in fostering education in his realm and enjoyed having works of history read to him. *Jinshu*, ed. by Zhonghua shuju, 105, p. 2741.

the most heroic man of his day. However, he conferred and appointed inappropriately; he took no thought for the succession; he himself perished, his descendants were destroyed.⁹⁸

Though noted for his heroism, Shi Le is stigmatized by his genealogy and ethnic background. According to the *lun*, he had attempted throughout his reign to rule according to the correct system of government, but he failed in his attempt to follow the Confucian principles that require a sovereign to be able to recognize and reward talent appropriately. As in the case of Liu Yuan, there is an association between his inability to rule according to the tenets of Chinese political orthodoxy and his barbarian origin that is expressed by the emphasis on his genealogy and its determinative force. The prevalence of this explanatory device challenges assessments by scholars that ‘the fundamental criterion of “Chinese-ness”, anciently and throughout history, has been cultural’.⁹⁹ Based on the examples discussed thus far, there is a very strong indication that, in some contexts, not only was ‘Chinese-ness’ inaccessible to the barbarians, but the very attempt at trying to attain it could be worthy of condemnation.

The two figures discussed above, Liu Yuan and Shi Le, belonged to the Xiongnu and Jie ethnic groups, both of which were originally nomadic peoples located to the north and who were considered by the historians of the *Jinshu* and other histories to be related to one another. Lest one think that the employment of othering ethnological discourse was limited to the treatment of these northern pastoralists, it will be instructive to consider the ways in which other ethnic groups are represented. In the case of the Murong clan of the Särbi, founders of the Former Yan dynasty and originally from Manchuria to China’s north-east, we see that they too appear within the same general barbarian category.¹⁰⁰ The *lun* appended to the account of the Former Yan begins saying,

The northern region spreads its energy, and the wicked enemies gather and proliferate; divided and alienated from all the Chinese, no civilized teachings reach them; they hold their distant lands with force. Greed and ferocity have become their custom; first they rebel and then submit in turn — this is their general nature.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ *Jinshu*, ed. by Zhonghua shuju, 107, p. 2798: 石勒出自羌渠，見奇醜類。[...] 雖曰凶殘，亦一時傑也。而託授非所，貽厥無謀，身隕嗣滅。

⁹⁹ Creel, *The Origins of Statecraft in China*, I, 197.

¹⁰⁰ On the Särbi Former Yan dynasty, see Corradini, ‘The Barbarian States’, pp. 194–98. In Chinese, see Liu Xueyao, *Wuhu shilun*, pp. 134–42.

¹⁰¹ *Jinshu*, ed. by Zhonghua shuju, 111, p. 2862: 北陰衍氣，醜虜彙生，隔閼諸華，聲教莫之漸，雄據殊壤，貪悍成其俗，先叛後服，蓋常性也。

As was the case with the assessments of the Former and Later Zhao dynasties, the *Jinshu* presents the Murong Sārbi as a people whose proper place is far away from China and whose natural state is one of savagery, violence, and perfidy.¹⁰² Yet despite such an introduction, the *lun* goes on to indicate that rulers of this people were not without their virtues either, and there are several places in the preceding narrative where they display qualities that accord with Chinese expectations of just governance.¹⁰³ But irrespective of the praise many of them earn, the *Jinshu*'s final assessment proceeds to explain their vices in ethnological terms. For example, the ruler Murong Jun has the makings of a great man, but he nevertheless proves to be a calamity for the north of China — and this calamity is conceived of in terms of the *yi lei* 異類, 'alien race', to which he belongs:

Murong Jun possessed the excellence of both letters and warfare, and added to these his decisiveness [...] But he carved up the common people and let loose the power of his whale-like engulfing appetite. [...] Is it not true that heaven must have hated the Eastern Jin and thus given rise to this alien race? If not, how could its ferocity be like this!¹⁰⁴

Despite his cultivation of Chinese literature and his natural abilities on the battlefield, Murong Jun is nevertheless represented in terms of his ethnic background, which is situated in a naturally antagonistic relationship with the Chinese Eastern Jin dynasty ruling the south of China. In this instance, there is even a cosmological dimension to this antagonism as the Sārbi are represented as a form of divine retribution against the Chinese.

Even the assessment of a people living to the south-west of China, the Di 氐 (or Ba-Di 巴氐) people who founded the Cheng Han state, begins by generalizing them according to an ancient conflict between the Chinese and

¹⁰² This is particularly interesting due to the fact that in the actual narrative section of the first fascicle dedicated to the Former Yan, the Sārbi people are said to descend from 有熊氏, an ambiguous term that would seem to link them with the mythical age of the Yellow Emperor and the lands over which he ruled (*Jinshu*, ed. by Zhonghua shuju, 108, p. 2803). They therefore have a lineage both older than, and distinct from, the Xiongnu and other barbarian peoples. Yet in the *lun* colophon, this distinction is not reiterated.

¹⁰³ For example, Murong Wei's respect for ritual propriety (*Jinshu*, ed. by Zhonghua shuju, 108, p. 2804) and his successful governance (p. 2806); Murong Huang's knowledge of the classics and astronomy (*Jinshu*, ed. by Zhonghua shuju, 109, p. 2815); Murong Han's great popularity among officials and soldiers alike and love of Confucianism (*Jinshu*, ed. by Zhonghua shuju, 109, pp. 2826–27); Murong Ke's virtuous character (*Jinshu*, ed. by Zhonghua shuju, 111, p. 2859).

¹⁰⁴ *Jinshu*, ed. by Zhonghua shuju, 111, p. 2863: 宣英文武兼優，加之以機斷 [...] 宰割黎元，縱其鯨吞之勢。[...] 非夫天厭素靈而啟異類，不然者，其鋒何以若斯！

foreign peoples, not just to the north but also to the west and south: ‘This is what it means to understand that the Rong-Di throw China into chaos; the strife has been deep since ancient times.’¹⁰⁵ The barbarians of the south-west are thus included in the same oppositional relationship with the Chinese that has already been observed in relation to peoples of the north and north-east. The barbarians of the south-west are also assigned other barbarian stereotypes: ‘they store up plunder and booty for a livelihood while studying rudeness and ferocity has become their custom.’¹⁰⁶ There seems to be little significance in geographical distinctions when it comes to the deplorable behaviour of barbarians and the threat that they collectively pose to China.

Yet despite the generalization of the same barbarian topoi to peoples of different regions, there does seem to be a particular virulence in the treatment of northern barbarians. This tendency is attributable both to their easier association with the Xiongnu, who threatened the Qin and Han dynasties in the late first millennium BCE, as well as to the fact that it was invaders from the north who first took control of the ancient capital cities of Chang’an and Luoyang in the early fourth century CE, cities whose politically symbolic significance was not less to the Chinese than that of Rome to the Romans. Regarding Helian Bobo, the Xiongnu founder of the Xia state, the *Jinshu* says,

Helian Bobo was of a wicked Xun¹⁰⁷ race; he entered the frontier regions and came upon the central territory, which was cracked and divided. Within the breaches of the frontier he indulged in wicked deeds; drawing his bowstrings amid the whistling of arrows, he seized control of the northern frontier.¹⁰⁸

Prominent features of this assessment of Helian Bobo are not so much his personal character as much as the qualities associated with his ethnic group. Here, as well as in the examples cited above, an equation of barbarian origins or identity with political illegitimacy, virtually absent in Procopius, is noticeably prev-

¹⁰⁵ *Jinshu*, ed. by Zhonghua shuju, 121, p. 3049: 是知戎狄亂華，釁深自古。On the Di people’s Cheng Han dynasty, see Corradini, ‘The Barbarian States’, pp. 180–83. In Chinese, see Liu Xueyao, *Wubu shilun*, pp. 193–96. The ethnonym Di 氐, though its Romanized form is identical, is unrelated to the ancient ethnonym, and later generic term for (northern) barbarian, Di 狄.

¹⁰⁶ *Jinshu*, ed. by Zhonghua shuju, 121, p. 3049: 資剽竊以全生，習獷悍而成俗。

¹⁰⁷ The word Xun 獯 is an archaic ethnonym for non-Chinese peoples of the north; its usage here is equivalent to the ethnonym Xianyun, elsewhere used to refer to the Xiongnu. See above, n. 93.

¹⁰⁸ *Jinshu*, ed. by Zhonghua shuju, 130, p. 3213: 赫連勃勃獯醜種類，入居邊宇，屬中壤分崩，緣間肆慝，控弦鳴鏑，據有朔方。On the Xiongnu Xia dynasty, see Corradini, ‘The Barbarian States’, pp. 226–27. In Chinese, see Liu Xueyao, *Wubu shilun*, pp. 119–25.

alent in the *Jinshu*'s assessment of a barbarian ruler. In contrast to the measured governance Procopius approves of in Theoderic, the *lun* goes on to relate that Helian Bobo 'usurped the magnificent title of the former kings and appropriated the system of rites and propriety of the Central Kingdom. He compelled and made use of those who were heroic and excellent and cast a covetous eye over the empire'.¹⁰⁹ By now a familiar trope, it appears that the greatest crime a barbarian could commit was to adopt the ways of the Chinese while attempting to rule legitimately over both barbarians and Chinese alike.

In this last case, as well as in the examples cited above, barbarian origins perform an explanatory function in the representation of barbarian rulers that is virtually absent in Procopius. Due to the constraints of space, it has not been possible to include examples from the *Jinshu* that do not deliver a historical verdict on a barbarian ruler or state in ethnological terms — notably in the *lun* assessment of Fu Jian, the ruler of the Di 氐 ethnic group's Former Qin state. However, even in the case of Fu Jian, who 'transformed the barbarians to follow the ways of the Chinese' and 'promoted Confucian orthodoxy of the ancient sages', there is a trace of ethnographic imagery when the *Jinshu* describes his force of non-Chinese troops with the pejorative and collective expression 'the strength of his dogs and sheep'.¹¹⁰ And even this otherwise successful state, which grew to such strength that it defeated all of its enemies in the north and even attempted to destroy the southern Eastern Jin dynasty in the south, is ultimately reduced to a pitiful laughing stock and an absurdity.¹¹¹ While the *Jinshu* does contain portraits of non-Chinese figures that are ethnologically neutral and do not emphasize their ethnic alterity, the purpose of this study is to demonstrate the contrasts in the deployment of ethnographic discourse in political narratives: while Procopius and the authors of the *Jinshu* both provide accounts of foreign conquest states, only the latter text exhibits consistent preoccupation with barbarian ethnicities and their political implications. This contrast suggests that political legitimacy was conceived of in ethnological terms at this period in ancient China in a way that it was not in sixth-century Constantinople.

¹⁰⁹ *Jinshu*, ed. by Zhonghua shuju, 130, p. 3213: 竊先王之徽號, 備中國之禮容, 驅駕英賢, 闢關天下.

¹¹⁰ *Jinshu*, ed. by Zhonghua shuju, 115, p. 2956: 變夷從夏 (He transformed the barbarians to follow the Chinese); 闢先聖之儒風 (He promoted the Confucian teachings of the ancient sages); 負其犬羊之力 (He relied on the strength of his dogs and sheep).

¹¹¹ *Jinshu*, ed. by Zhonghua shuju, 115, p. 2956: 取笑天下, 豈不哀哉! 豈不謬哉! (He became a laughing stock for the whole world. How pitiful! How absurd!).

Conclusions

The reconquests of Justinian were led from the stable Eastern Empire and the imperial capital of Constantinople, which had never fallen to a foreign power. In contrast, the reunification of China was not carried out by a revanchist native Chinese dynasty in the south, and indeed all attempts at retaking the lost northern heartlands of the empire ended in failure. Eventually, China was not reunified from the south but rather from the *north*, by the Sui dynasty, which had grown directly out of the Särbi-ruled Northern Zhou state. The imperial families of the short-lived Sui and its replacement, the Tang, were either of non-Chinese nomad ancestry or had at least intermarried extensively with these peoples and adopted cultural practices that had originated outside China.¹¹² What actually happened in China was as if a Roman aristocrat in the Gothic royal circle and with Gothic relatives had usurped the Gothic throne and, in cooperation with Goths and Italo-Romans, had somehow managed to conquer not only their neighbours in the West but also Constantinople and the East — all the while referring to themselves as the Romans and the restorers of the Roman world. That is, in effect, what happened in China in the late sixth century: the empire was ‘restored’ by the semi-barbarians of the north, not by the Chinese of the south.¹¹³

The circumstances surrounding the respective reunifications make the comparison of their ethnographic historiography all the more striking: under the Roman regime of Justinian, with its own arsenal of Graeco-Roman anti-barbarian rhetoric that had accumulated over the centuries, a popular and widely circulated historical account of the reconquest gives minimal attention to the barbarian origins of the Vandals and the Ostrogoths, the chief enemies of the

¹¹² See the reference for Chen above, n. 4. Also see Ma Tiehao, ‘*Jinshu* “Zaiji” de zhengtong guan’, pp. 26–27.

¹¹³ This is an awkward point for some modern historians who prefer to identify the Sui and Tang dynasties as the triumphant resurgence of Chinese identity once the yoke of centuries of barbarian rule had been thrown off. Somewhat dubious claims result: Li Yuan, the founder of the Tang, comes to be described as ‘genetically 75 percent Hsien-pei [Särbi], though legitimately Chinese’. Ho, ‘In Defense of Sinicization’, p. 131. What exactly is meant by ‘legitimately Chinese’ is not clear. An introductory essay to one of Liu Xueyao’s works cites the author’s argument that such a distinction between barbarian and Chinese as it appears throughout centuries of Chinese historiography is evidence of Han Chinese chauvinism and that this tradition of pejorative treatment of border peoples needs to be corrected. Yet it goes on to warn against the use of this discourse by foreign imperialists, who he claims seek to divide China by arguing that peoples from beyond the frontiers with cultures and languages described as foreign in the textual sources were not ‘Chinese’. Liu, *Wuhu shilun*, p. 4.

Romans.¹¹⁴ Moreover, barbarian origins are hardly ever correlated with the actions or personalities of the political leaders who had seized crucial, either economically or symbolically, pieces of Roman territory. Indeed, it has recently been argued that Procopius implies his approval of the Gothic regime, which was able to independently maintain *romanitas* in its own domain.¹¹⁵ This should give us pause when considering the suggestion that ‘the disappearance of the Roman state [in the West] removed the force which had sustained the old separate identities and drawn a firm line between Romans and outsiders.’¹¹⁶ How firm could this line have been if, from the point of view of the triumphant Roman Empire of Justinian, such a conceptual dichotomy turns out to be as porous as the frontier zones themselves?

The officials of the Tang Bureau of Historiography, on the other hand, despite the fact that they worked under a ruling dynasty with strong ties to the steppe and inner-Asian traditions, nevertheless *did* draw a stark line of distinction between a Chinese centre and a barbarian periphery — this after any such distinction in reality had broken down for centuries in the north of China.¹¹⁷ In each case we are dealing with an ideology of restoration of an imperial past, a programme that professed to reclaim and rejuvenate the empire in self-conscious reflection of ancient precedent. But only in China’s case did this involve establishing a stark demarcation between a barbarian Other and an imperial Self. The fact that in the Roman case such a demarcation did not appear, or did so only to a limited extent, raises the question of whether its presence in classical antiquity has been exaggerated to begin with.

It has been argued that under the Roman Empire there was ‘a close relationship between history and state, as at least some of the texts undoubtedly strengthened Roman identity and contributed to citizens’ identification with

¹¹⁴ Cesa adds that Procopius, while preserving a sense of Roman cultural superiority, nevertheless does not see the empire as a civilizing and morally superior force. ‘Etnografia e geografia’, pp. 214–15.

¹¹⁵ Pazdernik, ‘Reinventing Theoderic in Procopius’ *Gothic War*, p. 148.

¹¹⁶ Heather, ‘State, Lordship and Community’, p. 454.

¹¹⁷ My reading of the *Jinshu* is not in agreement with much of modern Chinese-language scholarship, which argues, on the contrary, along lines that ‘the Chronicles in their content exhibit an equally benevolent spirit towards both Chinese and barbarians’ (在‘载记’的内容上,也颇体现对胡汉一视同仁的精神) and that they exhibit the Tang emperor Taizong’s policy that ‘Chinese and barbarians are one family’ (华夷一家). Li Peidong, ‘*Jinshu yanjiu xia*’, pp. 87–88. For similar views, see Cao Meng, ‘*Jinshu yanjiu shulüe*’, p. 56, and Zhu Dawei, ‘*Jinshu de pingjia yu yanjiu*’, p. 46. An exception to this general assessment is Qu Lindong, ‘Lun Wei Jin Sui Tang jian de shaoshu minzu shixue’, pp. 67–78.

the *res publica*.¹¹⁸ What the empire, with its twin origin myths of Trojan immigration and Romulus's asylum, did not have was a homogenous ethnogenealogy that could be easily employed by historians in times when it was advantageous to make ethnic identity a crucial component of political legitimacy.¹¹⁹ The myths of Aeneas and Romulus are both characterized by heterogeneity, and in either case the founding of Rome is based upon a union and fusion of disparate peoples. This heterogeneity stands in marked contrast to the 'cosmic order of *tianxia* [which was] buttressed by the construct of the imagined continuity from the pristine age of the Yellow Emperor down to the present'.¹²⁰ Moreover, it helps us understand the lack of interest in ethnicity in the accounts of barbarian political figures discussed above: in the east-Roman eyes of Procopius, ethnic origins were not a significant criterion of political legitimacy.

In China, the foreign ethnic group that had dominated north China politically from the late fourth century to the late sixth, the Sārbi, would virtually vanish from the historical record after the reunification of China under the Sui and Tang dynasties. The fact that this people disappeared as a distinct ethnic group along with any acknowledged perpetuation of northern cultural influence within the Tang imperial family, whose very lineage was constructed to obscure its non-Chinese ancestry, indicates that in the discourse of political legitimacy in China there was simply no room for an ethnic identity other than that of Han, or Huaxia, for the monarch. A non-Chinese ethnic identity was to be suppressed in order to legitimize the claim to rule as the Son of Heaven.

The contrast that emerges from this study perhaps makes the fact that the populations of the Western provinces of the Roman Empire were eventually willing to subscribe to new identities and accept the legitimacy of barbarian kings a bit more explicable, at least in ideological terms. For the elite provincials of the Roman West were versed in the same historiographical and ethnological traditions that shaped the world views of Procopius; if barbarian ethnic identity was as delegitimizing a factor in late Roman notions of political legitimacy as many scholars have assumed, it should certainly be expected to appear in the writings of a popular Constantinopolitan historian who narrated the wars of Roman reconquest. Given the near absence of ethnological rhetoric in Procopius's treatment of Vandal and Gothic kings, it is hypothesized here that provincials ruled over by those very kings were able to look past the fact that

¹¹⁸ Mittag and Mutschler, 'Epilogue', pp. 432–33.

¹¹⁹ On some of the tensions present within Roman origin myth, see Dench, *Romulus' Asylum*, pp. 11–25.

¹²⁰ Mittag and Mutschler, 'Epilogue', p. 432.

their overlords traced their lineage back to peoples who had come from either north of the Danube or east of the Rhine. An ethnic component to political legitimacy may have been simply too insignificant or easy to be overlooked, and the right to rule over Romans could be asserted without a disavowal of barbarian origins and a rationalized claim to genealogical continuity with ‘Romans’ of old. In China, where a number of barbarian ethnonyms vanished after the Sui-Tang reunification and faith in imperial continuity was re-established, an official text such as the *Jinshu* takes pains to delegitimize barbarian political alternatives on ethnological grounds. As the minimal influence of ethnological thinking on the political discourse in the *Wars* of Procopius suggests — a text self-consciously rooted in the classical tradition of earlier centuries — modern assumptions that both Greeks and Romans perceived the world in strictly dichotomous terms, between themselves on the one hand and the barbarians on the other, are perhaps due for further reconsideration.

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MYTHOLOGY AND GENEALOGY IN THE CANONICAL SOURCES OF JAPANESE HISTORY

Bernhard Scheid

Scholars of this later age should not trust legends that do not appear in such works as *Nihongi*, *Kuji hongii*, and *Kogo shūi*. Even in these works there are stories that cannot be substantiated, so how much more doubtful is the authenticity of the tales found in other writings.¹

The above quote from a classic of Japanese medieval literature (fourteenth century) is one of the earliest critical self-reflections in Japanese historiography and points to the existence of what we may call a canon of historical texts. Today this canon is still in existence, albeit in a slightly different composition: while the *Nihongi* ('Chronicle of Japan', 720) — which recent scholars prefer to call *Nihon shoki* — stood the test of time, the *Kuji hongii* ('True Account of Ancient Matters', also known as *Sendai kuji hongii* or *Kujiki*) has been identified in the meantime as apocryphal. In its stead, the *Kojiki* ('Chronicle of Ancient Matters', 712) is now commonly regarded as being the oldest extant chronicle. The third text mentioned in the above quote, the *Kōgo shūi* ('Selection of Ancient Words') of the early ninth century, is still acknowledged as a viable source but it never superseded the other texts since it is much shorter, dated later, and was clearly written from an individual priest's vantage point, as I will explain in more detail below. All these texts, including

¹ Kitabatake Chikafusa, *Jinnō shōtōki* (c. 1340), trans. by Varley, p. 50.

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the apocryphal *Kuji hongī*, hold in common that they tell the same basic story, namely the ethnogonic history of Japan — equivalent to the history of the world and in fact the universe — from its inception until the consolidation of imperial rule shortly before the time of their compilation. This narrative can be regarded as a final seal on the political transformation that turned Japan from a loose tribal confederation into a central state headed by a hereditary ruling dynasty.

My essay provides an overview on the reception of these classical texts, including the increasing focus on their mythological episodes that became the object of a theological and eventually a nationalist discourse in later centuries. In this process, the original significance of genealogies was de-emphasized. As I try to show, however, the creation of a mytho-genealogical chart for ruling dynasty and the nobility of the ancient Japanese court can be seen as the primary original function of the historical classics.

Mythology and Historiography

The contours of the ancient Japanese central state as it developed in the seventh and eighth centuries largely followed the model of contemporary Tang China (618–907). The transmission of this model was only possible due to the massive import of Chinese culture via the Korean Peninsula, which had already a long tradition by that time. Traders and immigrants from the continent introduced new technologies not only including crafts and arts but also writing and later even the legal code of the Tang. While the process of state formation gradually turned Japan into a member of Chinese civilization, Japanese historiography took on a very special role in this context, since it focused on the non-Chinese origins of Japanese rulership. All the canonical sources cited put an emphasis on the native gods (*kami*), which figure as the creators of the world, the ancestors of the Japanese people, and the protectors of Japan. Specifically, they tell us about a celestial realm from where ancient rulers once descended. As comparative mythology has pointed out, this mytheme is typical for a range of nomadic peoples in the north of China including prehistorical Koreans.² It can also be found in South Asia but fails to appear in dynastic histories of China. In other words, Japanese historiography linked the foundation of the state to a pantheon that hardly transcended the Japanese archipelago. In doing so, the mythological parts of this narrative ignored not only the historical existence of China but also its historiographi-

² Ōbayashi, 'Japanese Myths of Descent from Heaven', p. 172.

cal tradition, according to which legitimate rule was based, in the last instance, on the legacy of primordial sages.

On the other hand, Japanese historiography followed Chinese models from early on in terms of methodology and representation. Like in China, the state began to employ chroniclers who routinely took note of important events, decisions, and ceremonies at court. Their bureaucratic annalist style was also applied to the past. The *Nihon shoki* in particular tends to describe events even from before the advent of writing as if record taking in a Chinese manner had existed during all times of Japanese history. Reigns served as temporal markers of history and painstaking efforts were taken to create a continuous line of rulers and to date the beginning and the end of each reign according to an adopted Chinese calendar. In this way, a genealogical chart of the dynasty took shape, which was fleshed out with various mythological accounts. The structure of this imperial mytho-genealogy was taken over by later works and has remained the backbone of Japanese historiography up to this day,³ even if modern historians no longer believe in prehistorical legends such as the purported foundation of the state in 660 BCE.

As indicated in the quote at the beginning of this essay, the *Nihon shoki* kept a preeminent place during most phases of Japanese premodern history. Initially this was due to its status as the first of six official, i.e. state-sponsored, imperial chronicles (*rikkokushi*).⁴ The subsequent five imperial annals, however, lost relevance in the same way as the imperial institution lost its erstwhile importance. In the medieval period (twelfth–sixteenth centuries), the *Nihon shoki* and the above-mentioned *Kuji hongji* were read by a Buddhist intelligentsia from a religious angle in order to reveal a specific Japanese ‘Way’ that comprised native deities (*kami*) and buddhas.⁵ This shift towards theological interpretations naturally increased the importance of the mythological chapters at the beginning of the text at the cost of later, more ‘historiographical’ accounts. The mythological episodes were sometimes even treated as a work of their own, the *Jindaiki* or ‘Chronicle of the Age of the Gods.’ Thus, the historical classics turned into quasi-religious sources. This tendency was eventually taken over and reinforced

³ For a concise overview of this development, see Goch, *Abriß*.

⁴ The six national chronicles were compiled on imperial command from 720 to 901, until the tradition deteriorated in the tenth century. In contrast to the *Kojiki*, the presentation of *Nihon shoki* to the court in 720 is documented in the *Shoku Nihongi*, the second official chronicle. Lectures at court on the *Nihon shoki* are documented between 812 and 965 (Kōnoshi, *Kojiki to Nihon shoki*, pp. 173–76).

⁵ On medieval interpretations of Japanese mythology see Scheid, ‘Two Modes of Secrecy’.

by early Shinto theologians such as Yoshida Kanetomo (1435–1511), who regarded *Nihon shoki*, *Kuji hongei*, and *Kojiki* as the three classics of Shinto.⁶

In the early modern (or Edo) period (1600–1867), a new historical criticism trained by a positivist Confucian way of thinking led to the falsification of the *Kuji hongei*'s claim that it was commissioned by the imperial regent and cultural hero Shōtoku Taishi (574–622).⁷ The pre-eminence of the *Nihon shoki*, on the other hand, was questioned, when the *Kojiki*, which had become almost incomprehensible due to its peculiar style of writing (see below), was deciphered by the famous Edo-period philologist Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801). Norinaga devoted a lifetime to a philological reconstruction of this text, which he identified as the most faithful representation of the ancient past due to the authenticity of its language. While the *Kojiki* preserved the 'soul' of the ancient words (*kotodama*), the *Nihon shoki* was written in Chinese and adopted a 'Chinese heart', i.e. an ideology imported from abroad.⁸ In the emerging national consciousness of nineteenth-century Japan, generations of scholars followed Norinaga's juxtaposition of a 'Chinese' *Nihon shoki* and a 'Japanese' *Kojiki*.

In the late nineteenth century, the pioneers of Western Japanese Studies brought a new vantage point into the discussion by regarding the Japanese narrative of the 'Age of the Gods' as a particularly well-preserved example of global mythology.⁹ Naturally, they questioned the historical veracity of both the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki* but they followed Norinaga's evaluation of the faithfulness of the *Kojiki* to prehistorical oral traditions, which some tried to trace back to a common heritage of mankind.

⁶ Scheid, *Der Eine und Einzige Weg*, p. 212.

⁷ First critical voices appeared already in the seventeenth century but it was due to the scholars of National Learning (*kokugaku*) Tada Yoshitoshi (1698–1750) and Ise Sadatake (1717–84) that the work lost its status as a canonical classic. Recently, John Bentley (*The Authenticity of 'Sendai Kuji Hongei'*) has taken up the mission to re-evaluate its historical value.

⁸ See volume one of Norinaga's *opus magnus*, the *Kojiki-den*, trans. by Wehmeyer.

⁹ English scholars took the lead in translating the Japanese classics into Western languages as part of a first systematic endeavour to come to terms with Japanese history and religion. Owing to its length and complex structure, the *Nihon shoki* was only translated once in its entire length, by G. W. Aston (1841–1911) in 1896. The *Kojiki*, on the other hand, was first translated by Basil Hall Chamberlain (1850–1935) in 1883, and retranslated in 1968 (Donald Phillippi) and 2014 (Gustav Heldt). The founder of German Japanese Studies Karl Florenz (1865–1939) published a German translation of the mythological chapters of *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki*, and other fragments as *Japanische Mythologie* in 1901 and a revised form (including the first translation of *Kogo shūi* in a Western language) as *Quellen der Shinto-Religion* in 1919. A complete version of the *Kojiki* in German had to wait until Klaus Antoni's translation of 2012.

One reason why the *Nihon shoki* does not appear fully convincing, especially to foreign readers, can be found in the fact that it does not tell just one simple story. This is true in particular for the initial mythological chapters. They consist of eleven episodes altogether, each of which is rendered in up to eleven variants until the narrative proceeds to the next episode.¹⁰ All variants return to the same narrative outline that we also find in the *Kojiki*, but many details differ from variant to variant, including the names of important protagonists, their family relations, and the locations of their deeds. Some important mythical episodes from the *Kojiki*, such as the death of the divine mother Izanami, are even missing altogether in the ‘main variant’ of the *Nihon shoki* but are recounted in a couple of its ‘alternative variants’. Therefore, mythology studies, which took shape at the beginning of the twentieth century in the mutual exchange of Japanese and Western scholars, tended to synthesize both *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* into one ‘critical edition’ of the purported original myth. From this perspective, the *Kojiki* indeed provides the most detailed version of the mythological narrative, while the main variant of *Nihon shoki* is actually shorter. Scholars such as the *grande dame* of Japanese mythology studies Nelly Naumann (1922–2000) tended to take the *Kojiki* as the base text for the interpretation of myths but referred to *Nihon shoki* variants whenever it seemed feasible.

Japanese scholars of history, on the other hand, gradually acknowledged the source criticism of their Western colleagues. A fundamental positivist critique of the historical accuracy of *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* was first formulated by Tsuda Sōkichi (1873–1961) in the early twentieth century but was suppressed by nationalist ideologies. After World War II, however, Tsuda’s criticism gained general acceptance in Japan.¹¹ Most historians now agree that the succession of Japanese rulers in one single line since prehistoric times cannot be substantiated by circumstantial evidence such as Chinese sources or archaeological findings, for example.¹²

The postmodern turn in the later twentieth century has led to a further deconstruction of the proclaimed antiquity and authenticity of both *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. However, they were rediscovered as witnesses of the way of thinking in their own time, the late seventh to early eighth centuries. From such a perspective, the so-called work analysis (*sakubinron*), a new approach from scholars of literature spearheaded by Kōnoshi Takamitsu, has pointed out fundamental

¹⁰ For a useful representation of these variants see Witkamp, *Arbeit am Text*, pp. 148–49.

¹¹ Sakamoto, *Six National Histories*, pp. 88–89.

¹² For a standard work on the creation of a central dynasty in prehistorical Japan, see Piggott, *The Emergence*.

differences between the individual classic texts, treating them as distinct works of literature rather than versions of the same original narrative.¹³ Influenced by Kōnoshi, American historian David Lurie has even put the purported linguistic authenticity of the *Kojiki* into perspective.¹⁴ In short, traditional scholarship was primarily interested in the veracity of the old chronicles, while scholarly focus has now shifted towards the history of history making itself.

My own interest in Japanese mythology is motivated by a general interest in the history of Shinto. From this perspective, I am critical of traditional claims that the classical chronicles in general and the *Kojiki* in particular preserved a transhistorical essence of Japanese religious thinking (or Shinto), as Motoori Norinaga found it in *kotodama*. As an outsider to the field of ancient Japanese literature, on the other hand, I see a danger that the focus on narratological differences between the classics, which is characteristic for the *sakuhin* approach, obscures certain common aims or ideologies that informed the creation of these texts.

It has been frequently argued that the *Nihon shoki* superseded the *Kojiki* in classical times (the Nara and Heian periods, eighth–twelfth centuries) because it accorded more closely to the model of ‘national histories’ (*guoshi* 國史) established in Tang China, as described by Edward Wang in this volume. This implies that in contrast to their ostentatious focus on the native pantheon, classical historians, or at least the compilers of the *Nihon shoki*, had a Chinese readership in mind and primarily wrote in the interest of foreign relations.¹⁵ While this may indeed be the case in comparison with the *Kojiki*, I would like to point out in the following that both texts were also written for internal purposes unrelated to China, namely to establish and sanctify a hierarchy at court based on mythical precedence. In the following, I illustrate this process by taking a closer look at the preface of the *Kojiki*, which preserved the most detailed (albeit not univocally verified) account of how a classical chronicle came into being. Before doing so, however, a note on genealogies in early Japan as such is necessary.

¹³ For a recent evaluation of the *sakuhinron* approach, see Wittkamp, *Arbeit am Text*. Lurie’s *Realms of Literacy* or Steineck’s *Kritik*, II also bears witness to the impact of *sakuhinron* on Western Japanese Studies.

¹⁴ Lurie, *Realms of Literacy*.

¹⁵ This observation can be traced back to Motoori Norinaga who based his criticism of the *Nihon shoki* precisely on its Chinese bias.

Genealogy

It can be argued that Japanese writing started with genealogies. At least, one of the earliest known written artefacts today, the Inariyama Sword of 471, contains a genealogy of a general or local lord, Wowake omi, consisting of seven generations of his paternal forefathers:

Recorded during the 7th month of the 48th year [of the sexagenary cycle] (471). Wowake omi's ancestor's name was Opopiko; his son's name was Takari sukune; his son's name was Teyokariwake; his son's name was Taka[pa]siwake; his son's name was Tasakiwake; his son's name was Pandepi; his son's name was Kasa[pa]yo; his son's name was Wowake omi. Generation after generation, as chief sword-bearer, our service has continued to the present. When Great King Wakatakiru's court was at the palace of Siki, I helped him rule all under heaven. Having this multiply refined sharp sword made, I record the origins of my service.¹⁶

The inscription insinuates a long tradition of service for a 'great king' by generations of 'sword-bearers', who followed each other according to a perfect patrilineal pattern. It would be a mistake, however, to take this as evidence that patrilineality was the standard in prehistorical Japan or that genealogical pedigree was valued at all times. To the contrary, Chinese records as well as indirect evidence confirm the fact that kinship patterns varied and were probably in a flux at the dawn of documented history, due to different waves of immigration at that time. Therefore, it is likely that the symbolic importance of agnatic succession was taken over together with writing from the continent and that writing supported an agnatic ideal. As David Lurie argued, the Japanese lord who commissioned the Inariyama sword could not actually read the text written on it. The writer was in all probability an immigrant expert who wrote on the sword what contemporary Chinese or more likely Koreans would have written on such an occasion.¹⁷ Thus, the continental medium of writing arrived in Japan in a package with continental practices such as patrilineal succession. From this point of view, the Inariyama Sword may be regarded as an example of Marshall McLuhan's famous phrase 'the media is the message'.¹⁸ Considering the indirect evidence of early female rulers and succession according to matrilineal patterns, it is very probable that ideologies of rulership shifted towards agnatic primogeniture as writing gradually became an instrument of cultural memory.

¹⁶ The translation follows Lurie, *Realms of Literacy*, p. 94. For the first translation and transliteration into English, see Murayama and Miller, 'The Inariyama Tumulus Sword', pp. 421–22.

¹⁷ Lurie, *Realms of Literacy*, pp. 94–99.

¹⁸ McLuhan, *Understanding Media*.

The mentioned dynastic chronicles, which are at the same time the oldest extant pieces of Japanese literature, date from more than two hundred years later and derive from a society that had undergone dramatic changes. The country was now governed by a nobility who wrote and read Chinese (even if they most probably did not converse in Chinese in their daily lives). A ruling family — the Tenno dynasty, which is still extant today — had established itself and followed an agnatic principle. Within this dynasty, however, succession was heavily contested. Polygyny led to rival candidates for succession; fratricide among the imperial family occurred every other generation; and rulers were often followed by their widows in order to secure the eventual succession of their male descendants. Maternal relatives of the ruler held the most important political functions and competed for influence on succession issues in the interest of their own lineages.¹⁹

The chronicles report these circumstances in surprising detail, yet they tend to idealize the past. As mentioned above, they all start with a long section on the ‘divine age’ tracing the Tennō dynasty back to the gods who created heaven and earth. Within this mytho-genealogy, the ideal of patrilineal succession becomes visible and is at the same time disturbed by the fact that one of the most important imperial ancestors is the female sun goddess Amaterasu. We should also note that the sovereigns who commissioned the extant chronicles were female: according to its preface, the *Kojiki* was compiled at the special request of Genmei Tennō (660–721; r. 707–15), the mother of Emperor Monmu (681–707; r. 697–707), who took over imperial rule after her son had died at an early age. She is said to have secured the throne until her grandson, the later Shōmu Tennō (701–56; r. 724–49) reached maturity. In between, however, was the rule of Genshō Tennō (680–748, r. 715–24), the daughter of Genmei, who commissioned the *Nihon shoki*. The importance of a female ancestor in the mythology — Amaterasu — is sometimes related to the fact that the country was governed by female rulers when its mythology was codified in written form. Other explanations attribute both female ancestors and female rulers to matrilineal undercurrents in the society of ancient Japan that had not yet been fully replaced by the Chinese ideal of patrilineal geniture as became characteristic for later periods of Japanese history.²⁰

¹⁹ For a detailed analysis of the political ideologies and realities of this time, see Ooms, *Imperial Politics*.

²⁰ First explanations of this kind date back to Oka Masao (1898–1982), the founder of Japanese Studies in Vienna (Scheid, ‘Oka Masao’).

Correcting Errors

The *Kojiki* contains a preface by its compiler, Ō no Yasumaro (d. 723),²¹ which sums up its contents and the purpose of its compilation. Notably, the preface provides a comparatively detailed account of the context in which it was written and even mentions the techniques by which oral history was transcribed into written, i.e. Chinese, form. This is exceptional and has been one of the reasons why the *Kojiki* attracted such heightened interest in later centuries. Some scholars, however, have pointed out that the oldest copy of the text is from the thirteenth century and that other chronicles lack a preface, which raises doubts on the historicity of both the preface and the main text of the *Kojiki*. Even if the majority of scholars including myself nevertheless consider the text to be authentic,²² the preface's claim of rendering prehistorical traditions in unchanged form is generally no longer taken at face value. Rather, the preface is considered important because it refers to the principles and considerations that guided the composition of the text. Since these purposes are plausible in my view, the question of whether the preface is authentic or whether it was added some decades after the main text is not of quintessential importance for my argument.

In the preface, compiler Yasumaro claims that his work can be traced back to an order by an emperor now called Tenmu (631–86; r. 673–86), four decades before Yasumaro eventually presented the text to the court. Tenmu's command is rendered as follows:

We hear that the royal annals and the words of former ages possessed by the noble houses deviate from what is true, and that many falsehoods have been added to them. If these faults are not corrected now, the original import will be lost before many years have passed. This is no less than the fabric of the realm and the foundation of royal influence. Therefore, it is our wish that the royal annals be edited and recorded and the ancient words of former ages be sought out and examined, so that we may erase falsehood and establish truth, passing this down to later generations.²³

While the actual words of this command remain questionable,²⁴ the fact that Emperor Tenmu initiated the compilation of a chronicle is also attested in the

²¹ Scholars who regarded the preface as a later fabrication put the personality of its author equally into doubt until his funeral tablet was excavated 1979, containing his name, rank, and date of death, 723.

²² On the discussion of the *Kojiki*'s authenticity, see e.g. Wittkamp, *Arbeit am Text*, pp. 132–39.

²³ *Kojiki*, trans. by Heldt, Preface, p. 3.

²⁴ According to Brownlee (*Political Thought*, p. 10), parts of this command are actually

Nihon shoki.²⁵ However, the nature of the already existing sources full of ‘falsehoods’ remains open to speculation. Both *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* hint at the existence of ‘royal annals’ (*teiki*), as well as other ‘words about former ages’ compiled by different aristocratic lineages. It seems quite plausible, therefore, that *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* are actually anthologies compiled from previous records (written or oral), which are no longer extant. A particular point of interest in the citation above, however, is the imperial critique that these previous narratives all contained errors. The true facts should therefore be fixed in written form. This order becomes extremely significant when we read it together with the *Nihon shoki* account of the beginning of Tenmu’s reign, which tells us how he fought and eventually killed the son of his brother in order to grasp rulership (Jinshin War, 672). This led to a major reconfiguration of offices at court and established what Herman Ooms has called the ‘Tenmu dynasty’.²⁶ In fact, modern historiography regards Tenmu as the first Japanese ruler who used the title of *tennō*, ‘heavenly sovereign’, and introduced *nihon*, ‘[land of] sun’s origin’, as the name of his realm.²⁷ More generally speaking, Tenmu put all his efforts into what Raji Steineck calls the ‘legal administration of time and space’,²⁸ which eventually led to a first consistent calendar on the basis of Chinese models (701), a permanent capital (Nara, 710), and a dynastic history (712/20). Against the background of his successful coup d’état, it is easy to surmise that Tenmu actually ordered his scribes to rewrite history in a way that suited his own purposes. Yet, the result of Tenmu’s command was not that his own acts of violence were erased from history, as the *Nihon shoki* account of his reign testifies. What other ‘errors’ might have been ‘corrected’ then?

In order to answer this question, the *Kogo shūi* (c. 807), mentioned already in the medieval catalogue of classics, provides a possible clue. This text is actually a synopsis of the lengthy mythological narratives in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* written about a hundred years later by Inbe no Hironari (dates unknown), the head of a hereditary priestly lineage at court. The author complains about the fact that the role of his ancestor was denigrated in the official mythology, which resulted in a

taken from a Tang document, which cites an order of the Chinese emperor Taizong (599–649).

²⁵ *Nihon shoki*, Tenmu 10(681)/3/16 (trans. by Aston, pt 2, p. 350).

²⁶ Ooms, *Imperial Politics*.

²⁷ The use of celestial symbolism in imperial representation followed the example of China, where the sovereign was referred to as ‘son of heaven’. It also becomes apparent in Tenmu’s personal name, lit. ‘heavenly warrior’. This appellation, however, was bestowed on him posthumously, probably alluding to his predilection for ‘heaven’.

²⁸ Steineck, *Kritik*, II, 91.

down-ranking of his own family. The reason to compile the *Kogo shūi* was therefore again to provide a ‘correct’ version of imperial history. Hironari’s critique is epitomized by the following quote: ‘The bestowal of rank [under Emperor Tenmu] was based on meritorious service connected with the emperor’s battle for the throne, *and not with service since the heavenly grandson descended to Japan*.’²⁹ This quote relates to a key event in the mythology, the ‘descent of the grandson of Amaterasu’, which is the story of an imperial ancestor (Ninigi), who was sent from heaven to earth (Japan) in order to put an end to ‘disorder’ among the so-called ‘earthly deities’ (*kuni tsu kami*), the aboriginal population on earth. The imperial ancestor came in the company of an entourage of ‘heavenly deities’ (*ama tsu kami*), the ancestors of the leading families at court. The Inbe ancestor Ame no Futodama was one of them and yet this pedigree was not adequately represented in the structure of court offices, as Hironari maintains. In this way, the *Kogo shūi* provides an important hint of how mythology was understood and used at the time of its compilation: it not only served as a token to verify imperial descent from the gods but also pertained to the aristocratic hierarchy at court. Ideally, the ranks of aristocratic families corresponded to the roles of their ancestors in the origin legends of imperial rule.

Hironari’s synopsis of the official chronicles differs only in seemingly minor details from *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. Naturally, all ‘corrections’ relate to the Inbe and their ancestor deities. The quote above explains these differences by the fact that the official chronicles were Tenmu-biased favouring those families that supported his *coup d’état*. These were in particular the Nakatomi, another priestly lineage who monopolized important tasks that should actually have been carried out by the Inbe, according to the *Kogo shūi*. We have no way to tell, whether Hironari’s version was in fact more authentic than the official history, but Hironari’s ‘corrections’ allow us to surmise that the corrections ordered by Tenmu served a similar purpose as Hironari’s on a larger scale, namely to revise the respective stories of individual ancestor deities in order to raise the status of those families that supported his rule.

Faithful Transcription

Let me go back to the *Kojiki*’s preface and draw attention to the problems of scripturalization, as they are addressed here. According to the compiler, the

²⁹ Inbe no Hironari, *Kogo shūi*, cited from Bentley, *Historiographical Trends*, p. 28, emphasis mine.

present sovereign, Empress Genmei, took over the history project initiated by Tenmu and commanded that he, Yasumaro, should write down what oral storytellers had memorized. In other words, it seems that Tenmu ordered the chronicles to be transmitted orally, while Genmei eventually ordered Yasumaro to transcribe the oral canon. In this context, Yasumaro mentions the difficulties in rendering the spoken vernacular language in Chinese writing:

in high antiquity, both words and their meanings were simple, making it difficult to write them out in sentences and form them into phrases. If [my] account were to use characters only for their meaning, then the words would not correspond exactly with what was intended [by the original storytellers]. But if the record were to rely on characters only for their sound, then it would grow long and hard to get through.³⁰

Here, Yasumaro discusses two methods to relate Japanese in writing, which are actually both attested in ancient texts: first a logographic usage of Chinese characters, which implies a translation of Japanese words into Chinese characters, and second a phonographic transcription, which implies a syllable by syllable transcription using Chinese characters for their sound value only. Yasumaro eventually applied a mixed system combining phonetic and logographic script, which resulted in a hybrid mixture of Chinese and Japanese. Notwithstanding later interpretations, which praise the authentic language of the *Kojiki*, in many cases even Chinese grammar and a Chinese word order were applied in its main text. Thus, characters had to be mentally rearranged when the text was recited in a Japanese idiom. This style of writing, the so-called *kundoku* ('reading [Chinese text] as Japanese'), was the earliest standard to render Japanese with Chinese characters and can be found also in the *Nihon shoki*. Here, however, it was applied consistently which implies that the *Nihon shoki* can be read in both languages, Chinese and Japanese. The *Kojiki*, on the other hand, retains many passages (especially poems) in 'pure Japanese' using phonographic transcription, which of course make no sense when read as a Chinese text. As Lurie has shown, this phonographic style was certainly not Yasumaro's personal invention but can be found in fragmentary written artefacts (including the Inariyama Sword) much earlier. In the *Kojiki*, however, it was applied in a surprisingly 'academic' form, including inline comments (in Chinese) such as 'read the last seven characters according to the sound'.

Since these annotations are not applied consistently, however, the hybrid style of the *Kojiki* leaves many points undecided and turns the act of 'reading'

³⁰ *Kojiki*, trans. by Heldt, Preface, p. 4.

into an act of ‘interpreting’ the text. This is one of the reasons why the *Kojiki* remains an unsolved riddle to this very day. The difficulties deciding which Chinese characters were taken for which purpose and what order of words was actually intended, necessitated the already mentioned philological deciphering of Motoori Norinaga, which initiated a new genre of philological studies, sometimes referred to as ‘National Studies’ (*kokugaku*). Modern scholarship on the *Kojiki* is still enormously indebted to this tradition. Yet, this tradition is in itself based on the conviction that Yasumaro’s claim to faithfully record oral literature is true. As William Bodiford puts it, Norinaga’s interpretation forces the reader ‘to imagine another text, an original verbal recitation, as existing behind the written text.’³¹ This claim has only recently become the subject of scholarly scrutiny.³² David Lurie speaks of a ‘grapholect’ of the *Kojiki*, ‘which is of course not unrelated to speech before the advent of writing, but provides no direct access to that “original” language.’³³ Rather, it created a new method of expression by combing the authority of continental scripture with the antiquity and authenticity of oral recitation. From this angle, the mention of professional storytellers and the efforts taken to transmit their narrative as correctly as possible obscure any editorial manipulation in the process of scriptualization. While the preface as such is full of sophisticated allusions to Chinese culture, it reduces the work of the scribe to a mechanical reproduction of vernacular speech.

Mytho-Generological Resiliency

Summing up, the preface of the *Kojiki* reveals two points of concern in the creation of a written historical canon: the preservation of ‘correct’ history and the preservation of ‘correct’ vernacular language. The latter concern points at the commitment to present the text as the immediate and unfiltered reproduction of primordial traditions even if the medium of writing turned the text into something Chinese. The ‘correction of history’, on the other hand, equally roots the dynastic structure of around 700 in the mythological past. Again, continental standards such as patrilineality or calendar calculations, which were intrinsically related to writing, lend authority to the supposedly non-Chinese dynastic narrative. Both concerns reveal a common goal of all the chronicles discussed here: their origin stories served as a kind of constitution of the entire court and

³¹ Bodiford, ‘Myth and Counter Myth’, p. 294.

³² Kōnoshi, *Kanji tekisuto to shite no Kojiki*; Antoni, ‘Creating a Sacred Narrative’.

³³ Lurie, *Realms of Literacy*, p. 232.

chronicles had to verify a genealogical link between the protagonists in these origin legends and the present social order. History, in other words, was the creation of an enormous genealogical chart that we indeed find represented in both, *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. Put differently, the genealogical structure of history created temporal relations and genetic relations at the same time, which objectified social stratification.³⁴

As regards their differences, Japanese philology since Motoori Norinaga has put much emphasis on the ‘Chinese’ language of the *Nihon shoki* as opposed to the preservation of ‘ancient Japanese’ in the *Kojiki*. As we have seen, these differences can be traced back to different techniques of transcription, which vanish if the texts are rendered in a Western language. They may in fact relate to a more xenophobic attitude of the *Kojiki* compiler, who excludes continental influences on the history of Japan more consistently from its narrative than the *Nihon shoki*. Nevertheless, mythemes of clear Chinese pedigree are presented as core episodes of native mythology in both classics. The silk weaving capacities of Amaterasu are just one among many examples. According to both *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, Amaterasu practices silk weaving in her heavenly palace and is therefore the natural founder of this prestigious technology. As has been shown by Nelly Naumann and more recently by Michael Como, however, the mythemes mentioned in this context are derived from Chinese legends about the origins of silk production.³⁵

On the level of narrative structure, both texts followed a master narrative that probably took shape in the four to five decades between Tenmu’s reign and the compilation of the classics. This master narrative applied what I have called elsewhere an ‘eclectic inclusivism’³⁶ uniting elements from quite heterogeneous origins into one mytho-genealogy that only acknowledged the basic difference between ‘heaven’ (the central nobility) and ‘earth’ (the general populace including provincial rulers) in an otherwise Japan-centred universe.

The question remains as to why the *Nihon shoki* superseded the *Kojiki*, which was issued eight years earlier, if we accept the chronology of *Kojiki*’s preface. As noted above, the most striking difference between the two texts is the fact that the *Nihon shoki* contains a row of variants for each episode. Intuitively, this should privilege the *Kojiki* as a canonical writing since it contains only one straightforward story. Yet, this monolithic narrative structure may be precisely the *Kojiki*’s weak point at the time of its compilation. Let me refer to an analogy

³⁴ Steineck, *Kritik*, II, 221.

³⁵ Naumann, ‘Sakahagi’, p. 27; Como, *Weaving and Binding*, pp. 186–88.

³⁶ Scheid, ‘Todesfälle’, p. 96.

from architecture, in order to explain this idea: the oldest wooden buildings of Japan, and actually of the world, are Buddhist structures built around the same time as *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* were drafted. How were they able to persist in a country known for its earthquakes and typhoons? Recent tests of experimental architecture have shown that the resilience of ancient temple architecture results from a specific technique that allows for a little space at each joint of the structures.³⁷ Therefore, these buildings can be shaken by quakes and winds. If the joints were too tight, the buildings would break. If we transfer this analogy to *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, we could say that the genealogical chart of the *Kojiki* was too tight, allowing no space in the cases when the dynastic order was put under stress. A certain degree of alternatives was needed. These genealogical alternatives are contained in the variant stories of the *Nihon shoki*, which testify to the existence of competing genealogies. In an inclusivist approach, the *Nihon shoki* selected more than one competitor even if it privileged one genealogy as the 'main version'. Thus, it marked both the genealogical ideal and the possible degree of deviations. I consider this a major reason why the *Nihon shoki* proved more resilient at the time of its creation. Conversely, later ages no longer interested in genealogical infighting tended to prefer the simple format of the *Kojiki*.

In any event, the mytho-genealogies of *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* were subsequently adapted by all kinds of historiographic sources in Japan without changing their basic structure. The resilience of this narrative is probably one major reason why the imperial institution maintained its status as a symbol of dynastic continuity, even if it lost almost all of its political functions in later centuries.

³⁷ Fujita, 'Structural Performance'.

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IRAN'S CONVERSION TO ISLAM AND HISTORY WRITING AS AN ART FOR FORGETTING*

Sarah Bowen Savant

'It is always in the present, finally, that forgetting is conjugated'.¹

'Know how to forget! (*Saber olvidar*) This is more a stroke of luck than an art....
Memory is not only rebellious, leaving us in the lurch when we need it,
but it is also foolish, rushing in when it is not at all opportune'.²

Introduction

Nearly twenty years ago, Jay Winter defended the centrality of memory to historical studies. Despite the variety and confusion of meanings ascribed to the very concept of memory, he said, 'just as we use words like "love" or "hate" without ever knowing their full or shared significance, so we are bound to go

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¹ Marc Augé, *Les formes de l'oubli*, cited by Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, p. 504.

² Baltasar Gracián (1601–58). Cited in Weinrich, *Lethe*, p. 173.

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on using the term “memory”, the historical signature of our own generation’. As Winter noted, the contemporary fixation on memory is overdetermined, shaped by nationalism and its many forms, identity politics, affluence, and a general desire by increasingly educated populations across Europe and North America for cultural ‘products’, the popularization of family narratives (and their associated nostalgia), the awareness of trauma brought by twentieth-century wars, and a general ‘turn’ towards cultural studies, in which memory figures prominently.³ The notion of cultural memory has gained particular traction for historians who work on texts. Scholarship on medieval Europe has benefited from this attention through the work of scholars such as Rosamond McKitterick, Patrick Geary, and Mary Carruthers, among others. At the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century, studies focused on memory, history, and group identities (including those of an ethnic or a national nature) continue to proliferate, and so too do summative readers, courses, and scholarly resources on the topic.⁴ Memory is central to the missions of cultural organizations, and in ‘popular’ history, themes relating to memory are ubiquitous. A mature ‘Memory Studies’ field produces scholarship on, for example, the ethics of forgetting,⁵ and has honed its methods and discursive terms.

The modern Middle East (from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries onwards) has received extensive attention in this field,⁶ but surprisingly, earlier periods — including the medieval period — have remained virtually untouched. This is the case despite the importance of memory to medieval Muslims, who wrote, for example, about memorization of the Qur’ān and Hadith and the reliability of knowledge transmitted through texts memorized and recited orally, and who produced virtuoso performances of memorized poetry.⁷ Today, memory of the premodern period still deeply informs Muslim groups as they negotiate their place in the present through reference to the past and, in this process, draw on a vast written heritage that can be plumbed repeatedly. Scholars of the premodern period treat memorization extensively — in studies of Hadith, the origins of the written tradition, and the growth of

³ Winter, ‘The Generation of Memory’, pp. 57–66.

⁴ E.g. the listserv H-Memory, at <<https://networks.h-net.org/h-memory>> [accessed 1 August 2020], and the Memory Studies Association.

⁵ And forgiveness; see, e.g. Derrida, ‘On Forgiveness’; Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, pp. 500–06; and Weinrich, *Lethe*, pp. 165–71.

⁶ E.g. topics covering the colonial past, Palestine, nationalism, and war and violence.

⁷ As Antoine Borrut has lamented, we lack a ‘Mary Carruthers du Moyen-Âge islamique’; *Entre mémoire et pouvoir*, p. 172 n. 32.

'Islamic' education, for example — but beyond a few important exceptions,⁸ we do not consider memory as a broader social and cultural phenomenon, and we rarely engage with Memory Studies outside of the Middle East. This situation impoverishes Middle Eastern history, and it is also a missed opportunity for Memory Studies, since the historical situation of the Middle East can stimulate thinking on memory outside our field.

In particular, I contend that the premodern Middle East can teach us not just about remembrance but also about forgetting. I first explored this point in a monograph focused on the Islamization of Iran in the ninth to eleventh centuries, which showed how the post-conquest descendants of the Persian imperial, religious, and historiographical traditions revised history.⁹ Conversion to Islam, I argued, led Iranians to recall their past in new ways and to accumulate new memories about their history. But it also involved processes of erasure. As curators weighed and evaluated Iran's pre-Islamic past piece by piece, much was simply omitted — the best route to oblivion. But quite a lot could not be forgotten, as it already formed part of Iranians' long-standing memory, undergirding institutions, supporting identities, and forming the basis for any variety of established agreements in society, culture, and politics. This storehouse of memory required some attention, and accordingly historians rewrote much of Iranian history, in the process swapping old identities for new ones. This rewriting took place in multiple contexts: in Arabic but also, increasingly, in Persian; in Iran and Iraq, at the courts of dynasties such as the Sāmānids and the Būyids; and in all genres that treated the past, including local histories for cities and regions such as Jurjān, Māzandarān, and Sīstān in which the focus is often on the local street and market rather than the imperial centre.

In fact, what I treated in the monograph as 'superimposition' — the overlaying of new memory upon old — is only one part of a wider set of techniques, which I here call, somewhat playfully, 'arts for forgetting'. The Iranian situation is but one case, albeit a very important and interesting one, and I hope that what follows speaks to a wider Memory Studies audience interested in what we can discern of patterns. My thinking is stimulated by my experience with and knowledge of the sources for Middle Eastern history, emerging digital technology, and what it generally means to be human with one's own, personal past.

I first examine patterns in the sources that suggest an art of forgetting. I propose that societies do not often forget through accident — neither today nor

⁸ Most importantly, Borrut, *Entre mémoire et pouvoir*, and Pierce, *Twelve Infallible Men*.

⁹ See Savant: *New Muslims*, as well as "Persians" in Early Islam; 'Forgetting Ctesiphon', and 'Shaping Memory of the Conquests'.

historically. Forgetting is frequently required but difficult for groups and for those who seek to curate their pasts. We can identify some of their efforts as distinct strategies. Next, I introduce the idea that the digital age enables us to detect patterns that provide a view into reworkings of the past. Digital technology facilitates the gathering of evidence for memory and forgetting, and I use such technology to demonstrate how historians revised long-established narratives and redefined what could be remembered.

An Ars oblivionalis

As Mary Carruthers has explained, from antiquity and the time of Cicero, the arts of memory 'were conceived of as investigative tools for recollective reconstruction and selection, serving what we now call creative thinking'.¹⁰ They most typically involved images, such as a cherub, that were linked to ideas, such as the ways of penance inscribed on its wings.

By trawling through one's mind, one could recollect, and thus arrange, various topics for a speech; one could also trigger the recollection of pieces of text learned by rote memorization. The arts of memory provided access routes to the contents of memory and were concerned with remembrance for the purposes of dialectic, rhetoric, and the prayers and homilies of medieval monks. An early thirteenth-century English manuscript of Peter Comestor's *Historia scholastica* housed in Cambridge's Corpus Christi College provides an example. Topics are arranged on the wings of the image's cherub. A speaker would recollect and mentally manipulate the wings in order to 'read' them, and then use the recovered text as material for his or her own oratory. There was a mental operation involved in viewing the image: the wings had to move in one's mind since the writing was obscured when the wings were folded. Speakers were familiar with such corpora of cherub images.¹¹

Forgetting was seen by participants in these practices as essential to constructing the arts of memory in the first place (just as forgetting has, in mod-

¹⁰ She also notes: 'The "art of memory" is actually the "art of recollection", for this is the task which these schemes are designed to accomplish. They answer to principles that define and describe how reminiscence occurs, what it is, and what it is supposed to do'. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 23.

¹¹ Carruthers, '*Ars oblivionalis, ars inveniendi*', esp. p. 106. As she notes, cherubim are described in Isaiah 6.2 and Ezekiel 10.21, but medieval images have their own details, in this instance with six wings (versus four in Ezekiel), a human face, and bare legs. Cambridge, CCC, MS 29, fol. VIII^r.

ern times, been widely recognized as an aspect of memory, not its opposite).¹² Forgetting was conceived of not simply as a failure to remember, but rather as a necessary step to refreshing memory and thinking. Medieval Europeans explained memory with agricultural metaphors: one cuts down groves of trees that were once sacred to create arable land.¹³ When the forest has been cleared, the land will appear visually quite different from its previous state, and its past will seem discontinuous with its present.

But how does one really make the past forgettable? In essence, one does so by making it irretrievable. So if the arts of memory facilitate recollection — the pulling up of what has already been recorded in memory, including by rote — any art of forgetting should do the opposite and prevent recollection.

I concur with Umberto Eco, who, in a brief and entertaining article, portrayed the memory arts as a semiotic system and argued that it was impossible to construct a forgetting arts simply as a contradiction of the model of the memory arts.¹⁴ Practically speaking, one cannot simply discard loci or images by, for example, imagining a man who removes images and tosses them out of a window. The result of such a manoeuvre would be 'not to forget something but to remember that one wanted to forget it'.¹⁵ What one needs to do, rather, is to confuse and disable memories, scrambling the system, much as one reroutes mail to a new postal address or assigns a new library call number to a book.¹⁶

Taking up Eco's playful theme, I propose the following three techniques as ways of preventing recollection; all three can be seen at play in Iranian history. They are ways by which cultures, and the people who create and live within them, get on with living when the past presents an obstacle to creating new meaning and memories. They are plainly human strategies. As Jorge Luis Borges writes, 'The truth is that we all live by leaving behind.'¹⁷ Medieval

¹² Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. xii.

¹³ Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, p. 114.

¹⁴ See Eco, 'An *Ars oblivionalis*?' (published in English twenty-two years after it was originally written). Scholars such as Carruthers have emphasized the importance of association to recollection (e.g. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 23; on Eco, see p. 450 n. 61), and also spoken of signs and in terms often consistent with semiotics.

¹⁵ Eco, 'An *Ars oblivionalis*?', p. 254.

¹⁶ A few late humanist treatises on the memory arts discuss how one can refresh one's search networks by sorting out and reducing the number of memory places, but they remain focused on the power of images and are not interested in 'suppressing or otherwise editing content one has previously learned'. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, pp. xii, citing Bolzoni, *The Gallery of Memory*.

¹⁷ Borges, 'Funes, the Memorious', p. 113.

Iranian writers were stuck with the past. Much of it could not be simply erased. It was immovable, as memory lived on. The historians thus needed methods for engagement, including these.

1. Writing over. In this technique, the contents of memory receive detailed attention. There is a point-by-point confrontation of details, close editing, and fretting over particulars. This process might result in substitutions, *remedia amoris*, as a new lover replaces an old one, for

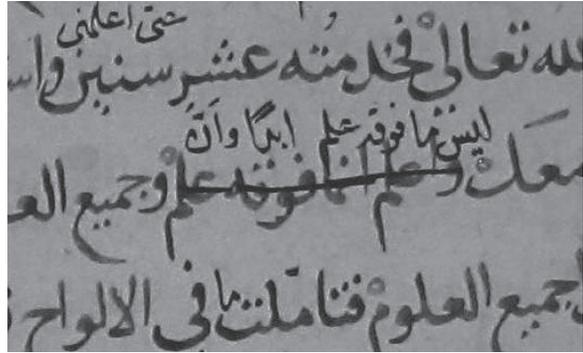


Figure 5.1. Istanbul, Köprülü, MS Fazil Ahmad Pasha 00923, fol. 2^v: replacing the old with the new.

example. Casanova, famously frustrated by his inability to win the virginity of his lover, Angela, falls into bed with two of her friends. He entitles this chapter of his memoir 'I forget Angela'.¹⁸ Casanova, and rebound love, are not just metaphors. They are illustrative of the pain and frustration of the past and the desire to do something — anything — to obliterate it. Just consider the attraction of the new and of new beginnings.

In the Iranian case, historians rewrote accounts of the Muslim conquests to show that the conquered territory surrendered willingly, not because of military weakness or a failure of resolve. In the retelling, Persians become the agents of the stories that feature them, rather than passive participants or, worse, victims. Likewise, historians of the conquests often refer to all of the Arabs' opponents as 'polytheists' (*mushrikūn*) — rather than, for example, Christians — and so erase the identity of the losers.¹⁹

2. Crowding out. Details are piled on, as memory of past times becomes obfuscated. It is swamped, confused, lost. Information overload is a frequent topic today, but it was also experienced and navigated historically.²⁰ More is frequently the enemy of meaning.²¹

¹⁸ Weinrich, *Lethe*, pp. 79–85.

¹⁹ See Savant, *New Muslims*, pp. 207–16.

²⁰ For example, Blair, *Too Much to Know*, pp. 71–96.

²¹ To echo Aleida Assmann, true oblivion may be impossible; the holdings of 'archives'

An ethical concern underlies Nietzsche's critique of antiquarian historical scholarship and its excess of historical consciousness: 'what matters' gets lost amidst a surfeit of trivial concerns. In discussions of the mind and memory, there is also the now iconic account of Luria and hypermnesia (the excessive power of memory), in which meaning is lost when there are no filters.²²

In Iranian history writing, crowding out occurs, for example, when a particular history is merged with other histories and becomes negligible by comparison. This occurred, for example, in the first centuries of Islam when the history of Persia and Persians was written as a form of local, rather than universal, history.²³

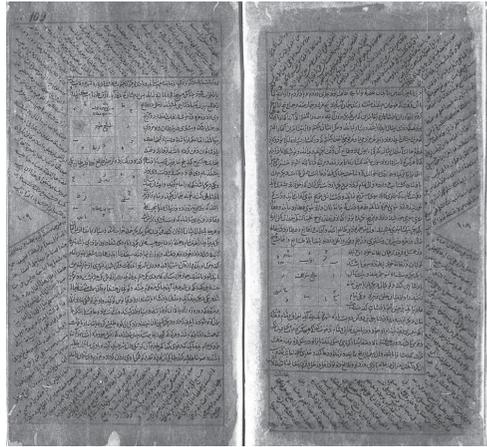


Figure 5.2. Istanbul, Köprülü, MS Fazil Ahmad Pasha 01589, fols 108^v–109^r: piling on details. The text filling the majority of the pages, within the boxes, is a work treating astrology and history called here *Jāmāsh-nāma*; the text written into the margins is entitled *Abṭāl aḥkām al-nujūm*.

3. Abstraction. In 'Funes, the Memorious', Borges narrates the predicament of Ireneo Funes, whose memory, like that of Luria's patient, Solomon Shereshevsky, was prodigious. Funes remembered the shapes of the clouds in the south at dawn on 30 April 1882, and could compare them with the marbled grain of a leather-bound book which he had seen only once, and with the lines of spray from an oar raised in the Rio Negro on the eve of the Battle of the Quebracho. Borges says that he was, however, 'almost incapable of general, platonic ideas. It was not only difficult for him to understand that the generic term dog embraced so many unlike specimens of differing sizes and different forms; he was disturbed by the fact that a dog at three-fourteen (seen in profile) should have the same name as the dog at three-fifteen (seen

may be recalled, and traces of culture may be rediscovered. Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, pp. 106, 196–97, 201, 369–76. But this does not stop producers of culture from trying. See also Hutton, *The Memory Phenomenon in Contemporary Historical Writing*, pp. 88–90.

²² Luria, *The Mind of a Mnemonist*.

²³ See Savant, *New Muslims*, pp. 138–48.

from the front'). He could not think, for to think is to 'forget a difference, to generalize, to abstract.'²⁴ With abstraction, memory is retrained; the past is given a place to satisfy the demands of truth and the living, but it is abbreviated and generalized in many ways, causing details to fade with time.

The most potent abstractions are often nostalgic in character, focused on sites of memory (such as people, events, and places subject to continual recycling of meaning) that comfort, inspire, or serve as foils to the present.²⁵ Some details float high, whereas others are suppressed in a longing for the past that directs attention away from elements best forgotten. But some abstractions also vilify and suppress emotional connections in a different sort of rewiring of memory.

Four subtypes of abstraction spring immediately to mind, although in practice they often overlap.

- *Labelling.* A person, role, or function is given a place in memory, but its details are permitted to become obscure. The substance of history is lost, just as labels generally subordinate particularity and difference. In Iranian history, the name 'Kisrā' (or Khusraw) stands for all rulers of the Sasanian era, not only Khusraw Anūshirvān (r. 531–79 CE) and Khusraw Parvīz (591–628 CE) — much as the label 'Caesar' denotes all Roman emperors. Reading a text about 'Kisrā' or 'Caesar', one thus asks: Which one? The same generalization occurs when religious groups are given labels such as *zindīq*.

- *Making icons.* In a narrow sense, the term 'icon' refers to religious images, but more broadly the term can denote anything visually memorable. Historians created a Sasanian icon out of Anūshirvān, whose justice was proverbial ('*adl Anūshirwān*'). This memory about the Sasanians and about the 'Abbāsids' courtly debt to them was not only an Iranian memory but also part of the self-image of the 'Abbāsids as heirs to Greek and Persian civilizations.

There was also Kisrā. According to the Arabic sources, a letter from Muḥammad was read to Kisrā, who tore it up (*mazzaqahu*). On hearing this, Muḥammad said, 'May God tear up his kingdom (*mazziq mulkahu*).'²⁶ Historians connect this statement by the Prophet to Qur'ān 34.19: 'They said, "Our Lord, make the stages of our journey longer". They wronged themselves; and so We made them tales (*aḥādīth*) and tore them completely to

²⁴ Borges, 'Funes, the Memorious', pp. 102–05.

²⁵ For the concept, see Nora, ed., *Les lieux de mémoire*; but see also Tai, 'Remembered Realms', pp. 906–22.

²⁶ Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr*, ed. by Mittwoch and Sachau, I, pt 2, p. 16.

pieces (*wa-mazzagnāhum kulla mumazzaq*). In that there are signs for everyone who is truly steadfast and grateful. As a figure of history, Kistrā stands opposite Caesar — just as Persia stands opposite Byzantium. He is a wooden figure; anyone who has seen the opening scene of Moustapha Akkad's film *The Message*, depicting a hissing Kistrā, has seen — from the Arabic tradition's standpoint — a largely accurate portrayal.

- *Metaphor*. The past points beyond itself, but it may be emptied of detail. For Arabic-speaking authors, the Sasanian imperial capital of Ctesiphon, located just a few miles from Baghdad, posed a challenge as a site inspiring problematic loyalties. These writers pass on surprisingly little detailed historical or visual knowledge of the site. One story converts the fabled Īwān of Kistrā into a metaphor, reporting how the Caliph al-Manṣūr attempted but failed to take it down.²⁷

- *Homology*. Homology represents one of the most potent tools of social and cultural classification through which equivalencies are presented and relationships created. It begins with an orderly correspondence, such as between the animal world and social groups or between types of positions (pope and caliph). The nature of the correspondence is structural, although a genealogy might be provided,



Figure 5.3. Iconic Kistrā tearing up a letter from the Prophet Muḥammad, in the widely circulated 1976 epic historical drama *The Message*, directed by Moustapha Akkad and produced by Filmco International Productions Inc. From <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVh1-VFhvsA>> [accessed 7 June 2018]. Image used with permission from Trancas International Films, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

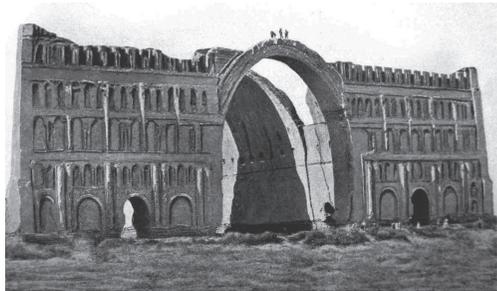


Figure 5.4. Remnants of the arched reception room of Kistrā, photographed in 1864. From <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ctesiphon-ruin_1864.jpg> [accessed 13 October 2020].

²⁷ See Savant, 'Forgetting Ctesiphon'.

as when Vedic tradition speaks about the origins of the caste system by reference to the vivisection of a primeval man. Homologies are not literally believed nor are they merely comparative; rather, by classification, they exaggerate similarity in pursuit of a point.

Muslim traditionists knew many homologies. The Qurʾān posits a homology between all monotheisms. The Prophet was the new Moses or Jesus, and Mecca the new Jerusalem. Throughout history various groups have styled themselves, or been styled by others, as Muhājirūn or Anṣār, corresponding to the Muslim immigrants to Medina and those who helped them on their arrival. Similarly, in the period of Iran's conversion to Islam, as I have shown elsewhere, Zoroastrians were transformed into 'polytheists' (*mushrikūn*) in many texts written between the ninth and the eleventh centuries.²⁸ Early Muslims frequently registered very little interest in the religious identity of the people they conquered and wrote about them in ways that underscored what they were not: Muslims. The application of the term *mushrik* left few traces of the conquered populations, and barely a hint of their religious systems.

All three of what I am calling the forgetting arts — writing over, crowding out, and abstraction and its subtypes — have corollaries in the memory arts. For writing over, we can think of the recycling of topoi, which are then invested with new meaning. Crowding out calls to mind the adding of topoi; too many topoi, and memory is disabled. Hugh of St Victor famously said: 'Confusion is the mother of ignorance and forgetfulness, but orderly arrangement illuminates the intelligence and secures memory.'²⁹ And where the memory arts make a sermon or a speech memorable by connecting it to places and images that are very specific and very personal, abstraction erases the concrete and the specific.

For the purposes of my argument here, I treat lightly the rather complex authorial agency and intentions that guided these strategies. I do not mean to evoke an image of historians conspiratorially manipulating the past. Rather, I strongly suspect that the process was more subtle, negotiated, and protracted over long periods of time, unfolding through often infinitesimal adjustments to existing texts as authors constructed their visions using the varied materials at their disposal. Rare is the smoking gun. The 'guardians of memory' may

²⁸ On homology specifically, see Savant, *New Muslims*, pp. 207–16.

²⁹ Hugh of St Victor, *The Three Best Memory Aids for Learning History*, trans. by Carruthers, p. 339. Hugh of St Victor, *De tribus maximis circumstantiis gestorum*, ed. by Green, ll. 11–12 (p. 488): 'Confusio ignorantiae et oblivionis mater est, discretiam autem intelligentiam illuminat et memoriam confirmat.'

well not have perceived the wider implications of the work they undertook or appreciated how, collectively, they were shaping what could be known about Iran's past.³⁰ But there was a cultural impulse, even a need, that made forgetting desirable and certain ways of relating the past more useful than others. The surviving texts give evidence of these adjustments and the care and attention devoted to writing and rewriting over decades and indeed centuries. The processes of rewriting were subtle, but through their visions of the past historians articulated what was meaningful to present communities of Iranians. In this sense, the forgetting arts were neither 'artificial' nor 'natural' memory (*ars vs vis*), to use the common terms, but something more prolonged and interesting.³¹

How Malleable Was the Past?

As Aleida Assmann has argued, in the digital age memory is no longer viewed as 'trace and storage, but as a malleable substance that is constantly being reshaped under the changing pressures and perspectives of the present'.³² Indeed, with the power to create our own storehouses of texts, images, and artefacts, and to gather data on their origins and histories across time and space, it is tempting to believe we can now achieve unmediated access not just to memory, but to the past itself. (This would be the attraction of 'virtual reality', whatever cautionary preambles may go along with it.) With 'reality' potentially before us, memory can seem self-evident; we may take it for granted, for example, that texts embody the cultural memory of past societies, and that their histories, including circulation and reuse, provide us an unprecedented and direct view onto memory in the making.

In the written Arabic tradition, there are many problems with this optimistic view, not least that only a fraction of the texts that once existed still survive.³³ We are forced to read what exists, mindful that texts are fragile and vulnerable and their survival or loss is subject to both accident and historical contingencies in ways that are often impossible to gauge. And how do we distinguish texts

³⁰ I take Geary's point, made with regard to post-Carolingian Europe around the first millennium, that the processes of creative memory often owe to what might seem to us to be trivial circumstances of the moment, rather than 'overarching political or ideological programs' or 'subconscious processes such as the transition from an oral to a literate society'. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, p. 178.

³¹ Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, p. 166.

³² Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, p. 146.

³³ See Savant, *A Cultural History of the Arabic Book* (forthcoming).

and narratives that were meaningful to societies and so survived until today from those that survived by sheer happenstance? Still, the malleability of the past becomes clearer when examined both at a distance and up close with digital methods, and this malleability seems to suggest the sort of patterned forgetting described above and the potential for replacing old identities with new ones. We can see specific texts reworked, with details and structures changed. Huge portions of texts are copied into new treatments of old topics, swamping what had previously been known and remembered. Labels, icons, metaphors, and homologies are repeated so often as to become fixed. But there are also parts and even whole structures that are less malleable and apparently fixed.

What can we actually see in the digital age? Texts are broken up and reused — one report is taken up, but another one left; hundreds of pages from one text are slotted into another structure. ‘Reuse’ is a technical term used by computer scientists to refer to the sharing of passages between texts, whatever the origin of the common passages. The term is intended to be value neutral and encompasses different practices, some small of scale, others large; some involving precision, others using paraphrase; some providing acknowledgement of their sources, others not. The sheer scope of reuse across the Arabic tradition, together with the low survival rate of texts in general, often makes it difficult to say who took what from whom, although sometimes firmer guesses can be made.

Most importantly, we can detect enormous intertextuality, and very often we can trace through intertextual connections the transmission of terms, metaphors, and stories; the rise and decline of ideas; the circulation of texts across genres, regions, and time periods; and the dominance of certain narrative structures. My research team on the Digital Humanities project KITAB (Knowledge, Information Technology, and the Arabic Book) is beginning to use digital methods to identify these patterns and connections and to theorize how societies remembered their pasts through complex and historically contingent processes that involved authors, audiences, and malleable and perishable materials. We rely, in particular, on an algorithm called *passim*, which was developed by David Smith of Northeastern University. These methods allow us to see what Kiene Brillenburg Wurth and Ann Rigney have described as ‘the life of texts’ in society.³⁴

³⁴ Brillenburg Wurth and Rigney, *Het leven van teksten*; see also Rigney, *The Afterlives of Walter Scott*. Rigney (following Foucault) has described the ‘scarcity’ principle, which enshrines conservation, repetition, and duplication as the core properties of memory and has pointed to literature as the central medium of cultural memory. Rigney, ‘Plenitude’, pp. 16–17; Tamm, ‘Beyond History and Memory’, pp. 462–63.

To illustrate, I will provide an example of the repetition of parts of a text across many centuries and contexts. The *History* (*Tā'rikh*) of Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī begins with the creation of the world and runs up to the year 302/915. Modern historians have often expressed some discomfort with what Fred Donner once called the 'Tabarization' of history, that is, the priority that historians of Islam grant to al-Ṭabarī and his book over other relatively early sources.³⁵ But it is important to acknowledge just how much 'Tabarization' occurred in the historical tradition itself and the extent to which historians after al-Ṭabarī relied, directly or indirectly, on the holistic narrative that he offered.

Table 5.1. What later works share with al-Ṭabarī's *History*. Based on the OpenITI corpus and data generated by the KITAB team, 23–26 February 2019. The Uniform Resource Identifiers (URIs) in column 1 can be used to locate the book files within the OpenITI corpus (<<https://github.com/OpenITI>> [accessed 1 August 2020]).

book 2 URI	words reused	# records	2 in 1	1 in 2
0630IbnAthirCizzDin.Kamil.JK000911	317,590	5015	22,46	21.71
0421Miskawayh.Tajarib. Shamela0012396	234,163	2965	34,47	16
0733Nuwayri.Nihaya Arab. Shamela0010283	191,440	3118	7,75	13.08
0597IbnJawzi.Muntazam. Shamela0012406	159,551	2682	10,9	10.9
0774IbnKathir.Bidayi.Shamela0004445	133,632	2095	6,1	9.13
0634AbuRabicHimyari.Iktifa. Shamela0009770	109,162	1298	27,59	7.46
0571IbnCasakir.TarikhDimashq. JK000916	105,852	1556	1,4	7.23
0581AbuQasimSuhayli.RawdUnuf. Shamela0006864	74,015	792	13,56	5.06
0213IbnHisham.SiraNabawiyya. Shamela0023833	73,805	779	26,14	5.04

³⁵ Donner, review of Kennedy, *The Prophet*.

Table 5.1. *Contd.*

book 2 URI	words reused	# records	2 in 1	1 in 2
0310Tabari.JamicBayan.Shia002468Vols	69,742	969	2.65	4.77
0157AbuMikhnafAzdi.Shia003665	64,575	434	72.27	4.41
0656IbnAbiHadid.SharhNahjBalagha. Shia002185Vols	63,984	978	4.75	4.37
0711IbnManzurIfriqi. MukhtasarTarikhDimashq. Shamela0003118	60,884	902	2.61	4.16

The data gathered by KITAB shows that many later authors reused — either through direct access or via intermediate channels — al-Ṭabarī’s text and its annalistic structure. But they did so selectively and in ways worth exploring. The data in table 5.1 come from KITAB’s statistics on reuse. The table lists later works and indicates how many words each shares with the *History*. The data are generated when passim slides across chunks of text within our corpus, looking for words occurring in sequence, but allowing for gaps.³⁶ Passim is more forgiving than conventional search engines are because it accommodates gaps; it also searches for reuse wherever it might occur, without predetermined content-based parameters (computer scientists refer to this way of searching as ‘unsupervised’). It records matches within csv-format files, with each file listing all common passages as individual records of reuse between any two books. We have run a further, statistics-gathering algorithm on all of the files generated

³⁶ The dataset above involved an n-gram query of 4-grams, repeated four times. The texts were mechanically chunked into 300-word units; a record was generated with any alignments involving at least ten words. Passim runs on the OpenITI Arabic corpus. The books come from a variety of online sources, with the largest number derived from the following three: *al-Jāmi‘ al-kabīr li-kutub al-turāth al-‘arabī wa-l-islāmī*, *Maktabat ahl al-bayt*, and *al-Maktaba al-shāmīla*. Other text sources are smaller in scale, such as transcriptions from the Hippocratic Aphorisms project led by Peter Pormann at the University of Manchester. Work on the corpus has been led by Maxim Romanov (AKU-ISMC/Vienna). We will be documenting and releasing all data generated within the project. See <kitab-project.org> (also for a fuller description of how passim operates) and <<https://github.com/OpenITI>> [accessed 1 August 2020]. The Uniform Resource Identifiers (URIs) in column 1 (e.g. 0630IbnAthirCizzDin.Kamil.JK000911-ara1) can be used to locate the book files on the OpenITI website. The URI for al-Ṭabarī’s text is 0310Tabari.Tarikh.Shia003474Vols-ara1 (based on a 1403/1983 edition that used the Brill/Leiden edition).

in this way, and at the moment members of the KITAB team are studying the statistics using the PowerBi software.

Table 5.1 shows just one way of filtering our data within PowerBi. It features works with the largest number of words in common with the *History*. The *History* is a long work (1.46 million words in the electronic file used for the data run), and so, too, are these works. The table also includes the number of instances, or records, of reuse and the extent to which the two books overlap, expressed as two percentages:

- number of aligned words in the other book/total word count of the other book³⁷
- number of aligned words in the *History*/total word count of al-Ṭabarī's *History*

So, for example, *passim* detects 317,590 words in the *History* that also appear in *al-Kāmil fī l-Ta'rikh* by 'Izz al-Dīn ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233). This reuse represents just over 20 per cent of each work, or 21.71 per cent of the *History* and 22.46 per cent of the *Kāmil* (the *Kāmil* being a shorter work).

The sequentiality of the reuse is important for gauging the structural relationship between books. Our data visualizations show the order of reuse. The top third of this visualization features al-Ṭabarī's text, laid out along the x-axis in 300-word increments.³⁸ Al-Ṭabarī's book is compared to a second text, the *Tajārib al-Umam* by Miskawayh (d. 421/1030), in the bottom third of the visualization. The lines in the top and bottom thirds of the graph represent up to 300 words of reuse, with the number of words running up the y-axis. (The thick vertical lines to the right represent the end of each book.) The curved lines between them link the related segments. The *Tajārib al-Umam*, like al-Ṭabarī's *History*, is a universal history, but whereas al-Ṭabarī's text ends in 302/915, Miskawayh's continues until the year 393/1003 and is frequently cited as a source on the Būyid dynasty that ruled Iraq and its environs. The white spaces in the top third reflect portions of al-Ṭabarī's text that Miskawayh

³⁷ The number of words aligned may differ for each book because it is possible, for example, that a part of one text aligns to two parts of another (as happens with Hadith frequently). In that case, the second book will have more words aligned than the first. The column, 'words reused', in table 5.1 represents the number of aligned words in al-Ṭabarī's book (that is, what of his book appears in the books listed in the 'book 2 URI' column).

³⁸ The latest KITAB visualizations are browseable online at <<http://kitab-project.org/>> [accessed 1 August 2020]. The red lines tend to appear overly dense when the totality of a book is visualized, as here. This is due to pixilation; zooming in gives a finer picture.

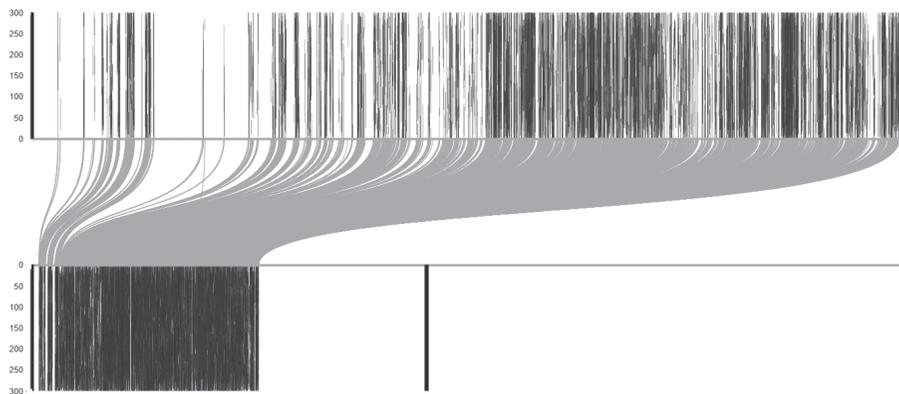


Figure 5.5. Data visualization based on passim-generated data showing the order of reuse and links between common passages in al-Ṭabarī's *History* and Miskawayh's *Tajārib al-Umam*.

did not reuse, and likewise, the white spaces in Miskawayh's text reflects material added to that of al-Ṭabarī.

Why such reused passages are common is a complex question whose answer involves a variety of possible direct and indirect relationships between the texts. Through our graphs and statistics, we can ascertain the importance of the *History*'s structure and contents, even if we need to look closer to see what is really going on. It is almost certain that Miskawayh had access to al-Ṭabarī's book, given the relative proximity of their lifetimes, the close relations between the texts, and the apparent absence of another, earlier source sharing these features.

Importantly, the popularity of al-Ṭabarī's work did not prevent later historians from subtracting material from it or adding material to it in countless acts of 'writing over'. These acts need to be studied, and our data and book files can serve as a starting point. For example, there are several indications that texts rooted in the Sasanian period continued to circulate well into the 'Abbāsid era in Arabic translations, including what historians of the tenth and eleventh centuries had to say about their own sources (e.g. Firdawsī, for the *Shāh-nāmah*) and the inventive ways in which authors retold Sasanian history in Arabic and Persian.³⁹ Al-Ṭabarī's account of the Sasanians is extensive, but he does not cite Iranian sources by name, instead referring to them in rather obscure ways. Close inspection of the white areas for the *Tajārib al-Umam* in figure 5.5 reveals, for example, an added text not contained within al-Ṭabarī's work and known as

³⁹ On this, see especially Savant, *The New Muslims*, chap. 4, titled 'Reforming Iranians' Memories of Pre-Islamic Times'.

the ‘Ahd Ardashīr’, as well as a work attributed to Khusraw Anūshirvān that quotes the Sasanian monarch in his own voice over twenty pages of anecdotes displaying the king’s wisdom.⁴⁰

Alongside text reuse data, a full analysis of the surviving manuscripts of al-Ṭabarī’s work, all relatively late, is required (although considerable spade-work has already been undertaken). Such an analysis will be important for uncovering the reception history of the book. Among other matters, it should pay attention to finding devices within the manuscripts (including titles) and establishing whether these are replicated in later reuses of al-Ṭabarī’s text. Our current work to annotate the structure of machine-readable texts is important for this kind of analysis. We also need to consider how authors cite one another. Curiously, for example, Miskawayh does not cite al-Ṭabarī directly in his book, although he mentions al-Ṭabarī’s death. The reasons behind citation and non-citation are surely complex and interpretation of their meaning and significance critical, but it is enormously helpful that we need not rely on explicit citation to gauge reuse and to discern general patterns of it.

Conclusions

As Baltasar Gracián noted long ago, memory is rebellious and training it is no easy task. That is especially true when one longs for oblivion, as memory tends to rush in ‘when it is not at all opportune’. This is often observed for individuals, as in the case of Proust and the memorable scent of a madeleine, or Oliver Sacks and the visual or musical memories that endure for more than fifty years,⁴¹ or, of course, Freud and the return of the repressed. But societies, too, live with memories that are enduring and powerful, giving meaning to everyday personal and social experience and underwriting identities that are essential to any form of collaborative existence. Memories also haunt and create anxieties, and they give rise to collective and urgent attempts to revise history and to find alternative pasts. In other cases, memory is simply an ill fit for the present. Memory of Iran’s pre-Islamic and early Islamic past was subject to revisions for these reasons.

⁴⁰ Miskawayh says, by way of preface: ‘I have written what follows based on what Anūshirvān himself relates in a book that he put together on his life (*sīratibi*) and on how he ruled his kingdom. I have read in what Anūshirvān wrote about his own life the following’. These additions are discussed in more detail in my *A Cultural History of the Arabic Book*. See also, Savant, ‘Genealogy and Ethno-Genesis’.

⁴¹ Sacks, *The Last Interview*, pp. 48–49, 55–57, and 91–93.

Cervantes refers to a *librillo de memoria*, on which one could write without pen or ink; the writing on its pages, which were covered with a thin coat of varnish, could easily be wiped away and the pages used again.⁴² A powerful way to forget something is to omit it from the personal or collective record, or to erase it. But this is impossible for any impactful or once meaningful past. More often, even typically, forgetting takes some form of individual or social effort, a will of sorts. I have highlighted specific narrative strategies for forgetting — writing over, crowding out, and abstraction — and noted the potential of text reuse to enable revision of the record.

The task of historians, in general, is to find patterns, whether through inductive methods that rely on close reading for important examples that can be generalized or now, in the digital age, through the use of digital methods. The challenge that lies ahead of us as historians is to develop ways of thinking and working that are attuned to such patterns, and to find ways to combine close and distant reading.

⁴² Chartier, *The Author's Hand*, pp. 16–17.

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IRAN AND ISLAM: TWO NARRATIVES

Michael Cook

In this article I propose to summarize two narratives that can serve to illustrate the changing relationship between Iranian and Islamic identity in the centuries following the Muslim conquest of Iran. The first is a ninth-century story told in Arabic. The events it describes occurred around 840, and it was very likely written down in the second half of the century; we find it in the universal history of Ṭabarī (d. 923), who attributes the account to a grandson of the Caliph al-Manṣūr.¹ The second narrative is a late eleventh-century story told in Persian, though the events it purports to describe took place in the late fifth or early sixth century. It is found in the ‘mirror for princes’ composed by Niẓām al-Mulk (d. 1092), the famous Persian vizier of the Seljūq Turkish sultans.² After presenting these stories, I will try to show what their juxtaposition can do for us. Both narratives are well known, and in recounting them I will not be saying anything new to specialists.³ My hope is rather to use these stories

¹ Ṭabarī, *Taʾriḫ al-rusul waʾl-mulūk*, ed. by De Goeje and others, pp. 1308–13; *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, trans. by Bosworth, xxxiii, 185–93. Bosworth’s translation is helpfully annotated and gives references to the considerable secondary literature on the narrative. The story was already used by Goldziher in 1889 (Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, I, 139–40). Hereafter I cite the text simply as Ṭabarī, *Taʾriḫ*, and the translation as *History*, joining them with an equals sign.

² Niẓām al-Mulk, *Siyar al-mulūk (Siyāsat nāma)*, ed. by Darke, pp. 257–78; Nizām al-Mulk, *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings*, trans. by Darke, pp. 190–206. Hereafter I cite the text as Niẓām al-Mulk, *Siyar al-mulūk*, and the translation as *Book of Government*, joining them with an equals sign.

³ For two recent studies on the theme of Iran and Islam, see Tor, ‘The Long Shadow of

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to dramatize a development that may intrigue non-specialists interested in the themes discussed in this volume.

The Trial of the Afshīn

The first story is about the Afshīn, the hereditary ruler of the Iranian kingdom of Ushrūsana in the mountain valleys of what is now roughly northern Tajikistan.⁴ This pagan kingdom had no doubt survived from pre-Islamic times, but in the early ninth century its ruler, the Afshīn, had become a major player in the military politics of the Arab and Muslim caliphate, and in that context he passed as a Muslim. An able and powerful general, he had done the Caliph al-Mu‘taṣim (r. 833–42) a great service by suppressing one Iranian rebellion, that of Bābak in western Iran, but had allegedly also done him a disservice by inciting a rebellion on the part of an eastern Iranian ruler, Māzyār. For this the Afshīn was about to lose his life, but before this happened he was put through a curious process — a kind of secret show-trial — at the end of which the chief Qāḍī condemned him to death. At this trial a number of accusations were made against him, and it is these that concern us.⁵

First two Sogdians were produced against him, a muezzin and a prayer-leader with lacerated backs. The Afshīn explained that he had flogged them for invading a temple, throwing out its idols, and turning it into a mosque. He gave as the reason for his action that he had a commitment to the Sogdian princes (*mulūk al-Sughd*) that he would leave all his subjects to practice their existing religion.⁶

He was then questioned about a book he had in his possession. He had elaborately ornamented it, and worse yet it contained blasphemy against God

Pre-Islamic Iranian Rulership’, and Savant, *The New Muslims*. Both include references to the voluminous secondary literature.

⁴ For the Afshīn and his background, see Bosworth, ‘Afshīn’; De la Vaissière, *Samarcande et Samarra*, index s.n.

⁵ There are several accounts of this trial in the secondary literature; for a recent one see De la Vaissière, *Samarcande et Samarra*, pp. 131–37. Note that I translate *al-‘Ajām* as ‘the Iranians’ and *al-‘jamiyya* as ‘Iranianness’ in deference to the fact that the Afshīn was a Sogdian, not a Persian; the narrative does not use *Furs* or related terms.

⁶ Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, p. 1308.17 = *History*, p. 187. A parallel passage adds a prudential reason: he was afraid that the actions of the muezzin and prayer-leader would threaten his control over the country (*fa-khifū an yantaqida ‘alayya amr tilka ‘l-buldān*, [Anon.], *al-‘Uyūn wa’l-ḥadā’iq*, ed. by De Goeje and De Jong, p. 520.14).

(*al-kufr billāh*). He responded that he had inherited the book from his father. It contained the refined traditions of the Iranians (*adab min ādāb al-ʿAjām*), and it was from this that he profited, leaving the rest aside. As to the ornamentation, he had simply preserved the book as he had received it, not seeing this as going outside Islam; he added that his interrogator — the vizier Ibn al-Zayyāt — had two comparable books in his own house.⁷

After this he was accused of eating the flesh of animals that had not been slaughtered in the Muslim fashion, and quoted as saying that owing to his relations with ‘these people’ he had done things he detested — eating olive oil, riding camels, and wearing sandals; but at least he had not removed his pubic hair, nor had he been circumcised (more of this anon). The Afshīn responded by calling in question the reliability of the witness, a Zoroastrian high priest, but he mentioned that he had spoken to this witness about ‘Iranianness’ (*al-ʿAjamiyya*) and his sympathy for it and for its people (*maylī ilayhā wa-ilā ahlihā*).⁸

He was then asked how his subjects addressed him when writing to him. He replied that they wrote just as they had done to his father and grandfather, but was unwilling to quote the epistolary formula in question. It emerged that this formula, in the language of Ushrūsana, meant ‘to the god of gods (*ilāh al-āliha*) from his slave so-and-so son of so-and-so’. The Afshīn’s defence was that this was the custom of his people with his grandfather and father, and with himself before he became a Muslim; he feared loss of prestige in the eyes of his subjects were he to change the practice.⁹

The Afshīn’s brother was then quoted as identifying himself with the cause of ‘this white religion’ (*hādihā ʿl-dīn al-abyad*), referring to the Arab troops of the caliph in derogatory terms, and charting a course that would lead to the return of religion to what it had been in the days of the Iranians (*wa-yaʿūdu ʿl-dīn ilā mā lam yazal ʿalayhi ayyām al-ʿAjām*). The Afshīn made the obvious response that this related to his brother, and added that even if he himself had written such a letter as a stratagem in the caliph’s service, this would have been unobjectionable.¹⁰

⁷ Ṭabarī, *Taʾrikh*, p. 1309.9 = *History*, pp. 187–88. The first book is *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, a work originally written in Sanskrit and later translated from Middle Persian into Arabic by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ; the second has the rather puzzling title *Kitāb Mazdak* (see Bosworth’s comments on the passage, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, p. 188 nn. 536–37).

⁸ Ṭabarī, *Taʾrikh*, p. 1309.15 = *History*, pp. 188–89.

⁹ Ṭabarī, *Taʾrikh*, p. 1310.15 = *History*, pp. 189–90.

¹⁰ Ṭabarī, *Taʾrikh*, p. 1311.9 = *History*, pp. 190–91.

Our account then returns to the question of circumcision: Why was the Afshīn uncircumcised? His response was that he was afraid that circumcision might damage his health, and that in any case he was unaware that not being circumcised placed one outside Islam.¹¹

The Afshīn was then condemned by the chief Qādī and taken back to his prison.¹² This ends the account of the trial, but soon after Ṭabarī gives an account of his subsequent treatment. When in 841 he perished in prison, apparently through starvation, his body was thrown at the feet of his son Ḥasan, after which it was crucified, then burnt and the ashes thrown into the Tigris.¹³ Ṭabarī concludes with a flashback: at the time when the Afshīn was first imprisoned, his property was impounded, and found to include idols and numerous books relating to his religion, among them a Zoroastrian work (*kitāban min kutub al-Majūs*).¹⁴

This, then, is a story that conveys a sense of irresolvable tension between Iran and Islam.

Mazdak

The second story is about Mazdak, the Zoroastrian heretic associated with the reign of the Sasanian monarch Qubād (alias Qubādḥ or Kawādḥ, r. 488–96 and 498–531). It constitutes the first installment of Niẓām al-Mulk's extended account of the misdeeds of heretics in the land of Iran (*zamīn-i 'Ajam*) down to his own time. Mazdak, he tells us, was a Zoroastrian high priest (*mūbad mūbadān*) in the time of King Qubād; he went off the rails when he started to claim to be a prophet. This was because he knew enough astrology to ascertain that a man was coming who would bring a (new) religion and invalidate (*bāṭil kunad*) Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Buddhism; but he made the mistake of thinking that he was himself this man. So he affirmed, not entirely consequentially, that he had been sent to renew the religion of Zoroaster (*tā dīn-i Zardusht-rā tāza kunam*), just as God had sent a prophet to the Israelites to renew the authority of the Torah after people had fallen away from the laws

¹¹ Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, p. 1312.16 = *History*, p. 192.

¹² Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, p. 1313.5 = *History*, pp. 192–93.

¹³ For the date, see Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, p. 1318.15 = *History*, p. 200; for the display of the body to the son, see Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, p. 1317.1 = *History*, p. 198; for the rest, see Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, p. 1317.19 = *History*, p. 199.

¹⁴ Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, p. 1318.11 = *History*, p. 200.

of Moses.¹⁵ He supported this claim in two ways. First, he alleged that the received interpretations of the sacred texts (the Zand and Avesta) were in error, and that his own interpretations were correct (we are not told what these were). Secondly, he arranged for a miracle in the fire-temple: he had the fire speak, saying that the worshippers of God in the land of Iran (*Yazdān-parastān-i Irān-zamīn*) should follow Mazdak. The miracle was, of course, a fraud: Mazdak had had a tunnel dug so that one of his minions could position himself close to the fire and speak through a small aperture. King Qubād, however, allowed himself to be duped by this charade.¹⁶ We now learn the arresting substance of Mazdak's doctrine: wealth was to be divided up so that all should be equal (*mutasāwī al-ḥāl*), since all men are slaves of God and children of Adam; and women were to be common property (*māl-i yakdīgar*) — a view that was especially attractive to the common people (*mardum-i 'āmm*).¹⁷

By this stage there was a desperate need for some hero to come to the rescue. He duly appeared in the form of Qubād's son Nūshīrwān (alias Anūshīrwān), the future King Khusraw I (r. 531–79), but at this stage just an eighteen-year-old prince.¹⁸ He was nevertheless very firm: he told his father that he was not, thank God (*al-ḥamdu lillāh*), a Mazdakite, and that the purpose of religion was to protect wealth and women (*dīn az bahr-i māl-u ḥuram ba-kār-ast*).¹⁹ But

¹⁵ Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyar al-mulūk*, 44.1, pp. 257–58 = *Book of Government*, 44.1, p. 190. It is not just Mazdak who invokes Israelite monotheism: the Zoroastrian priests at one point contrast Mazdak's teachings with those of the prophets (*payghāmbarān*) who had appeared in Syria (*zamīn-i Shām*, Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyar al-mulūk*, 44.7, pp. 261–62 = *Book of Government*, 44.7, p. 193).

¹⁶ Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyar al-mulūk*, 44.2–3, pp. 258–60 = *Book of Government*, 44.2–3, pp. 191–92. The phrase *Irān-zamīn* occurs twice in the narrative, both times in § 2, once in the mouth of Qubād, and once in the passage just cited. Elsewhere in the narrative we find the terms 'Ajam and 'Ajami, which as can be seen I render with 'Iranians' and 'Iranian'. The term *Pārsī* occurs once, in the phrase *mūbad-i Pārsī*, where the sense is 'the priest from Fārs', not 'the Persian priest' (Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyar al-mulūk*, 44.11, p. 264 = *Book of Government*, 44.11, p. 195).

¹⁷ Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyar al-mulūk*, 44.4, pp. 260–61 = *Book of Government*, 44.4, p. 192. Note that both sides agree that women are male property; what is at issue is only whether they are the public property of men at large or the private property of particular men. Contrast an account of tenth-century Khurramīs in which communal access to women is conditional on their agreement (Crone, 'Zoroastrian Communism', p. 450).

¹⁸ For his age see Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyar al-mulūk*, 44.6, p. 261 = *Book of Government*, 44.6, p. 193.

¹⁹ Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyar al-mulūk*, 44.8, pp. 262–63 = *Book of Government*, 44.8, p. 194. For the Islamization of the language of pre-Islamic Zoroastrians seen here in the phrase *al-ḥamdu lillāh* compare the identification of Mazdak as 'the messenger of God' (*fristāda-i*

the brave young layman was in need of more learned support, and to this end he brought in a wise old priest from Fārs.²⁰ In contrast to Mazdak, this priest got his astrology right: he knew that unlike Mazdak the prophet who was to come would abolish Zoroastrianism and all other existing religions, and protect wealth and women; moreover he would be an Arab, whereas Mazdak was an Iranian (‘*Ajamī*).²¹ The priest duly reduced Mazdak to silence in a debate in front of the king, denouncing him as seeking to destroy the royal house of Iran (*khāna-i mulūk-i ‘Ajam*). Yet Mazdak still had the endorsement of the speaking fire; after all, as he pointed out, there was no reason to look askance at such a miracle, since Moses and Jesus had worked miracles in their time.²² But the priest was not deceived, and had already had Nūshīrwān bribe a follower of Mazdak to reveal the secret of the fire to them.²³ At this point the wise old priest showed that he was also cunning: he outwardly conceded defeat and went home, while Nūshīrwān feigned conversion to the new religion, leaving Mazdak and his followers to think that they had triumphed.²⁴ The rest was virtuous skulduggery. Nūshīrwān obtained from Mazdak a list of his twelve thousand followers, had him gather them together, regaled them at a splendid banquet, took them out in twenties and thirties to invest them with robes of honour — and had them stripped naked and half-buried in pits, head downwards with their legs in the air. Mazdak was then treated to this sight and duly disposed of. Nūshīrwān now deposed his erratic father and began his long reign of justice and generosity (*dād-u dibish*).²⁵

So unlike the story of the Afshīn, this one has a happy ending.

Yazdān, a literal Persian translation of the Arabic *rasūl Allāh*, Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyar al-mulūk*, 44.22, p. 273 = *Book of Government*, 44.22, p. 202).

²⁰ Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyar al-mulūk*, 44.9–11, pp. 263–65 = *Book of Government*, 44.9–11, pp. 194–96.

²¹ Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyar al-mulūk*, 44.12, pp. 265–66 = *Book of Government*, 44.12, p. 196.

²² Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyar al-mulūk*, 44.13, pp. 266–67 = *Book of Government*, 44.13, pp. 196–97; Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyar al-mulūk*, 44.18, pp. 270–71 = *Book of Government*, 44.18, p. 200.

²³ Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyar al-mulūk*, 44.16, pp. 269–70 = *Book of Government*, 44.16, p. 199.

²⁴ Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyar al-mulūk*, 44.18–21, pp. 270–73 = *Book of Government*, 44.18–21, pp. 200–02.

²⁵ Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyar al-mulūk*, 44.22–26, pp. 273–78 = *Book of Government*, 44.22–26, pp. 202–06.

Juxtaposition

What can the juxtaposition of these two stories do for us? What do they show to have changed between the first story and the second? As often, our interest is not in whatever historical truth these narratives may contain, but in what their plausibility for contemporaries can tell us.²⁶ The periods that concern us are accordingly the later ninth century for the story of the Afshīn and the later eleventh for that of Mazdak. Let us approach the question under three headings: politics, culture, and religion.

In political terms we see two major political changes, one affecting the mountains, and the other the plains. In the mountains, the story of the Afshīn showed us an unreconstructed pagan polity, one in which the ruler was regularly addressed by his subjects as ‘god of gods’. By the time Niẓām al-Mulḳ was telling the story of Mazdak, such survivals of pre-Islamic Iranian polities were a thing of the past. Meanwhile there had been an equally significant change in the plains: in place of an Arab caliphate holding sway over Iran, there was now a Turkish sultanate. Admittedly the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate still survived, and would do so till 1258; but real power in Iran was now in the hands of the Seljūq dynasty. In fact both these changes had already visibly begun, but only begun, in the days of the Afshīn. Unlike his ancestors he was at least outwardly a Muslim, had a son with a Muslim name, and had played a key role in an ‘Abbāsīd military intervention in Ushrūsana — itself by no means the first Muslim attack on the kingdom. Meanwhile, as we have seen, at least one early attempt had been made by the hapless muezzin and imam to impose Islam in place of the existing religion (be it Buddhism or Zoroastrianism or some combination of the two).²⁷ By the late eleventh century such efforts would seem to have carried the day: all Iranian mountaineers in sight appear to have succumbed to Islam in some fashion.²⁸ In the same way the caliphate in the time of al-Mu‘taṣim was no longer what it had once been: behind the Arab facade, the armies of the caliphs were now coming to be dominated by Turks, and with the arrival of the Seljūqs

²⁶ For those interested in what actually happened, Ṭabarī’s account of the trial of the Afshīn is as good a source as we are likely to get. By contrast, the value of Niẓām al-Mulḳ’s account of Mazdak is slight; for a discussion drawing on the wider range of sources, including much earlier ones, see Crone, ‘Zoroastrian Communism’, with references to further secondary literature.

²⁷ Cf. De la Vaissière’s characterization of Central Asian Zoroastrianism as iconic and polytheistic (*Samarcande et Samarra*, pp. 133–34); also Crone, ‘Buddhism as Ancient Iranian Paganism’, pp. 30–31.

²⁸ The pagans of Ghūr would seem to have remained largely out of sight (see Bosworth, ‘The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World’, pp. 159–60, 195).

Turkish domination extended to the ruling family. This did not mean the end of all tension between Iran and Islam in the political arena: while no eleventh-century Muslim rulers were addressed as ‘god of gods’, they did give offence to the pious by using the old Iranian title ‘king of kings’ (*shāhanshāh*).²⁹ But the gap was no longer the chasm it had been in the time of the Afshīn.

In cultural terms, the big change was the emergence of a new literary language. In the days of the Afshīn the choice was stark: on the one hand there was Arabic, the language of God, Islam, and the caliphate; and on the other hand there were the pre-Islamic Iranian literary languages written in their pagan scripts — the language of the Afshīn’s books being more likely Sogdian than Middle Persian. By the time of Nizām al-Mulk the old Iranian literary languages, if they survived at all, were confined to non-Muslim minorities, and Arabic, while still enjoying great cultural prestige in Iran, was no longer the written language of everyday life. Its place had been taken by a contemporary form of Persian written in the Arabic script. This sanitized New Persian was thus a Muslim literary language in which the refined traditions of the Persians could be communicated without the admixture of blasphemies against God, and with little direct continuity with the pre-Islamic literary heritage.

In religious terms, everyone bar the religious minorities was now Muslim, and took this for granted; there was no longer any prospect of restoring the ‘white religion’ to the position it had enjoyed in the days of pre-Islamic Iran. But just because Islam could now be taken for granted, attitudes to pre-Islamic Zoroastrianism could safely soften. Of course if the question was asked whether Zoroastrianism was *true*, the answer had to be negative — otherwise there would have been no need for God to send a new prophet to invalidate it. And yet its untruth was at least somewhat qualified. In Nizām al-Mulk’s retelling of the story of Mazdak, a Zoroastrian priest could accurately and in good faith foretell the coming of Muḥammad. His account also shows how Zoroastrianism was now seen as closely linked to the biblical mainstream of pre-Islamic religious truth: its priests, we are given to understand, were familiar with the teachings of the Syrian prophets, and even the heretic Mazdak appealed to the example of Moses and Jesus.

But whether a religion is *true* is not the only question worth asking about it. In unashamedly pragmatic terms, an even more important question — in this world at least — is whether a religion is a *good thing*: is it, as the European

²⁹ For the events that took place in Baghdad in 1038, see Madelung, ‘The Assumption of the Title Shāhānshāh by the Būyids’, pt II, pp. 181–82; for the condemnation of the title by the Prophet, see Madelung, ‘The Assumption of the Title Shāhānshāh by the Būyids’, pt I, p. 84.

Enlightenment would have it, a politic institution? The orthodox Islam to which Nizām al-Mulk subscribed was not just true, it was also a very good thing because it underwrote male property in wealth and women — just as Ismā‘īlī heresy was not just false but a very bad thing because it subverted male property in wealth and women. In the same way orthodox Zoroastrianism — Zoroastrianism uncorrupted by Mazdakite heresy — was a good thing because, as Nūshīrwān explained to his father, it protected these property rights, whereas Mazdakite heresy was a bad thing because it subverted them. However different they might be in doctrine and ritual, at a certain level orthodox Zoroastrianism and orthodox Islam were thus functionally interchangeable.³⁰ We are accustomed to think of such ideas as the esoteric whisperings of the intellectual elite; here we find them implied in the exoteric context of an administrator giving advice on good governance.

So what we see is a drastic transformation of the landscape. In the ninth century Iran and Islam are still starkly opposed. Despite the Afshīn’s attempt to suggest that some of the things he was accused of did not mean going outside Islam, the overall message of his trial was that there was no middle ground. In the eleventh century, by contrast, the extremes have been eroded, and a space for compromise has opened up — a space that Nizām al-Mulk could occupy without significant sense of strain.

At this point, however, the question could well be asked whether I have been exaggerating. The answer is yes and no. I don’t think I have been exaggerating in my interpretation of either of my two stories. Where I have gone too far is in tacitly assuming that each story is historically representative of its period. A full accounting in response to this objection would go well beyond the limits of this article. What is certainly the case is that we can easily find examples of accommodation between Iran and Islam as early as the ninth century, and examples of tension as late as the eleventh. In the ninth century the Afshīn was able to lead a double life for many years without incident, and as we have seen he defended his reading of his ancestral book in terms of his interest in the refined traditions (*ādāb*) of the Iranians; this defence was worth putting forward precisely because such traditions enjoyed considerable prestige in the Muslim society of his day. The existence of middle ground was also apparent in the relatively good press already enjoyed by Nūshīrwān in ninth-century texts;³¹ there was even a tradition in which the Prophet was supposed to have said ‘I was born

³⁰ As Tor puts it, Nizām al-Mulk uses Nūshīrwān ‘as a model for proper *religious attitudes*’ (‘The Long Shadow of Pre-Islamic Iranian Rulership’, p. 157; her italics).

³¹ See *The History of al-Tabarī*, trans. by Bosworth, v, 154–55 n. 395.

in the time of the just ruler (*al-malik al-‘ādil*), meaning Anūshirwān, though the religious scholars gave it short shrift.³² Moving on to the eleventh century, a pious contemporary of Nizām al-Mulk condemned Firdawsī’s *Shāhnāma* — the Iranian national history in New Persian verse — as a tissue of lies, disparaging it as a ‘Magus-book’ (*Mughnāma*). But we should note the telltale fact that while rejecting the content the book he adopted its form, composing an epic account of the wars of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib in the same metre as the *Shāhnāma*.³³

We may end with a couple of phenomena that illustrate other aspects of the general reduction in tension.

One has received a lot of scholarly comment: the changing conventions of political legitimation in the tenth and eleventh centuries. In 934 the military adventurer Mardāwīj is alleged to have declared ‘I shall restore the empire of the Iranians (*al-‘Ajām*) and destroy the empire of the Arabs’. But after he was killed in the following year there was never a prospect of a restoration of a unified Persian empire; Iran was now entering the most politically fragmented period in its recorded history.³⁴ Among its numerous local dynasties we nevertheless

³² Savant, *The New Muslims*, p. 132 and n. 4 (here Savant quotes from a literary source a version that continues with the unkind qualification that the rest of the Sasanian rulers were unjust). The Prophet himself is said to have assured someone in a dream ‘I never said it’ (*mā qultubu qaṭṭ*, quoted in the passage cited by Savant from Bayhaqī’s *Shu‘ab al-īmān*). The Transoxanian scholar Ḥalīmī (d. 1012) offers the tart comment that it cannot be that the Prophet would call someone just who judged by a law other than God’s (*lā yajūzu an yusammiya Rasūl Allāh (s) man yaḥkumu bi-ghayr ḥukm Allāh ‘ādilan*, quoted in Zarkashī, *al-Tadbkīra fī ‘l-aḥādīth al-mushtahira*, ed. by ‘A. ‘Atā 12, p. 179, where there is also an account of the dream). The comment is also found in Ḥalīmī, *al-Minhāj fī shu‘ab al-īmān*, ed. by Fawdah, III, 15, but as often in this printing the text seems to be corrupt (*lā yajūzu an yusammiya Rasūl Allāh (s) man ghayyara ḥukm Allāh ta‘ālā ‘adlan*).

³³ For more on this see Cook, *Ancient Religions, Modern Politics*, p. 17. Ḥalīmī likewise condemns reading, liking, memorizing, and talking about Iranian books (*kutub al-‘ājim*), together with the discussion of their contents in social gatherings (*al-mudhākara ‘inda ‘l-ijtimā‘*, *al-Minhāj fī shu‘ab al-īmān*, ed. by Fawdah, III, 114). He goes on to say that talking about reports of the history of the Iranians (*akbbār al-‘ājim*), praising them, citing their deeds in normative contexts (*al-iḥtijāj bi-siyarihīm*), spending time on memorizing such accounts and money on copying them, all this is disapproved of and reprehensible (*makrūh wa-madhūm*). Such material is not to be elevated to the status of something that one reads, hears, takes seriously (*yu‘taddu bihī*), has copied, or purchases; this is highly disapproved in religious terms (*min ashadd mā yukrah fī ‘l-dīn*). The opening of this diatribe is quoted in the passage from Bayhaqī’s *Shu‘ab al-īmān* cited by Savant (see n. 32).

³⁴ For Mardāwīj’s ambition to overthrow the caliphate and restore the Persian Empire, see Madelung, ‘The Minor Dynasties of Northern Iran’, p. 213, and Madelung, ‘The Assumption of the Title Shāhānshāh by the Būyids’, pt 1, pp. 86–88.

find attempts to forge links to pre-Islamic Iran in two ways: by adopting the title ‘king of kings’,³⁵ and by claiming descent from the Sasanians or other great families of the Iranian past.³⁶ A particularly noteworthy case of such genealogical pretensions is that of the Sharwān-Shāhs of eastern Transcaucasia, who exchanged an Arab tribal lineage for a Sasanian one.³⁷

The other, less frequently noted change was onomastic: a revival of Iranian personal names that is signalled by the appearance of father-son pairs in which the father has an Arabic name while the son has an Iranian one. The Sharwān-Shāhs are again a case in point. Up to and including the reign of Yazīd ibn Aḥmad (r. 991–1028), the rulers have only Arabic names; thereafter these are rapidly replaced by Iranian names, with the transition marked by such mixed pairs as Manūchīhr ibn Yazīd (r. 1028–34) and Qubādh ibn Yazīd (r. 1043–49).³⁸ Elsewhere we encounter a high official who served both the Seljūqs and the ‘Abbāsids in the first half of the twelfth century and bore the name Anūshirwān; his father’s name was Khālīd, and that of his grandfather Muḥammad.³⁹

In short, the reduction in tension between Iran and Islam between the ninth and eleventh centuries may not have been as far-reaching as the juxtaposition of our stories suggests, but it was nonetheless real.

³⁵ For the use of the title by the Būyids see Madelung, ‘The Assumption of the Title Shāhānshāh by the Būyids’; for its use by other dynasties, see Tor, ‘The Long Shadow of Pre-Islamic Iranian Rulership’, p. 150.

³⁶ Bosworth, ‘The Heritage of Rulership in Early Islamic Iran’, pp. 56–61; Tor, ‘The Long Shadow of Pre-Islamic Iranian Rulership’, pp. 152–54, 156, 158.

³⁷ Bosworth, ‘The Heritage of Rulership in Early Islamic Iran’, p. 60; Madelung, ‘The Minor Dynasties of Northern Iran’, pp. 243–44. Note how these conventions gave rulers in Iran an option that was not available further to the west. There the choice for a local potentate was between claiming to be a loyal representative of the caliph and claiming to be caliph himself, whereas in Iran the availability of the pre-Islamic political tradition made it possible to bypass the caliphal dilemma.

³⁸ Bosworth, ‘The Heritage of Rulership in Early Islamic Iran’, p. 60; Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties*, pp. 140–41, no. 67. The ruler between the two was ‘Alī ibn Yazīd (r. 1034–43), the last ruler of the dynasty with a purely Arabic name (I leave aside the ‘second line’ of Sharwān-Shāhs). Qubādh’s immediate successor was Bukhtnaṣṣar ‘Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn Yazīd; the original Bukhtnaṣṣar was Nebuchadnezzar, who contrived to acquire an Iranian genealogy in Islamic times (Savant, *The New Muslims*, pp. 153–54).

³⁹ Bosworth, ‘Anūshervān Kāšānī’, p. 139. The phenomenon is noted in Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period*, p. 71, and p. 149 n. 3 thereto.

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THE FORMATION OF SOUTH ARABIAN IDENTITY IN *AL-İKLİL* OF AL-HAMDĀNĪ

Daniel Mahoney*

Introduction

A man of the Banī Dārim came to the reigning King of Yemen. He intended to meet him at Zafār, but before that he found him in his hunting grounds looking over the edge of a mountain. When [the king] spoke to him, he learned that he was an envoy. He said to him, ‘*thib ‘alā al-fanā*’, meaning ‘sit down on the ground’. But [the envoy] thought that he meant, ‘jump off the cliff’, so he leapt, fell, and died. The king said, ‘No one should come to Zafār, except those who know the language of its people.’¹

This brief anecdote comes from the eighth volume of *al-Iklil* after a section in which its author, al-Hamdānī, describes the various precious minerals mined in

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¹ Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklil*, ed. by al-Akwa‘, 8, p. 60 (*wafada ba‘ḍ Banī Dārim ilā malik al-yaman fi ‘aṣrihī fa-qaṣadahū fi Zafār fa-šādafahū dūnahā fi mutaṣayyidin lahū wa-huwa mush-fin ‘alā ‘arqat jabal fa-lammā wājahahū ‘alima annahū wāfid fa-qāla lahū thib ‘alā l-fanā’ ay uq‘ud ‘alā l-arḍ fa-zanna annahū thib fi l-hayd fa-wathaba fa-taraddā fa-māta fa-qāla l-malik dū zafara dhī li-Himyar ay lā yaqṣid Zafār illā man ‘arafa lughat ablihā*). This chapter utilizes the al-Akwa‘ edition which builds upon the work of previous editions, including Müller (1879, 1880), al-Karmalī (1931), Faris (1940), al-Khaṭīb (1949), and Löfgren (1965), as well as other manuscripts (al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklil*, ed. by al-Akwa‘, 8, pp. 8–20).

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the mountains of South Arabia. Although it is unlikely that this precise event ever occurred, it does communicate in a succinct and effective fashion a less than generous perspective of Arabs who arrive to South Arabia from the north and the potentially lethal consequences of their ignorance of the region.² Hence, it directly sets up a combative dichotomy of regional identities that repeatedly appears in other parts of the text. Al-Hamdānī wrote the ten-volume compendium of *al-Iklīl* in the tenth-century political context of disaggregation and transformation. After the withdrawal of the Abbasid Caliphate military forces from South Arabia, it continued to be a zone of conflict where various local and foreign groups were in competition for political dominance. In response to this state of turmoil, al-Hamdānī created *al-Iklīl* in order to delineate and celebrate the population, culture, and history of the region at a time when it largely had become a more isolated and overlooked part of the Islamic world.

This chapter focuses on the ways through which al-Hamdānī forms a sense of a common identity for the tribal inhabitants of South Arabia by using disparate but overlapping techniques for writing about their past and its relationship to the present. In this way, he interweaves ideas about their genealogy, monuments, and graves in order to trigger and mould cultural memories that may be utilized to create a greater sense of interconnectedness, belonging, and pride for their otherwise segmented and scattered community across South Arabia.³ Thus, in *al-Iklīl*, al-Hamdānī creates a shared product of social imagination that serves as a multifaceted touchstone for a collective identity, from which the South Arabian tribal population may more closely bond together in the uncertain political environment of the tenth century.

The Historical and Historiographic Context of al-Iklīl

After emerging in the first century BCE, the Himyarite kingdom of South Arabia increasingly came to dominate much of the Arabian Peninsula in subsequent centuries, but quickly declined after invasions of South Arabia by the Aksumites and then Persians during the course of the sixth century CE. With the rise of Islam and the subsequent conquests, however, the inhabitants of South Arabia once again became part of a dominant political group led by

² The Banū Dārim are part of the large north Arabian tribe of Tamīm (Lecker, ‘Tamīm b. Murr). Al-Akwaʿ notes that there is a similar report from Ibn al-Kalbī (al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, ed. by al-Akwaʿ, 8, p. 60).

³ This approach to how cultural memories promote and shape collective identities extends from: Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, pp. 111–41.

inhabitants from the Hijaz region with whom many emigrated to new garrison towns in Iraq, Syria, and Egypt. Yet, during this period South Arabia itself remained a peripheral region in relation to the emergent caliphate. While some Yemenis took an active role in the politics to the north, their brethren who remained behind took little interest in integrating into its overall imperial structure. Religious leaders, military generals, and administrative officials were sent, beginning with those delegated by the Prophet Muḥammad and continuing through the dynasties of both the Umayyads and Abbasids. But they were met with varying difficulties that resulted in limited effectiveness for their attempts at governance. Hence, the narratives that can be gleaned from the reports of the seventh through ninth centuries speak of frequent rebellions by the defiant population which were only inconsistently quelled. Eventually, near the end of the ninth century the Abbasid Caliphate gave up on South Arabia and retreated from their main political centre of Sanaa, although the local leaders of the Yu‘firids continued to say the Friday prayer in the name of the Abbasid caliph. But also, at this time, minority religious groups from the north, including the Zaydis and the Isma‘ilis, began to enter South Arabia in order to set up their own centres of political influence.⁴ It is in the midst of these conflicts that al-Hamdānī was born in Sanaa towards the end of the ninth century.

Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan al-Hamdānī belonged to the Hamdān tribal confederation located in the northern highlands of South Arabia.⁵ He came from a trading family which enabled him to travel extensively across the Arabian Peninsula, including longer stays in Mecca and Kufa, which brought him into contact with the scholarly communities of those centres. He was given the nickname of ‘the tongue of Yemen’ (*lisān al-Yaman*), due to his prolific writing on various topics, such as agronomy, astronomy, and metallurgy, in such works as *Ṣifat Jazīrat al-‘Arab* and *Kitāb al-Jawharatayn al-‘Atīqatayn al-Mā’i‘atayn min al-Ṣafrā’ wa-l-Bayḍā’: al-Dhabab wa-l-Fiḍḍa*. Beyond scientific topics, he also composed poetic verses in which he bolstered the tribes and tribal leaders of South Arabia, as well as antagonized the Zaydis whom he perceived to be intruding into local politics. This outspokenness led to his imprisonment

⁴ These notably follow a much briefer Khariji incursion into South Arabia, led by Najda b. ‘Āmir al-Ḥanafī from al-Yamana in 690–91 during the second civil war of the caliphate. The population of Sanaa was forced to pay a ransom of 100,000 dinars for alms and give their allegiance. But there is no mention of them installing a more sustained political ruler, unlike the later movements of the Zaydis and Isma‘ilis.

⁵ Ibn al-Qiftī, *Inbāh al-Ruwāt ‘alā Anbāh al-Nuḥāt*, ed. by Ibrāhīm, 1, 279–84. For a more recent and wider overview of his life and works, see: Heiss, ‘Tribale Selbstorganisation und Konfliktregelung’, pp. 17–33; Toll, ‘Al-Hamdānī’, pp. 120–27.

for three years by the Yu‘firid ruler of highlands in the vicinity of Sanaa and Shibām. Upon his release, he was given shelter and protection by the al-Daḥḥāk family in the highland town of Rayda where he wrote the ambitious work of *al-Iklīl*.⁶

Al-Hamdānī builds from previous works focusing on the history and culture of South Arabia. In the seventh century, ‘Abīd b. Sharya al-Jurhumī compiled *Akhhbār al-Yaman wa-ash‘ārihā wa-ansābihā*, and in the eighth century Wahb b. Munabbih put together *Kitāb al-mulūk al-mutawwaja min Ḥimyar wa-akhhbārihim wa-qīṣaṣihim wa-qubūrihim wa-ash‘ārihim*.⁷ Both consist of tales about pre-Islamic South Arabia, largely focusing on the feats and superiority of the Himyarite kings, and thereby have been interpreted as a type of folkloric propaganda, akin to the *ayyām al-‘arab* from North Arabia, in order to support the Yemeni claim for political leadership in the Islamic community during its first centuries.⁸ Consequently, as al-Hamdānī continues to write about this ‘Qaḥṭān Saga’ in *al-Iklīl* in order to bolster the tribal population of South Arabia against the northerners in the tenth century, he regularly cites both of these authors. Additionally, he also takes information from the written records (*sijill*) of the Khawlān tribe in the northern highlands and other tribal scholars who served as mentors for him, such as Abū Naṣr Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Sa‘īd al-Yaharī, Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Awsānī, and Muḥammad b. Yūnis al-Abrahī.⁹ As a result, expanding beyond these previous works, he was able to compile a ten-volume compendium consisting of a variety of types of historical writing. Unfortunately, only four volumes (1, 2, 8, and 10) of *al-Iklīl* have survived, but the contents of the rest are known through al-Qiftī’s description of their contents.¹⁰

⁶ Another medieval biography from Ṣā‘id al-Andalusī (*Ṭabaqāt al-umam*, ed. by Cheikho, pp. 58–59), reports that al-Hamdānī was sent to jail a second time where he later died, but the veracity of these claims remains debated. Nonetheless, it is generally agreed that al-Hamdānī died in the mid-tenth century.

⁷ A probable recension of this no longer extant work, transmitted by ‘Abd al-Malik b. Hishām but ascribed to Wahb b. Munabbih, is *Kitāb al-tijān fī mulūk Ḥimyar wa-l-Yaman*.

⁸ Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, pp. 196–97, 224; Duri, *The Rise of Historical Writing among the Arabs*, pp. 130–35.

⁹ Pitrovsky, ‘Al-Hamdānī and Qahtanide epos’, pp. 17–25; Heiss, ‘Tribale Selbstorganisation und Konfliktregelung’, pp. 24–26.

¹⁰ Al-Qiftī, *Inbāh al-Ruwāt ‘alā Anbāh al-Nuḥāt*, ed. by Ibrāhīm, 1, 282. It should also be pointed out that there is further evidence of later influence upon the text, mainly through: (1) a brief introduction at the beginning of volume 1 by Muḥammad b. Nashwān b. Sa‘īd al-Ḥimyarī,

The first, second, and tenth volume of *al-Iklīl* contain the genealogies of the tribes of South Arabia, which extend into the pre-Islamic period and are interspersed with short narratives and poems related to the groups and individuals described within the lineages. The third volume comprises statements about the merits and deeds of the inhabitants of South Arabia, while the seventh volume refutes false reports on the ancient history of South Arabia. The fourth through sixth volumes contain a historical narrative of the Ḥimyar from their beginning until the advent of Islam. Finally, the eighth volume comprises descriptions of monuments, burials with inscriptions, and elegiac poems of South Arabia, while the ninth volume contains proverbs and aphorisms of the Ḥimyar in their language. To varying degrees these diverse methods of documenting and writing about the past mirror ninth-century historiographic trends, which focus on secular knowledge and the rediscovery of the period before Islam.¹¹ For example, the final volumes of Ibn Qutayba's *Kitāb al-Ma'ārif* cover topics such as geography, proverbs, and ancient kings, and the lengthy introduction of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam's *Kitāb Futūḥ Miṣr* describes Egypt's ancient and Islamic antiquities.¹² Overall, through these varied historiographic approaches al-Hamdānī was able to conjure diverse memories of South Arabia's past in order to form a collective identity for its inhabitants. The rest of this chapter will examine three distinct but overlapping strategies that al-Hamdānī utilized to invoke this shared imagination which brought them together into a more cohesive community against their northern invaders.

son of the twelfth-century author of the *Qaṣīda Himyariyya* and *Shams al-'ulūm* (al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, ed. by al-Akwa', 1, pp. 57–58), and (2) a statement at the end of the grave reports in volume 8, which directly indicates that this is the end of what al-Hamdānī reported for that volume (al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, ed. by al-Akwa', 8, p. 195). For further speculation on this influence, see: Della Vida, 'Review of *The Antiquities of South Arabia*', pp. 163–64.

¹¹ Khalidi speaks about these historiographic trends in the context of the formation of what constituted *adab* and a renewed concentration on the *jābiliyya*, including re-establishing links to the genealogy and epic glory of the pre-Islamic world (*Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*, pp. 87–89).

¹² Rosenthal has also considered *al-Iklīl* to be a type of 'local history' in comparison with other medieval examples from the regions of Iraq, Syria, and Egypt (*A History of Muslim Historiography*, pp. 158–59). Moreover, *al-Iklīl* may be compared with *faḍā'il* literature, which declares the excellent features of a city or province, such as fifteenth-/sixteenth-century Yemeni historian Ibn al-Dayba's *Kitāb faḍā'il al-Yaman wa-ablihi* (Sellheim, 'Faḍīla'; Conermann, 'Lebensspender, Stätte der Erinnerung, Gedächtnisort', pp. 302–04).

Genealogy: A Personal Approach

Al-Hamdānī begins volume one of *al-Iklīl* with a prologue that clearly lays out his motivations for describing the tribal genealogies of South Arabia. He states that his collection of the linkages that connect the population to their pre-Islamic forefathers is prompted by his dissatisfaction with how genealogists from the north mixed up and abbreviated these relationships in their work.¹³ Furthermore, he specifically criticizes Hishām al-Kalbī and his father, the noted genealogical specialists from Iraq, for not traveling to South Arabia for their research and instead relying on nearby descendants of Yemeni tribal emigrants to provide them with information. In response to this perceived inaccuracy, he dedicates three volumes of *al-Iklīl* to describe the lineages of the tribes of South Arabia. In the first volume, he first concentrates on patriarchs of antiquity from Ādam (Adam) to Nūh (Noah), and then the upper strata of the Qaḥṭān (Joktan) lineage, which descended from the great-great-grandson of Nūh through Sām (Shem) and settled in the southern region of Arabia. Conversely, he also briefly mentions the ‘Adnān lineage, who are descendants of Ibrāhīm (Abraham) through Ismā‘īl (Ismael) that live in North Arabia, as well as the related genealogy of Muḥammad.¹⁴ Al-Hamdānī then goes on to delineate the Qudā‘a confederation, whose genealogical affiliation changed from ‘Adnān to Qaḥṭān in the late Umayyad period in an attempt to remain powerful in the politics of the Islamic community,¹⁵ and the autochthonous South Arabian tribal group of Khawlān. In the second volume, al-Hamdānī focuses on the genealogy of the enormous confederation of Ḥimyar al-Ḥumaysa‘, which dwelled throughout the Yemeni highlands, but especially concentrated in the south where Ḍafār, the capital of their former kingdom, is located. Finally, in the tenth volume he describes the Kahlān side of the South Arabian genealogy, but mostly focuses on his own tribal confederation of Hamdān and minimizes the amount of details about the other major group of Madhḥij for political reasons.¹⁶

Beyond the skeletal structure of the genealogical links, al-Hamdānī also inserts poems and short narratives about groups and individuals within it

¹³ Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, ed. by al-Akwa‘, 1, pp. 60–61.

¹⁴ Varisco provides a comparative perspective on how genealogical models of different sources, including *al-Iklīl*, provide representations of the descent of Muḥammad (‘Metaphors and Sacred History’, pp. 140–44). For an updated ethnographic perspective on the South Arabian genealogical model, see: Varisco, ‘Yemen’s Tribal Idiom’, pp. 217–41.

¹⁵ Crone, *Slaves on Horses*, p. 35.

¹⁶ Mahoney, ‘The Political Construction of a Tribal Genealogy’, pp. 173–79.

in order to boast of their qualities and achievements, as well as to explicate the relationships and processes of eventual cohesion among them. The topics of these reports cover various conflicts and truces, as well as integration and assimilation among the tribes.¹⁷ But also, some of these interspersed reports contain more overtly didactic narratives that, through the perspective of an outsider, describe the vital elements of the South Arabian tribal community on a more pared down level. For example, in a report from the people of Ṣa‘da, a tribal member of Madhḥij, al-Haytham b. al-Aswad al-Nakh‘ī, came before the Umayyad caliph ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān, who inquired about his people (*qawm*), which subsequently triggered the following dialogue:

He said: ‘Tell me about Hamdān’. He said: ‘[They are] sons of death and horse-men of fierce battles’. He said: ‘Tell me about Kinda’. He said: ‘Those are our most honoured and our prestige’. He said: ‘Tell me about Madhḥij’. He said: ‘Those are our horsemen if we launch an attack, and our protection if we flee’. He said: ‘Tell me about al-Azd’. He said: ‘[They are] the highest in number and most worthy of pride’. He said: ‘Tell me about Quḍā‘a’. He said: ‘[They are] our horsemen among the courageous fighters and our lamps in the darkness’. He said: ‘Tell me about Ḥimyar’. He said: ‘Those are the nest of our glory and the home of our power’.¹⁸

Through this report in the format of questions and answers directed towards an outside audience (with the Umayyad caliph, in this case, serving as a stand-in for it), al-Hamdānī is able to communicate more efficiently who are the major tribal groups of South Arabia and what their perceived roles in the overall community are. Thus, this report effectively moves beyond the South Arabian emic perspective of the tribal community represented in the convoluted details of its genealogical complexity, and instead for a brief moment portrays an etic perspective of that same community through a reduced version that is more digestible for an outsider (and possibly also an insider) to absorb. Overall, in these three volumes al-Hamdānī coalesces together the common kinship identity of the South Arabian tribal community through the imagined whole

¹⁷ References to these types of events are also found in other works by al-Hamdānī, such as the conflict of Yawm al-Razm between Hamdān and Madhḥij (*Ṣifāt Jazīrat al-‘Arab*, ed. by al-Akwa‘, p. 216).

¹⁸ Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, ed. by al-Akwa‘, 2, p. 177 (*qāla akhbirni ‘an Hamdān, qāla abnā’ al-manūn wa-fursān al-malāḥim, qāla fa-akhbirni ‘an Kinda, qāla ulā’ika ashrafunā wa-dibājunā, qāla fa-akhbirni ‘an Madhḥij, qāla ulā’ika fursānunā in shadadnā wa-ḥumātunā in sharadnā, qāla fa-akhbirni ‘an al-Azd, qāla l-‘adad al-akḥar wa-l-maḥkhar al-akbar, qāla fa-akhbirni ‘an Quḍā‘a, qāla fursānunā fi l-buḥam wa-maṣābihunā fi l-zulam, qāla fa-akhbirni ‘an Ḥimyar, qāla ulā’ika wakr ‘izzinā wa-bayt mulkinā*).

of the Qaḥṭān confederation. In a straightforward manner, he outlines their personal connections to show both how its contemporaneous parts form an internal cohesion of belonging and how they link to significant persons of the pre-Islamic past. Additionally, through shorter narratives in prose and poetry, al-Hamdānī alludes to events of its shared, albeit rocky, past in an accumulative fashion that moulds the memory of them towards an overall process of the tribal community's integration.

Monuments: A Cultural Heritage Approach

A second strategy which al-Hamdānī undertakes to form a collective identity for the inhabitants of South Arabia is based on the monuments across its landscape. The first section of *al-Iklīl*'s eighth volume contains extensive descriptions of these structures, as well as reports of historical events from multiple time periods that have taken place in their vicinity, poetic verses by numerous authors that laud them, and other data that signify their importance in the history and culture of South Arabia. At the same time, the entries neither internally organize these various types of information in a well-structured manner or narrative, nor externally seem to be arranged with clear continuity or connections. Instead, these disjointed contents may be approached through a lens of historical geography that emphasizes notions of what now would be considered cultural heritage.¹⁹ In this perspective, places and objects of the past are commemorated through strategic acts of remembering in order to produce feelings of belonging and possibly formulate political tactics of support or subversion of an established order. This historiographic method based on commemorative place-making through cultural heritage is especially effective for communal identity formation when specific narratives from different eras may be directly paralleled to each other in order to show how the same struggle of its population has repeatedly occurred and continues to occur. A good example of this accumulation of remembered misfortune is the way al-Hamdānī makes parallels to the attacks on the Ghumdān palace and the city of Sanaa in the ancient, early Islamic, and contemporary periods.²⁰

Another exceptional example of cultural heritage historiography focuses on al-Hamdānī's entry for the ancient Himyarite capital of Ṣafār, which combines multiple types of information from different periods in order to succinctly stress

¹⁹ Mahoney, 'Cultural Heritage and Identity Politics', pp. 67–76.

²⁰ Mahoney, 'Cultural Heritage and Identity Politics', pp. 73.

and celebrate its significance for the inhabitants of South Arabia.²¹ It begins with a description of its palaces, including Raydān, Shawḥaṭān, and Kawkabān. The luxurious structure of which, it is said, was built by jinn, similar to other palaces in Yemen. But al-Hamdānī notes that this is only an exaggeration which has been transmitted, for example, through a report by Muḥammad b. Khālid. It states that Sulaymān b. Dāwud (Solomon, son of David) sent with Bilqīs bt. Dhī Sharḥ, *malika* Sabā' (Queen of Sheba), demons who subsequently built palaces for her, such as Salḥīn, Ghumdān, Baynūn, and Sirāwiḥ. Nonetheless, al-Hamdānī also does point out that a Qur'ānic verse speaks about jinn in the service of Sulaymān for the creation of structures, statues, and cooking vessels,²² and that kings of Yemen have been supported by jinn in ways other than construction, such as the delivery of fruit from India.

Next, the entry abruptly moves on to describe Ḥafṣ's highland location and its nine gates. Here he marvels at the curious technology of the gate of al-Ḥaql, which was said to be so heavily guarded because it was written that the person who will destroy Ḥafṣ would enter it through this gate. Leading to the house of the king, it had an alarm system of bells which would ring when it was opened and closed, and was blocked by a gold chain which had to be moved when a distinguished visitor came to the king. Whenever the chain was moved, a note would be recorded of the date and then passed on to the palace chamberlain and the king himself. Al-Hamdānī also notes that these chamberlains of the king were descendants of the kings of al-Mandaj from Ṣa'da in the north of Yemen, possibly insinuating a geographically based political hierarchy.

Then, in what initially appears to be a tangent in the entry, al-Hamdānī continues with a report, descending from 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, about his visit to al-Nu'mān in al-Ḥīra. It describes the various phases of security and waiting it took to gain an audience with the king, which ended in a quick and cursory encounter, albeit with some gifts sent later on.²³ But it appears that al-Hamdānī chose to insert this story with the purpose of creating a parallelism of prestige and importance between the courts of the Lakhmids and Ḥimyar, as dictated through the extreme manners it takes to receive an audience from their kings.

This story is followed by multiple poems that celebrate the greatness of Ḥafṣ's fortresses, fertile gardens, and irrigation dams. The final poem speaks of the onyx from Ḥafṣ, which then leads into a description of the various types of pre-

²¹ Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, ed. by al-Akwa', 8, pp. 50–61.

²² Qur'an 34.13.

²³ Al-Hamdānī also provides this information in his *Ṣifat jazīrat al-'Arab* (al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifat jazīrat al-'Arab*, ed. by al-Akwa', pp. 64–65, 81–82).

cious minerals found across the highlands of South Arabia, thereby seamlessly combining artistic expression with scientific information. This mountain theme then ends with the anecdote quoted at the beginning of this chapter, which narrates the events leading to a North Arabian envoy leaping from a cliff near Ḥafār due to a linguistic misunderstanding. Finally, the last section of this entry consists of a report that gives Ptolemy's longitudes for Ḥafār, Sanaa, and Ma'rib.

Overall, in this entry for the cultural heritage of Ḥafār, al-Hamdānī stacks and intertwines multiple types of scientific, historical, aesthetic, and religious information in order to celebrate its sophisticated architectural grandeur, fertile environs, and mineral wealth, as well as evoke memories from the patriarchal period to the height of the Himyarite empire to the early Islamic period. As a result, this synthesis arouses feelings of pride and import that distinctly connect the inhabitants of South Arabia not only to this specific location but also the region as a whole. Moreover, the most emphatic element of this collective identity formation may be al-Hamdānī's narrative of the ill-fated visit of the North Arabian to Ḥafār. Here he gives the impression of a distinct disdain for the ignorant who arrive from North Arabia. In so doing, the report may be further interpreted as a veiled threat for a more menacing notion of danger toward those from the outside who come with antagonistic motivations. Overall, examination of the entirety of the cultural heritage reports of these monuments shows how in aggregation they form an extensive network of cultural memories that coalesces into a complex, shared imagination of their past. Thus, al-Hamdānī's compilation of them engenders an encompassing cohesion of belonging and togetherness for the inhabitants of South Arabia that may be directed towards his personal anti-northern political cause.

Graves: An Archaeological Approach

A final way in which al-Hamdānī builds a common South Arabian identity through cultural memories focuses on reports that describe the uncovering of pre-Islamic graves and their inscriptions. Before this section of the eighth volume of *al-Iklīl*, however, al-Hamdānī inserts two others that appear to provide a transition between reports focused on monuments and those about exposed graves.²⁴ The first is based on a report from the ancestors of a member of the Ḥimyar tribal confederation that describes predictions received from the two pre-Islamic soothsayers of Saṭīḥ and Shiqq. They stated that there will be four

²⁴ Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, ed. by al-Akwaṣ, 8, pp. 150–55.

sacred places (*muqaddas/marḥūm*),²⁵ four cursed places (*mahrūm/mash'ūm*),²⁶ and eight places where treasure will be found in South Arabia.²⁷ After listing the names of all of these locations, they continued to describe in sequence how the treasures will be uncovered, ranging from fire and water to animals and jinn to earthquakes and winds. Thus, the narrative of this report extends from noting places of significance above ground to speaking about what riches will be revealed beneath it, much like al-Hamdānī subsequently providing reports about the wealth of information about South Arabia's past that has been uncovered in its burials. Moreover, indicating that it is possible to read the inscriptions associated with them, al-Hamdānī next briefly expounds on the ability to understand the *musnad* script of the language of ancient South Arabia, although with some discrepancies due to variations in the shapes of its characters. As a result, he writes into the text a correspondence between the letters of Arabic and *musnad*, as well as provides a short example that demonstrates the nuances of how some characters change depending on their place within a word, including a transliteration example of an inscription from Nā'it.²⁸

After these clarifying remarks, al-Hamdānī begins to recount, and sometimes provide additional commentary to reports describing the discovery and exploration of tombs in various parts of South Arabia, along with a few from other regions, such as Syria, Iran, and Egypt. Most of these reports consist of two different time periods: first, that of the people who discover the burials in the early Islamic period, and second, that of the people interred within the tombs from the pre-Islamic, mostly Himyarite, period.²⁹ The narratives from the early Islamic period often contain references to caliphs, such as 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān, and their governors, such as Muḥammad b. Yusūf al-Thaqafī, who is repeatedly mentioned. Conversely, the narratives from the pre-Islamic period are full of Himyarite kings and their

²⁵ These are listed as Mirā' Ma'īn, al-Janad, Mā'rib, Hakir of Zabīd.

²⁶ These are listed as Khutā, Azāl (Sanaa), Tihāma, and al-Ma'āfir.

²⁷ These are listed as (1) Iram, the city of Shaddād b. 'Ad, (2) Dhakhir, a mountain in the land of al-Ma'fir, (3) Jubā, the fortress of the pharaohs, (4) Ḥafār, the fortress of the Tubā'a (ancient kings of Yemen) in the plain of Yaḥṣub, (5) Ma'rib, (6) Shibām of Ḥirāz (7) Ghumdān, and (8) al-Ḥamrā' in the Hadramawt. Al-Hamdānī also reports that a tribesman from 'Abs informed him that the greatest treasures of Ḥimyar are with the Dhū Ru'ayn in Baynun.

²⁸ For further analysis of al-Hamdānī's understanding of the Himyarite language and its inscriptions, see: Robin, 'Ḥimyar, des Inscriptions aux Traditions', pp. 20–25; al-Ṣalwī, *Masānid ḥimyarīyya fī maṣādir al-turāth al-'arabī*, pp. 80–92.

²⁹ For a review of the different types of pre-Islamic graves recorded in modern archaeological research of Yemen, see: Vogt, 'Death and Funerary Practices', pp. 80–89.

family members, as well as early prophets of God, many of whom are less well known from other records. Consequently, the precise veracity of many of the reports is dubious, despite the fact that all have chains of transmission associated with them. Moreover, there are occasionally supernatural or very improbable elements in some of the reports, further pointing to the likelihood that many of them are works of historical fiction with the excavation serving as a literary device in order to communicate ideas about the pre-Islamic past.³⁰ In any case, these reports refer to clear cultural memories of the inhabitants of South Arabia for their imagined past and thereby serve as rich sources to mould multiple aspects of their collective identity.

One common theme in these burial reports focuses on the emergence of monotheism in South Arabia before the Islamic period.³¹ These burials include early prophets who came to Yemen to spread the message of God, but were not able to convert the communities they visited. For example, there is a report about the discovery of the burial of Ḥanẓala b. Ṣafwān whose inscription states that God sent him to Ḥimyar and the Arabs of the people of Yemen, but they denied and killed him,³² and a report about the tomb of Hūd in the Hadramawt whose inscription states that he had compassion for ‘Ād, but God’s command was not averted.³³ While the first inscription gives a clear narrative for the prophet’s experience, the second is more cryptic seemingly because the story of Hūd and ‘Ād is well known from the Qur’ān.³⁴ Consequently, both of these reports indicate the prominent place that South Arabia played in the Islamic historiographic narratives about the salvation stories of the pre-Islamic period alongside the stories of other prophets that are reported to have spread across the peninsula in this period. As a result, the presence of the graves and the memory of their interred prophets simultaneously inspire regional pride in the context of the wider Islamic world. Moreover, the framing stories of the reports reveal that not only were these burials found in the early Islamic period, but that their narrators were so inspired by them that they sought out Muḥammad, in the first case, and Abū Bakr or ‘Alī in the second case, in order to convert to

³⁰ For research on the formation and meaning of narratives from literary-historical texts about the pre-Islamic period, see: Drory, ‘The Abbasid Construction of the Jahiliyya’, pp. 33–49; Hirschler, ‘The “Pharaoh” Anecdote’, pp. 45–54; Leder, ‘The Use of Composite Form’, pp. 125–48.

³¹ Further analysis of this theme is found in Mahoney, ‘Medieval Reports’, pp. 71–81.

³² Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, ed. by al-Akwa‘, 8, pp. 166–67.

³³ Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, ed. by al-Akwa‘, 8, pp. 161–63.

³⁴ Qur’ān 11.50–60.

Islam. Thus, beyond the significance of the buried prophets for the pre-Islamic period, the tombs themselves took on an inspirational role for the conversion of Yemenis in the Islamic period.

Other tomb reports in *al-Iklīl* related to the emergence of Islam focus on royalty that did and did not convert to monotheism in the pre-Islamic period. For example, one report provides a direct corollary to the report of Hūd's tomb by describing the discovery the burial of ʿĀd b. Iram, the ruler of the community who denied Hūd, although the prophet's name is not explicitly stated in this report, and was subsequently punished by God for it.³⁵ Another clear example of the punishment of God for ancient royalty is found in a report originating from a man from Ḥimyar that tells about his wandering through the cemetery of the kings during the burial of an esteemed member of his tribe named Hāʿān b. Ḥanīf.³⁶ On one of the tombs there, he read in *musnad*: 'This is Biqʿa, daughter of ʿAbd Shams, the King of Ḥimyar. She was insolent to her lord, oppressed her people, and did evil. So God exterminated her.'³⁷ Thus, in these reports the idea of the faults of the pre-Islamic royalty begins to take shape, much in contrast to the rest of *al-Iklīl* where they and their feats are overwhelmingly celebrated as a source of pride. Building on this critique, there are also burial reports of pre-Islamic individuals who themselves recognized these faults and decided to profess their monotheism. For example, the report of ʿĀd b. Iram additionally contains a section that describes the burial of his daughter, Rawʿa bt. ʿĀd b. Iram, in the same cave. Her inscription states that she perceived her father to be haughty, proud, and evil so God killed him, but she believes in God and what descended from him. Thus, this report altogether shows the emergent process of individuals in South Arabia converting to monotheism. Interestingly, based on four additional burial reports, a trope appears in which it is the daughter(s) specifically who confess their monotheism in contrast to their Himyarite king (*tubbaʿ*) fathers.³⁸ In any case, there is also one report from Abū Naṣr about the tomb of a Yemeni tribal leader whose inscription discloses his monotheism: 'In your name, O God, lord (*rabb*) of

³⁵ Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, ed. by al-Akwaʿ, 8, pp. 168–71.

³⁶ Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, ed. by al-Akwaʿ, 8, pp. 165–66.

³⁷ Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, ed. by al-Akwaʿ, 8, p. 166 (*hādbihī Biqʿa bint ʿAbd Shams malik Ḥimyar ʿatat ʿalā rabbihā wa-zalamat qawmahā wa-asāʿat, fa-ablakahā llāh*). Al-Hamdānī also gives a note for this report that Aḍraʿa is the correct name of the buried woman, and that others from the Dhū Yazan attribute an incorrect name to her because of their ignorance of the genealogy of South Arabia.

³⁸ Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, ed. by al-Akwaʿ, 8, pp. 158, 173–74.

Ḥimyar, I am Ḥassān, the *qayl*. Lo and behold, there is no *qayl* except God'.³⁹ The term *qayl* for tribal leader is specific to pre-Islamic Yemen, thereby reflecting the very South Arabian flavour that this inscription takes on. Additionally, al-Hamdānī also provides a further note to this report that describes the genealogical descent of the interred, further demonstrating his commitment to integrating different aspects of identity in *al-Iklīl*.⁴⁰

In a similar fashion, other burial reports of the eighth volume emphasize the power of the pre-Islamic royalty related to information provided in the sections mainly focused on genealogy and monument descriptions. In a report about the grave of Sham'a, a daughter of Dhū Murāthid, her inscription describes her longing for fruit from India. Directly after, a further edited note then explains this statement and insinuates that jinn provided this service for her, echoing in a more personal way this idea which was previously mentioned in the monument entry for Zafār.⁴¹ Moreover, an additional genealogically based comment is given in this report that explains specifically who the Dhū Murāthid were, including their designation as one of the eight noble Ḥimyarite families known as the *mathāmina* and their particular relationship to the contemporary tribes of South Arabia.⁴²

Among the *muthāmina* Āl Dhī Murāthid were the most beautiful of the Ḥimyar. The jinn served them. Those knowledgeable about the reports of Ḥimyar relate all of that for Āl Dhī Murāthid, especially because they were people of the house of Bilqīs. The king of Dhū Danyān is from the descendants of Dhī Murāthid, and from his descendants are Dhū Baws, and named after them is Bayt Baws. From the descendants of Dhī Murāthid are the people of Ḍawrān, who are the ones who built Ḍawrān of Jabal Bakīl — and the Dharaḥ people in the Ḥirāz. From the descendants of Dhī Qayn, son of Dhī Murāthid, is the one who built Qaṣr Dhī Qayn in Zāhir of Balad Hamdān. He was a king over Hamdān.⁴³

³⁹ Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, ed. by al-Akwa', 8, pp. 176–77 (*bi-smika allāhumma rabb ḥimyar, anā Ḥassān al-qayl idh lā qayl illā llāh*).

⁴⁰ Ḥassān b. 'Amr b. Qays b. Mu'āwiya b. Jushm b. 'Abd Shams b. Wā'il b. al-Ghawth b. Jaydān b. Qaṭn b. 'Arīb b. Zuhayr b. Ayman b. al-Humaysa' b. Ḥimyar.

⁴¹ Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, ed. by al-Akwa', 8, pp. 182–83.

⁴² For more information on the *mathāmina*, see: Robin, 'al-Mathāmina'.

⁴³ Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, ed. by al-Akwa', 8, p. 183 (*kāna fi l-Mathāmana Āl Dhī Murāthid ajmal Ḥimyar jamālan wa-kānat al-jinn takhdīmuhum wa-l-'ulamā' bi-akbbār Ḥimyar yarawna dbālika kullabū fi Āl Dhī Murāthid khuṣūṣan bi-sabab Bilqīs li-annahum ahl baytiḥā wa-l-malik Dhū Danyān min wuld Dhī Murāthid wa-min wuldihī Dhī Baws wa-bihī summiya Bayt Baws wa-min wuld Dhī Murāthid al-Ḍawrāniyyūn alladhī banā Ḍawrān Jabal Bakīl wa-l-Dharaḥiyyūn*

Finally, another group of grave reports, relating to the critiques of pre-monotheist Himyarite royalty, focuses on their self-professed ambivalence and disappointment with their lives. Instead of glorifying them, the burial inscriptions perceive their feats as unsatisfying and ultimately pointless in the face of death. For example, one grave inscription found on a gold tablet next to the head of a man succinctly summarizes this ambivalence as: ‘In the name of God, we evaded everything, but death defeated us.’⁴⁴ These sentiments can similarly be found in the poetic verses of another grave inscription for two men from the pre-Islamic period found in al-Janad, which in particular focuses on mortality’s ultimate relationship with the earth in a cyclical fashion:

These are two graves of two lords of Ḥimyar.
 They have decomposed in the soil completely.
 Death vanished the two with its attacks.
 Death is the destroyer of every base of the mountain peaks.
 The two came from the dirt in the beginning.
 The two returned to the dirt by taking abode in the soil.⁴⁵

The focus on the physicality of the bodies after death is also present in other inscriptions alongside their bitter feelings about their life experience. This rancour becomes especially accentuated through the juxtaposition of the inscription with the descriptions of the burial itself. For example, a report, from the people of Najrān about an iron sarcophagus discovered in the ‘cemetery of the kings’, states that it contained:

an old man; his head and beard were white; his emaciated body was wrapped in a garment. Writing beside his head stated, ‘I am Junāda b. al-Junayd, *qayl* of Ḥarī al-Māwān.’ I lived for 100 years. Then I transformed into what you see. I have contempt for the world and those desiring it. Woe to those who it tempted and were deceived by it.⁴⁶

bi-Ḥirāz wa-min wuld Dhī Qayn b. Dhī Murāthid alladhī banā qaṣr Dhī Qayn bi-l-zābir min Balad Hamdān wa-kāna malikan ‘alā Hamdān).

⁴⁴ Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, ed. by al-Akwa‘, 8, p. 158 (*bi-smillāh kullu shay’in ihtalnā labū wa-l-mawtu ghalabanā*).

⁴⁵ Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, ed. by al-Akwa‘, 8, p. 179 (*hādhāni qabrā sayyiday Ḥimyara || qad baliyā fi l-turābi kulla l-bilā, afnāhumā l-mawtu bi-karrātihī || wa-l-mawtu mufnī kulli saftihī l-dhurā, kānā mina l-turbi bidayyā fa-qad || ‘ādā ilā l-turābi bi-suknā l-tharā*). This inscription is also notable because it is written in the third person, in contrast to the majority of others which are in the more intimate first person.

⁴⁶ Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, ed. by al-Akwa‘, 8, p. 175 (*anā junāda b. al-junayd qayl ḥarī*

Conversely, descriptions of burials, including their contents and bodies, from other reports strike a strange contrast with the inscriptions themselves, wherein the former is a display of wealth and power, but the latter contains a lament of defeat. For example, a report describes a grave from the Hadramawt as:

a man was upon a bier of *ṣandal*.⁴⁷ He was dressed in gold and upon him was a loin cloth and a cloak. [...] In his hand was a seal and next to his head was a tablet of *ṣandal*, stating 'I am Sinān dhū Akam. I lived for 200 years. I have experienced good and bad fortune, days of joy and days of unhappiness. I asked my lord to kill me before the day of humiliation, which has no pride, the day which has no nobility'.⁴⁸

This same contrast is also found in the report for the burial of the eponymous ancestor of the tribal confederation of Quḍā'a, which al-Hamdānī emphasizes is the father of the tribes of Quḍā'a in Yemen and al-Shām.⁴⁹ While his tomb is a display of wealth, in his inscription he complains of his disappointments with life, emphasizing that although others looked to him as an apex of success, in his death he has become a precautionary admonition. The report states:

[The ones who found the tomb] came upon an old man seated on a bier of gold. He was the most beautiful of whom they saw and had the greatest body. Upon him was a woven robe. Upon his head was a tablet of gold, written upon it in *musnad* was: 'I am Quḍā'a b. Mālik b. Ḥimyar. I was displeased and satisfied. I was displeased with the deception of hope, and I was satisfied with the coming of death. Whoever is not satisfied with fate, he will not learn anything. And whoever is not content with what he is given, he will be tired and life will not be pleasant for him. After we were the epitome of glory for those who looked at us, we became a warning for those that visit'.⁵⁰

al-māwān, 'ishtu mi'at sana thumma širtu ilā mā tarawna uff li-l-dunyā wa-li-l-rāghibīn fihā wa-l-wayl li-man istahwathu wa-ghurra bihā).

⁴⁷ A common translation for *ṣandal* is a type of sandal-wood, but al-Akwa' also states that it is a type of brick located in the mountains of al-Ahnūm in Yemen (*al-Iklīl*, ed. by al-Akwa', 8, p. 159 n. 1).

⁴⁸ Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, ed. by al-Akwa', 8, pp. 158–59 (*fa-idhā rajul 'alā sarīr min ṣandal qad ulbisa l-dhabab 'alayhi ḥullat izār wa-ridā' [...] wa-fī yadīhi khātīm wa-'inda ra'sihī lawḥ min ṣandal maktūb fihī, anā sinān dhū akam, 'ishtu mi'atay sana wa-ḥalabtu l-dahr asbturahū, fa-yawm jabra wa-yawm 'ibra, wa-dā'awtu rabbī yumītanī qabla yawm dhull lā 'izza mā'abū wa-yawm lā karam mā'abū).*

⁴⁹ Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, ed. by al-Akwa', 8, pp. 181–82.

⁵⁰ Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, ed. by al-Akwa', 8, p. 181 (*fa-aṣābū shaykhan jālisan 'alā sarīr min dhahab ajmal man ra'aw wa-a'zamahum jisman wa-'alayhi thawb mansūj wa-'alā ra'sihī*

Overall, these reports provide a mixed and more nuanced message than the emphatic celebration of pre-Islamic South Arabia in much the rest of *al-Iklīl*. While many of them still show the material wealth associated with the Himyarite royalty, the inscriptions associated with them communicate a more cautious message of the shortfalls of the life associated with it. In this way, al-Hamdānī seems to be communicating that, although the South Arabian leaders of the past were seemingly all-powerful and prosperous, upon death those aspects of life were not meaningful and other things, such as belief in God, were more significant. Thus, through these burial reports he moulds the cultural memory of the glorious past to shape not only blind pride in it, but also recognition that with monotheism, and implicitly their eventual identity as Muslims, the inhabitants of South Arabia have together evolved toward a more meaningful existence.

Conclusion

Al-Hamdānī's construction of *al-Iklīl* encompassed numerous ways to speak towards multiple aspects of the culture, demography, and history of tenth-century South Arabia. As a result, he was able to tap into and further develop the collective imagination of its inhabitants through innumerable references to memories of their past. Consequently, based on their understanding of the region's genealogical links, narrative events, structures, language, and key personalities, he was able to create a multifaceted identity that unified the population. Moreover, throughout his work he also set up perceived exclusionary boundaries of this community and counterparts to them in the form of 'North Arabians' that could be fit into different political contexts from the broad fight over legitimate rule over the Islamic community to al-Hamdānī's more personal struggle against the infiltration of Zaydi influence in South Arabian politics. But how was this text then received under such contentious circumstances? Unfortunately, there is little direct evidence of the text's reception, and indirectly it can be stated that the Zaydis' role in the political landscape was sustained and for the most part increased over the course of the medieval period and beyond. But also, it may be remembered that only four volumes of *al-Iklīl* are known to have survived in the historical record. One reason for this

lawḥ min dhahab maktūb fīhi bi-l-musnad, anā quḍā'a b. mālik b. ḥimyar, sakḥiṭtu wa-raḍītu, wa-sakḥiṭtu għadr al-amal wa-raḍītu ḥulūl al-ajal, man lam yarḍa bi-l-qadar jahila l-khabar, wa-man lam yaqna' bi-mā u'ṭiya tā'iba wa-lam yaṭib lahū l-'aysh, ba'damā kunnā zīnat al-nāzirīn šīrnā 'ibra li-l-zā'irīn).

partial survival is found in Ibn al-Qiftī's biographical entry for al-Hamdānī.⁵¹ He states that, already in his time of the thirteenth century, he personally has only seen certain volumes. Furthermore, he says that the reason for this incompleteness is that people of the tribes destroyed them because of the faults or slander (*mathālib*) within them. Thus, although al-Hamdānī seems to have written *al-Iklīl* at least in part for the tribal community of South Arabia, they in response did not agree with his conclusions.

⁵¹ Ibn al-Qiftī, *Inbāh al-Ruwāt 'alā Anbāh al-Nuḥāt*, ed. by Ibrāhīm, I, 279–84.

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CONVERGENCE AND MULTIPLICITY IN BYZANTINE HISTORIOGRAPHY: LITERARY TRENDS IN SYRIAC AND GREEK, NINTH TO TWELFTH CENTURIES

Scott Fitzgerald Johnson

Introduction

In her 1979 article, ‘The Attitudes of Byzantine Chronicles towards Ancient History’, Byzantinist Elizabeth Jeffreys argued that ‘The writing of histories was the most significant contribution to secular literature made in the Byzantine world’. Likewise, Muriel Debié, a Syriacist, has recently written, ‘The Syrian Orthodox method of writing history is the only truly distinctive Syrian Orthodox literary genre.’¹ History writing is thus considered fundamental to both medieval Greek and Syriac literary cultures. In this chapter I attempt to survey the surviving historiography in Syriac and Greek from the ninth to the twelfth centuries, with a special emphasis on universal chronicles.² In discussing

¹ Jeffreys ‘The Attitudes’, p. 93; Debié, ‘Syriac Historiography and Identity Formation’, p. 114.

² These corpora are much too large to be discussed in their entirety here. For *Handbücher* surveys of surviving texts in Greek, see Krumbacher, *Geschichte*; Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur*; Beck, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Volksliteratur*; and Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur*, and individual entries in Kazhdan, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*. For Syriac texts, see Debié, ed., *L’historiographie syriaque*; Debié, *L’écriture*; Brock,

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individual examples, I try to show how the texts, through their varied modes of organizing historical material, contribute to the construction of the identity of the author or the community they represent. The choice of universal chronicles is not arbitrary: it will emerge that ancient history, especially biblical history derived from the Old Testament, often provides a foundation for ecclesiastical historians to differentiate Christian communities from one another. In other words, the modes of universalizing history in these highly literary texts are rhetorical tools. This continuum of historical perception, even in non-universal chronicles beginning later than Creation, is ultimately a historiographical and literary strategy that authors use to place their own communities on the map of human knowledge.

A Historiographical Problem

The opening section of the first volume of Alexander Kazhdan's posthumously published *History of Byzantine Literature* is entitled 'A Farewell to Historicity'.³ This first volume deals at length with Theophanes Confessor, whose *Chronicle* from the early ninth century marks, for Kazhdan and many others, a watershed moment in the story of Greek historiography, representing a new direction in history writing, one that eschewed narrative realism in preference for a schematic, annalistic style.⁴ Accompanying the annalistic style was, in his analysis, the absence of any historiographical argument or philosophy that, in classicizing history and ecclesiastical history, previously guided the deployment of historical material. Further, where a multiplicity of historiographical options was still available, say, in the sixth century — as evidenced by historians as different as Procopius, Evagrius Scholasticus, and John of Ephesus — by the ninth century, all of these options had converged into the single annalistic chronicle. For Cyril Mango, in particular, this convergence inaugurated a distorting

'Syriac Sources'; Brock, 'Syriac Historical Writing'; Debié and Taylor, 'Syriac and Syro-Arabic Historical Writing'; and entries on individual authors in Brock and others, eds, *The Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary*.

³ Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature*.

⁴ To his credit, Kazhdan claims that the Byzantines intentionally chose to write in this manner, emphasizing an aesthetic shift. Others have simply assumed Byzantine authors were unable to produce anything more interesting. Further, it is important to remember that Theophanes' sources did not all use dates as he does and, where they did not, Theophanes assigned dates to events: see *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle*, trans. by Hoyland, pp. 19, 39.

stylization — the ‘Distorting Mirror’.⁵ For Mango, and Kazhdan to a lesser degree, this stylization forces modern historians to ‘read around’ or ‘read past’ the history-as-it-is-written if we hope to extract any trustworthy, positive data about Byzantine society and culture.

The assumed literary historical background to Kazhdan’s narrative runs as follows. Classicizing history came to an end with the work of Theophylact Simocatta in 630. Ecclesiastical history ended a bit earlier, with Evagrius Scholasticus in the late sixth century. Annalistic historiography — for instance, the sixth-century universal chronicle of John Malalas (490–570s) or the *Chronicon paschale* from the 630s — represented, formally speaking, an amorphous ‘third place’ which was flexible enough to include material from both classicizing and ecclesiastical history but which, in terms of its literary value at the time, was always viewed as a handmaiden to the more philosophical forms of history. Each of these three types of history writing was, in the period, linked to a (postclassical) founder of the discipline: Procopius for classicizing history (with continuators in Agathias, Menander Protector, and Theophylact Simocatta);⁶ Eusebius for ecclesiastical history (with continuators in Sozomen, Socrates, Theodoret, and Evagrius Scholasticus);⁷ and, finally, Julius Africanus for the later chroniclers, who often reused material wholesale from him in their annalistic histories.⁸

There are a number of ways in which this scholarly framework could be reorganized. As will become clear, modern surveys of Byzantine historiography from the sixth to the twelfth centuries are very often contingent on the perceived reception of Eusebius during this period, especially the *Chronici canones* and the *Ecclesiastical History*. These reception narratives focus on two fronts: they are concerned both with the marked influence of his historiographi-

⁵ Mango, *Byzantine Literature*. This approach has been criticized from a number of angles: see Mullett, ‘New Literary History’; Odorico, Agapitos, and Hinterberger, eds, *L’écriture de la mémoire*; Macrides, ed., *History as Literature in Byzantium*.

⁶ See Cameron, *Agathias*; Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice*; Whitby, ‘Greek Historical Writing’; Baldwin, ‘Menander Protector’; Efthymiadis, ‘A Historian and his Tragic Hero’; Brodka, *Die Geschichtsphilosophie*.

⁷ See Van Nuffelen, *Un héritage de paix*; Van Nuffelen, ‘Socrate le Scholastique’; Whitby, ‘The Church Historians and Chalcedon’.

⁸ See Gelzer, *Sextus Julius Africanus*; Wallraff, ed., *Welt-Zeit*; Wallraff, ed., *Julius Africanus; Julius Africanus, ‘Chronographiae’*, ed. and trans. by Wallraff; Mosshammer, *The Chronicle of Eusebius*; Adler, *Time Immemorial*; Adler, ‘Sextus Julius Africanus’; Mango, ‘The Tradition’; Mortley, *The Idea of Universal History*; Von Randa, ed., *Mensch und Weltgeschichte*.

cal work among eastern Christian historians (writing in Syriac, Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopic, Georgian, and Arabic) and the apparently tepid reception of Eusebius as historian in early Byzantine Constantinople. However, for many Byzantinists, the influence of Eusebius in neighbouring eastern Christian traditions, or even in Islamic historiography, is not worthy of serious consideration.

With this in mind, one might say that the trajectory of the standard arguments about the emergence of Byzantine historiography is from a multiplicity of traditions to a convergence: convergence in literary form (the annalistic chronicle), in language (Greek), and in location (Constantinople). Furthermore, the totalizing effect of the annalistic style in Byzantine historiography, especially for the early Byzantine period (c. 600–1000) has a distinct political dimension. It is almost always linked to the phenomena of Iconoclasm and the influence of Palestinian, Chalcedonian monasticism on the capital. Thus, modern interpretations of Byzantine historiography are intertwined with scholarly debates over what took place in the so-called ‘Dark Ages’ and in the period of Iconoclasm: roughly, from the death of Muḥammad in 632 to the Triumph of Orthodoxy in 843. Two questions are repeatedly asked in nearly every treatment of historiography in this period: first, where did the established forms of classicizing and ecclesiastical history disappear to? And, second, why does Theophanes’ *Chronicle* emerge apparently out of nowhere in the early ninth century?

Mango argued provocatively in a 1991 article, ‘Greek Culture in Palestine after the Arab Conquest’, that both questions can be answered by the simple fact that there was very little (if any) direct knowledge of Eusebius’s historical writings in Constantinople from the time of Evagrius Scholasticus in the late sixth century up to the earliest surviving Greek manuscripts of Eusebius in the tenth century.⁹ As evidence, Mango points to Photios’s *Bibliotheca* (mid-ninth century) and the *Suda* encyclopedia (c. 1000), both of which seem to have a surprisingly limited acquaintance with Eusebius’s historical writings. Thus, in answer to the question, where did earlier historiographical forms disappear to, Byzantine writers from Muḥammad to Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos were either uninterested in Eusebius’s writings (which is hard to believe) or they simply did not know him.¹⁰

⁹ See also Adler and Tuffin, *The Chronography*, p. lxxviii.

¹⁰ Mango does not address the question of whether writers of the ninth century knew Eusebius indirectly through the fifth- and sixth-century ecclesiastical historians or through Eusebius’s (now lost) chronographical successors and critics, Panodorus and Annianus (cf. Adler and Tuffin, *The Chronography*, p. lxxviii). The reception of Eusebius in Syriac is not divorced from this question either (Kesseling, ‘Die *Chronik* des Eusebius’; Adler, ‘Eusebius’ *Chronicle* and its Legacy’; Debić, ‘L’héritage’).

For Mango, the lack of detailed knowledge of Eusebius's historical works among early Byzantine writers has the benefit of explaining the advent of the chronicle tradition in Constantinople as an importation, specifically, through the arrival of George Synkellos. George had been a monk in Palestine, probably at St Chariton monastery, near Jerusalem.¹¹ When he died between 806 and 814 in Constantinople, having been *synkellos* to the Patriarch Tarasios, he deposited his world chronicle into Theophanes' hands.¹² The *Chronicle* extends from the creation of the world to Diocletian's accession in 284 CE.¹³ Moreover, Mango has argued elsewhere that the bulk of the *Chronicle* under the name Theophanes, extending from 285–813, was actually written by George himself.¹⁴ Theophanes declares in the preface to his work that he received the commission (or inspiration/motivation) to write his work from George.¹⁵ What is clear, regardless of questions of authorship, is that George had access to specifically Palestinian manuscripts,¹⁶ and that Theophanes had his own eastern sources.¹⁷

Therefore, to summarize Mango on this topic: he acknowledges a continuous acquaintance with Eusebius in the monasteries of Palestine, especially St Sabas and St Chariton, and at the monastery of St Catherine in Sinai (in other words, in staunchly Chalcedonian monasteries). However, he denies the same acquaintance with Eusebius to writers in the capital from the late sixth to the tenth centuries. The basics of his argument — leaving aside Theophanes'

¹¹ Mango, 'Greek Culture in Palestine', p. 151. See the helpful introduction to Adler and Tuffin, *The Chronography*.

¹² Mango, 'Who Wrote the *Chronicle* of Theophanes?' argues that George was alive until 813.

¹³ *Georgii Syncelli ecloga chronographica*, ed. by Mosshammer.

¹⁴ *Theophanis chronographia*, ed. by De Boor.

¹⁵ *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, trans. by Mango and Scott, pp. lii–lxiii; Mango, 'Who Wrote the *Chronicle* of Theophanes?'; cf. Ševčenko, 'The Search'. James Howard-Johnston has argued against this (Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, chap. 9).

¹⁶ Huxley, 'On the Erudition'; Mango, 'Greek Culture in Palestine', p. 153. Huxley overinterprets the evidence, however: Adler and Tuffin, *The Chronography*, p. xxx n. 9. Again, one might ask about Malalas and the *Chronicon paschale* as Constantinopolitan predecessors from the sixth and seventh centuries. Even there, the question of Syriac translations and sources must come into play (Witakowski, 'Malalas in Syriac'; Debié, 'Du grec en syriaque'; Debié, 'Jean Malalas'; Debié, 'Homère chronographe').

¹⁷ I leave to the side here the thorny question of Theophanes' eastern sources — dealt with *in extenso* by Lawrence Conrad ('Theophanes'; 'The Conquest of Arwad') and others (Brooks, 'The Sources of Theophanes'; Proudfoot, 'The Sources of Theophanes') — except to say that the debate has recently been rekindled by Maria Conterno and Robert Hoyland. See Conterno, *La descrizione dei tempi* and Hoyland's translation of the *fragmenta* of Theophilus of Edessa's *Chronicle*.

eastern sources for the moment — are broadly accepted.¹⁸ However, a critical issue is how this literary history disenfranchises a host of authors and texts in languages other than Greek in the process of arriving at its conclusion. Mango, and following him, Marie-France Auzépy, Guglielmo Cavallo, and, most recently, Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon, all strongly emphasize the singular impact of Palestinian Christianity for the resolution of the Iconoclast controversy and the advent of new literary trends in Constantinople (including the annalistic chronicle).¹⁹ Both the end of Iconoclasm and the flourishing of literature in the ninth century are components of the so-called ‘Macedonian Renaissance’.²⁰ Historiographical convergence into the annalistic chronicle is thus linked politically to a telos of intellectual ‘renaissance’ and to literary forms characteristic of middle Byzantium.

If one were to take into account the broad range of historical writing among eastern Christian languages that interacted directly with Byzantium, the trajectory of ecclesiastical history, for example, would actually be from convergence (i.e. from a dependence upon Eusebius, Josephus, and other Greek sources) to a multiplicity of modes of *native* expression in different languages, each representing attempts at defining community under different circumstances, within a shared historiographical inheritance. The fact deserves to be emphasized that most of these cultures were part of the Byzantine Empire until the Arab conquests of the 630s–640s and continued to maintain contact with the empire even where language and religious confession — not to mention the Islamic caliphate — would seem to have been insuperable barriers. Because the subject is vast, this chapter will concentrate on the evidence from West and East Syrian

¹⁸ Even where the language of ‘Theophanes’ (and George’s) eastern sources is hotly debated, there is no question that this was an *importation* and that that importation sparked a historiographical revolution: see, e.g. Speck, ‘Der “zweite” Theophanes’, who argues for Greek (against Mango’s suggestion of Syriac). See also the classic statement of Ševčenko, ‘The Search’.

¹⁹ Cavallo, ‘Qualche riflessione’; Auzépy, ‘From Palestine to Constantinople’; Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium*. Mango was anticipated in this argument by Blake, ‘La littérature grecque’ (which represents a set of posthumously edited lectures from the 1930s). I deal with this topic in much greater detail in Johnson, ‘Social Presence’.

²⁰ Some scholars now date this renaissance of learning to the late eighth century and, specifically, the development of the miniscule script during the Iconophile intermission (though some of these developments may owe more to the Iconoclasts themselves than we are able to determine). See Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival*; Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium*, pp. 63–66. The ‘Macedonian Renaissance’ coincides neatly, of course, with the Carolingian ‘Renaissance’ and the same of Abbasid Baghdad: as a result, causal relations have been posited between all three: see Treadgold, ed., *Renaissances before the Renaissance*.

historiography, and in Greek, the universal chronicle tradition, up to about 1200. Were it to include other languages, such as Coptic, Armenian, Ethiopic, Georgian, and Christian Arabic, these would provide even more variety of form and reception. All of these together, if considered part of a 'Big Tent Byzantium' that would for the sake of argument ignore political and denominational boundaries, should play a leading role in the ongoing revision of the narrative of Byzantine historiography in the period.²¹

The Breadth of West Syrian Historiography

In a recent article surveying the robust tradition of Syriac historiography, Muriel Debié and David Taylor argue that one of the qualities of Syriac historiography that allowed it to flourish during this period was that it is 'a rare example of non-étatist, non-imperial, history-writing': in other words, there is no state which Syriac historiography was serving, a status which somehow freed it to grow and develop.²² Despite what we might consider to be an unlikely trajectory in the absence of patronage, native Syriac historiography was indeed a continuous practice from the sixth to the fourteenth centuries. In terms of surviving original histories in Syriac, there are many more than can be discussed here.²³ By my count there are twenty-five distinct, extant histories (some very substantial) in Syriac from 500 to 1200, most of which come from the sixth to ninth centuries, precisely the 'Dark Ages' in traditional narratives of Byzantium.²⁴ Moreover, we know of even more historical texts than have sur-

²¹ For a big picture exploration of this 'big tent' approach, see the forthcoming volume ed. by Elizabeth Bolman, Scott F. Johnson, and Jack Tannous, *The Byzantine Near East: A New History*.

²² Debié and Taylor, 'Syriac and Syro-Arabic Historical Writing', p. 156.

²³ See Brock, 'Syriac Historical Writing' and Debié and Taylor, 'Syriac and Syro-Arabic Historical Writing' for complete surveys. As Debié and Taylor note, historical writing in Syriac appears not just in manuscript but also in inscriptions. The most famous historical inscription is the so-called 'Nestorian Stele' from Xi'an China, a bilingual Syriac-Chinese text inscribed in 781 but detailing the history of East Syrian (or 'Nestorian') Christians in China from their arrival in 635. The main part of the narrative is in Chinese, but the succession of bishops is listed along the sides with the names in Syriac and their Chinese translations: a new edition and translation is provided by Eccles and Lieu, eds, 'Xi'an (Nestorian) Monument'; see also Pelliot, *L'inscription Nestorienne*, Walker, 'From Nisibis to Xi'an', and Johnson 'Silk Road Christians'. Additionally, we have a late eighth-century mini-chronicle carved into the walls of the West Syrian church of St Sergius at Ehresh on the Euphrates, with various dated events from Christ to the time of carving: see Palmer, 'The Messiah and the Mahdi'; *The Seventh Century*, trans. by Palmer, pp. 71–74.

²⁴ See this annotated bibliography of Syriac historical texts: <<http://syri.ac/chronicles>> [accessed 1 August 2020].

vived: for instance, at least seven Syriac ecclesiastical histories from the seventh and eighth centuries are known by name but are now lost. These lost texts were independent histories, mostly with named authors, not texts combined into other histories.²⁵

A number of local histories survive from the West Syrian tradition in the sixth century. These are focused on a local hero or saint, but they often offer a short chronological history of the place. This 'localism' in part depends on the tradition of the Edessa archives, which were visited by Julius Africanus in the third century and Eusebius in the fourth, but which in our period resulted in the sixth-century *Chronicle of Edessa*, preserved in a seventh-century West Syrian manuscript and retaining some very unique information about the history of the city and its Christian population.²⁶

Important translations and reworkings of Greek texts, some of which today are lost in the original, were also made by Syriac historians in the same time frame. For instance, by far the earliest manuscript of Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* is the Syriac translation dated by its colophon to 462.²⁷ It cannot be overemphasized for the case of eastern Christian historiography, especially as it relates to Byzantine historiography, that Eusebius was available in Syriac (and consequently, Armenian) from an early point and that the Syriac version is known from a manuscript several centuries older than the earliest Greek one.

What is called today the *Chronicle of Ps.-Zacharias Rhetor* incorporates a large section of (probably) Zacharias Scholasticus's Greek history from the sixth century.²⁸ This Zacharias also wrote (among other things) a *Life of Severus*

²⁵ See the very useful chronological table of surviving and lost Syriac histories in Debié, *L'écriture*, pp. 489–92.

²⁶ See Adler, 'Christians'; Debié, 'Record Keeping'; Debié, 'L'héritage'; Debié, *L'écriture*, pp. 527–29. Interestingly, the *Chronicle of Edessa* seems actually to be Chalcedonian in confession, though adapted to a West Syrian context. The Chalcedonian element points forward to what we know from later sources, that Edessa nourished a Chalcedonian Melkite community throughout early Byzantium. In fact, the first Christian to write in Arabic (that we know of by name) was Theodore Abu Qurrah, a Chalcedonian from Edessa, bishop of neighbouring Harran in the early ninth century, who had been previously a monk at St Sabas and who also wrote in Greek and Syriac.

²⁷ St Petersburg, NLR, MS Syr. 1 = Hatch, *An Album of Dated Syriac Manuscripts*, pl. III = Kessel, 'Abridged Translation', p. 5 (no. XXIV). We have evidence that this text was in circulation before this manuscript, which is, regardless, not the autograph copy of the translation: for a helpful survey of the reception of the *Ecclesiastical History* in Syriac, see Debié, 'La version syriaque', pp. 271–75.

²⁸ See *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor*, ed. and trans. by Greatrex, Phenix, and Horn. See also Debié, *L'écriture*, pp. 529–35.

of *Antioch* which today survives only in Syriac.²⁹ The *Chronicle of Ps.-Zacharias* includes in addition numerous shorter documents of historical interest from varied contexts, especially unique survivals concerning Eutyches and the Second Council of Ephesus (the ‘Robber Council’) of 449. Even though the sole surviving manuscript (BL, MS Add. 17202) — from 600 CE, about thirty years after the compiler/translator constructed this work — is entitled ‘Events from World History’, it is clear that the work was designed as an ecclesiastical history in the vein of Eusebius, and the title ‘Ecclesiastical History’ appears in Syriac as a running title in the sections not authored by Zacharias Scholasticus.³⁰ Thus, in this case, we find Greek works being collected, translated, abridged, reorganized, and repackaged into what is essentially a new work in Syriac with its own unified vision.³¹

The polymath West Syrian writer Jacob of Edessa produced in the late seventh century a translation and annalistic continuation of Eusebius’s *Chronicle* (now lost except for *testimonia*).³² Jacob even imitated the layout of the text: secular history on the left; ecclesiastical history on the right.³³ This direct dependence on Eusebius’s method produced a unique feature of West Syrian historiography: beginning with the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch Dionysios of Tel Mahre in the early ninth century (who took inspiration from Jacob), West Syrian historical texts were all double chronicles, which did not combine secular and sacred history, but intentionally separated them.³⁴ This is true, for instance, of the magnificent chronicle of Michael the Syrian (Michael the Great) from the twelfth century.

In this context, it is worth noting that there seems to have been a real vocation of ‘historian’ among some West Syrian monasteries, even though (as is often remarked) there is no single word in Syriac used for ‘historian’. Regardless, West Syrian historians recognized the received genres of both ecclesiastical and secular historiography in Greek and, over the course of the sixth to ninth centuries, made numerous different experiments at combining these strands into new works that retained a distinctly Syriac, and particularly a Miaphysite, interpretation of the post-Chalcedonian churches and the Greek-speaking

²⁹ See, *Two Early Lives of Severos*, trans. by Brock and FitzGerald.

³⁰ Brock, ‘Syriac Historical Writing’, pp. 4–5.

³¹ See Debié, ‘Ordonner les temps’.

³² *Theophilus of Edessa’s Chronicle*, trans. by Hoyland, p. 33. See Debié, *L’écriture*, pp. 548–51.

³³ Debié and Taylor, ‘Syriac and Syro-Arabic Historical Writing’, p. 167.

³⁴ Debié, ‘Syriac Historiography’, p. 113.

Byzantine Empire.³⁵ It is an obvious point, but one which should be reiterated, that almost every West Syrian scholar and historian from this period was at least bilingual in Greek and Syriac, and it is becoming increasingly clear that they had access to a wider range of Greek texts, including historiography and rhetoric, than has traditionally been assumed.³⁶

The most recent translator of the *Zuqnin Chronicle*, Amir Harrak, has stated that, in his words, 'it is beyond reasonable doubt', that the late eighth-century manuscript containing the majority of this *Chronicle* is in fact the autograph of Joshua the Stylite, a priest from near Edessa in northern Mesopotamia who was active in the late eighth century (though whose career is often dated to the early sixth century).³⁷ The monastery of Zuqnin, where the *Chronicle* was written, is near to Amida. The manuscript is currently in the Vatican Library, having been brought there in 1715 by Joseph Assemani, who discovered the manuscript in the library of the Monastery of the Syrians (Deir al-Surian) in the Wadi Natrun (Scetis) in Egypt.³⁸ Six folios in a manuscript in the British Library belong to the lost opening of this codex.³⁹ This codex represents only one of around two hundred manuscripts that can be linked, either explicitly or implicitly, with the collecting activities of Mushe (or Moses) of Nisibis, abbot of the monastery in the early tenth century.⁴⁰ Mushe made several visits to Mesopotamia on various business for the monastery, often dealing both with the caliphate at Baghdad and also with the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Syrian Orthodox churches.⁴¹ There was a close connection between the Syrian Orthodox of Tikrit, in northern Iraq, and the Monastery of the Syrians, partly because there was a Tikritan trading colony in Fustat/Cairo throughout this period. It is worth highlighting in this context that the earliest copy of Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* mentioned above, one in a Syriac manuscript from 462, was also a part of this collecting activity.

³⁵ Morony, *History and Identity*; Ter Haar Romeny, ed., *Religious Origins*.

³⁶ *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle*, trans. by Hoyland, p. 26.

³⁷ *Incerti auctoris chronicon anonymum Pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum*, ed. by Chabot. See *The Chronicle of Zuqnin*, trans. by Harrak, pp. 7–8; Dunphy, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, II, 1546; and Brock and others, eds, *The Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary*, p. 450. See also Debié, *L'écriture*, pp. 561–66.

³⁸ BAV, MS Vat. Syr. 162 = Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana*, III, 329.

³⁹ BL, MS Add. 14665 = Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts*, pp. 1118–19.

⁴⁰ Brock, 'Without Mushe of Nisibis'; Blanchard, 'Moses of Nisibis'.

⁴¹ Brock, 'Without Mushe of Nisibis'.

The *Zuqnin Chronicle* was organized in four distinct sections:

1. from creation to Constantine (drawing heavily on the LXX, the NT, and Eusebius);
2. from Constantine to Theodosius II (drawing on Eusebius and Socrates Scholasticus, as well as the Syriac *Cave of Treasures* and a version of the *Seven Sleepers of Ephesus*);
3. from Theodosius II to Justinian (drawing largely on John of Ephesus and, through him, the *Chronicle* of John Malalas and the *Ecclesiastical History* of Pseudo-Zachariah of Mitylene);
4. from Justinian to the present day of 775 (drawing on a *Chronicle* attributed to Joshua the Stylite, now called *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite*, as well as the famous *Letter of Simeon of Beth Arsham* on the Himyarite martyrs, John Rufus's *Plerophoriae*, the *Chronicle of Edessa*, and other local sources).

The first three sections are mainly found as a palimpsest over a copy of historical books from the Septuagint, dating to sixth to seventh centuries, whereas the fourth section is on fresh pages, perhaps indicating a recognition that this material had not been set down before in any historians known to Joshua. This schema of four parts is described by the author at the beginning of the fourth section, where the author also makes clear his sources. In the text, there is no clear division between the third and fourth sections, except for this digression on organization and sources. Interestingly, despite the broad coverage of the *Zuqnin Chronicle*, no later Syriac author cites it, though the trend towards ecclesiastical history we will see fully realized in later texts.⁴²

As in the Greek world, Syriac historians often wrote abbreviated chronicles which gave a synoptic overview of the coverage provided by more complete and ambitious texts like the *Zuqnin Chronicle*.⁴³ Two of these, the anonymous chronicles for the years 819 and 846, are both attempts at world history. The *Chronicle ad annum 819* survives in a ninth-century manuscript from Tur Abdin, discovered in 1911.⁴⁴ The manuscript was copied by a scribe named Severus for his uncle, bishop of Harran (consecrated between 846 and 873). This text is not a universal chronicle in the traditional sense, since it extends

⁴² See Pigulevskaja, 'Theophanes' *Chronographia*.

⁴³ For the short chronicles in Greek, see Schreiner, ed., *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*.

⁴⁴ *Chronicon ad annum 819*, ed. by Barsoum, I, 3–22. See Debié, *L'écriture*, pp. 567–68.

from Christ's birth to the present day. The seventh and eighth centuries comprise half of the text, which as a whole makes up only seventeen pages in the modern critical edition. The *Chronicle ad annum 846* is a more substantial piece of historiography (eighty-one pages in the modern edition), preserved in a tenth-century manuscript.⁴⁵ This text is a universal chronicle covering the period of creation to 846 CE. It uses extensively the *Chronicle ad annum 819* as a source, but, interestingly, it also uses a lost antecedent of what is today called the *Melkite Chronicle*, a Chalcedonian Syriac chronicle surviving only as part of Sinai Syr. 10, a manuscript of the eighth/ninth century.⁴⁶

Because with Syriac we have such rich and early manuscripts (often complete with substantial colophons), it is easy to trace the direct use of earlier texts, even the specific manuscripts used, by later chroniclers. However, the question that immediately arises is what do we do with universal chronicles *ad annum* where there is a gap between the end date of the chronicle and the earliest manuscript? (In the Greek world this is less of an issue because the manuscripts tend to be so much later than the end date of the chronicles, at least for the early Byzantine texts.) But in Syriac in the ninth century we have the more interesting historical problem of the possibility of refashioning the identity of a whole tradition through the incorporation of chronicles not written for that tradition even within the same century or generation. This seems to have been what happened with the *Melkite Chronicle*, already mentioned, but also with the only Maronite history to have survived, the so-called *Maronite Chronicle*, covering the period of Alexander the Great to the 660s but surviving in a single, fragmentary manuscript of the eighth or ninth century.⁴⁷

Indeed, the ninth century seems to have been an especially fertile period for Syriac historiography. The West Syrian trend towards ecclesiastical history which we saw in the *Zuqnin Chronicle* of 775 re-emerges in the mid-ninth century *Chronicle* of Dionysius of Tel Mahre.⁴⁸ While this *Chronicle* is lost as an independent text, we know of its scope and content through the histo-

⁴⁵ *Chronicle ad annum 846*, ed. by Brooks, II, 157–238. See Debié, *L'écriture*, pp. 572–73.

⁴⁶ De Halleux, 'La chronique melkite abrégée du ms Sinai syr. 10'. See Brock, 'Syriac Historical Writing', p. 7. See also Debié, *L'écriture*, p. 546.

⁴⁷ *Maronite Chronicle*, ed. by Brooks, I, 43–74. See Brock, 'Syriac Historical Writing', p. 7 and Debié, *L'écriture*, pp. 546–48. Another partial folio of the *Maronite Chronicle* (NF B.56) has been recently described among the Syriac 'New Finds' at Deir al-Surian: see Brock and Van Rompay, *Catalogue*, pp. 358–59 (description), 373–75 (transcription and translation). On the survival of Monothelite/Maronite literature, see Tannous, 'In Search of Monothelism'.

⁴⁸ See Witakowski, *The Syriac Chronicle*; Abramowski, *Dionysius von Tellmahre*; Debié, *L'écriture*, pp. 569–72.

ries that followed it, especially those of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. These thankfully incorporated some of Dionysios of Tel Mahre's programmatic discussion of his sources.⁴⁹ Thus we know that Dionysios made use of a broad range of historiographical material and was justly lauded and prized by later historians: these sources include famous texts such as the now lost Greek *Chronicle* of Theophilus of Edessa (the Maronite, whom he calls simply 'the Chalcedonian').⁵⁰ As mentioned, Dionysios's method of visually separating ecclesiastical and secular events was followed by all major West Syrian chronicles that followed him.

Not least of these was the masterful chronographical work of Michael the Great, patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox from 1166–99, a colossal text in twenty-one books which represents in many ways the culmination of the tradition of universal historiography in Syriac.⁵¹ However, in unique ways it defines the identity of Christians, and of the Syrian Orthodox, within a multilingual and multi-confessional Christian East. Michael makes explicit a connection that was already present in earlier Syriac chronicles: the succession of Old Testament patriarchs, kings, and prophets finds its direct legacy in the apostolic succession of bishops and patriarchs up to his own day.⁵² This is, therefore the backbone of his entire *Chronicle*, the unbroken succession of God's chosen leaders from Adam to his own day. Importantly, this is not a succession of emperors or caliphs, even though Michael includes those and follows the pattern laid down by Dionysios of Tel Mahre of separating ecclesiastical and secular events. Nevertheless, the overall chronological structure that governs both columns of history is the succession of the leaders of Israel, the Jews, the early Christians patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, and Rome up through the Council of Ephesus in 431, and then the Syrian Orthodox patriarchs (technically resident at Antioch) following Chalcedon. (Michael makes a point to include the succession of patriarchs of the Coptic church and the Armenian church as well, since they were likewise Miaphysite or non-Chalcedonian in confession.)

In terms of Syrian Orthodox identity, Dorothea Weltecke has recently shown how important the concept of the ancient Near East was to Michael, not simply in defining himself as both an 'Aramean' or 'Assyrian' (which he does), but in the sense of attempting to explain to his readers where such

⁴⁹ E.g. Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, ed. by Chabot, x.20, II, 357 (trans.); IV, 378 (text). See also, generally, Riad, *Studies*.

⁵⁰ *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle*, trans. by Hoyland; Palmer, 'Les chroniques'.

⁵¹ Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, ed. by Chabot. See Debié, *L'écriture*, pp. 577–85.

⁵² For this concept in Eusebius, see Johnson, 'Lists'.

nomenclature comes from and why he might ultimately reject the term *Suryaye* (or 'Syrians') in preference for the long-standing Syrian Orthodox self-acclamation, the *Mhaymne* (or believers); paralleling, in the sixth and seventh centuries, the use of the term 'Orthodox' by Greek-speaking Miaphysites, over and against Constantinople's exclusive claim on that term.⁵³ (This echoed, though was not directly taken from, the *Zuqnin Chronicle* which had stated that the Syrian Orthodox descended from Noah's grandson Aram, the son of Shem (Genesis 10.22).) Michael wants his readers to understand that those who have come to be called *Suryaye* 'the Syrians' or *Bnay Surya* 'the people of Syria' are actually the authentic *umta Armaya*, 'the Aramaean people'.

Jacob of Edessa (and John of Litarba's lost history) in the eighth century had argued that the common language of the Chaldeans and Assyrians was Aramaean, which they defined specifically as Hebrew. Michael explicitly rejects this and goes so far as to argue that Syriac — which he calls *leshana Urbhaya*, that is, 'the language of Edessa', and not *leshana Suryaya* — was, in fact, the original language of all of created humanity prior to the Tower of Babel, and that Hebrew and Jewish Aramaic are both descended from *it*, rather than the other way around. In Weltecke's words, 'Compared to the efforts of medieval and early modern European chronographers to connect their history to ancient Troy or to ancient Egypt, Michael's historical rooting of the Syriac Orthodox in the ancient Near East is source-based and academically sound'.⁵⁴ Whatever one might think of the soundness of Michael's reconstructions, here is another example of how Old Testament history, in the universal chronicle genre or form, becomes crucially important for the definition of contemporary medieval political and ethnic boundaries. Michael includes the statement by Dionysios of Tel Mahre that the Syrians never had kings: for Dionysios this was a point of pride that he used in denigrating the Church of the East ('the Nestorians') who, he said, were too closely involved with the Abbasid Caliphate at Baghdad. For Michael, almost four centuries later, the theological enemies were the Melkites, both those who spoke Syriac and those who spoke Greek. To Michael, even though he knew Greek, Greek was a marker of alterity or imperial meddling in the midst of indigenous Christian cultures (especially in the century and a half following the Byzantine recapture of Antioch in 969).

Michael was followed by two major histories out of my chronological scope for this chapter, the *Chronicle of 1234* and the *Chronicon* of Barhebraeus, both

⁵³ Weltecke, 'Michael the Syrian'; see also, more generally, Weltecke, *Die 'Beschreibung der Zeiten'*.

⁵⁴ Weltecke, 'Michael the Syrian', p. 123.

of which reproduced the main lines of the Syriac historiographical tradition as Michael had done but also took it in new directions and are largely independent of Michael's *Chronicle* in terms of organization and argument.⁵⁵ In fact, Barhebraeus takes a much more inclusive picture of Syriac identity than either Dionysios of Tel Mahre or Michael the Syrian, by including both the Church of the East and the Melkite Syriac church as part of his Syrian Orthodox narrative. Certainly by Barhebraeus's day, if not before, it was the preservation of Syriac as a liturgical language of ancient heritage which had become the unifying element, despite persistent doctrinal differences, in a late medieval Muslim world in which almost all Christian theological writing took place in Arabic.

East Syrian Monastic Histories

The situation in the East Syrian world was in certain ways very different: East Syrian writers show almost no interest in civil or secular history. The only work that deals with secular history at all is the *Rish Melle* of John of Phenek (John bar Penkaye) in the seventh century, which, like its contemporary the *Apocalypse of Ps.-Methodius* (originally written in Syriac), attempts to link the events of the rise of Islam in the East with the end of the world.⁵⁶ Instead, East Syrian writers used different mechanisms to organize their histories: they grouped events under the reigning patriarch (*katholikos*), or by a succession of abbots at individual monasteries, or by the establishment of multiple Church of the East monasteries and metropolitan bishoprics in Iraq and Central Asia. They also produced histories of philosophical and rhetorical schools, such as that of the famous school of Nisibis, which, in part, inspired Cassiodorus to establish Vivarium.⁵⁷ In the words of Debié and Taylor,

East Syrian histories are structured as a chain of biographies which are linked together by the interrelationship of the figures described, whether as teachers and pupils, for example, or as successors to earlier bishops or abbots. Remarkably, and perhaps counter-intuitively for readers used to other historiographical traditions, these texts include almost no fixed dates (some have none, few have more than a dozen) and there are only very rare references to reigning shahs, kings, or caliphs.

⁵⁵ See Debié, *L'écriture*, pp. 585–89 (*Chron. 1234*) and pp. 589–94 (Barhebraeus).

⁵⁶ Debié and Taylor, 'Syriac and Syro-Arabic Historical Writing', pp. 169–70. See also Bruns, 'Von Eva und Adam'; Pinggéra, 'Nestorianische Weltchronistik'; Reinink, 'Paideia'; Reinink, 'East Syrian Historiography'. See also Debié, *L'écriture*, pp. 614–16.

⁵⁷ Maas, *Exegesis*.

They were clearly not written to enable comparison or chronological co-ordination with other historical texts.⁵⁸

So, here in the East Syrian tradition we find a different type of reception of Eusebius altogether, where the building of the edifice of the ecumenical church is constructed bishop by bishop, student by student, succession by succession. Although the Syriac authors do not use the Greek word *διαδοχή*, 'succession', the concept was intimately familiar to them (even ingrained), possibly from Eusebius, though perhaps from the Greek collective biographies of philosophers and sophists by Diogenes Laertius, Philostratus, and Eunapius, texts that were circulating at East Syrian rhetorical schools like Nisibis, Jundishapur, Baghdad, or the West Syrian school of Qennesheh.⁵⁹

East Syrian historians, almost all monks, tended to come from elite families that provided education for their sons. Thus, the East Syrian historiographical tradition can claim numerous abbots, bishops, maphrians (i.e. sub-patriarchs), and even two *katholikoi* as historians. Moreover, some historians, like Thomas of Marga, who wrote his *Book of the Abbots* in the 840s, had access to the archives of the *katholikos* and to official church correspondence.⁶⁰ When Thomas discusses the appointment of David bishop of the Tsnaye (China), and Peter bishop of Saba' (Yemen), he says he learned about these appointments through the letters of Mar Timothy I, who was *katholikos* around 800 and who was responsible for a massive organizational project of the East Syrian bishoprics in Central Asia, China, and the Arabian Peninsula.⁶¹ In fact, Thomas is so assiduous in his citation of sources that we can almost reconstruct the monastic library of Beth 'Abe in northern Iraq where he was a monk (about one hundred kilometres north-east of Mosul). Importantly, many of the texts he cites or adapts into his own narrative would, on their own, be labelled as 'hagiography', and it has been highlighted of late that there was a 'hagiographical network of saints' Lives', which centred on monastic foundations and which (as a conception of the circuit of monasteries) circulated among East Syrian

⁵⁸ Debié and Taylor, 'Syriac and Syro-Arabic Historical Writing', p. 167. See also Debié, 'Writing History'.

⁵⁹ On the school culture of the Syriac tradition, with its emphasis on translation from Greek, see, for the West, Tannous ('Syria'; 'You Are What You Read'), and, for the East, Becker, *Fear of God*. The importance of succession lists as a structural tool for the composition of Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* is the subject of Johnson, 'Lists'.

⁶⁰ *Thomas of Marga*, ed. by Budge. See Debié, *L'écriture*, pp. 620–21.

⁶¹ See *Thomas of Marga*, ed. and trans. by Budge, I, 238 and II, 448. On Timothy I and his influence, see Baum and Winkler, *The Church*, pp. 58–64.

historians.⁶² Thomas himself wrote some of these lives as separate works: thus the *Life of Rabban Cyprian* stands as an independent work at the end of his *Book of the Abbots*.

A younger contemporary of Thomas, Isho'dnah of Basra, writing around 865, produced a full scale ecclesiastical history which is now lost — some have posited that the Arabic *Chronicle of Siirt* (1036), a massive history of the Church of the East probably translated in part from an original Syriac text, was penned by Isho'dnah (though this attribution is today denied).⁶³ What does survive is a much shorter work of 140 mini-biographies of the founders of important monasteries called the *Liber castitatis*.⁶⁴ These founders are all linked by their association, usually through their monastic training, with the Great Monastery on Mt. Izla, near Nisibis (in modern south-eastern Turkey), which according to tradition was founded by Abraham of Kashkar in the mid-sixth century. However, Isho'dnah extends the foundation of this monastery back further to a legendary monastic figure from Egypt, Mar Awgen, who was said to have come from Pachomius's monastery in the fourth century to establish monasticism in Persia. Isho'dnah accepts this story but connects Awgen directly to Mt. Izla, thus giving this focal point of his narrative a much earlier pedigree (and an Egyptian one to boot), meanwhile somewhat conflating the biographies of Awgen and Abraham of Kashkar.⁶⁵

The importance of this change appears even more clearly in how Isho'dnah deals with these two and other central, structural figures: almost all of them make pilgrimages to the West, specifically to Jerusalem, Sinai, and Scetis (Wadi Natrun) in the Egyptian desert. These journeys seem to be a self-imposed rite of initiation and they always occur after the monk has been trained in the Scriptures but before he has taken the monastic habit. At one point in Thomas of Marga's *Life of Rabban Cyprian*, he says that Cyprian 'burned with a hot desire' to see the physical places of his faith, and made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Sinai, and Scetis, where he stayed for some time. Similarly, in describing the *katholikos* Isho'yahb III's trip to Syria (as part of an embassy to meet with Heraclius in Aleppo in 630), Isho'yahb found in Antioch a marble sarcophagus with bones of the apostles in it. Thomas says Isho'yahb 'burned

⁶² Debié and Taylor, 'Syriac and Syro-Arabic Historical Writing', p. 174; Debié, 'Temps linéaire'; Debié, 'Writing History'.

⁶³ See Nautin, 'L'auteur'; Fiey, 'Īšō'dnāh'. See also Wood, *The Chronicle of Seert; Chronicle of Siirt*, ed. by Scher.

⁶⁴ *Livre de la Chasteté*, ed. by Chabot. See Debié, *L'écriture*, pp. 621–23.

⁶⁵ Jullien, 'Aux sources'.

with a hot desire' and 'a complete greediness' to bring it back to Iraq, and in the end God helped him accomplish this.

Thus, in both Thomas and Isho'dnah, there is an intentional westward orientation to these foundational figures in the history of the Church of the East, not necessarily towards Byzantium, though that is a part of it, but towards the Holy Land, and also, towards the foundational sites of Christian monastic culture in Egypt.⁶⁶ These two Church of the East historians in the ninth century, contemporary with the 'Macedonian Renaissance' in Constantinople, are writing long works of monastic and ecclesiastical history that try to claim the entire scope of eastern monasticism for themselves. True, they are aware of the missions to the East that resulted in churches all along the Silk Road, the conversion of Sogdians, and eventually the 'Nestorian Monument' in Xi'an,⁶⁷ but the great majority of their narratives deal with the geography and organization of the Church of the East in former Sasanian territory, now under the Abbasids, as well as consistently, and structurally, with reference to the sites of early Christian history in the West (i.e. the Holy Land).

Greek World Chronicles, Ninth to Twelfth Centuries

George the Monk (George Monachos/Hamartalos), writing probably between 843–45,⁶⁸ but possibly as late as the 870s, borrowed heavily from Malalas and Theophanes, and focused on ecclesiastical history, from the creation of Adam up to the end of Iconoclasm.⁶⁹ His extensive coverage of the age of Augustus has been noted by multiple scholars. In the context of the present argument, this extended discussion of the age of Jesus's Incarnation fits nicely with the view that biblical and ecclesiastical history were a continuum of divine action in the world. Such an approach finds parallels in several other universal chronicles as well. To highlight this emphasis of George's *Chronicle*, it might be noted that an important fourteenth-century manuscript of a translation of this chronicle into Old Church Slavonic — the chronicle was also translated into Old Georgian — includes 127 miniatures of Old Testament, New Testament, and

⁶⁶ I discuss this westward orientation of Thomas of Marga and Isho'dnah of Basra more fully in Johnson, *Literary Territories*, pp. 115–32.

⁶⁷ On which see, generally, Walker, 'From Nisibis to Xi'an'. See also Johnson, 'Silk Road Christians' and Johnson, 'The Languages of Christianity on the Silk Roads.'

⁶⁸ Afinogenov, 'The Date.'

⁶⁹ *Chronicon Georgii Monachi*, ed. by De Boor and Wirth. See also Afinogenov, 'Le manuscrit.'

some historical episodes. While the visual depiction of scenes from a history or chronicle is not unique to universal chronicles — after all, perhaps the preeminent example of illustrated historiography, the Madrid Skylitzes, is not universal in scope — the practice nevertheless shows affinities throughout Byzantium between universal historiography and commentaries on the Old Testament, not least the substantial corpus of Hexaemeral literature. One thinks of the illustrated versions of Cosmas Indicopleustes, illustrations which may go back to Cosmas himself in the sixth century but were certainly copied and imitated in Byzantium.⁷⁰

Symeon Logothetes (fl. mid-tenth cent.) wrote a world chronicle extending from the creation of Adam up to 948, which is connected to George Monachos at a number of places.⁷¹ This *Chronicle*, labelled in previous generations as the work of a Leo Grammatikos (a scribe of 1013) or a Theodosios of Melitene, served as a site of rewriting and republication from a number of points of view, especially with regard to the later sections, which were changed and extended according to other authors' interests. To illustrate the incestuous nature of the chronicle traditions (and Byzantine chronicles more generally), it could be noted that one of the three main versions of Symeon Logothetes is entitled, in fact, the *Continuation of George Monachos to 963*.⁷² This type of overlap, to the point of indistinguishability between authors and their works, signals also the contentiousness of this era in the memory of the Byzantines: thus, the original *Chronicle* of Symeon Logothetes was pro-Romanos I Lekapenos (r. 920–44) in its contemporary sections; whereas the so-called *Continuation of George Monachos to 963* favoured Lekapenos's rivals, the Phokas family.⁷³ Although the complicated political biases of Byzantine historiography are less important for the present argument, it is valuable to reflect even briefly on how these different Constantinopolitan families and dynasties were all attempting to write themselves into long historiographical works that, despite addressing this contentious tenth century, for much of their bulk focus on biblical and antiquarian history. In this vein it is worth mentioning another chronicle surviving under Symeon's name, preserved in a single manuscript of the late twelfth century. The *Chronicle of Pseudo-Symeon*, as it is normally called, begins with crea-

⁷⁰ See the study of these images and the codices that preserve them by Kominko, *The World of Kosmas*.

⁷¹ Symeon Magistros, *Chronicon*, ed. by Wahlgren.

⁷² See Sotiroudis, *Die handschriftliche Überlieferung*; Markopoulos, 'Sur les deux versions'; Markopoulos 'Hē chronographia'.

⁷³ See Wahlgren, 'Original'.

tion and (like the *Continuation of George Monachos*) ends at 963. This is the third branch of the three main recensions of Symeon Logothetes' *Chronicle*. The manuscript itself (BnF, MS gr. 1712) is interesting for having combined Pseudo-Symeon with Leo the Deacon and then with Psellos's *Chronographia*. The latter, a hugely important history for all subsequent Byzantine historians, not least Anna Komnene who imitates it very closely, has lost its (no doubt grand and rhetorically sophisticated) prologue precisely for the purpose of the text being combined *into* a universal history (which it was specifically *not*) alongside these other, strikingly malleable historical texts.⁷⁴

John Zonaras's (d. c. 1150) long universal chronicle, the *Epitome of Histories*, extends from creation to the death of Alexios I Komnenos in 1118.⁷⁵ Though borrowing from John Skylitzes and Michael Psellos for his discussion of Byzantine subjects, he engages a broad range of sources for archaic and ancient history. It seems likely that Zonaras and George Kedrenos shared a source which knew the (mid-tenth-century) *Excerpta historica* of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, due to the fact that they both cite a horoscope attributed to Vettius Valens from the second century CE but which was actually cast around 990, as explained by David Pingree.⁷⁶ Zonaras was very critical of the reign of Alexios I, a subject which has been much discussed. More important for my purposes is the heavy emphasis on Roman history in Zonaras, to the exclusion of ancient Greece. His sources for Roman history included Polybios and Plutarch, among others.⁷⁷ Not since George Synkellos in the early ninth century was a Byzantine chronicler more explicit or concerned about his sources, yet in both cases it has been noted that there is a clear erosion of interest in ancient Greece, especially when compared to John Malalas in the sixth century, who seems to have had direct access not just to the basic curriculum of classical poetry but to a rather full corpus of Greek tragedy and some Hellenistic verse as well.⁷⁸ This focus on Rome has been linked to the mature consciousness of twelfth-century writers as *Rhomaioi* and as the real legacy of Rome, in the face of the crusaders from the West claiming Roman authority, and their autocephalous orthodox brethren in the north, claiming Kiev and later Moscow for the same purpose. But it is significant that Zonaras, the longest and most exacting

⁷⁴ See Papaioannou, 'The Aesthetics'.

⁷⁵ John Zonaras, *Epitomē historiōn*, ed. by Büttner-Wobst and Pinder. See also Grigoriadis, *Linguistic and Literary Studies*; Trapp, *Militärs*.

⁷⁶ Pingree, 'The Horoscope'; Banchich and Lane, *The History of Zonaras*, pp. 10–11.

⁷⁷ On Zonaras's sources, see DiMaio, 'Smoke in the Wind'.

⁷⁸ Jeffreys, 'Writers'.

chronicle of middle Byzantium, which dares to criticize even the founder of the Komnenian dynasty, was not yet trumpeting the inheritance of *Hellas* as an identity marker but was, through and through, a Roman.⁷⁹

The *Historical Synopsis* of Constantine Manasses (d. c. 1187) has recently been the subject of much interest, particularly in its relationship to the emergence of the sophisticated novelistic literature in the twelfth century.⁸⁰ Constantine himself is the author of a now fragmentary novel.⁸¹ Like that novel — and like his four-book narrative of an embassy to the patriarchate of Jerusalem, the *Hodoiporikon* from 1160 — Manasses' *Historical Synopsis* is in verse, borrowing much from Homer but from other classical poets as well.⁸² It has long been noted that Manasses, despite ostensibly pitching his *Chronicle* for a broad audience with a swift narrative and racy scenes, incorporates surprisingly recondite metaphors and allusions, some found among Byzantine authors only in the very *recherché* commentaries of Manasses' contemporary John Tzetzes.⁸³

However, it now seems that in some cases Manasses' esoteric references can be traced to common sources with Tzetzes and others, not least earlier chronicles such as that of Malalas. Furthermore, it has long been recognized that both Malalas's sources and the original form of his *Chronicle* are probably impossible to recover with precision, due to the relatively late and truncated character of the manuscript tradition.⁸⁴ The chief witness to Malalas dates to around 1200,

⁷⁹ Magdalino, 'Aspects'. For a modern take on this idea, see Kaldellis, *Byzantine Republic*.

⁸⁰ *Constantini Manassis breviarium chronicum*, ed. by Lampsidis. See Reinsch, 'Historia ancilla litterarum?'

⁸¹ Nevertheless, I wonder if Jeffrey's (and Nilsson's) emphasis on novelistic *ekphrasis* in Manasses is too constrained by rhetorical or genre expectations. I would lean in the direction of Mullett, 'Novelisation in Byzantium', that perhaps the 'novelization' of historiography is part of a much broader trend in Byzantine literature towards the adoption of narrative, and not limited to the influence of the Greek Novel or the new Byzantine novels being written in the twelfth century. It seems to me that what Manasses is doing is much more *metaphrasis* at a high level, more akin to the *Paraphrase of the Gospel of John* into hexameters done by Nonnus of Panopolis in the fifth century. On the varied strategies for incorporating fictional devices into historical narrative (and vice versa) in medieval literature, see Agapitos and Mortensen, eds, *Medieval Narratives*.

⁸² Mullett, 'Novelisation in Byzantium'; Nilsson, 'Discovering Literariness'; Nilsson, 'To Narrate the Events'; Nilsson, 'The Same Story'; Nilsson and Nyström, 'To Compose, Read, and Use a Byzantine Text'.

⁸³ That is, Tzetzes' commentaries on the *Iliad* but also, incredibly, commentaries on his own letters. This is the self-reflective world of the twelfth century: see Nilsson, *Raconter Byzance*.

⁸⁴ On Malalas's sources, see, generally, Jeffrey, Croke, and Scott, eds, *Studies in John Malalas*; Beaucamp and Augusta-Boularot, eds, *Recherches*.

thus only a generation later than Manasses himself. Interestingly, Manasses does not limit himself to colleagues like Tzetzes or to universal chronicles like that of Malalas. He also draws on the sixth-century ecclesiastical historian Evagrius Scholasticus, otherwise little used among Byzantine authors in this context. Thus, perhaps, unlike the Syriac tradition in which there was an ever-increasing focus on ecclesiastical history, to the degree that secular history was in the ninth century separated out to allow the ecclesiastical stream to be all the purer, Manasses shows a flexibility in source material and organization which defies expectation.⁸⁵ In some ways this is not surprising given the very real renaissance of letters in twelfth-century Constantinople, but it is nevertheless remarkable that Manasses, so comfortable with recondite classical allusion on one hand, while simultaneously adopting certain ‘popularizing’ techniques of the novel on the other, is committed to incorporating late antique ecclesiastical history from an unsung hero of the genre. Manasses is thus an important example of the hybridity of the universal chronicle in the twelfth-century East, writing precisely at the same time as Michael the Syrian.⁸⁶ While both adopted for themselves the received concern for correlating the Old and New Testaments with whatever ancient history they could put their hands on (via earlier chronicles, mostly), there was still room for manoeuvre in terms of ecclesiastical history, shown here through Evagrius Scholasticus and in Michael’s case the incorporation of Dionysios of Tel Mahre.

Conclusions

The Syriac historiographical tradition — just to take one example from the multitude of eastern Christian literary cultures — was thriving during the very period of history for which Byzantine scholars struggle to pinpoint what is even happening in Constantinople. As discussed above, to resolve this prob-

⁸⁵ Nilsson, ‘The Same Story’; Croke, ‘Uncovering’; Afinogenov, ‘Some Observations’.

⁸⁶ One might also mention in this regard a contemporary of Manasses, Michael Glykas (d. c. 1200), who used the latter’s verse chronicle for his own long prose chronicle (ed. by Bekker). Glykas dedicated his *Chronicle*, which concentrates heavily on ancient history, to his son, as a form of moral enrichment. One is reminded of John Stobaios in the sixth century, and, to be certain, the shared encyclopaedic trends of Byzantine anthologies and historiography (among many varied genres) explored by Paolo Odorico, ‘La cultura’, as a culture of *syllogé*, which continues to be a focus of current research (Macé and Van Deun, eds, *Encyclopedic Trends*). Like Zonaras and Manasses before him, Glykas concentrates on Rome, to the near exclusion of classical Greece.

lem, they have to rely heavily on less than satisfactory apparatus: the importation of a Palestinian-Eusebian tradition of chronography into the capital, and the teleology of 'renaissance' as a concept. But there is no need for 'renaissance' if Byzantium is a 'big tent'. To go a step further, we should perhaps eschew the concept of a strictly imperial 'Byzantium' altogether for the sixth to twelfth centuries and instead begin the fruitful work of trying to compare eastern Christian traditions with the more familiar Greek and Latin ones, in the hopes of seeing the Mediterranean, Europe, and Mesopotamia as a unified whole with a shared historiographical inheritance and competing, but interdependent, communal identities.

Many other texts, even other universal chronicles, could be brought to bear on this discussion if I had extended my survey earlier, later, or further to the West or East. Going earlier would have entailed a discussion of sixth- and seventh-century chronographers like John Malalas and the *Chronicon paschale* (including the difficult question of their use of sources), as well as the lost ecclesiastical histories by writers such as John of Antioch.⁸⁷ Later than the twelfth century, I have left out, on the Syriac side, the *Chronicle of 1234* and the ecclesiastical and secular *Chronica* of Barhebraeus (d. 1286), both hugely important thirteenth-century writers in the Syrian Orthodox tradition; on the later Palaiologan side, I have left the *Historical Synopsis* of Theodore Skoutariotes (ends 1282), the *Chronicle* of Ephrem of Ainus (ends with 1261), that of the post-1453 Laonikos Chalkokondyles and Doukas, as well as the numerous Slavonic translations of George Monachos, Pseudo-Symeon, Manasses, and others. I have additionally left to the side a more complete discussion of later East Syrian historiography, especially its reception among Christian historians writing in Arabic, such as Elias of Nisibis (Elias bar Shinaye), and even more, the connections between Christian and Muslim Arabic historiography.⁸⁸

Certain conclusions, however, are available even on the basis of what is, admittedly, a cursory comparison:

1. Both Greek and Syriac universal chronicles reuse earlier material, sometimes almost wholesale, both with and without attribution. This hardly needs saying. However, I might emphasize the point that *what is used* is not always predictable: the *Chronicle of Zuqnin* uses mostly ecclesiastical history and only turns political closer to its own day. Also, the *Chronicle of Zuqnin* is not used by anyone after it, including Michael the Syrian. As a parallel, Constantine

⁸⁷ Van Nuffelen, 'Socrate le Scholastique'.

⁸⁸ Elias of Nisibis, *Opus chronologicum*, ed. by Chabot and Brooks.

Manasses quotes from an ecclesiastical history, namely Evagrius Scholasticus, which is rarely cited by other Byzantine historians.

2. In terms of the survival of evidence, Syriac historiography is characterized for the most part by very early manuscripts, and not infrequently we have the autograph versions themselves. Moreover, such manuscripts were prized by Syriac libraries in the medieval world, and the amazing collecting work of Mushe of Nisibis was responsible for critical examples of the extant Syriac historiography, including the earliest version of Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*. In other words, Syriac scribes *knew what they had*. As one goes later in the Greek tradition the gap between composition and surviving copy narrows, but we rarely (possibly never?) have Byzantine universal chronicles surviving in the hand of the author prior to the Palaiologan period.
3. It is obvious, but perhaps deserves reiterating as a corollary to the last point, that the plentiful colophons in Syriac manuscripts beginning in the fifth century add another dimension for the history of historiography and self-awareness on the part of the authors and scribes.
4. Finally, the emphasis on Old Testament patriarchs and their continuity with Apostles and patriarchs of the early church is itself a kind of rewritten biblical history. To be sure, all universal chronicles maintain a connection to the larger history of the great empires. Nevertheless, I would like to see this emphasis on the Old Testament as correlative with the Syriac and Greek focus on ecclesiastical history. Beyond the Bible itself, there was also the very real legacy of Eusebius's historical works in the East, from the fifth century on in Syriac. The apparently intermittent use of Eusebius in Byzantium — often indirectly through Synkellos and others — is not the ultimate key to understanding the literary trends in eastern historiography as a whole.

In her article 'Old Testament "History" and the Byzantine Chronicle', which appeared in the proceedings from the Dumbarton Oaks Symposium *The Old Testament in Byzantium*, Elizabeth Jeffreys makes the following statement about the 'historical appropriation' of the Old Testament among Byzantine chroniclers:

This ambiguity — the blurring of secular history and sacred history — is apparent in many aspects of the Christianized environment of Byzantium. It is especially apparent in the Christian world chronicle, a series of texts that have been frequently categorized as quintessentially Byzantine.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Jeffreys, 'Old Testament "History"', p. 157.

She adduces the literary history of the *Book of Jubilees*, alongside a close reading of John Malalas's *Chronicle*, in order to buttress this claim of perennial ambiguity in the composition of Byzantine historiography. Further, she concludes with the statement that, 'at some point, Byzantine rhetoric, both theological and political, developed the view that the Byzantines in particular were the New Israel, the new Chosen People, God's New Elect'. She points to the David-Cyprus plates as a sign that this view was already present in Heraclius's day; however, she admits that, between the seventh and twelfth centuries, when she says the view became as prevalent as the idea that Constantinople was the New Rome, 'a stage is missing'.

I am not convinced that there is something so clear-cut as a 'stage' that could be located with any precision in this history of self-reflection among Byzantine historians. Instead, I would argue that, across numerous genres, what one could *do* with the Old Testament was malleable, and the result depended in large part on how the chronicler viewed the Bible, and the acts of God, *within* (or extending *into*) the tradition of ecclesiastical history. It is this felt connection between the Old Testament patriarchs and the apostolic history of the church that shows up most strongly in the universal chronicles, not, I would suggest, the connection between the Old Testament patriarchs or kings and the Byzantine emperors.⁹⁰ The shared identity between Israel and the Byzantines came through the historiography of episcopal and patriarchal succession. True, one frequently sees the focus of Byzantine historians alighting on the secular framework of their society (and I would not seek to obscure that aspect of their identity) but, alongside parallel trends like the flourishing Hexaemeron/exegetical tradition in both Syriac and Greek, the value of God's active work in the created world continued to resonate with Byzantine historians. This is true especially in view of a specific literary theodicy that was both imperial in focus and trans-imperial (global/cosmic) in implications. The political self-definition of many historians in the Byzantine Empire was, on one hand, *par* for the course and, on the other, clearly does not dominate the historical consciousness of all historiography from Byzantium.

Whether or not these many different works purport to be world chronicles (in the familiar Greek tradition of Africanus and Eusebius up to George Synkellos and Theophanes), the *biblical* structure of history, from the creation of the world into the present, is a fundamental given. It is fundamental chronologically but also in terms of literary *mimesis*. The chronological basis is clear from, for example, Jacob of Edessa in the West Syrian tradition, who, in addi-

⁹⁰ Cf. Rapp, 'Old Testament Models'.

tion to his influential continuation of Eusebius, also wrote a commentary on the Hexaemeron ('the six days of creation' from Genesis), an extremely popular and versatile genre in the eastern churches (often overlapping with historiography), with examples in Greek by Basil of Caesarea, George of Pisidia (in verse), Anastasius of Sinai, and by numerous writers in Syriac and Armenian.⁹¹ Moreover, the characters of Thomas of Marga's *Book of the Abbots* are constantly aping the qualities of the Old Testament prophets. Elijah is extremely common as a model for these monastic founders, and one supposes that, in addition to the mimesis of the character himself, Syriac ecclesiastical historians, in part, saw themselves as writing in the tradition of the biblical books of I–IV Kingdoms (I–II Samuel; I–II Kings). Indeed, numerous commentaries on the book of Kings survive in Syriac, and the manuscript tradition of the standard Peshitta translation of Kings shows ample editorial and scholastic interest.⁹² Thus, one might say that historiography in multiple forms was endemic in the Syriac world, both East and West. This was true from the fifth century, in the form of Syriac translations of Eusebius, and from the sixth century, in the form of original historiographical works in Syriac, and continued unbroken throughout the Byzantine period.

⁹¹ Ter Haar Romeny, ed., *Jacob of Edessa*; Thomson, ed., *The Syriac Version of the Hexaemeron*; Greatrex, 'Memre One, Two, and Four of the Hexaemeron of Jacob of Edessa'; Anastasius of Sinai, *Hexaemeron*, ed. and trans. by Kuehn and Baggarly.

⁹² See Dyk, *Language System*; Walter, *Studies in the Peshitta of Kings*; and Williams, *Studies in the Syntax*.

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THE BYZANTINE PAST AS TEXT: HISTORIOGRAPHY AND POLITICAL RENEWAL C. 900

Emmanuel C. Bourbouhakis

I

In what has become a canonical article on the subject of Byzantium's historiographic revival at the turn of the ninth century, Ihor Ševčenko chronicled 'The Search for the Past in Byzantium around the Year 800'. In it he surveyed the varieties of historical writing undertaken after an unusually long fallow period during the devastating Arab conquests of formerly Roman territories, a catastrophe eventually compounded by the internecine conflicts over iconoclasm.¹ Ševčenko concluded by offering an estimate of the role historical writing would come to play in the cultural and political regeneration of Byzantium over the next century and a half; what scholars came to label the Macedonian 'renaissance'. Ševčenko's appraisal of the sudden historiographic revival was measured. 'The search for the past', he concluded, 'stands at the beginnings of the first Byzantine humanism.'² Never one to belabour the significance of his scholarship, Ševčenko did not spell out the implications of this verdict. What he had effectively done, however, was put historiography at the crux of Byzantium's imminent political and cultural revival. It has thus become widely accepted

¹ Ševčenko, 'The Search for the Past', pp. 279–93.

² Ševčenko, 'The Search for the Past', p. 293.

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that the sudden resurgence of historiography from this period onward was a political and ideological project, an attempt by Byzantine intellectuals, many of whom were part of the governing elite, to regain their historical bearings after a profoundly disorienting period which had brought not only territorial losses, but a concomitant loss of confidence in their political identity, as well. What we have come to call Byzantine humanism — whose significance remains a contested subject — spoke to this need for political and ideological reorientation. But the role of the inherited historiographic canon in this humanistic project remains unclear.³

Whereas Ševčenko focused on the newly vibrant writing of history of the ‘long’ ninth century, it was the systematic *re-reading* of the received Greek historiographic tradition which would prove intellectually formative to the overhaul of both identity and ideology during this period of imperial reconstitution and consolidation. I focus on the study or uses of the Greek historiographic corpus read by Byzantine scholars, as distinct from contemporary historical writing, because I think it more clearly reveals the role assigned to historical thinking at a time when Byzantine elites felt the need to buttress a political identity fractured by conquest from without and conflict from within. Contrary to some opinion, I would argue that the study of historical texts in Byzantium was not a narrowly academic exercise. It was pivotal to the perception of their own place *in* history.

It has been proposed that Byzantium’s cultural revival in the period leading up to the first millennium, what Paul Lemerle designated as *Le premier humanisme byzantin* in the book by the same title, not only preceded but significantly nurtured the conditions for the military and economic expansion of the empire.⁴ Quite apart from populating the ranks of the state and church

³ I use the term ‘humanism’ with considerable trepidation since I share many of the misgivings about appropriating labels designed to confer greater legitimacy to Byzantine cultural traditions and practices which were ultimately quite different in kind from those inaugurated by Italian and early modern European intellectuals of a later age. But the term has lost much of its specific content as scholars, including Western medievalists, have adopted it to describe periods at least as far removed from the Humanism of Salutati and Erasmus as Byzantium was. Certainly, Byzantium has as much claim to having anticipated European humanism at this time as the Western Middle Ages, and the role of Byzantine scholars in the early days of Italian humanistic efforts has only grown more prominent with more study. See Monfasani, *Byzantine Scholars*; cf. Wilson, *From Byzantium to Italy*. It must nevertheless be admitted that terms like ‘humanism’ may obscure far more than they reveal about Byzantine cultural practices, including the study of historiography, making their re-evaluation more difficult.

⁴ Treadgold, ‘Revival’, p. 306. Treadgold, following Mango, has argued that the initial impe-

administrations with better educated officials, the mix of curiosity, enjoyment, and regard for learning fostered by these efforts, I would argue, was bound to transform the cultural sensibility as well as the ideological intuitions of the elites who participated in the revitalization of Byzantium.⁵ The contribution of historiography to the *renovatio* of Byzantine imperial identity seems to me at once indisputable *and* elusive. On the one hand there is no denying that the abundant textual remains of Greek historiography became an important touchstone for Byzantine elites who were trying to forge a new template for the governance of the empire. They were perceived as offering guidance on how to best contend with everything from palace intrigue to diplomatic negotiations with their ‘barbarian’ neighbours, as well as a broad spectrum of imperial affairs besides. On the other hand, there is no easily identifiable single aspect of cultural or political discourse from this period that might be directly attributed to the renewed appetite for the reading of history.

Although referring to Western medieval historiography, Gabrielle Spiegel has written insightfully of ‘the ways in which the past itself constituted an ideological structure of argument, one that sought legitimacy from the borrowed authority of history understood as [...] an artifact of historiography’.⁶ I cite Spiegel as an especially eloquent proponent of the view that medieval historiography attempted to ‘address contemporary political life via a displacement to the past’, often by employing literary means more commonly associated with medieval fiction or epic.⁷ Such displacements have been a familiar trope of modern scholarship on historiography.⁸ But in an intellectual setting which

tus for the wider cultural revival came largely from iconophile efforts to vindicate their position after 780 by combing through any literature which might lend support to the intellectual framework they had erected around their doctrinal position. See Treadgold, ‘Revival’, p. 315. But where Lemerle (see below) and others saw the ‘classicism’ of this period as integral to the project of doctrinal vindication, Mango argued that it was incidental to it, the result of an intellectual ‘spill-over’. See Mango, ‘The Availability of Books’, pp. 44–45.

⁵ Treadgold makes the important point that discussion of Byzantine ‘scholars’ often occurs separately from that of Byzantine governance. In fact, the intellectual revival which undergirded the ideological restoration of the ninth and tenth centuries was carried out largely by the same individuals who comprised Byzantium’s administrative and political elite across both church and state. See Treadgold, ‘Revival’, p. 311.

⁶ Spiegel, *The Past as Text*, p. xii.

⁷ Spiegel, *The Past as Text*, p. xiii.

⁸ Some of us are old enough to recall being assigned E. H. Carr’s *What Is History?*, a staple of the Anglo-American syllabus in undergraduate seminars dealing with what was then called ‘historical method’. Carr took the view that most historical writing revealed as much, if not more,

placed a premium on traditions of learning founded on close study of manuscripts, an ideologically structured reading of history was bound to foreground the *written-ness* of the past, its embodiment as a verbal construct, or what we have come to call its *textuality*.

Approximately half a century either side of 900, Byzantium produced two outstanding and notably original examples of engagement with the traditions of Greek historiography. The first of these monumental cultural projects was the unprecedented inventory of historical writings profiled in the wide-ranging *Bibliothèque*, itself a largely retrospective project of intellectual history by the ninth-century scholar, state functionary, and, eventually, patriarch, Photios. The second was the *Excerpta*, an even more ambitious effort to distil lessons on a surprising variety of subjects touching on governance, morality, imperial administration, ethnography, culture, and ideology more generally, by collating the full corpus of extant Greek historiography into broadly utilitarian thematic sections.⁹ While these two projects have long been held to form part of an approximately continuous effort at revitalizing the intellectual life of Constantinople (Lemerle's *humanism byzantin*), opinion has wavered on whether the scholarship we find in these works, including their respective treatment of historiography, 'was a matter more of learning for learning's sake than of practical knowledge'.¹⁰ I will return towards the end of my paper to the question of why the political and ideological subtext of such learning has often been discounted. I should like first to offer summary sketches of the two works in question, the *Bibliothèque* and the *Excerpta*. For while each was composed with distinct aims in mind, they both spoke to consonant preoccupations. Rather significantly, given our concern here, each project maintained a parallax perspective of sorts on history as both past *and as text*, a duality which contributed to the formal sensibil-

about the preoccupations and anxieties of its own time, 'displacing' them, as Spiegel might say, into the past and seeming to offer lessons affirmed by the outcome of events. The Byzantine texts in question here would appear to reverse the alleged displacement, bringing historical writing from other periods to bear directly on the present and the future.

⁹ For bibliography on each text, see the notes to the respective discussions below.

¹⁰ Treadgold, 'Revival', p. 310. Treadgold illustrates his point about the idle or non-instrumental nature of such scholarship by observing that Byzantine intellectuals were 'more likely to spend [their] time memorizing Homer than inventing gunpowder'. But the instrumentality or uses of close study of Homer or Herodotos is not necessarily exhausted by the capacity to produce immediately practicable applications. To say as much would be to conclude that Ptolemaic, Byzantine, or Italian classicism produced no real effect on the thinking and decision-making of the generations who studied these texts, a proposition which flies in the face of so much scholarship on the links between education and ideology.

ity surrounding the genre of history and helped set the stage for the extraordinary experiments in Byzantine historical writing in succeeding centuries.¹¹

Among the handful of Byzantine works known to scholars outside of the discipline on account of its having preserved summaries of now lost ancient literature, especially historiography, Photios's *Bibliothēke* remains a testament to the cultural oecumenism of both its author and of the intellectual climate of his time. This enormous work has rightly been seen as marking the start of a cultural efflorescence which would only abate with the final collapse of Constantinople's defences in 1453. Most likely composed in stages during the period between the mid to late ninth century,¹² the *Bibliothēke*, or as one early manuscript would have it, the Μυριόβιβλος ('A Plenitude of Books'), surveys an eclectic selection of some 280 prose texts. These were Christian, pagan, and secular in content, across a variety of genres, in all amounting to some 1600 pages of Greek text in eight volumes of the now standard Budé edition.¹³ As already mentioned, nearly half of the texts surveyed by Photios have since been lost, raising important questions about cultural reception and valuation at this time. We are thus dependent on the *Bibliothēke* for our knowledge of key prose texts from antiquity, most notably precious works of ancient Greek historiography.

In fact, historiography is the single largest and, arguably, most coherent genre profiled in Photios's prose miscellany. A total of thirty-three histori-

¹¹ I am referring here to such *sui generis* historical works as Michael Psellos's *Chronographia*, Anna Komnena's *Alexias*, or Eustathios's *Conquest of Thessalonike*, each of which was arguably without precedent in the annals of either ancient or late antique Greek historiography. Although we have excellent surveys of middle Byzantine historiography in Karpozilos and Treadgold's multi-volume surveys of medieval Greek historical writing, we still lack for studies of these works which might foreground their formal novelty. This has allowed Byzantine historical works to appear rather staid in the scholarship.

¹² Hägg, 'Photius at Work', pp. 213–22.

¹³ The bibliography on the *Bibliothēke* is both extensive and disparate and deserves to be gathered under one roof. A serviceable introduction to the contents of the work and the issues they raise may be found in Photios, *The Bibliotheca*, trans. by Wilson. The commonly transliterated title Βιβλιοθήκη is not found on any manuscript older than the sixteenth century, while Μυριόβιβλος accompanies the work in the fourteenth-century BnF, MS suppl. gr. 256. The two oldest manuscripts, thought to belong to distinct lines of descent, Venice, Marc., MS gr. 450 dated to the tenth century, and Marc., MS gr. 451, to the twelfth, both read: Ἀπογραφὴ καὶ συναριθμησις τῶν ἀνεγνωσμένων ἡμῖν βιβλίων ὧν εἰς κεφαλαιώδη διάγνωσιν ὁ ἡγαπημένος ἡμῶν ἀδελφὸς Τάρσιος ἐξηγήσατο. ἔστι δὲ ταῦτα εἴκοσι δεόντων ἐφ' ἐνὶ τριακόσια. For a discussion of the manuscripts, see the preface to *Bibliothèque*, trans. by Henry, 1; cf. Treadgold, *The Nature of the 'Bibliotheca'*, pp. 81–96. The conventional choice of *Bibliothēke* is meant only to be expedient. It should not be taken as an indication of the work's aims, which remain much discussed.

ans, some of truly prodigious length, are abridged and their form analysed in thirty-nine entries or *codices*. Besides making him perhaps the best read scholar of ancient historical literature in the Middle Ages, Photios's profiles of subsequently lost historical works, including Arrian's seventeen books of *Parthika*, *Bithyniaka*, and *Events after Alexander*; Theopompos's *Philippika*; all forty books of Diodoros Siculos and the twenty-four of Appian; Memnon's history of Heraclea Pontica; or the lengthy histories of Ktesias, Olympiodoros, Praxagoras, and Agatharchides, for many of which he is often our only surviving witness, have assured him a permanent place in any history of Greek historiography.¹⁴ Indeed, Photios arguably produced the earliest profile of historiography *as a genre*, noting shifts in style alongside differences in content.¹⁵ But while the *Bibliotheke* is prized for its stewardship of the Greek historiographical tradition, the function or significance of allocating so much space to historical texts has often been elided in the scholarship.

As its scale and scope suggest, the *Bibliotheke* was not aimed at leisure. Taken as a whole, Photios's compilation reveals a decidedly utilitarian bent. The selection of texts covers a broad cross section of subjects which a well-educated aspirant to the administration of church and state might want to consult.¹⁶ The anticipated audience, represented by Photios's own brother Tarasios, the ostensible dedicatee of the work, were men who required guidance in the voluminous canon of authoritative literature on the prosaic matters surveyed in the *Bibliotheke* (which may explain, in part, the conspicuous exclusion of poetry from Photios's otherwise comprehensive survey). Unsurprisingly, history assumed a rather prominent — some have even argued for a central or decisive — place in this didactic scheme. I shall return to this question pres-

¹⁴ McGilvery, *Arrian's Events*.

¹⁵ Even a cursory glance at the *Bibliotheke's* table of contents will quickly demonstrate the share of the work devoted to historiography. What scholarship there is on the historiographic portions of the work reflects interest in particular historians and their text rather than on Photios's wider assessment of historical writing per se, e.g. Mendel, 'Greek and Roman History'. Unfortunately, the only work dedicated to the historiographic portions of the *Bibliotheke* fails to persuade by making the manifestly exaggerated claim that Photios sought to provide comprehensive surveys of the past rather than to profile the representations of that past. See Klinkenberg, 'De Photii Bibliothecae codicibus historicis'.

¹⁶ The *Bibliotheke* was not intended to replace the texts it distilled, as has sometimes been suggested in order to account for the loss of so many of the texts it reviews. Its entries were clearly meant to serve as an index of pertinent subjects to be looked up as the need arose, or as one scholar has put it: 'Photius is no historian, and his *Bibliotheca* is in fact a notebook of a scholar interested in having the information at hand'. See Mendel, 'Greek and Roman History', p. 198.

ently. As for the ideological or broadly strategic thread running through the *Bibliothēke's* historiographic chapters, it may be summed up as the fate of successive empires in the east (Persian, Macedonian, and Roman), complemented by Rome's struggle to shore up its legitimacy along its eastern frontier, what would eventually form the heart of the Byzantine Empire. Thus Photios focuses on the otherwise arcane Greek and Roman mythographic accounts of political legitimacy in Appian, noting the accounts of Aeneas and the Roman kings, or how Egypt came under Roman rule, to the exclusion of much else in the text modern scholars would care to know about.¹⁷ Similarly, Photios summarizes those parts of Josephus's *Antiquitates* which describe the political rationale of Rome's interventions in Judaea.¹⁸ As Mendel has noted, 'about 95% of the information of the historical *codices* cover [such] issues'.¹⁹ Photios was interested in the facts of imperial hegemony which formed the relevant background to Roman, i.e. Byzantine, political identity.

Some have seen a not so subtle signpost of the *Bibliothēke's* latent ideological programme in the work's dedicatory epistle, where Photios links the composition of the *Bibliothēke* to his departure on an upcoming embassy to the Abbasid Caliphate.²⁰ Did the prospect of a potentially perilous journey to Baghdad stir Photios to create a more permanent record of his prodigious reading, as a testament perhaps to his scholarly temperament? Others, myself included, find such a solely personal motive unconvincing.

Instead, it may be that the specific mission to the Arab Muslim capital concentrated Photios's mind on the ideological dimension of the empire's predicament, and that this prompted his specific focus in the historiographic *codices* of the *Bibliothēke*. But the dedicatory epistle is, at best, circumstantial evidence. Even if we did not have it, however, the ideological tenor of the historiographic profiles in the *Bibliothēke* would leave little doubt as to the general interest of

¹⁷ Coppola, 'L'istoria Romana di Appiano', pp. 478–88.

¹⁸ Schamp, 'Flavius Josephus et Photios', pp. 185–96; cf. Hägg, *Photios als Vermittler*, pp. 184–93.

¹⁹ Mendel, 'Greek and Roman History', pp. 204–05. Mendel's is one of few attempts at a systematic reading of the historical *codices* of the *Bibliothēke*. However, it suffers from a lack of a broader, Byzantine cultural and ideological context which continuity with contemporary texts might have provided. I hope to fill this gap in a forthcoming article.

²⁰ The letter may be found at the start of the *Bibliothēke*. It is not especially long (it has come down to us with a few lacunae) and does not appear to have been composed to stand out in the manner of many Byzantine *prooimia*. A full translation may be found in Photios, *The Bibliotheca*, trans. by Wilson.

Photios's anticipated audience.²¹ The emphasis on eastern monarchies in the *Bibliothēke* reflected a desire to project an enduring historic logic onto relations with the Arab caliphate. Historiography could at once reassure Photios's contemporaries that they were dealing with an old problem, while also bracing them for its dangers. This is an appealing theory, not least because it binds the seemingly heterogeneous survey of historical works into a more coherent whole.

We see this in the comparatively long entry (twenty-six Budé pages!) devoted to the relatively unknown fifth-century BCE *Persika* of Ktesias. In contrast, Herodotos, a staple of the Byzantine curriculum, notoriously gets rather short shrift from Photios in a concise summary which depicts the *Histories* as a colourless chronicle of the Persian succession of kings (βασιλείς). But the entry for Herodotos was not intended to profile the work so much as to remind his readers of Herodotos's insights into the difficulty of discharging power at the Persian court. Indeed, Photios devotes a disproportionate share of his survey to the equally dis-analogous parts of ancient historiography dealing with the rulers and peoples of the east. Consequently, it was not a purely academic interest in the history of Heraclea Pontica, for example, which led to the inclusion of Memnon's history in the *Bibliothēke*.²² The same may be said of Arrian's account of the foundation of the Parthian kingdom prior to its final subjugation by Trajan.²³ All this was complemented by ethnographic excurses about the customs and characteristics of peoples on Rome's frontiers. The overall political orientation of the *Bibliothēke's* historiographic survey begins to emerge as one considers the broad thematic consonances among the summaries offered by Photios (as distinct from the different emphases in the works themselves). This political preoccupation with Rome's place in the east has also been adduced to explain the absence of a historian as canonical in Byzantium as Thucydides. Simply put, although *The Peloponnesian War* remained an important model of ambitious prose style and historical thinking per se, the detailed account of ideological rivalry within and among ancient Greek city states did not speak to the political concerns of Photios's time.²⁴

²¹ I place little credence in narrow readings of the epistle which infer that the *Bibliothēke* was intended as a reading list drawn up by Photios for his brother alone.

²² For the place of Memnon in the *Bibliothēke*, see Ziegler, 'Photios', cols 699–700; for the remnants of Memnon's text, see Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, III, 525.

²³ See Photios, *Bibliothèque*, ed. and trans. by Henry, 58, I, 51–52; cf. Carmine Coppola, 'L'istoria Romana di Appiano', pp. 488–89.

²⁴ Kennedy and Kaldellis, 'Thucydides in Byzantium'; Reinsch, 'Byzantine Adaptions of Thucydides', pp. 755–78.

Paul Speck has described the ideological moment in which Photios composed the *Bibliothēke* as marked by a desire to ‘rever[t] back’ to a more reassuring late antique reality, late Rome’s (or early Byzantium’s) imperial apogee, whose ‘threads’ (*Fäden*) had been violently severed by the political ‘upheavals’ (*Umwälzungen*) of the previous two centuries.²⁵ Unlike the Franks and the Arabs, Speck argued, Byzantium had to confront challenges to its inheritance of Roman legitimacy in the wake of military defeat and economic truncation after losing a large part of the empire’s most productive lands. These losses were compounded by internal fractures and doctrinal controversy, prompting rival claims to the suzerainty once claimed, albeit never fully exercised, by Byzantium. Byzantine elites had to find some way to reassert continuity with a Graeco-Roman past which underwrote so much of their political identity. And while we would look in vain in the *Bibliothēke* for a systematic articulation of such an expressly political programme, the broadly ideological preoccupations of the *Bibliothēke* are also undeniable, and nowhere more so than in its survey of historiography. The prominence granted to historiography helped centre the *Bibliothēke* by encouraging proficiency in the long tradition of Greek writing about a relevant past stretching back over a millennium and a half.

Unable to produce conclusive evidence of the *Bibliothēke*’s ideological utility, including its historiographic inventory, such instrumental readings have been displaced by interpretations of the work as primarily an eclectic amalgam of literary history and cultural antiquarianism.²⁶ This has in turn dovetailed with the view of a formalist Byzantine classicism driven by cultural *mimesis* on both a large and small scale. More recently, however, Anthony Kaldellis has called into question the conventional view that Byzantine curatorship of ancient historiography in projects such as the *Bibliothēke* was motivated solely, or even primarily, in order to furnish models of rhetoric and a ready stockpile of erudite anecdotes, even as he acknowledges Photios’s interest in identifying a ‘fitting and appropriate style’ for historical writing.²⁷ The correct answer may well lie in reconciling these two points of view.

²⁵ Speck, ‘Weitere Überlegungen’, pp. 255–83, 277.

²⁶ The effort to showcase Photios’s literary preoccupations in the *Bibliothēke* was most notably undertaken by Alexander Kazhdan in his *History of Byzantine Literature*, II, 41; cf. Bevegni, ‘La Biblioteca di Fozio’, pp. 326–47.

²⁷ In the entry for Herodotos (see Photios, *Bibliothèque*, ed. by Henry, 60, I, 57–58) Photios begins by referring to τὴν τῆς ἱστορίας κατάληψιν καὶ τὸν οἰκείον αὐτῆς καὶ κατάλληλον τύπον (the understanding of history and the style most appropriate and suited to it).

Photios went to some lengths to emphasize the reciprocal dependence of historiographic text and historical context. Indeed, what sets the historiographic entries of the *Bibliothēke* apart from conventional historical writing of their time is the fact that it was not the past per se that was being profiled, but the accounts of that past as formal narratives. Thus, each summary of a historical text is accompanied by a concise but subtle rhetorical profile, with emphasis on those stylistic traits which rendered its contents either more or less persuasive. This emphasis on the indissoluble link between history as event and as formally composed text spoke directly to the relevance of historiographic literacy. Photios reiterated the point about proficiency in *historiography* as a source of guidance in matters of governance in a letter he wrote to a court official, in all likelihood a friend, reproving the man for seeking political instruction in Scripture:

In all your wisdom, then, you assumed that our Saviour must have intended from the start to furnish us with the skills required to govern. And so how could you fail to seek justification, fond as you are of finding fault and exhaling insolence, for the fact that he did not make provisions regarding generals, military encampments, or soldiers, nor about when to prosecute battle against one's enemies or to sue for peace, just as he did not about how much one should sell grain and other goods? Are you not dismayed that he taught nothing regarding surveyors of markets, judges, or legislators, who they should be and how many of them we need? Blind and foolish man, have you fallen in so deep a slumber while passing sleepless nights poring in vain over the Holy Scriptures, so that you failed to realize that our Lord and Saviour gave no forethought to the types of government and their respective administration? For he knew, he knew that mankind gained sufficient preparation through experience to grasp these things, as want and necessity supply these lessons easily day by day, as the errors of one's forerunners provide a sufficient counterexample by way of a corrective to future generations in similar circumstances.²⁸

²⁸ Photios, *Epistulae*, ed. by Laourdas and Westerink, 187, II, 82: Ἐνόμισας δὲ ἄρα ὑπὸ πολλῆς σοφίας σὺ ὡς καὶ προηγούμενον ἔσχεν σκοπὸν ὁ σωτὴρ πολιτικὴν παραδοῦναι τέχνην. πῶς οὖν οὐκ αἰτίαις ὑπάγεις, καίτοι φιλαιτιώτατος ὢν καὶ πνέων τὴν ἕβριν, ὅτι μηδὲν περὶ στρατηγῶν μηδὲ στρατοπέδων μηδὲ στρατιωτῶν ὥρισεν, οὐδ' ὅπως δεῖ πολεμίοις διὰ μάχης ἰέναι οὐδ' ὅτε σπένδεσθαι, ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὅσου δέοι τὸν σίτον ἢ τὰ ἄλλα πιπράσκεσθαι; ἀγορανόμους δὲ καὶ δικαστὰς καὶ νομοθέτας, ὁποῖοί τε ἔσονται καὶ ὅσοι, οὐ δυσχεραίνεις ὅτι μηδὲν εἰσηγήσατο; τυφλὲ καὶ μωρὲ, οὕτω βαθὺν ὕπνον ἐκάθευδες, καὶ ταῦτα τὰς νύκτας ἀύπνου τελῶν ἐπὶ τῇ κατὰ τῶν θείων λογίων ματαιοπονίᾳ, ὥστε μηδὲ τούτου συναίσθησιν δέξασθαι, ὅτιπερ ὁ σωτὴρ ἡμῶν καὶ θεὸς τῶν μὲν πολιτικῶν τύπων καὶ τῆς περὶ αὐτὰ τάξεως οὐκ ἔσχε προηγούμενον τὸν σκοπὸν; ἦδει γάρ, ἦδει τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἱκανὴν τῇ πείρᾳ παρασκευὴν πρὸς ταῦτα λαβεῖν, τῆς χρείας καὶ τῆς ἀνάγκης τὴν μάθησιν αὐτοῖς ὀσημέραι ῥαδίαν παρεχομένης, καὶ τῶν προλαβόντων τὰ πταίσματα ἀποχρῶσαν τοῖς ἐσομένοις ἐπὶ τῶν ὁμοίων ἀντεισάγειν τὴν διόρθωσιν.

Were this anyone but a future patriarch, we might suspect that Photios's doubts about the self-sufficiency of Scripture to guide human affairs was evidence of some deeper scepticism regarding the sovereignty of Orthodox teaching. Instead we are reminded that, notwithstanding his reputation as a man of learning, he spent most of his career not as a professional scholar but as a high-ranking state official who had to be rushed through the ranks of ecclesiastical office in order to be appointed to the patriarchal throne.²⁹ It seems some combination of schooling, career, and intellectual temperament had taught Photios that only the study of human affairs, i.e. the study of historical texts, could supply *ικανὴν τῇ πείρᾳ παρασκευὴν* (sufficient preparation through experience) for the conduct of political life and the administration of the state.

If it is unsurprising to find historical writing implicated in the consolidation of the Byzantine Empire at this time, it is nevertheless remarkable how deeply embedded an otherwise distant Graeco-Roman past, contained in seemingly recondite texts, could become in the historical perception of medieval Byzantines. A century after Photios's profile of Greek historiography — and perhaps partly as a direct result of it — the historian Leo the Deacon could cite from the *Roman Antiquities* of Dionysos of Halicarnassus in a bid to 'classicize' his history of the campaigning emperors Nikephoros Phokas II (r. 963–69) and Ioannes Tzimiskes (r. 969–76). By doing so, he was able to effectively anchor his narrative of Byzantine territorial gains in a Roman ideological framework.³⁰ In similar fashion, Kaldellis has astutely discerned, Leo's depiction of Tzimiskes' triumph in Constantinople patently drew on Plutarch's account of Camillus' triumph in Rome.³¹ For the next six centuries, Byzantine emperors and generals would be likened to Scipio, Fabius, Pompey, and other Roman figures drawn from the texts profiled by Photios. Was this not a more insidious form of political *mimesis* — on an almost typological level of identity — at least partially enabled by Photios's broad sampling of ancient historiography?

II

Discussion of the *Bibliothēke* in a historiographic context is almost invariably coupled with analysis of the *Excerpta*, a work cut entirely from the cloth of

²⁹ Ahrweiler, 'Sur la carrière de Photius avant son patriarcat', pp. 348–63.

³⁰ Leo the Deacon, *History*, trans. by Talbot and Sullivan.

³¹ Kaldellis, 'The Original Source', pp. 35–52; cf. Schamp, 'A propos du Plutarque de Photios', pp. 440–52.

extant Greek historical writing.³² A work at least as ambitious in scope and scale as the *Bibliotheke*, the *Excerpta* or Ἐκλογαί can be interpreted as having at least partially fulfilled the promise of historiography implied in Photios's letter above.³³ Indeed, many of the categories of πολιτικὴ τέχνη (political art/skill) enumerated by Photios in the letter cited above are either directly or indirectly addressed in the separate sections of the *Excerpta*.³⁴ This was less likely a matter of coincidence than of a shared and enduring sense of political priorities and questions regarding the nature and effective conduct of the Byzantine polity. These amounted to concerns about the political identity of being 'Roman' and what governing decisions flowed from such an assumption. But the *Excerpta* were not simply intended to mine historical writings for guidance on an exceedingly wide cross section of subjects apposite to the imperial system of governance. Their ancillary aim was to make *historiography* on these themes more readily available by means of an elaborate system of quotation.³⁵ In keeping with this emphasis on text-based authority, each category of the *Excerpta* was preceded by a precise enumeration of the historical works from which the excerpted passages were copied *verbatim* in what has been aptly described as a medieval 'cut-and-paste' system of extended citation. Thus, a typical section, 'On Virtues and Vices', lists the following works of history from which the compilers cited the relevant texts:³⁶

α' Ἰωσήπου ἀρχαιολογίας
(The *Archaeology* of Josephus)

³² *Excerpta historica*, ed. by De Boor and others. The seminal work on the *Excerpta* and its place in Byzantine culture history remains Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin*. It is now significantly buttressed by the excellent dissertation of A. Németh, which brings the manuscript evidence to bear on a detailed analysis of the work's composition and aims. See Németh, 'Imperial Systematization of the Past'. A summary of his arguments may be found in Németh, 'The Imperial Systematization of the Past', pp. 232–57.

³³ I am not suggesting here that the *Excerpta* was an organic extension of Photios's historiographic survey in the *Bibliotheke*, though some have pointed to the ninth-century selection of historical texts by Photios as forming the basis for the Constantinian-sponsored project, perhaps simply by providing an exemplary inventory of indispensable works of historiography whose volume and linguistic sophistication could not but prove discouraging to anyone persuaded of their value.

³⁴ See below for a partial list of categories reconstructed from the surviving parts of the *Excerpta*.

³⁵ Only two of the fifty-three sections survive entire, *de legationibus* and *de virtutibus et vitiis*; two more, *de insidiis* and *de sententiis*, are fragmentary.

³⁶ *Excerpta historica*, ed. by Büttner-Wobst and Roos, II, pars. 1–2.

- β' Γεωργίου μοναχοῦ
(The *Chronicle* of George the Monk)
- γ' Ἰωάννου τοῦ ἐπὶ κλην Μαλέλα χρονικῆς
(The *Chronicle* of the one surnamed Malelas)
- δ' Ἰωάννου Ἀντιοχέως χρονικῆς ἱστορίας
(The *Chronicle* of John of Antioch)
- ε' Διοδώρου Σικελιώτου καθολικῆς ἱστορίας
(Diodoros of Sicily's *World History*)
- ς' Νικολάου Δαμασκηνοῦ καθολικῆς ἱστορίας
(Nicholas of Damascus's *World History*)
- ζ' Ἡροδότου Ἁλικαρνησέως
(Herodotos of Halicarnassus)
- η' Θουκυδίδου
(Thucydides)
- θ' Ξενοφῶντος Κύρου παιδείας καὶ ἀναβάσεως Κύρου τοῦ Παρυσάτιδος
(Xenophon's *Education of Cyrus* and the *Anabasis*)
- ι' Ἀρριανοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου Ἀνάβασις
(Arrian's *Alexandrian Campaigns*)
- ια' Διονυσίου Ἁλικαρνησέως Ῥωμαϊκῆς ἱστορίας
(Dionysos of Halicarnassus's *Roman History*)
- ιβ' Πολυβίου τοῦ Μεγαλοπολίτου Ῥωμαϊκῆς ἱστορίας
(Polybios of Megalopolis's *Roman History*)
- ιγ' Ἀππιανοῦ Ῥωμαϊκῆς τῆς ἐπὶ κλην βασιλικῆς
(Appian's *Roman History*, also called the *Imperial History*)
- ιδ' Δίωνος Κοκκιανοῦ Ῥωμαϊκῆς ἱστορίας
(Dio Cassius's *Roman History*)

The preface to the *Excerpta* explains the decision to list the individual historical texts from which the quotations were drawn. It was intended, we are told, to authenticate the authorship of the excerpted passages, lest they seem 'like illegitimate children bearing a false name'.³⁷ The difference between invoking

³⁷ *Excerpta historica*, ed. by Büttner-Wobst and Roos, 1, 2: Ἐμφαίνει δὲ τουτὶ τὸ προοίμιον, τίνας οἱ λόγοι πατέρας κέκτηνται καὶ ὅθεν ἀποκυίσκονται, ὡς ἂν μὴ ὦσιν αἱ κεφαλαιώδεις ὑποθέσεις

events from the past and excerpting the texts of those accounts *verbatim* is further underscored by this highly structured system of direct citation. The authority in question was that of the text, not simply knowledge of the past *per se*. The *Excerpta* accentuated history *qua* historiography, the past *qua* text. The rationale it provided alongside conventional praise for the emperor's initiative to gather these 'sources' stresses the twin nature of history as both text and fact:

Since with the passage of so many years there has been both an immense accumulation of events woven into an endless tapestry of texts, [so that] the intricacy of history has expanded infinitely and grown unwieldy as a result, it was bound to happen that over time people's preferences would tend towards the worst choices, showing contempt for good decisions while becoming indifferently disposed towards the apprehension of past events, falling behind any true attainments. As a result of this, historical inquiry was overshadowed by uncertainty, in part due to a lack of useful books, and partly because people feared and dreaded their extensive prolixity.³⁸

Ignorance of the morally and politically relevant past, the authors of the *Excerpta* stress in their programmatic statement, was attributable to historiographic illiteracy, itself the result of a cumulatively unwieldy textual tradition. It is worth underscoring once more the deliberate blurring here of history as the events of the past and as a textual practice.

Having read through the various histories in a thorough enough manner to be able to assign every part of every text to a pertinent subject area, the compilers of the *Excerpta* could arguably have synthesized the contents of the texts into revised accounts of pertinent events. Instead they chose a novel, impressively elaborate, method which assured that dependence on the original historical texts would be foregrounded. In this way the *Excerpta* made the restoration

ἀκατονόμαστοι καὶ μὴ γνήσιοι, ἀλλὰ νόθοι τε καὶ ψευδώνυμοι. εἰσι δ' ἐκ τῶν ὑποτεταγμένων χρονικῶν (The present prologue reveals what sort of parentage this text has and whence it was born, so that the subjects treated here may not remain nameless and inauthentic but be deemed spurious and pseudonymous. The texts derive from the following historical works).

³⁸ *Excerpta historica*, ed. by Büttner-Wobst and Roos, I, 1: ἐπεὶ δὲ ἐκ τῆς τῶν τοσούτων ἐτῶν περιδρομῆς ἀπλετόν τι χρῆμα καὶ πραγμάτων ἐγένετο καὶ λόγων ἐπλέκετο, ἐπ' ἀπειρόν τε καὶ ἀμήχανον ἢ τῆς ἱστορίας εὐρύνετο συμπλοκῆ, ἔδει δ' ἐπιρρεπέστερον πρὸς τὰ χεῖρω τῆν τῶν ἀνθρώπων προαίρεσιν μετατίθεσθαι χρόνοις ὕστερον καὶ ὀλιγώρως ἔχειν πρὸς τὰ καλὰ καὶ ῥαθυμότερον διακείσθαι πρὸς τὴν τῶν φθασάντων γενέσθαι κατάληψιν, κατόπιν γινομένης τῆς ἀληθοῦς ἐπιτεύξεως, ὥστ' ἐντεῦθεν ἀδηλία σκιάζεσθαι τὴν τῆς ἱστορίας ἐφεύρεσιν, πῆ μὲν σπάνει βιβλῶν ἐπωφελῶν, πῆ δὲ πρὸς τὴν ἐκτάδην πολυλογίαν δειμαινόντων καὶ κατορρωδούντων. This text accompanies the section 'On embassies'. It shows slight variations from the same passage accompanying the other sections in the different manuscripts. See Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin*, pp. 281–82.

of Byzantine (or Roman) imperial identity a function of historiographic proficiency in a manner, and to a degree, almost never before seen, not even during the much touted Justinianic *renovatio imperii* of the sixth century which saw a conscious appropriation of classical historiography by authors such as Procopius and Agathias.

In comparison with the *Bibliotheke*, whose grounds for endorsing a particular historiographic canon were implied in the wider intellectual framework of Photios's text, the *Excerpta* spell out the presumed moral and political utility of historiography quite explicitly. The contents of each text were apportioned into a classification system which self-evidently spoke to contemporary interest in areas deemed vital to the conduct of state affairs. A list of such categories reconstructed from internal references in the *Excerpta* bears this out:

On imperial accessions; On the succession of monarchs; On the Caesars; On marriages; On plots against monarchs; On stratagems; On victory; On defeat; On recovering from defeat; On battles in war; On combat; On public orations; On embassies*; On political administration; On ecclesiastical matters; On customs; On peoples; On settlements; On hunting; On bizarre events; On ekphrasis; Epigrams; On epistles; Sententiae; On Greek [or pagan] history; On who discovered what; On feats of valour; On virtues and vices.³⁹

Even without the specific passages excerpted in each of these categories, we may glean something of the general intention from the titles along with the implied correspondences which allowed them to be grouped together. Seemingly non-ideological categories like 'On hunting', 'On bizarre events', or 'Epigrams' assume their place alongside the more obviously political headings when one recalls the symbolic economy of hunting to the ruling classes, the potential of 'bizarre events' to be interpreted as ominous portents of political developments, or of epigrams to articulate ideological formulas in formally exquisite dedications on public buildings and artworks. Taken together, the disparate parts amounted to a profile of Byzantium's imperial identity.

Put differently, the *Excerpta* treat us to a kind of imperial *habitus*. Yet the parcelling out of whole historical works into diverse topics inevitably violated each history's narrative frame. This has elicited the label 'anti-histoire' from scholars otherwise sympathetic to the wider cultural programme represented by the *Excerpta*. The design of the project, they allege, proceeds from an anti-

³⁹ Although only two of the fifty-three sections are fully preserved, it has been possible to reconstruct an additional twenty-six headings from internal references in the oldest, tenth-century manuscript, Venice, Marc., MS gr. 450. See Flusin, 'Les Excerpta constantiniens', pp. 553–58.

historical logic.⁴⁰ While I do not wish to relitigate the matter here, it seems to me that a work that made systematic use of historiography on the scale of the *Excerpta* is likelier to be guilty of an extreme or idiosyncratic historicism, not of being anti-historical. What I wish to stress here, however, is that the admittedly novel application of historiography to the categories contained in the *Excerpta* relied on a conception of history *as text* which would prove pivotal to Byzantine identity over the longer term. Where more conventional vehicles for some of these subjects, like imperial panegyric, might have been satisfied to allude to historical events in passing, with no mention of the texts preserving accounts of these events, the *Excerpta* offered direct quotation, thereby highlighting the textually mediated nature of historical knowledge. To be sure, this invariably challenged a purely narrative conception of history's utility. Still, the *Excerpta* remained an attempt to add historical depth to fundamental features of Byzantine political life and imperial identity.

Of course, historiography's practical and moral utility was not an invention of either Photios or the compilers of the *Excerpta*. Historical texts had often been read, and arguably composed, with just such instruction in mind. It was this broadly ethical, as well as more narrowly instrumental utility, as much as any desire to know the past for its own sake, which had ensured the enduring relevance of any historical work since antiquity. But the wholesale gathering of historiography as a vast, chronologically undifferentiated store of wisdom on an uncommonly wide range of subjects, into what Paul Magdalino has characterized as the historical equivalent of 'moral, social and political case law', was without precedent.⁴¹ Moreover, it marked a different relationship with the past, in as much as the authority to regulate Byzantine reality emanated from the combination of past *and* text. Thus, much as Photios's survey of a broad-based historical literacy had no commensurate parallels, so the *Excerpta* marked a new turn in the role which history *qua* historiography would come to play in imperially sponsored cultural projects in a bid to shore up the political identity of the Byzantine ruling class towards the closing of the first millennium.

The preface to the *Excerpta* identifies the project's warrant as a general moral decline, citing a laxness in learning and an ignorance of the historiographic tradition specifically as a contributing factor. Writing in the emperor's name, the work's compilers rather significantly did not frame this moral deterioration in

⁴⁰ Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin*, pp. 287–88; cf. the more nuanced position of Flusin, 'Les Excerpta constantiniens', pp. 537–59.

⁴¹ Magdalino, 'Orthodoxy and History', p. 151.

narrowly Christian terms. Perhaps this reflected the patently secular nature of most of the ancient historical texts marshalled to the moral renovation of the empire. Of course, by suggesting that the remedy required a massive scholarly intervention, the erudite compilers of the *Excerpta* implicitly portrayed themselves as indispensable to the restoration of values. So while Byzantium may not have been alone in having sought bookish solutions to its perceived problems, it did prove among the most energetic, as the legacy of what used to be called the *encyclopédisme* of the ninth and tenth centuries demonstrates.⁴²

Likewise, the copying (and possible collation) of manuscripts containing Greek and Roman historiography saw a significant increase in patronage during this same period. Although usually framed as an act of cultural stewardship of antiquity's bequest to Western civilization, demand for such manuscripts originated in something more than literary antiquarianism, as used to be suggested. It can hardly be a coincidence that the period which saw the composition of the *Bibliothèque* and the assembly of the *Excerpta* also produced many of the most important manuscript exemplars of ancient historiography, including Thucydides, Herodotos, Polybios, and numerous other texts which formed the backbone of Byzantine historical literacy. Byzantine elites supported historical scholarship, including the copying out of manuscripts, because they perceived ancient historiography as speaking to their own historical predicament. Indeed, as Antony Kaldellis has argued, the canon of surviving Greek historiography 'was neither random nor a given and can partly be explained by reference to identifiable Byzantine interests'.⁴³ Those interests have been usually depicted as almost exclusively rhetorical or antiquarian in nature, strangely making the Byzantines out to be the only apolitical readers of ancient historiography. Of course, Kaldellis's point, that Byzantine engagement with the Greek historiographic tradition was 'not a random sample but reflect[ed] Byzantine priori-

⁴² See Odorico's criticism of the idea of *encyclopédisme* as applied to the scholarly works of this period, in 'La cultura della Συλλογή', pp. 1–21; in a later essay in which he recapitulated some of his arguments regarding 'the florilegic habit' behind works like the *Excerpta*, Odorico suggested that there was little to mark this period off from previous ones in this respect; see, however, the dissenting argument from Magdalino in the same volume. Odorico, 'Cadre d'exposition', pp. 89–108; cf. Magdalino, 'Orthodoxy and History', pp. 144–47.

⁴³ Such was the relationship between Byzantine contemporary preoccupations and their reading of ancient historiography that, as Kaldellis has suggested, the extant corpus of ancient historical texts 'promote[d] Byzantine interests precisely enough that a heuristic case can be made for reversing the normal relationship between classical and Byzantine historiography [...] the classical corpus may be viewed as a preface to the Byzantine one'. See Kaldellis, 'The Byzantine Role', p. 71.

ties' should not be controversial.⁴⁴ However, matching those priorities to the reading of the historical texts remains a desideratum of the field.

III

Although unnamed as such, identity will always figure conspicuously in the background to any argument about the reception of historiography, regardless of the period or the society in question. Kaldellis's inference is radical only in as much as it attempts to normalize Byzantium's engagement with its rich historiographic inheritance. But whereas interpretations of the history written in the period leading up to and immediately following the year 900 in Byzantium readily grant that it was informed by ideological preoccupations flowing from a crisis of imperial legitimacy, projects like the *Bibliothèque* and the *Excerpta* which spoke to such questions have been largely relegated to the status of cultural curiosities, products of an academic antiquarianism with little direct bearing on Byzantine self-perception, much less on the exercise of political authority.⁴⁵ This is due, in part, to the fact that few bridges have been built to Byzantine practices of inquiry and scholarship — Lemerle's *humanisme byzantin*. Both the *Bibliothèque* and the *Excerpta* proceeded from the perception of a precarious relation to the Roman past seen from across a widening gulf of reality, which would only increase over time. A remedy was thus sought in the written, authoritative record of the past. Byzantium's intellectuals looked to historiography for patterns and paradigms with which they might bring their faltering political identity into line with the present reality. As a result, Byzantium's relationship to its past arguably changed in this era. The inescapable differences with an increasingly discontinuous past may have contributed to the idea of a more remote, and paradoxically more instructive, antiquity, available through close study of its textual legacy.

The conveners of the conference at the basis of this volume note in their précis that 'the old imperial framework of Charlemagne's empire [did] not cor-

⁴⁴ Kaldellis, 'The Byzantine Role,' p. 72. Like others before him, Kaldellis sees a manifest 'eastern bias' in Photios's selection of historical texts, often reflected in the summaries of those texts. When considered in tandem with the *Excerpta*, as well as with historical texts composed in this period, the Roman heuristic is hard to deny. Still, I would caution against the assumption that any single overarching element explains the place of historiography in the *Bibliothèque*. No doubt, the various strands of historiography selected and summarized by Photios reflect a desire to orient oneself as a Roman state, but they also reflect a voracious and curious mind's idiosyncratic reading habits.

⁴⁵ Cf. *supra* Treadgold's 'learning for learning's sake'.

respond with the actual political realities from the middle of the ninth century onward'. Despite this, they note, contemporaries 'continue[d] to use it as a common baseline from which to construct their own histories and resolve the tension resulting from this discrepancy'. How different was Byzantium in this respect? From about the mid-ninth century on, the empire's elites tried to forge a newly viable political identity by closely scrutinizing the texts which vouchsafed the ideological legacies bequeathed by Greece and Rome. While Western historians at this time were experimenting with novel configurations and frameworks tailored to the political legitimacy of emerging medieval kingdoms, the intellectually pioneering among their Byzantine counterparts pursued innovations not so much in the writing of history, which continued for the most part along previously established lines, but in the re-reading of the immense historiographic tradition preserved in the well-stocked libraries of the imperial capital. I would therefore amend our writ and say that we must examine 'the social function of historical writing [*and reading*] to construct identities, communicate visions of community and legitimate political claims'.

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SCRIPTORES POST THEOPHANEM: NORMATIVE ASPECTS OF IMPERIAL HISTORIOGRAPHY IN TENTH-CENTURY BYZANTIUM

Yannis Stouraitis

A comparative approach to the social role of history in the construction and communication of collective identity in Latin Europe, Byzantium, and Islam towards the end of the first millennium seems to be facilitated by the common cognitive character of historiography in these three cultural spheres. It is generally accepted that the so-called Western historiographical tradition was marked by the role of the person. An author wrote his or her work of history for other persons with the aim to provide them with knowledge of the past, the image of which remained constantly open to scrutiny and reformulation.¹ In contrast, in the East Asian historiographical tradition history writing was principally considered as an official, state-run task. The ruling power employed public servants to anonymously write history based on facts provided by state documents. The latter were to be destroyed after the conclusion of the work in order to prevent any revision of what was intended to become the final, official version of the past published under the seal of state authority. The emperor was not allowed to see the text before it had taken its original final form.²

¹ Liakos, 'Γνωστική ή δεοντολογική ιστοριογραφία', pp. 209–10.

² Sato, 'Cognitive Historiography', pp. 130–33.

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According to the Japanese historian Masayuki Sato, who introduced the analytical distinction between Western *cognitive* and Eastern *normative* historiography, the different social role of historiographical works in the premodern East Asian world was due to the fact that history acquired there the social function that sacred texts, such as the Bible and the Qur'ān, or legal texts, such as the *Codex Iustinianus*, had in the Western Euro-Asian world.³ Therefore, the task of history writing was primarily associated with the need to make up for the lack of such texts that would provide society with a deontological framework. By destroying the historical documents from which the official version of history had stemmed, the latter acquired the status of a historical fact and thus of a sacred text, for it constructed an image of the past that could not be altered. As a result, this past could be referred to as an unquestionable normative framework for human judgement.⁴

Sato's binary analytical schema has been addressed sceptically. In Jörn Rüsen's view, such a clear-cut distinction between the two historiographical traditions does not really apply, since morality had been a central aspect of the social function of Western historiography before the great scientific turn of the nineteenth century and remained so thereafter.⁵ As a result, cognition and normativity need to be approached as diachronically intertwined in Western historiographical thought. In Rüsen's own words:

'Historical' means that what happened in the past has a meaning for the present. The past is related to the present by a temporal chain of events and developments, and the conception of change is always influenced by assumptions of its meaning and significance. These assumptions have a normative impact, since they are generated by the cultural needs of people in the present, which can only be fulfilled by interpreting the experience of the past.⁶

This argument raises a central methodological issue regarding the scrutiny of the differentiated social role of historiography in medieval cultures. According to Sato, the normative character of traditional East Asian historiography was conditioned by the fact that history was not merely intended to discover and interpret the past, but also to construct a fixed image of it which precluded

³ Sato, 'Cognitive Historiography', p. 131. This is not to say that private persons did not undertake the task of writing historiographical works, but these were regarded as works of literature by their contemporaries, Sato, 'Cognitive Historiography', pp. 136–37; cf. Liakos, 'Γνωστική ή δεοντολογική ιστοριογραφία', p. 210.

⁴ Sato, 'Cognitive Historiography', p. 135.

⁵ Rüsen, 'Morality and Cognition', p. 41.

⁶ Rüsen, 'Morality and Cognition', p. 41.

any future revision.⁷ Rösen's thesis indicates, instead, that the main difference between East Asian and Western historiography lies not in the absence of a normative function by the latter, but in the different, renegotiable character of its normative dimension.

Historiography in the medieval Euro-Mediterranean world may not have acquired a 'sacred' status by constructing an image of the past that could not be subject to revision. Nonetheless, this does not mean that it was only intended to discover and interpret the past. It also aimed to reconstruct it according to current needs, to which history was to serve as a normative point of reference. Moreover, it does not mean that certain historiographical texts were not intended to claim a higher authoritative status, as opposed to others, in an effort to instrumentalize a certain image of the past as a normative framework for the present and the future.

In what follows, I shall argue that the corpus of history known under the conventional titles *Scriptores post Theophanem* or *Theophanes continuatus*⁸ represents such a case. It was a historiographical project that aimed to recall a certain image of historical continuity into the present and thus to construct historical consciousness that would serve the imperial power's need to reassert a traditional vision of community and identity.

The Project of the Scriptores post Theophanem

The corpus of the *Scriptores* has come down to us in a single manuscript of the early eleventh century, the BAV, MS Vat. Gr. 167.⁹ It consists of six books, the authors of which remained anonymous. In the present, scholars regard this historiographical synthesis as internally divided into three parts. One part includes books one to four that treat the time between 813 and 867, each one of them dealing with the reign of one of the four emperors that ruled successively during this period (Leo V, Michael II, Theophilos, and Michael III). A separate part forms the fifth book, the so-called *Vita Basilii (VB)*, which treats the reign of Emperor Basil I (867–86), Constantine VII's grandfather and founder of the so-called Macedonian dynasty. The final part is the sixth book dealing with the reigns of all the emperors that ruled between 886 and 963 (Leo VI, Alexander,

⁷ Sato, 'Cognitive Historiography', p. 135.

⁸ The original version of the title is *Οἱ μετὰ Θεοφάνην* meaning 'Those after Theophanes'.

⁹ Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur*, I, 340; Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί και χρονογράφοι*, p. 345.

regents of Constantine VII, Romanos I, Constantine VII, and Romanos II). In the manuscript, the account abruptly stops in the year 961, two years before the end of the reign of Romanos II (959–63).¹⁰

There exists an ongoing debate as to who the potential authors of the various books might have been. Moreover, it remains an open issue whether these six books should be viewed as a uniform work of history. The first five books were certainly written under the supervision of Constantine VII between 945 and 959, the period of his sole rule. According to the proem of the first book, the emperor offered the material and guidance to the actual authors, whereas the rubric of the fifth book (*Vita Basilii*) implies an active role of the emperor in the writing of the text.¹¹ The sixth book was written some years after the emperor's death, but its author remained faithful to the line of anonymity. All six books were put together by the redactor of the eleventh-century manuscript as a unified historical corpus; however, the fact that the *VB* has its own proem, in which the text is titled 'Historical Narrative' (*historiké diégésis*), as opposed to the title *chronographia* in the proem of the first book, is considered as evidence that this was initially a separate work which was put together with the first four books at a later stage.¹²

Certainly, the existence of a second proem is a strong indication that the *VB* was initially conceived as an independent historical work, the composition of which most probably preceded the first four books of the *Scriptores*.¹³ Be that as it may, it has been noted that the author(s) of the latter were well aware of the content of the *VB* when writing the text, and that they organized the narrative according to what was (or was going to be) narrated therein about Basil I. This is a strong indication that, if the composition of the first four books postdated the fifth, the former came into being with the intention to be presented jointly with the latter in the form of a historical corpus of common logic and historical perspective.¹⁴

¹⁰ Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur*, 1, 343.

¹¹ *Vita Basilii*, ed. by Ševčenko, p. 8; Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians*, p. 166.

¹² Bury, 'The Treatise *De administrando imperio*', pp. 571–72; Ševčenko, 'The Title of and Preface to *Theophanes continuatus*', pp. 88–89; Mango, 'Introduction', p. 4*.

¹³ On this argument, see Codoñer, 'Constantino Porfirogéneto', p. 319; cf. Mango, 'Introduction', p. 9*. Bury, 'The Treatise *De administrando imperio*', p. 551, has pleaded for a simultaneous composition of the first five books.

¹⁴ Hirsch, *Byzantinische Studien*, pp. 225–26; Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί και χρονογράφοι*, pp. 323, 353–55. On a different approach, see Ševčenko, 'The Title and Preface to *Theophanes continuatus*', pp. 88–89.

The sixth book represents a different case, for it was written after the emperor's death and therefore not under his supervision. It treats the reigns of five emperors together as opposed to the previous five books that each treated a single emperor's reign.¹⁵ Recently, it has been shown that the older thesis that regarded the sixth book as the product of two different authors, one of whom did not belong to the pro-Macedonian intellectual faction, is flawed.¹⁶ A close reading of the text does not verify the existence of two diametrically opposite attitudes towards the Macedonian dynasty. It follows that we are dealing with the work of one author, who wrote a few years after Constantine VII's death, probably in the reign of Nikephoros II Phokas (963–69), with the intention to continue and complete the emperor's historiographical project.

That Constantine VII had anticipated the need for the composition of a historical account dealing with the period from the death of Basil I into his own reign is made evident in the proem of the *VB*.¹⁷ The anonymous author of the sixth book picked up the narration where the fifth book had ended without interpolating a proem. This demonstrates his intention to present this book as the organic continuation of the previous five and implies that he was a member of or, at least, close to the deceased emperor's intellectual circle. One may then plausibly argue that the author was, in fact, aiming to conclude the project that had been envisaged by Constantine VII.

It has been pointed out that Constantine VII was the only Byzantine emperor who explicitly commissioned the writing of historiographical works on behalf of the imperial power (Genesius's history, *Scriptores post Theophanem*) and that the mid-tenth century was marked by a court conception of how history should be written.¹⁸ With respect to that, it is important to notice that, as opposed to the other historiographical works of this or the previous period that were published under the name of a certain author,¹⁹ something which personalized the projected view on the past, the corpus of the *Scriptores* was

¹⁵ The individual chapters are, however, divided according to emperors' reigns and entitled *Basileia* and once *Autokratōria*, see Mango, 'Introduction', p. 3*.

¹⁶ Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί και χρονογράφοι*, pp. 360–62. On the older thesis that was generally accepted until recently, see Hirsch, *Byzantinische Studien*, pp. 273–75, 285–86.

¹⁷ *Vita Basilii*, ed. by Ševčenko, 1, p. 8, ll. 3–10.

¹⁸ Magdalino, 'Knowledge', p. 202; Markopoulos, 'Byzantine History Writing', pp. 189–90.

¹⁹ Even though a debate exists as to whether the other historical work commissioned by Constantine VII was indeed written by an author named Genesius or not, there is little doubt that this was a work circulated under an author's name and not anonymously; Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί και χρονογράφοι*, p. 315.

circulated as a work of anonymous authors. In light of this, it is my contention that, in order to scrutinize the intended social role of this work of history, one should remove the spotlight from the debate regarding who the actual authors of each one of the books might have been. Of particular importance in this case is rather the novelty that these books were purposefully presented as a historical corpus of anonymous authors written by the order and under the supervision of the highest authority in the empire, the imperial office (i.e. the *state*).

From the point of view of the aforementioned analytical distinction between *normative* and *cognitive* historiography, the *Scriptores* seem to be positioned somewhere in the middle. By the standards of the medieval Euro-Mediterranean and, in particular, Byzantine historiographical tradition, they obviously represented a step towards impersonal history. Even though in the Byzantine socio-political context the corpus could not acquire the function of a 'sacred' history, the facts of which would not be subject to reinterpretation and reconstruction in the future,²⁰ it still demonstrates some of the traits, by which a historiographical work claimed a normative status in the East Asian sociopolitical context. The emperor did not sign the work as the author,²¹ but had himself presented in the proem as the authority that had commissioned the task to anonymous authors, obviously well-educated officials of the court. He was also presented as the authority that provided the authors with the material (i.e. historical documents). Moreover, the author of the sixth book, who wrote after the emperor's death, maintained his anonymity — a strong indication that he purposefully remained faithful to a certain conception regarding the public image of the corpus.

By portraying this work as an impersonal product of the highest authority in the empire, the imperial office, an implicit but distinct claim to objectivity and authority of knowledge was made. The goal of reserving a normative status for this historical corpus is stated in the proem of the first book. There the anonymous author claims that the emperor's intention was to provide a history that would function as a public teaching-ground.²² In view of the aforementioned

²⁰ For instance, John Skylitzes wrote a history in the late eleventh century that treated the period from 813 to 1057 and stated in his proem that his goal was to revise older historical narrations of the ninth and tenth centuries that had not been objective, see Skylitzes, *Historia*, ed. by Thurn, pp. 3–4.

²¹ About Constantine VII's actual participation in the authorship of the work, see Ševčenko, 'The Title of and Preface to *Theophanes continuatus*', p. 86; Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί και χρονογράφοι*, pp. 352–53; Condoner, 'Algunas consideraciones sobre la autoría del *Theophanes continuatus*', pp. 17–28.

²² ὡς περ τι κοινὸν διδασκαλεῖον προθεῖναι πᾶσιν ἐβουλεύσω καλῶς, *Theophanes continuatus (libri I–IV)*, ed. by Featherstone and Codoñer, proem, p. 12, ll. 23–24; cf. Ševčenko, 'The Title

strategy of representation of the *Scriptores*, the latter statement should not be discredited as a conventional reproduction of an authorial *topos*. It should rather be evaluated in conjunction with the emperor's intention to produce history for the future. Therefore, it should be understood as the main motive that set in motion the *Scriptores* project. Not least, because another contemporary historiographical work, the history of Genesisius (*Liber regnum*), had treated the same period by the order of the same emperor.²³

Genesisius's text, which preceded the first four books of the *Scriptores*,²⁴ treated the reigns of the five emperors that held power between 813 and 886 (beginning with the accession of Leo V and ending with the death of Basil I). This work was also intended to communicate the propaganda of the Macedonian dynasty about the rise of its founder, Basil I, to the throne. Constantine VII's decision to produce a new version of the history of the same period leaves little doubt that the work of Genesisius did not fulfil the emperor's expectations.²⁵ However, if Constantine VII was dissatisfied with the way this author had constructed his grandfather's propagandistic portrait, his motives in marginalizing Genesisius's history seem to have gone beyond the simple need to refurbish Basil I's image.

In the introduction of the new edition of the *VB*, Cyril Mango posed the question as to whether the history of Genesisius would have treated the reign of Basil I, had the fifth book of the *Scriptores*, the *VB*, already been written at that time.²⁶ This plausible question stresses the very fact that, had Constantine VII written a detailed historical account of his grandfather's reign by the time he commissioned Genesisius to write a history of the period after 813, there would have been no reason for the latter to include Basil I's reign in his work.

of and Preface to *Theophanes continuatus*, p. 85: 'Thou hast decided been best advised to proffer all this as a public teaching-ground of sorts.'

²³ ἄτε ταῦτά γε καὶ διαίτησαι προσεταγμένος πρὸς Κωνσταντίνου τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος, Genesisius, *Iosephi Genesisii regum libri quattuor*, ed. by Lesmüller-Werner and Thurn, proem, p. 3, ll. 14–15; Engl. translation, Genesisius, *On the Reigns*, trans. by Kaldellis, preface, p. 3: 'since I have been commanded to make this inquiry by the Emperor Constantine.'

²⁴ Barišić, 'Génésios et le Continuateur de Théophane', p. 120; Ljubarski, 'Theophanes continuatus and Genesisios', pp. 12–27; Mango, 'Introduction', p. 7*.

²⁵ On Genesisius's failure to live up to the task of dynastic propaganda, see Barišić, 'Génésios et le Continuateur de Théophane', pp. 121–22; Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and his World*, pp. 582–83.

²⁶ Mango, 'Introduction', p. 7*. Nonetheless, Mango states on the following page (p. 8*) that he is inclined to accept W. Treadgold's chronological scheme, according to which the *VB* preceded Genesisius's history.

Moreover, Genesius states in his proem that he was the first to write the history of the emperors treated in his text.²⁷ Such a statement seems at least awkward, if he knew that his patron, Constantine VII, to whom he dedicated his work, had already concluded a detailed history of Basil I's reign.

All this indicates not only that Genesius's history must have preceded the *VB*, but also that the latter work, given that it preceded the first four books of the *Scriptores*, was initially conceived as an independent historical account, the main purpose of which was to make up for Genesius's failure to stand up to the task of presenting the reign of the founder of the Macedonian dynasty in the best possible light. Constantine VII's decision to create the corpus of the *Scriptores* by supplementing the *VB* with another four books, which were written afterwards with the intention to fully substitute Genesius's history and together to provide an official-imperial version of the history of the period 813–86, is usually attributed to his intention to discredit those emperors that preceded his grandfather on the throne in order to highlight the Macedonian dynasty's role in reinvigorating the empire. However, a closer look at Constantine VII's strategy in shaping the public image of the *Scriptores* suggests that the conception of this historical corpus, which had the potential of being extended into the emperor's own times, had an additional, more ambitious goal than that.

According to the title of the first book this was a

chronicle written by the order of Constantine, our Christ-loving Sovereign born in the purple, son of our most wise Sovereign and renowned emperor, Leo. It begins where the (work of the) late Theophanes of Sigriane, a relative of the emperor, came to an end.²⁸

The purposeful designation of the work as a *chronographia*, even though this was a dynastic history, to which the history (*historikē diégēsis*) of Basil I's deeds (*VB*) was attached, was due to the intention to establish its image as the quasi-organic continuation of the chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor.²⁹ Apart from the reference to the work of Theophanes in the title, the anonymous author of the

²⁷ Genesius, *Iosephi Genesii regum libri quattuor*, ed. by Lesmüller-Werner and Thurn, proem, p. 3, ll. 17–20.

²⁸ Χρονογραφία συγγραφεΐσα ἐκ προστάγματος Κωνσταντίνου τοῦ φιλοχρίστου και πορφυρογεννήτου δεσπότη, υἱοῦ Λέοντος τοῦ σοφωτάτου δεσπότη και αὐτοκράτορος• ἀρχομένη ἔνθεν κατέληξεν ὁ κατὰ γένος προσήκων τῷ βασιλεῖ μακαρίτης Θεοφάνης ο τῆς Σιγριανῆς, *Theophanes continuatus (libri I–IV)*, ed. by Featherstone and Codoñer, p. 8; cf. Ševčenko, 'The Title of and Preface to *Theophanes continuatus*', p. 81.

²⁹ Cf. Barišić, 'Génésios et le Continueur de Théophane', p. 132 n. 3; Magdalino, 'Knowledge', p. 202.

first book repeated this claim in the proem, where he highlighted the emperor's decision to consider the concluding point of Theophanes' chronicle as the best possible starting point of this historical corpus.³⁰ Moreover, he spotlighted the alleged bonds of kinship that related Theophanes with Constantine VII, and stated that this relationship brought glory upon the chronicler and fame upon the emperor.³¹ By highlighting Theophanes' relationship with the Macedonian dynasty in the proem of the *Scriptores*, Constantine VII was seeking to appropriate the saint-chronicler's authoritative image in regard to religious orthodoxy as well as to attribute to Theophanes' work the image of a historiographical text that enjoyed the approval of the higher authority in the empire, the imperial office.³²

However, Theophanes' chronicle, which treated the period from the reign of Diocletian to 813, constituted the organic continuation or, better said, the completion of the unfinished world chronicle of George the *synkellos* that had been written in the last years of the eighth century. In the proem of his text, Theophanes praises George as a distinguished chronographer and states that he had undertaken the difficult task to carry on and complete the latter's excellent work after his death.³³ This means that for the author as well as for his contemporaries, his text was not considered as an independent work of history that was intended to focus on the history of the Christian Roman imperial rule in Constantinople, thus marginalizing the pagan Roman imperial past. It was the second part of a bipartite work of world history. The interconnection of the two texts in Byzantine perception is confirmed by the fact that they appeared together in the manuscript tradition from the second half of the ninth century onwards.³⁴

³⁰ ἐκείνην ταύτης ἀρχὴν εἶναι νομίσας τῆς ἱστορίας ἀρίστην, τὴν τῷ μακαρίτῃ Θεοφάνει γενομένην κατάληξιν, *Theophanes continuatus (libri I–IV)*, ed. by Featherstone and Codoñer, I.proem, p. 12; cf. Ševčenko, 'The Title of and Preface to *Theophanes continuatus*', pp. 81–82: 'Thou hast decided that the conclusion of the work by the late Theophanes would be the most appropriate beginning for the (present) narrative.'

³¹ ὃν κατὰ συγγένειαν καὶ ἀγχιστεῖαν, τὸ εἶναι υἱωνὸς λαχὼν, ἀποσεμνύνεις τε ἐκ τῶν σῶν ἰκανῶς καὶ ἀντιλαμβάνεις αὐθις παρ' αὐτοῦ τινὰ εὐκλειαν, *Theophanes continuatus (libri I–IV)*, ed. by Featherstone and Codoñer, I.proem, p. 12; cf. Ševčenko, 'The Title of and Preface to *Theophanes continuatus*', p. 85: 'He is Thy close relative by virtue of Thy being his grandson; and Thou providest him with a great deal of glory on account of Thine own (writings), while in turn Thou receives some fame from him.'

³² See Magdalino, 'Knowledge', p. 202.

³³ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. by De Boor, I, 3–4; *The Chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor*, trans. by Mango and Scott, p. 1.

³⁴ Adler and Tuffin, *The Chronography of George Synkellos*, p. lxxvii.

It follows that by appropriating Theophanes in the proem of the *Scriptores*, Constantine VII also appropriated by association the chronicle of George the *synkellos*, thus binding it to the imperial office and equally attributing to it an authoritative image. As Cyril Mango has pointed out, the texts of George the *synkellos* and Theophanes the Confessor formed together the most systematic Roman account of the human past in the form of a world chronicle at the time.³⁵ Considering this, the representation of the *Scriptores* as the organic continuation of these two texts allows for little doubt that the emperor's aim was to entrench the normative character of his impersonal product of dynastic history by integrating it into a corpus of world history from the Creation to his own times.

In this way, Constantine VII was also fulfilling in an indirect fashion the plan that was mentioned in the proem of the fifth book (*VB*). There, the author stated that he had not set himself to the task of writing the most noteworthy deeds accomplished throughout the whole duration of the Roman power in the city of *Byzantium* (i.e. Constantinople) because such a task required a great deal of time and effort, as well as an abundant supply of books and respite from public duties.³⁶ This statement, to the interpretation of which I shall come back later, has been considered as an unconvincing excuse given the abundance of historical material in the intellectual circle of Constantine VII.³⁷ Regardless, this is another strong indication that the *VB* was initially conceived as an independent work written before the first four books of the *Scriptores*. Otherwise, if the emperor had already set in motion the project of writing the first four books as a continuation of the bipartite world chronicle of George the *synkellos* and Theophanes the Confessor, thus acknowledging and circumscribing the authoritative character of the latter texts for the history of the Romans before 813, then why should he have included a statement in a book written later (or, for that matter, simultaneously), which would point to the need for a rewriting of the whole history of the Roman imperial rule seated in Constantinople? Moreover, we know that the text of Theophanes the Confessor underwent a revision by the circle of Constantine VII.³⁸ This revision was obviously related to the emperor's plan to appropriate this text and connect it to his historical corpus.

³⁵ Mango and Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor*, p. iii.

³⁶ *Vita Basilii*, ed. by Ševčenko, proem, p. 9.

³⁷ This is an argument put forward by Ljubarski, *Prodolžatelj' Feofana*, p. 244; cf. Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί και χρονολόγοι*, p. 357.

³⁸ Yannopoulos, 'Les vicissitudes historiques', pp. 537–38.

There exists general consensus that the composition of the *VB* post-dates the year 948, with 950 being suggested as a probable date.³⁹ About Genesisius's history there is an ongoing debate regarding its precedence over the *VB* or not.⁴⁰ The view adopted here is that, if this commissioned work was written at one stage — as is more probable — it must have preceded the *VB* and therefore it should be dated before 948.⁴¹ The first four books of the *Scriptores*, given that they were written after the *VB*, should inevitably be dated sometime between 950 and 959 (Constantine VII's death).

A suggested reconstruction of the events according to this chronology goes as follows: Constantine VII received the commissioned history of Genesisius sometime before 948 and, being dissatisfied with the cursory treatment of Basil I's reign, decided to write a separate history of his grandfather's reign that would make up for this failure. At this time, he did not yet have in mind to fully substitute Genesisius's work, but only to provide a better account of Basil I's reign and refurbish his image. It was only after the *VB* had been concluded, that is, in 950 at the earliest that he set in motion the project that would incorporate his grandfather's history, and potentially also the history of the latter's successors until his own times, into a world chronicle, thus constructing the largest

³⁹ Bury, 'The Treatise *De administrando imperio*', pp. 551, 574.

⁴⁰ Bury, 'The Treatise *De administrando imperio*', pp. 550, 574; Genesisius, *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, trans. by Kaldellis, pp. x–xiv; Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians*, pp. 180–82.

⁴¹ Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians*, pp. 165–88, suggests a chronological sequence, according to which the *VB* preceded Genesisius's history. This sequence does not explain, however, Genesisius's choice to treat Basil I's reign in his text and to state in the proem that he was the first to do so, while he knew that a detailed account on this emperor's reign was already concluded under the supervision of his own patron Constantine VII. An alternative solution to Bury's view about the chronological sequence regarding the composition of the two texts has been suggested by A. Kaldellis. He argued that the first three books of Genesisius's history were written at an earlier stage and the fourth book, consisting of the cursory account of Basil I's deeds, was written after the *VB* had been concluded; Genesisius, *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, trans. by Kaldellis, pp. xi–xiv. Nonetheless, if we accept that Genesisius concluded the whole account at one stage before the *VB*, as his proem indicates, his choice to treat Michael III and Basil I together in a single book can still be explained. Considering that Basil was already co-emperor when he organized Michael III's murder to remain sole autocrat, Genesisius may have opted for a perspective of continuity, instead of change/succession, in the imperial office, when he decided to treat both emperors in a single book. In his view, such an approach may have seemed as a corroboration of Basil I's image of legitimacy. Instead, for his patron, Constantine VII, this may have been an additional reason to set in motion the composition of the *VB*.

and most authoritative Byzantine corpus of universal history from the creation to the days of his own dynasty.

Genesisius's work could obviously not fulfil the latter task. This was conceived and circulated as a person's individual product, for which he had personally made the choice of his material,⁴² and which treated a short historical period of certain emperors' reigns under the rubric 'book of history' (*historias biblos*).⁴³ The conception of a personal history, in which the trajectories of morality and cognition were intertwined, is made evident in the proem where Genesisius stated that he had written a history with the aim to confer benefit to future generations and to profit himself with the knowledge of the past.⁴⁴ Instead, the anonymous corpus of the *Scriptores* was purposefully designed by Constantine VII to be advertised and, thus, broadly received as a *chronographia* that constituted the continuation and culmination of an authoritative world chronicle.

History Writing and the East Roman renovatio imperii

In light of the above, the issue of the conception of the historiographical project of the *Scriptores* pertains to the development of the genre of historiography and its socio-ideological role in tenth-century Byzantium. This issue needs to be addressed in conjunction with the goal of imperially sponsored historiography to contribute to the reformulation of Roman political ideology, i.e. Roman identity. As far as this is concerned, one needs to begin by looking at the prem-

⁴² ὅθεν καὶ γὰρ νῦν τὴν περὶ τούτων γραφικὴν σπουδὴν πολυτρόπως ἀνηρημένος, ἕκ τε τῶν τότε βεβιωκότων καὶ ἀμωσγέπως εἰδότην ἕκ τε φήμης δῆθεν δραμούσης ἠκουτισμένος, εἰς τόνδε τὸν ἀγῶνα παρῶρημαι, Genesisius, *Iosephi Genesisii regum libri quattuor*, ed. by Lesmüller-Werner and Thurn, proem, p. 3; Engl. trans. by Kaldellis, preface, p. 4: 'Hence I have now undertaken the complex task of writing about them, by listening both to men who lived then and who have some limited knowledge of what transpired and to oral traditions that have come down from that time'.

⁴³ Genesisius, *Iosephi Genesisii regum libri quattuor*, ed. by Lesmüller-Werner and Thurn, proem, p. 3.

⁴⁴ Ἡ τῶν πάλαι πεπονημένων διάληψις μεγίστην ὄντως ὠφέλειαν παριστῶσα τοὺς ἐπιλημμένους αὐτῆς πρὸς γραφὴν αὐτῶν διανίστησιν. ὅθεν καὶ γὰρ νῦν τὴν περὶ τούτων γραφικὴν σπουδὴν πολυτρόπως ἀνηρημένος [...] εἰς τόνδε τὸν ἀγῶνα παρῶρημαι, τὸ μὲν εἶ πως πρὸς τι λυσιτελὴς τοῖς μετέπειτα διοφθεῖν, τὸ δὲ καὶ ἑμαυτῷ τοῦτο καρπώσοιμι, Genesisius, *Iosephi Genesisii regum libri quattuor*, ed. by Lesmüller-Werner and Thurn, proem, p. 3; Engl. trans. Genesisius, *On the Reigns*, ed. by Kaldellis, preface, p. 4: 'The knowledge of past events confers great benefit by itself and can also inspire those who receive that benefit to record those events. Hence I have now undertaken the complex task of writing about them [...] I embark upon this venture so that I may seem to be conferring some benefit upon those who come after me, but also so that I may enjoy the fruits of it for myself'.

ise that the Macedonian dynasty, in particular Constantine VII, undertook the task to revise the content of Roman political ideology (and thus, also, identity). According to this premise, the Macedonian emperors abandoned the traditional Roman ecumenical claim of world supremacy that entailed the Roman emperor's sovereign rights over the former *orbis romanus* in favour of a new vision of *limited* ecumenicity that precluded the Latin West.⁴⁵ In this context, the Constantinopolitan historiographical production of the mid-tenth century is approached as being ideologically divided in two major opposing parties: the representatives of the ideal of *absolute* or *traditional* ecumenicity (anti-Macedonian party) that produced 'ecumenical historiography' in the form of the world chronicles of the so-called Logothetes' circle, and the ideologues of *limited* ecumenicity (pro-Macedonian party). The latter tended to marginalize the ecumenical aspect of historiography by focusing on the production of 'dynastic history'.⁴⁶

This analytical schema has been addressed with scepticism at various levels. One counterargument is that the sources of the period, historiographical or other, do not report on a struggle over the content of Roman ecumenical ideology between two opposing political parties.⁴⁷ This argument is corroborated by the fact that the tenth-century Byzantine power elite accepted a formal division of ecumenical supremacy only between two rulers, the Roman sovereign in Constantinople and the Muslim sovereign in Baghdad, as a letter of Patriarch Nicholas I Mystikos to the caliph al-Muqtadir in 913/14 makes evident.⁴⁸ No similar statement is found in Byzantine sources for a ruler in the Latin West. Nevertheless, if we were to accept that a reading of the sources between the lines could stand in for the absence of such a straightforward statement, one needs to consider a further counterargument. This has maintained that the premise about an ideological distinction between *absolute* and *limited* visions of supremacy over the former Christian-Roman world at the Byzantine court seems to be informed by an overly modern approach to Byzantine political ideology.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Lounghis, 'L'historiographie de l'époque Macédonienne', pp. 69–86; Lounghis, *Κωνσταντίνου Ζ' Πορφυρογέννητου De administrando imperio*, pp. 36–101; Lounghis, 'Die byzantinische Ideologie der "begrenzten Ökumene"', pp. 117–28.

⁴⁶ Lounghis, *Η ιδεολογία της Βυζαντινής ιστοριογραφίας*, passim.

⁴⁷ On this argument, see Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί και χρονογράφοι*, pp. 46–47.

⁴⁸ Nicholas I, *Letters*, ed. by Jenkins and Westerink, 1, 16–18, pp. 3–4: 'I mean that there are two lordships, that of the Saracens and that of the Romans, which stand above all lordship on earth, and shine out like the two mighty beacons in the firmament'.

⁴⁹ Koder, 'Die räumlichen Vorstellungen', pp. 29–30.

According to this viewpoint, the ecumenical dimension of medieval East Roman political thinking can hardly be measured against the goals of the current foreign and, in particular, military policies of the post-seventh-century imperial city state of Constantinople. One rather needs to differentiate between pragmatic constraints, which compelled the Constantinopolitan ruling elite to focus on affairs in a de facto contracted geopolitical sphere of influence within the former Roman world, and this elite's self-identification as Roman. The latter axiomatically precluded any artificial distinction between *absolute* and *limited* ecumenicity in Byzantine political imagery. In my perspective, this argument emphasizes a central aspect of medieval East Roman political thought: the prerogative of the Roman emperor of Constantinople to claim nominal supremacy over the whole former *orbis romanus* was not bound to a grand-strategic plan of foreign, in particular military, policy.⁵⁰ As has been noted, such a plan probably did not even inform the Justinianic *reconquista*, which is often referenced as an archetype of Byzantine ecumenical policies.⁵¹

In the world view of the tenth-century Byzantine ruling elite, the emperor of Constantinople was the only Roman emperor in the world, and therefore de jure the only ruler who could claim the Roman political heritage and the primordial right of sovereignty over the whole Christian, i.e. former Roman, Oecumene. This perception had indeed very little to do with the enactment or, for that matter, abandonment of a politico-military programme that would actively pursue the reinstating of direct imperial authority over the largest part of this Oecumene. Such a task had become incrementally unrealistic in the post-sixth-century geopolitical context due to the empire's radical contraction in terms of territory, revenues, and manpower, especially after the Muslim expansion.

The post-seventh-century confinement of Byzantine military endeavours in the West to those parts of the Italian Peninsula, where the empire maintained some provincial outposts, demonstrates Byzantine awareness of the lack of resources that would make large-scale expansionary plans in the former Western Roman world feasible. No Byzantine emperor envisaged or, for that matter, tried to set in motion a military endeavour in areas beyond this geographical zone. This was a result of realism and pragmatism, as the diachronic landmarks of Byzantine foreign policy, and indicates one thing: one can hardly distinguish between imperial policies on the empire's western frontier during the tenth century that were dictated by visions of *absolute* and *limited* ecumenicity respectively.

⁵⁰ Cf. Stouraitis, "Just War" and "Holy War" in the Middle Ages, pp. 250–56.

⁵¹ See Heather, *The Restoration of Rome*, pp. 137–53.

For instance, the military policies of Constantine VII (945–59) and Nikephoros II Phokas (963–69) in Italy, despite their obvious differences, were principally informed by the need to protect the Byzantine possessions in South Italy and to deal with the Muslim danger in Sicily.⁵² At the same time, the obvious change in Byzantine diplomatic attitudes towards the Franks between the reigns of those two emperors was not determined by a different vision of East Roman supremacy within the Christian Oecumene, but rather by a changing geopolitical context. When Constantine VII was applying to the Franks a distinct but, nonetheless, politically subordinate status within the Christian Oecumene in his political writings of the 950s, there existed no ruler holding the title of the Roman emperor in the West. This facilitated the accommodation of the Christian Franks in the ideological schema of Byzantine diplomacy that presented Christian peoples as potential allies of the Byzantines against the common Muslim foe — a schema that had been put forward by Constantine VII's father Leo VI in the politico-military treatise *Taktika* already in the early tenth century.⁵³ As opposed to that, Nikephoros II Phokas was confronted with the provocation of Otto I's crowning as *imperator* in 962. The latter's campaigns against Byzantine possessions in Italy (967–68) that aimed to compel the Byzantine emperor to accept his plans for an imperial intermarriage⁵⁴ sealed the turn towards a hostile relationship. This hostility is colourfully depicted in the account of the second embassy of the bishop of Cremona Liutprand to Constantinople in 968.⁵⁵

It follows that the content of the ecumenical ideal and its role in tenth-century Byzantine political imagery needs to be disconnected from the objectives of imperial policies in the West. It should rather be analysed in different terms. The broadly shared belief among the members of the Byzantine ruling elite that the sole Roman emperor in the world, the emperor in Constantinople, was the only rightful heir of the Roman imperial culture was above all a constitutive element of this elite's identification as Roman. Even though this belief was employed in a normative fashion by Byzantine authors to inform the theoretical justification of any minor expansion of Byzantine territory in the period after the seventh century, its principal sociopolitical function was to cir-

⁵² Shepard, 'Western Approaches (900–1025)', p. 544.

⁵³ On a comparative analysis of the image of the Franks in the *Tactica* of Leo VI and the *De administrando imperio* of Constantine VII, see Stouraitis, *Krieg und Frieden*, pp. 232–43, esp. 240–42.

⁵⁴ Shepard, 'Western Approaches (900–1025)', pp. 546–47.

⁵⁵ Shepard, 'Western Approaches (900–1025)', pp. 545–46.

cumscribe Byzantine exclusiveness in regards to the Roman political heritage. This means, to deprive any other sovereign Christian ruler within the former Roman world of the right to claim a share in this political heritage and to call himself emperor of the Romans. Whereas pragmatic constraints obliged the emperor in Constantinople to pay due respect to the peer political status of certain Western sovereigns in diplomatic terms, the identity discourse of the Constantinopolitan ruling elite strictly deprived those rulers of the right to call themselves Romans.

It is in this politico-ideological context, that we should try to interpret and explain Constantine VII's initiative to promote the image of a mass corpus of history through the innovative combination of dynastic history and world chronicle within a framework of transition of the genre of historiography from *chronographia* to *historia*.⁵⁶ If we accept that the genre of world chronicle bore certain connotations of ideological adherence to the traditional Roman notion of ecumenical empire, one cannot ignore the emperor's consistent efforts to establish a certain image of the *Scriptores* in public opinion. The representation of this work as the last part of the largest and most systematic Roman account of world history currently available can hardly be taken as evidence of his intention to use the genre of history as a means of deviation from the traditional patterns of Roman political ideology. Instead, his undertaking should be positioned in the broader context of the process of *renovatio imperii* under the Macedonian dynasty, which had begun with the process of revision of the Roman law, the Justinianic *Corpus iuris civilis*, under the emperor's father.⁵⁷

In the sociopolitical context of the Roman Empire, law had traditionally been the primary source that provided the society with a deontological framework, intended to perpetuate a certain sociopolitical order and its identity. Constantine VII's decision to instrumentalize historiography in a manner that no other Byzantine emperor had done before points to his intention to contribute to the process of reassertion of Constantinople's Roman political heritage through an alternative source of political normativity, i.e. history. By symbolically recalling a totalizing image of the Roman imperial past into the present, he was inscribing the recent history of the Roman imperial power of Constantinople and, above all, of his own dynasty into a schema of linear continuity of the Roman imperial rule in time. This schema was intended to serve current political and cultural needs in the sociopolitical context of an imperial city state that sought to ideologically reassert its image as a predominant world power.

⁵⁶ On this transition of genre, see Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί και χρονογράφοι*, pp. 49–50.

⁵⁷ Cf. Magdalino, 'Knowledge', p. 208.

In order to better understand the ideological co-determinants that shaped Constantine VII's historiographical agenda, one needs to take a closer look at two other treatises written by him about the same time as the *Scriptores*. The *De thematibus* and the *De administrando imperio* deal with the administrative geography and the governance of the empire respectively, and bear useful historiographical aspects that shed light on the emperor's historical approach to the issue of *translatio imperii*. In the prooimion of the *De thematibus*, Constantine VII attempts a short historiographical flashback concerning the developments that had led to the current division of the empire into the administrative and military units of the *themata*.⁵⁸ There, he adopts a military perspective and divides the history of the Roman Empire roughly and schematically into the time periods before and after the emergence of the *themata*.

According to the emperor's schema, initially there existed regiments and legions in the Roman Empire. This refers to the period 'when the Roman emperors campaigned with the army and imposed the Roman yoke upon those that rebelled against them, and laid siege to nearly the whole Oecumene that was undisciplined and in opposition'. In an exemplary fashion, he names certain Roman rulers: 'Such as Julius Caesar, the wonderful Augustus, the notorious Trajan, the greatest among the emperors Constantine, Theodosius and all those after them that embraced Christianity and piety'.⁵⁹ In the following lines, he observes:

when the emperors ceased to campaign in person, they ordained generals and *themata*. And in this fashion the Roman Empire came down to the present day. On the present occasion, since the Roman dominion was contracted in the East and the West and was mutilated from the reign of Heraclius onwards, those that succeeded him, not knowing how and up to what point to make full use of their power, cut their domain of authority and the units of soldiers into small pieces, indeed speaking Greek and abandoning their ancestral Roman language.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ On the *themata*, see Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, pp. 723–71, with all basic previous bibliography.

⁵⁹ 'Ὅτε οἱ βασιλεῖς μετὰ τοῦ λαοῦ ἐπεστράτεον καὶ τοῖς ἀνταῖρουσι τὸν τῆς Ῥωμαϊκῆς δουλείας ζυγὸν ἐπετίθεσαν καὶ μικροῦ δεῖν πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐπολιόρκουν ἀτακτοῦσαν καὶ ἀντιλέγουσαν, ὡς ὁ Καῖσαρ Ἰούλιος, ὡς ὁ θαυμαστός Αὐγουστος, ὡς ὁ Τραϊανὸς ἐκεῖνος ὁ περιβόητος, ὡς ὁ μέγας ἐν βασιλεῦσι Κωνσταντῖνος καὶ Θεοδόσιος καὶ οἱ μετ' ἐκείνους τὸν χριστιανισμόν καὶ τὴν θεοσέβειαν ἀσπασάμενοι. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De thematibus*, ed. by Pertusi, pp. 59–60.

⁶⁰ 'Ὅτε δὲ τοῦ στρατεῦν οἱ βασιλεῖς ἀπεπαύσαντο, τότε καὶ στρατηγοὺς καὶ θέματα διωρίσαντο. Καὶ εἰς τοῦτο κατέληξεν ἡ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἀρχὴ μέχρι τῆς σήμερον. Νυνὶ δὲ στενωθείσης κατὰ τε ἀνατολὰς καὶ δυσμὰς τῆς Ῥωμαϊκῆς βασιλείας καὶ ἀκρωτηριασθείσης ἀπὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς Ἡρακλείου τοῦ

The assertion that the Roman emperors' withdrawal as active leaders of the army from the battlefield coincided with the post-seventh-century emergence of the so-called theme system is, of course, inaccurate. Nonetheless, this summary of the Roman imperial power's past bears interesting ideological symbolisms and connotations. Constantine VII draws an exemplary list of emperors, which begins with Julius Caesar, the first Roman imperator to function as an autocrat in Byzantine view. He continues with Augustus, the first Roman autocrat, who established the system of imperial monocracy and pacified the Oecumene under the Roman yoke in the time of the birth of Christ.⁶¹ Then, he moves on to Trajan, the last Roman autocrat to undertake a large-scale expansion of the traditional *orbis romanus* — a pacifying mission in Byzantine imperial mentality.⁶² The next exemplary ruler is Constantine I, whose image as the greatest of all Roman emperors refers undoubtedly to his role in the Christianization of the Roman Oecumene. The last name to be mentioned is that of Theodosius I, the last Roman ruler to preside over the whole late antique empire and the one who made Christianity its official religion.

A closer look at this historical construct reveals two things. First, Constantine VII chose to explicitly include in his list the names of emperors who functioned as sole autocrats over the whole traditional *orbis romanus*. Second, the last two names in the selective rulers' list refer to Christian emperors who presided over the whole empire from Constantinople, the New Rome. As a result, the statement about all those Christian rulers who succeeded Constantine I and Theodosius I implies that the line of continuity of Roman imperial rule, which reached up to Constantine VII himself, referred exclusively to the Roman autocrats of Constantinople. Also striking is the emperor's effort to stress a schema of linear continuity between the pagan and the Christian Roman autocrats, which comprised the transition from a pagan to a Christian Roman rule and the transfer of the centre of Roman power from Rome to Constantinople. Moreover, he sought to downplay the role of cultural discontinuity due to the seventh-century linguistic Hellenization of the East

Λίβυος, οἱ ἀπ' ἐκείνου κρατήσαντες οὐκ ἔχοντες ὅποι καὶ ὅπως καταχρήσονται τῇ αὐτῶν ἐξουσίᾳ. εἰς μικρά τινα μέρη κατέτεμον τὴν ἑαυτῶν ἀρχὴν καὶ τὰ τῶν στρατιωτῶν τάγματα, μάλιστα ἐλληνίζοντες καὶ τὴν πάτριον καὶ ῥωμαϊκὴν γλῶτταν ἀποβαλόντες. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De thematibus*, ed. by Pertusi, p. 60.

⁶¹ The standardized link between the pacifying mission of the pagan Roman Empire in the Oecumene and the birth of Christ in Byzantine perception went back to Eusebius; Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica*, ed. by Mras, I.4.4–5, p. 15; Eusebius, *Demonstratio evangelica*, ed. by Heikel, VII.2.22, p. 332; VIII.1.16, p. 354; IX.17.18, p. 442.

⁶² Cf. Stouraitis, *Krieg und Frieden*, pp. 204–07.

Roman imperial power by employing the Justinianic utterance on Latin being the ancestral language of the Roman emperors.⁶³

All this points to Constantine VII's effort to project an image of the Roman imperial past that highlighted the *translatio imperii* from Rome to Constantinople. If this comes as no surprise, it is nonetheless of great interest that the emperor's focus was not on the traditional notion of *translatio imperii* under Constantine I. His main concern was, instead, to highlight the irreversible crossing of the Roman imperium to Constantinople after the fall of Rome and the deposition of the last Roman emperor in the West. This is made evident when we take a closer look at his references to the division of Roman imperial authority between Rome and New Rome after the foundation of Constantinople by Constantine I.

The first relevant reference is found in chapter 9 of the *De thematibus*. There, Constantine VII reports on the division of the empire into three shares under Constantine I's sons and successors, one of whom was reigning in Rome, and characterizes it as the old and first division of the imperial rule:

The share of authority of the emperor that ruled in Constantinople reached up to here (i.e. Dyrrhachium). What was on the opposite side of the Ionian Gulf was subordinate to the emperor in Rome. This is how the great emperor Constantine made the distribution [of imperial authority] among his three sons, Constantine, Constans, and Constantius. The first son was given those parts above France and beyond the Alps up to [the shores of] the western Ocean and the city of Kantavri. Constantine, the last son, was given Rome and the regions below France, the island of Sardinia and Sicily, and those parts on the opposite side, Libya and Carthago, the metropolis of the Africans, and up to Cyrene. Constantius was given the parts of Dyrrhachium, Illyricum and Hellas, and the islands beyond that, the Cyclades and the so-called Sporades up to the Hellespont, the so-called Asia Minor, both Syria and Palestine, and Cilicia and Egypt. Libya was under the authority of the emperor in Rome. And this is what the old and first distribution of the Roman imperial power looked like.⁶⁴

⁶³ Justinianus, *Novellae*, ed. by Kroll and Schöll, Nov. 7, p. 52 and Nov. 66, p. 342; cf. Koder, 'Sprache als Identitätsmerkmal', pp. 12–13.

⁶⁴ "Ἔως ὧδε ὁ μερισμὸς τῆς βασιλείας ἐγένετο τοῦ κρατοῦντος βασιλέως τὸ Βυζάντιον, τὰ δὲ ἀντίπερα, ἅπερ Ἰώνιος κόλπος, τῷ βασιλεύοντι τῆς Ῥώμης ὑπήκοα. Οὕτω γὰρ ἐμέρισεν ὁ μέγας βασιλεὺς Κωνσταντίνος τοῖς τρισὶν υἱέσιν αὐτοῦ, Κωνσταντίνῳ καὶ Κώνσταντι καὶ Κωνσταντίῳ· τῷ μὲν πρώτῳ υἱῷ τὰς ἄνω Γαλλίας καὶ τὰ ἐπέκεινα Ἰαλπεων ἕως τοῦ ἑσπερίου Ὠκεανοῦ καὶ ἐς αὐτὴν πόλιν τὴν Κάνταυριν· τῷ δὲ Κώνσταντι τῷ ὑστάτῳ υἱῷ τὴν Ῥώμην καὶ τὰς κάτω Γαλλίας, τὴν τε νῆσον Σαρδῶ καὶ αὐτὴν Σικελίαν καὶ τὴν ἀντίπερα Λιβύην Καρχηδόνα τε [καὶ] τὴν τῶν Ἄφρων μητρόπολιν καὶ ἕως Κυρήνης αὐτῆς· τῷ δὲ Κωνσταντίῳ τὰ ἀπὸ τοῦ Δυρραχίου καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ Ἰλλυρικόν

This statement demonstrates that the author had no intention of concealing the recurrent phenomenon of occasional division of imperial authority among three or two rulers within the older *orbis romanus* from the end of Constantine I's reign up to the fifth century. The final such distribution of power had occurred under Theodosius I — the last sole ruler over the whole Roman Oecumene mentioned in Constantine VII's exemplary list of Roman autocrats. He had divided the imperial power into two shares for his sons and successors, one in Rome and the other in Constantinople — a division that had endured up to the fall of Rome and the loss of the empire's Western parts by the late fifth century. In this context, the author of the *De thematibus* makes a reference to the current administrative status of the island of Sicily in the following chapter (10):

Sicily is a large and conspicuous island. Previously it was not under the authority of the emperor of Constantinople when Rome was governed by an emperor. But now a detriment has taken place because of Rome laying aside imperial power and becoming autonomous, and it is governed by anyone who becomes a pope. So, in the current time it (i.e. Sicily) is under the authority of Constantinople that masters the seas up to the straits of Gibraltar.⁶⁵

The statement that the emperor of Constantinople did not have any authority over Sicily for as long as Rome was governed by an emperor obviously refers to the period after the reign of Constantine I when Constantinople was already standing as New Rome and the imperial authority was shared by — at least — two rulers, one in Rome and one in Constantinople. This provides the framework for the interpretation of the statements that follow in the passage. The central message is that the Western parts of the empire were not under the authority of the emperor in Constantinople for as long as there existed an emperor in Rome — that is, until the late fifth century. Since Rome had ceased

τὴν Ἑλλάδα τε καὶ τὰς ἐπέκεινα νήσους τὰς τε Κυκλάδας καὶ τὰς καλουμένας Σποράδας καὶ ἕως Ἑλλησπόντου, τὴν τε καλουμένην μικρὰν Ἀσίαν, ἀμφοτέρας τε καὶ Συρίας καὶ Παλαιστίνην καὶ τὴν Κιλικίαν καὶ αὐτὴν Αἴγυπτον. Ἡ γὰρ Λιβύη τῷ τῆς Ῥώμης ὑπέκειτο βασιλεύοντι. Καὶ οὕτως μὲν ὁ παλαιός τε καὶ [ὁ] πρῶτος μερισμός τῆς βασιλείας Ῥωμαίων. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De thematibus*, ed. by Pertusi, p. 94.

⁶⁵ Νῆσός ἐστι μεγίστη καὶ ἐπιφανεστάτη ἡ Σικελία. Οὐκ ἦν δὲ τὸ πρότερον ὑπὸ τὴν ἀρχὴν τοῦ βασιλείως Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, ὅτε ἡ Ῥώμη ἐβασιλεύετο· νυνὶ δὲ ἐγένετο ἡ καινοτομία αὕτη διὰ τὸ τὴν Ῥώμην ἀποθέσθαι τὸ βασιλεῖον κράτος καὶ ἰδιοκρατορίαν ἔχειν, καὶ δεσπόζεται κυρίως παρὰ τινος κατὰ καιρὸν Πάπα. Κρατεῖται δὲ νῦν ὑπὸ τὴν ἀρχὴν Κωνσταντινουπόλεως διὰ τὸ τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Κωνσταντινουπόλεως θαλασσοκρατεῖν μέχρι τῶν Ἡρακλείων στηλῶν, καὶ πάσης ὁμοῦ τῆς ὡδε θαλάσσης. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De thematibus*, ed. by Pertusi, p. 94.

to be governed by an emperor, there had remained only one Roman ruler in the Oecumene, the emperor of Constantinople. This emperor ruled in the present over those territories in Italy, which had previously been under the authority of his Western counterpart (like Sicily and the seas up to Gibraltar) and which in the meantime had not laid aside (*apothesthai*) Roman imperial authority (like papal Rome had done).

A similar argument is made in the *De administrando imperio*, the political treatise that Constantine VII presented to his fourteen-year-old son Romanos in order to teach him how to run the empire. There, in chapter 27 on the principalities and the governorships of the province of Lombardy, the emperor states:

In the old times the whole domain of Italy, both of Naples and Capua and Beneventum, Salerno and Amalfi and Gaeta and all of Lombardy, was under the sway of the Romans, that is, when Rome was governed by an emperor. But after the empire crossed to Constantinople, all these territories were divided into two commands, for which reason the emperor in Constantinople dispatched two patricians. One of them governed Sicily, Calabria, Naples and Amalfi, and the other had his seat at Beneventum and governed Papia, Capua and the rest. And they delivered to the emperor each year what was due to the treasury. All aforementioned territories were inhabited by the Romans.⁶⁶

This is a problematic passage; especially with regard to the statement that after the crossing of imperial rule to Constantinople the Italian Peninsula came under the authority of the emperor there. In the edition of the text, Jenkins translated the phrase βασιλευομένης τῆς Ῥώμης. Μετὰ δὲ τὸ ἀνελθεῖν τὸ βασιλεῖον ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει as follows: ‘when Rome was the imperial capital. But after the seat of empire was removed to Constantinople’. This interpretation implies a binary schema of *translatio imperii* from one reigning city (Rome) to the other (Constantinople), which is normatively related to Constantine I’s reign. However, if Constantine VII intended to adopt such a binary schema that would distinguish between Rome and Constantinople as the sole reigning city, i.e. the sole capital, of the whole empire, respectively, he would have

⁶⁶ Ἰστέον, ὅτι ἐν τοῖς παλαιοῖς χρόνοις κατεκρατεῖτο ἡ πᾶσα ἐξουσία Ἰταλίας, ἡ τε Νεάπολις καὶ Κάπυα καὶ ἡ Βενεβενδός, τὸ τε Σαλερινὸν καὶ ἡ Ἀμάλφη καὶ Γαῖτις καὶ πᾶσα ἡ Λαγουβαρδία παρὰ τῶν Ῥωμαίων, δηλονότι βασιλευομένης τῆς Ῥώμης. Μετὰ δὲ τὸ ἀνελθεῖν τὸ βασιλεῖον ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει διεμερίσθησαν ταῦτα πάντα εἰς ἀρχὰς δύο, ἐξ οὗ καὶ παρὰ τοῦ βασιλευόντος ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει ἀπεστέλλοντο πατρικιοὶ δύο· καὶ ὁ μὲν εἰς πατρικίος ἐκράτει τὴν Σικελίαν καὶ τὴν Καλαβρίαν καὶ τὴν Νεάπολιν καὶ Ἀμάλφην, ὁ δὲ ἕτερος πατρικίος ἐκαθέζετο εἰς Βενεβενδόν, καὶ ἐκράτει τὴν Πάπτιαν καὶ τὴν Κάπυαν καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ πάντα. Καὶ ἐτέλουν κατ’ ἔτος τῶ βασιλεῖ τὰ νενομισμένα τῶ δημοσίῳ. Αὐταὶ δὲ πᾶσαι αἱ προρρηθεῖσαι χώραι κατωκοῦντο παρὰ τῶν Ῥωμαίων. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, ed. by Moravcsik, xxvii.1–12, p. 113.

employed the participle of the verb *basileuō* (to reign) in active voice (*basileuousês tês Romês*). This way, the meaning of the phrase would have precluded the simultaneous existence of another reigning city in the empire. As opposed to that, the purposeful employment of the participle in passive voice (*basileuomenês tês Romês*) indicates that his statement referred to a period when Rome was not the only city in the empire governed by an emperor.

This becomes clear if we consider that Constantine VII or his ghost-writer had in mind the recurrent division of imperial rule between Rome and Constantinople after the reign of Constantine I — as the aforementioned report in the *De thematibus* demonstrates. This means that the phrase, ‘But after the empire crossed to Constantinople’, can hardly have been intended here to refer to the *translatio imperii* under Constantine I in the early fourth century. Given that it comes directly after the phrase, ‘when Rome was governed by an emperor’, it should rather be taken to refer to the final crossing of imperial monocracy to Constantinople from the late fifth century onwards, when Rome ultimately ceased to be governed by its own emperor and there remained only one Roman emperor in the Oecumene — that of Constantinople. This interpretation of the passage fully corresponds with the aforementioned statement on the status of Sicily in the *De thematibus*, where it is reported that the island was not under the authority of the emperor of Constantinople for as long as Rome was governed by an emperor.

Moreover, it is further verified by the author’s effort in the rest of chapter 27 of the *De administrando imperio* to present the emperors of Constantinople as having continuously kept the Italian Peninsula under their authority from the time when the empire crossed to Constantinople, i.e. after the deposition of the last emperor of Rome in the late fifth century, until the mid-eighth century. For this reason, he provides a short, manipulated summary of historical events, in which Ostrogothic rule and the Justinianic reconquest are omitted, and the Lombard invasion of Italy (568) is misdated in the mid-eighth century — the time when the papacy had slipped away from Constantinople’s imperial authority.⁶⁷ This inaccurate account seems to have been intended to put the detrimental events of the Lombard invasion and the loss of Constantinople’s authority over the city of Rome together in the same period when imperial rule was in the hands of the iconoclast emperors of the so-called Isaurian dynasty — those emperors whom the authoritative chronicle of Theophanes depicted in the worse light. Considering that the *De administrando imperio* was not a work addressed to the public, but a personal guide about how to run the empire

⁶⁷ Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, ed. by Moravcsik, 27, p. 116.

addressed to the emperor's fourteen-year-old son, this manipulation seems to have had a rather didactic purpose — it blamed the radical contraction of imperial authority in Italy on heretic rulers who did not enjoy God's favour.

This reading of the emperor's codified and often manipulated historical accounts in both treatises reveals a certain ideological agenda. His aim was to project an image of the Roman imperial past that was principally informed by two political ideals: first, the ideal of imperial autocracy; and second, the ideal of *translatio imperii* from Rome to Constantinople. His main concern, however, was not to highlight the *translatio imperii* under Constantine I, but rather the irreversible crossing of the Roman imperium to Constantinople after the deposition of the last emperor of Rome and the end of the division of imperial power between an Eastern and a Western ruler.⁶⁸

These political ideals constituted the backbone of Constantine VII's Roman ecumenical mentality as summarized in two statements in the *De thematibus* concerning the current political status of Constantinople in the world. According to the emperor, the capital of his empire, the New Rome, was 'the reigning city that prevailed over the whole world' and 'the queen of cities and of the whole world'.⁶⁹ Moreover, in the *De administrando imperio* Constantine VII informed his son Romanos that his imperial power was given to him by God in order to receive presents by the peoples and obeisance by the inhabitants of the earth.⁷⁰ It is this political mentality that provided the subtext for the projected ecumenical image of the Byzantine emperors in the dynastic history of the *Scriptores*. There, in the second book (reign of Michael II), the Roman emperor of Constantinople is referred to as 'the master of the whole earth', whereas in the sixth book Romanos II is presented as the ruler of peoples.⁷¹

Considering that the *De thematibus* was, at least in part, written and redrafted in the same period as the *De administrando imperio* — that is, during

⁶⁸ This Byzantine version of an ultimate fifth-century *translatio imperii* to the East is explicitly referenced by the late twelfth-century history of John Kinnamos; Kinnamos, *Epitome*, ed. by Meinecke, pp. 218–20.

⁶⁹ Δίκαιόν ἐστι προκατάρχειν τῆς Εὐρώπης γῆς τὸ Βυζάντιον, τὴν νῦν οὖσαν Κωνσταντινούπολιν, ἐπεὶ καὶ πόλις ἐστὶ βασιλεύουσα τοῦ τε κόσμου παντὸς ὑπερέχουσα, ὡς τοῦ μεγάλου Κωνσταντίνου καὶ βασιλέως τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν κληρονομήσασα [...] Ἀρχὴν οὖν τῆς Εὐρώπης τὴν βασιλίδα τῶν πόλεων καὶ τοῦ κόσμου παντὸς τὴν νέαν Πώμην ἐγὼ τίθημι, Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De thematibus*, ed. by Pertusi, p. 84, ll. 1–4 and 39–40.

⁷⁰ Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, ed. by Moravcsik, prol.39–49, p. 46.

⁷¹ *Theophanes continuatus (libri I–IV)*, ed. by Featherstone and Codoñer, II.24, p. 116; *Theophanes continuatus (liber VI)*, ed. by Bekker, VI.5, p. 473, l. 4.

Constantine VII's sole reign (945–59), probably in the 950s,⁷² the interrelation between the projected image of the Roman imperial past in those two works and the conception of the *Scriptores* project can hardly be doubted. This corpus of history came into being as a result of the emperor's increasing awareness of the fundamental role of historical memory and consciousness in the reproduction of collective identity. This awareness, reflected also in the project of systematic excerption of historical works by the emperor's circle,⁷³ found its final expression in the representation of the *Scriptores* as the final part of a world history. This way, a work of dynastic history could be transformed into a threshold between the origin of the Roman imperial community and its future.

Constantine VII's perception of the Roman past was not determined by the notion of historical continuity of a people in terms of ethnic history. It was informed by the notion of continuity of an ecumenical imperium and the relevant need to reproduce and reassert a normative vision of a centralized imperial-political order, the boundaries of which were determined by the limits of enforceable imperial authority.⁷⁴ The careful choice of the texts of George the *synkellos* and Theophanes the Confessor as parts of his authoritative world history was explicitly intended to highlight the linear continuity of the Roman imperium within the framework of universal history. As already noted above,⁷⁵ these interconnected texts were delivered jointly in the Byzantine manuscript tradition since the second half of the ninth century, whereas usually only the last part of the text of George the *synkellos* was copied in those joint versions. Not coincidentally, this part began with the political processes that had brought Julius Caesar to power,⁷⁶ the first Roman autocrat in Constantine VII's aforementioned exemplary list in the *De thematibus*.

It is in this light that one should revisit the statement made in the prooimion of the *VB*, alluding to the author's wish to create an account of the most noteworthy deeds throughout the whole duration of Roman rule in

⁷² Loungis, 'Sur la date du De thematibus', pp. 299–305; Ahrweiler, 'Sur la date du De thematibus de Constantine Porphyrogénète', pp. 1–5. On the various stages of the composition of the text see now the latest argument in Haldon, *The 'De Thematibus'* (forthcoming).

⁷³ On the *Excerpta*, see Flusin, 'Logique d'une anti-histoire', pp. 537–59; Németh, 'The Imperial Systematisation of the Past', pp. 232–58.

⁷⁴ Stouraitis, 'Reinventing Roman Ethnicity in High and Late Medieval Byzantium', pp. 72–76.

⁷⁵ Cf. n. 34 above.

⁷⁶ Ševčenko, 'The Search for the Past', p. 283; Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί και χρονογράφοι*, pp. 96–97.

Constantinople.⁷⁷ In Constantine VII's view, the history of Roman imperial rule that was seated in the world-reigning city of Constantinople did not begin with the first Christian emperor of Constantinople, but with the rise to power of Julius Caesar in Rome. In this schema of linear historical continuity from the first pagan Roman autocrats (Julius Caesar and Augustus) to his own times, the emperor was able to unite the pagan and Christian past of the imperial office and to provide his authoritative version of the process of *translatio imperii* from Rome to Constantinople that had been irreversibly sealed after the deposition of the last emperor of Rome in the late fifth century. Thus, he was able to reassert the ecumenical claims of New Rome despite the radical territorial contraction of Roman imperial authority and, last but not least, to downplay the significance of the major cultural change concerning the imperial administration's Hellenization during the seventh century.

In the *De thematibus*, the emperor presented Latin as the ancestral language of the Roman emperors of Constantinople and referred to Greek as the language adopted by them from the time of Heraclius onwards.⁷⁸ In the *Scriptores*, the adopted Greek language was referred to as the language (*glôtta*) or voice (*phonê*) of the Romans.⁷⁹ This stance demonstrates the main difference between an ethnic vision of the past, in which a people's historical continuity and boundaries were informed and circumscribed by the continuity of historic cultural markers, and an imperial vision. In the latter, it was the continuity of the centralized authority of the Roman imperial office that determined the community's historical image and boundaries. As opposed to the tenth-century Latin West, where history writing was informed by an established image of the world as divided into ethnic *regna*, i.e. into peoples of historical culture and notional common descent circumscribed by political loyalty to their king, Constantine VII produced history with the aim to reassert the vision of an imperial order, and to ascribe to his dynasty the preeminent role of its renovator.

⁷⁷ Cf. n. 36 above.

⁷⁸ Cf. n. 60 above.

⁷⁹ *Vita Basilii*, 68, ed. by Ševčenko, p. 234; *Theophanes continuatus (liber VI)*, ed. by Bekker, VI.15, p. 407.

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WHO WERE THE LOTHARINGIANS? DEFINING POLITICAL COMMUNITY AFTER THE END OF THE CAROLINGIAN EMPIRE

Simon MacLean

Introduction

This article deals with ethnic labels and their uses in the political discourses of the post-Carolingian world. As a starting point, we can use one of the best-known texts on notions of identity in tenth-century Europe, which comes in the middle of Bishop Liudprand of Cremona's vitriolic, self-serving, and entertaining account of his embassy to Constantinople in 968. Invited to dinner one evening, Liudprand was made to sit at a humiliating distance from his host, the Byzantine Emperor Nicephorus Phocas, and spent the meal enduring not only the appallingly oily food but also a series of insults directed towards his own patron, the king of East Francia and Italy — and emperor — Otto I. After a bout of aggressive banter about the gluttony and poor skills of the Ottonian army, Nicephorus finished with a rhetorical coup-de-grâce intended to belittle the very notion of a Western Empire, which had been recently revived by Otto after a gap of nearly half a century: 'You are not Romans, but Lombards!' At this Liudprand lost his composure, retorting that Romulus (the mythical founder of Rome) had been a fratricide and the son of a whore, and that the original Romans had been nothing more than debtors, slaves, and fugitive murderers. He continued:

We, that means the Lombards, Saxons, Franks, Lotharingians, Bavarians, Swabians and Burgundians, so disdain them that we utter no other insult than 'You Roman!' to our enemies when aroused, and we understand that single term, the name of

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the Romans, to include every baseness, every cowardice, every kind of greed, every promiscuity, every mendacity, indeed every vice.¹

The fact that Liudprand embraced rather than refuted Nicephorus's insult — that he aggressively rejected the identification of Rome with imperial status rather than seeking to reclaim it — is striking because it seems to run contrary to mainstream definitions of political order in the early Middle Ages, which were customarily saturated in the imagery of *Romanitas*.² Indeed, Otto I's own imperial coronation had been staged in Rome in February 962, as had that of his son Otto II at Christmas 967, only a few months before Liudprand took ship to Constantinople. Yet in drawing a contrast between the multi-regnal diversity of the West and the avowedly uniform 'Roman-ness' of the Byzantine Empire and other Mediterranean polities, the bishop of Cremona was not completely alone. In 871, when the Byzantine Emperor Basil I belittled the imperial stature of the Carolingian ruler Louis II by pointing out that he was in territorial terms no more than a king of Italy, Louis's angry response included the observation that the kings of the other Western kingdoms were his relatives, and that the Frankish empire was thus constituted precisely by the sum of its parts.³ A similar comparison appears in the description of another Ottonian embassy, led by the monk John of Gorze, to the court of Caliph 'Abd ar-Rahman in Cordoba in the mid-950s. The author of John's *Life* puts into the caliph's mouth a speech criticizing Otto's habit of delegating power to representatives in different parts of his realms, and although the text breaks off before we hear the ambassador's comeback it is clear that the intention was to lampoon the oriental despotism of the Cordoban court by comparing its suffocating centralization with the common-sense devolution of the West.⁴ In the late ninth and tenth centuries, then, it was perfectly possible for Western apologists to celebrate the polycentrism of the Frankish/Saxon empire as a source of its strength rather than (as claimed by Nicephorus, Basil, 'Abd ar-Rahman, and even some modern historians) its key weakness. Beneath Liudprand's exaggerated version of his exchange with the emperor therefore lies a genuine contrast between the self-perceptions of the Frankish and Mediterranean worlds in the

¹ Liudprand, *Legatio*, ed. by Chiesa, 11–12, pp. 192–93; trans. by Squatriti, 11–12, pp. 246–47.

² Smith, *Europe after Rome*, pp. 253–92.

³ Fanning, 'Imperial Diplomacy'. See also McKitterick, ed., *Being Roman after Rome*, themed issue of *Early Medieval Europe*.

⁴ John of St-Arnulf, *Vita Johannis Gorzie*, ed. by Parisse, 136, pp. 160–61; Nelson, 'Rulers and Government', pp. 125–29.

tenth century. His bold assertion that the natural units of political order were the sub-imperial *gentes* (peoples) represents a distinctively Western mindset.

One implication of this is that even though early medieval writers frequently referred to ethnic communities, and sometimes even provided abstract definitions of what they meant by the term 'gens', ethnic labels in the ninth and tenth centuries did not refer *only*, or even primarily, to ethnicity.⁵ Liudprand's list of peoples does not reflect a purely ethnographic sensibility, but uses 'national' labels to denote the elite political communities which in his view constituted Otto's kingdom. These labels carried political weight.⁶ As Tim Reuter aptly put it: 'Ethnicity appears to have lit up in the presence of rulers in much the same way as fluorescent clothing does in the presence of street lighting'.⁷ On top of this proxy role in political discourse, statements about ethnicity in early medieval sources could also be heavily informed by providential and legal discourses.⁸ Such statements do not, therefore, correlate directly to modern notions of national identity.

The consequent problem of whether and how we can move from discourse to identity has much occupied historians of the early Middle Ages.⁹ Yet the ambiguity of ethnic classification is also what makes it useful, as a tool which we can use to prise open the smooth surfaces of early medieval sources and access the imagined landscapes of contemporary politics. This article examines some of the key political dynamics of tenth century Europe via the history of the most enigmatic of Liudprand's 'peoples': the Lotharingians.

Who Were the Lotharingians?

The Lotharingians were unlike the other *gentes* in Liudprand's list in that they were a 'new' group. Indeed, Lotharingia is one of the great paradoxes of Frankish history.¹⁰ On the one hand, its story is one of fleeting existence and

⁵ On contemporary definitions see e.g. Goetz, 'Gens'; Pohl, 'Strategies of Identification'.

⁶ On the use of ethnic terms to describe political communities see e.g. Goetz, 'Gentes'; Reuter, 'Whose Race'.

⁷ Reuter, 'Whose Race', pp. 103–04.

⁸ Innes, 'Historical Writing'. On legal status and Frankishness see e.g. West, *Reframing the Feudal Revolution*, p. 24. On methodology see especially Bartlett, 'Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity'; Reuter, 'Whose Race'; Pohl, 'Strategies of Identification'; Brubaker and Cooper, 'Beyond Identity'.

⁹ For an overview of the 'ethnogenesis' debate see now Wood, *The Modern Origins*, pp. 299–329.

¹⁰ For a recent introduction with further references see MacLean, 'Shadow Kingdom'.

pronounced discontinuity. Its origins lay in the Treaty of Verdun of 843, which ended the wars between the sons of Louis the Pious (814–40) by dividing his empire into three kingdoms. Lothar I, the eldest son, received the middle kingdom stretching from the Low Countries to central Italy. What we usually refer to as Lotharingia was the northern part of this realm, inherited by (and ultimately named after) his like-named son in 855.¹¹ But Lothar II's kingdom (lying roughly between the Rivers Scheldt and Meuse in the west and the Rhine in the east) was itself ephemeral. His turbulent reign was dominated by a controversial and highly political divorce case which divided and embarrassed his political elites, and when he died in 869 without legitimate heir the realm itself was split down the middle and absorbed into the kingdoms of his powerful uncles to either side.¹² This was only the first of numerous divisions and reallocations — and although it was briefly revived in a different form for Lothar's cousin Zwentibald between 895 and 900, this was effectively the end of Lotharingia's history as an independent kingdom.¹³

On the other hand, the same story has also been told as a narrative of surprising continuity. Even setting aside the fact that a version of the region survives (via a long history of disputed claims and European wars) as the French administrative region of Lorraine, in the ninth and tenth centuries the concept of the kingdom seemingly persisted even when it did not formally exist. Thus after the death of Lothar II in 869 there are relatively frequent references to the 'regnum Lotharii' (Lothar's kingdom); and in the early tenth century we start to read of 'Lotharingians'.¹⁴ From the 930s, these Lotharingians were sometimes said to have had their own leaders called 'dukes'. And by the time we reach the pro-Ottonian historians of the 960s, the Lotharingians are explicitly referred to as a people ('gens') with specific characteristics. According to Widukind of Corvey they were 'a skilful people, accustomed to ingenuity, ready for war and adaptable to the outcome of events'.¹⁵ Ruotger of Cologne describes the Lotharingians as having been a 'savage' people before they were tamed by Duke Bruno, the

Invaluable full-length studies are provided by Schneider, *Auf der Suche*, and West, *Reframing the Feudal Revolution*.

¹¹ See Parisot, *Le royaume de Lorraine*, pp. 747–53 on Lothar II as the eponymous figure.

¹² On the divorce and its consequences see now Airlie, 'Unreal Kingdom'.

¹³ Schneider and Martine, 'La production d'un espace'.

¹⁴ Bauer, *Lotharingien*, pp. 12–68.

¹⁵ Widukind of Corvey, *Rerum gestarum Saxoniarum libri tres*, ed. by Hirsch, I.30, pp. 42–43 ('quia gens varia erat et artibus assueta bellis prompta mobilisque ad rerum novitates'); II.15, pp. 79–80; II.36, pp. 95–97.

brother of Otto I.¹⁶ And it was Liudprand of Cremona, a contemporary of these writers, who was first to use the abstract term ‘Lotharingia’ to refer to a particular territory.¹⁷ Of all the spectral lost kingdoms and subkingdoms into which the Frankish empire was periodically divided, this one was exceptional in witnessing the planting and evolution of a new community label. Why might this have been? What can this apparent example of a people and a kingdom becoming identified with a king, rather than the more common reverse, tell us about politics and ethnic discourse in the late ninth and early tenth centuries?¹⁸

These questions have a truly enormous historiography, but the recent debate is quite polarized. Some have argued that the evolution of the terminology (*regnum* — people — territory) reflects the ever-increasing solidity of Lotharingian identity, hot-housed by regional resistance to interference from the larger kingdoms on either side.¹⁹ Others have deconstructed the idea of Lotharingian-ness as a genuinely felt identity, underlining the absence of evidence for the kinds of phenomenon from which group identities would normally derive, such as shared histories, persistent cultural bonds, and a consistent sense of geography.²⁰ The near-absence of clear statements of Lotharingian identity in Lotharingian sources is a telling element in this argument: although attributions of territorial and group labels are fairly consistent in the century after Lothar II’s death, it is unavoidably the case that they come overwhelmingly from the perspectives of outsiders writing in West Francia, Saxony, and Italy.

Nonetheless, it is widely accepted that ethnicity is a relational and situational concept — a manipulable category rather than an inert witness to fundamental beliefs and identities.²¹ This means that even classifications imposed by outsiders should be taken seriously — self-identifications and external labels are linked, and discussions of social and ethnic identity need to take account

¹⁶ Ruotger of Cologne, *Vita Brunonis*, ed. by Schmale-Ott, 39, pp. 41–42.

¹⁷ Liudprand, *Antapodosis*, ed. by Chiesa, II.18, p. 43; II.25, p. 46 and *Historia*, ed. by Chiesa, 14, p. 177; 22, p. 182. On Liudprand’s words for territories and peoples see Gandino, *Il vocabolario*, pp. 237–80.

¹⁸ The peculiarity was underlined by Reuter, ‘Whose Race’, p. 106 (and for parallels see Schneider, *Auf der Suche*, pp. 261, 442). For a sophisticated exploration of such questions in the case of tenth-century Saxony, see Becher, *Rex, dux und gens*.

¹⁹ Anton, ‘Synoden’; Bauer, *Lotharingien*.

²⁰ Schneider, *Auf der Suche*; Margue, “Nous ne sommes ni de l’une, ni de l’autre”, published in Gaillard and others, eds, *De la mer du nord*. The latter volume contains a representative variety of opinions.

²¹ Geary, ‘Ethnic Identity as a Situational Construct’.

of the dialectic between them.²² With this in mind, the intention of the present article is not to take sides in the debate over the existence or otherwise of Lotharingian identity, far less to resolve it. Rather, I will defer the question of whether or not the language of our sources reflects genuine identity and solidarity, and ask instead how and why authors of the earlier tenth century might have chosen to use certain terms and expressions. Specifically, my enquiry is limited to explicit references to ‘the Lotharingians’ as a group, a term used habitually by modern historians to refer to elites of the middle kingdom from the 850s onwards, but rarely if ever found in sources written before *c.* 920. This terminology should be taken seriously because while we may be unsure about whether successive deployments of this concept denote the existence of a continuous and conscious group, we can at minimum read them as rhetorical attempts to assert the existence of such a group. After all, the terminology of our sources never simply reflects social reality, but also helps construct it. My argument is that early coinings of the term ‘Lotharingians’ make most sense as strategic manoeuvres within the fluid context of a specifically post-Carolingian politics — and can therefore be used in turn to illuminate a world in which established definitions of political order were coming unstuck, and new ones were competing to take their place.²³

One indication of the shift from Carolingian to post-Carolingian is the very absence of new historical narratives written in the wake of the empire’s disintegration in 888. The relatively abundant supply of ninth-century narratives dries up shortly thereafter, with no long-form contemporary histories written in East Francia, northern Italy, or the middle kingdom between Regino of Prüm’s *Chronicle* (908) and the revival of the 960s represented by the work of Liudprand and Widukind. In West Francia, an equivalent silence is broken only by Flodoard of Reims, whose *Annals* and *History* are invaluable, but limited by their close focus on Reims and its environs. The annalistic tradition of the eighth and ninth centuries was firmly anchored in Carolingian political order, structured around patterns of royal movement and the cycle of the religious calendar.²⁴ After the end of the Carolingian monopoly on royal power, and especially after 900, ninth-century political patterns fractured as would-be

²² Jenkins, *Social Identity*, pp. 20–28; Jenkins, *Rethinking Ethnicity*, pp. 53–56; Pohl, ‘Strategies of Identification’, pp. 12–27. Cf. Brubaker and Cooper, ‘Beyond Identity’.

²³ Throughout this article I use ‘post-Carolingian’ in a limited and specific sense, to mean the period after the end of the Carolingian monopoly on royal power in the Frankish realms. For more on this definition see Airlie, *Power and its Problems*; MacLean, ‘Carolingian Past’.

²⁴ McKitterick, *History and Memory*.

kings in all parts of the Frankish world competed to establish their families (or re-establish them, in the case of the Carolingians themselves) as royal dynasties. As part of this competition, rulers were regularly deposed and crowns seldom passed from fathers to sons. That this period of uncertainty should have coincided with a break in the production of historical narrative is no accident — the break itself might indicate a lack of confidence in the location and stability of the political centre, akin to a less dramatic version of the ‘crisis of representation’ which characterized the late and post-Roman world.²⁵

Traces of this rupture might also be detected in the quasi-ethnic terminology used to describe political organization in the period. Ninth-century definitions of political order had orbited around a hegemonic notion of Frankishness as an umbrella political identity and as an emblem of elite membership.²⁶ As the notion of a coherent Frankish empire became increasingly unsustainable after 888, so too did the labels used to characterize its inhabitants: Frankishness became a more descriptive and precise term reserved for the inhabitants of Francia ‘proper’ (the West Frankish heartlands and Franconia); while older classical terms also found new purchase.²⁷ Ethnic qualifiers in royal titulature (title plus people) had also been integral to ninth-century idioms of political authority, with Carolingian rulers often represented as ‘kings of the Franks’ and variations thereof. The first Ottonian kings, by contrast, were normally announced simply as ‘king’, perhaps reflecting a wariness of adopting Carolingian styles too ostentatiously while descendants of Charles the Bald still aspired to rule west of the Rhine (though contemporary narratives do sometimes style them in ‘Frankish’ terms).²⁸ Likewise, while the Ottonians did allow some nobles the title ‘dux’ (or duke), they were extremely reluctant to enrich this with an ethnic qualifier. The most powerful of the Lotharingian dukes in the earlier tenth century, Giselbert, is only called ‘dux of the Lotharingians’ in one royal charter.²⁹ It is no coincidence that this comes from the first months of the reign of Otto I, who was at this point (and by means of this charter) seeking to cement a relationship with Giselbert and to assert his claim to regard Lotharingia as part

²⁵ Heydemann, ‘Biblical Israel’.

²⁶ See McKitterick, *History and Memory*; Innes, ‘Historical Writing’, pp. 544–47; Koziol, *The Politics of Memory and Identity*, p. 225; Reimitz, ‘The Providential Past’, pp. 109–35.

²⁷ Schneidmüller, ‘Adso von Montier-en-Der’; Brühl, *Deutschland — Frankreich*, pp. 83–180; cf. Pohl, ‘Gens ipsa peribit’.

²⁸ Brühl, *Deutschland — Frankreich*, pp. 163–69. On the significance of the ‘of the Franks’-style formulation, see Pohl, ‘Christian and Barbarian Identities’, esp. pp. 12–15.

²⁹ *Die Urkunden Otto I.*, ed. by Sickel, no. 6, pp. 94–95.

of his kingdom in the face of a genuine challenge from his Carolingian rival Louis IV. In other words, the qualifying term ‘of the Lotharingians’ here is not neutral and is as significant as the title ‘dux’ — it represents a public concession to Giselbert, made in peculiar circumstances. There is thus meaning, and deliberation, in formal uses of this quasi-ethnic terminology in tenth-century political discourse.³⁰

This, then, is the context in which we should evaluate our sources’ earliest references to a group known as ‘the Lotharingians’, who are curious in the first instance because they are not ‘the Franks’. What connotations might this coinage have had in the first decades of the tenth century? How might its deployment have made sense in an unstable political situation which the powerful sought to control by asserting their own visions of community? And how might we take this story across the chasm which separates the ‘regnum Lotharii’ of the late ninth century from the world of Widukind of Corvey and Liudprand of Cremona, in which for the first time Lotharingia had become a territory and the Lotharingians a people?

The Emergence of ‘the Lotharingians’

The first explicit appearance of ‘the Lotharingians’ is in the two versions of the so-called *Alemannic Annals*, surviving in manuscripts from Zurich and Monza but probably written in the monastery of St-Gall, near Lake Constance, around 920.³¹ It is certainly reasonable to regard the collective noun as having evolved from the later ninth-century concept of the ‘regnum Lotharii’ — but even if so, the timing and context of the shift requires further examination. On closer inspection, one of the striking things about the sources written in the twenty years after 888 is the relative rarity of the expression ‘regnum Lotharii’ — all the more noticeable in that this includes a period (895–900) in which Lotharingia was a distinct kingdom with its own ruler (Zwentibald). The kingdom was never referred to as ‘Lothar’s’ in the royal charters of Zwentibald, nor those of his father, the East Frankish king and emperor Arnulf (888–99); and it was hardly exclusive in the various narrative sources from the 890s. Contemporaries preferred a variety of terms (including ‘Zwentibald’s kingdom’; ‘the Gallican kingdom’; ‘province of the Western Franks’), which seems to highlight the absence of any settled designation in this period; and there are

³⁰ On the political weight carried by charter formulas see e.g. Keller, ‘Zu den Siegeln’; Koziol, *Politics of Memory*. The classic study is Wolfram, ed., *Intitulatio II*.

³¹ *Annales Alamannici*, ed. by Lendi.

no uses of ‘Lothar’s kingdom’ in the decade after 895.³² In this light, perhaps we should hesitate before assuming the ubiquity and continuity of the concept of ‘Lothar’s kingdom’, whose inhabitants were ready to emerge as full-fledged ‘Lotharingians’.

This observation can be supported with evidence from the reign of the next East Frankish king Louis IV (900–11), Arnulf’s other son who succeeded both his father and his brother after their respective deaths. Louis was born in 893, hence his nickname ‘the Child’ and his pressing need for experienced counsellors. The royal styles and images deployed by those counsellors in his charters and seals were intended to support pointed statements defending his authority and legitimacy. One of his charters, issued in 903 in favour of St-Gall, refers to the presence of the king’s leading men, including a certain Gebhard ‘duke of the kingdom which is called by many Lothar’s [kingdom]’.³³ This passage has played a part in the long-running debate about the emergence of duchies in the post-Carolingian period, and on its basis Gebhard has often been described as the first duke of Lotharingia.³⁴ But — setting aside the fraught issue of ducal status — why is the reference to Gebhard’s sphere of influence so awkwardly worded? Why not simply ‘duke of Lothar’s kingdom’? One explanation might be the very fact alluded to above, namely that the appellation ‘Lothar’s kingdom’, which we tend to assume was commonplace after the 860s, was in fact non-standard at the beginning of the tenth century. The term was apparently unfamiliar to the author of this charter, who presented it as something of a neologism.

This coinage could well have served a political end in the reign of Louis the Child, whose advisers were eager to disassociate him from his late half-brother Zwentibald because of the infamy of the latter’s conduct. The reign had also ended murkily with the death of Zwentibald, who was possibly murdered — and possibly by a faction sympathetic to Louis.³⁵ Zwentibald was effectively erased from history in the official discourse of Louis’s court: the simple fact that he had reigned is acknowledged only twice in Louis’s charters, and in one

³² *Annales Fuldenses*, ed. by Kurze, a. 891, p. 119 and a. 895, p. 126 (Lothar’s kingdom), a. 893, p. 122 (province of the Western Franks), a. 900, p. 134 (Gallican kingdom); *Annales Vedastini*, ed. by Simson, a. 879, p. 45; a.884, p. 55; a. 885, p. 56, a. 895, p. 75 (Lothar’s kingdom), a. 896, p. 78; a. 898, p. 80 (Zwentibald’s kingdom).

³³ *Die Urkunden Ludwigs des Kindes*, ed. by Schieffer, no. 20, p. 126 (‘dux regni quod a multis Lotharii dicitur’).

³⁴ On this debate see Becher, *Rex, dux und gens*. I have learned much from two unpublished PhD theses: Hope, ‘The Political Development’; Robbie, ‘The Emergence of Regional Polities’.

³⁵ Hartmann, ‘Lotharingien in Arnolfs Reich’, pp. 122–42.

of those only to remind its audience that he had been deposed by ‘the leading men (*proceres*) of Lothar’s kingdom’.³⁶ Regino of Prüm, writing in 908 for the attention of one of Louis the Child’s most influential courtiers and thus perhaps for the king himself, subscribed to this view, depicting Zwentibald as a disaster and consistently describing the kingdom he had ruled as the ‘regnum Lotharii’.³⁷ This consistency was new, and stands in stark contrast to the varied terminology of the immediately preceding period. In view of all this, my suggestion is that the term ‘Lothar’s kingdom’ was used in the court discourse of Louis the Child’s reign as part of the black-ops campaign against the reputation of his predecessor — a conscious and pointed alternative to previously current terms like ‘Zwentibald’s kingdom’.

Another feature of the tentative re-emergence of this Lotharian association under Louis the Child is that all three of the royal charters which use the label ‘regnum Lotharii’ do so to refer not just to a territory, but also to an elite group — the ‘proceres’ of the ‘regnum’. Furthermore, all three documents position the same figure as the leader of that alleged community: Duke (sometimes count) Gebhard.³⁸ Gebhard was a member of a family, known to historians as the ‘Conradines’, which became powerful under Louis the Child, and in the first decade of the tenth century he was in the process of being forcibly installed as the king’s representative in the middle kingdom.³⁹ Any attempt to represent Gebhard’s authority as legitimate in the midst of this very turbulent situation required that he be positioned as leader of what purported to be a regional political community — regardless of whether such a community genuinely existed, and of whether he was actually able to exercise that authority. With this in mind it may be significant that Regino’s *Chronicle*, written around the same time and directed towards Louis the Child’s court circle, is also anxious to legitimize the blossoming power of the Conradines. Indeed, it finishes with the family triumphing over their enemies with the help of ‘an army from Lothar’s kingdom’ — another image of collective allegiance.⁴⁰

³⁶ *Die Urkunden Ludwigs des Kindes*, ed. by Schieffer, no. 57, p. 184, no. 70, p. 266 — the quote is from the latter (*proceres regni Lothariensis*).

³⁷ Regino of Prüm, *Chronicle*, ed. by Kurze, though NB Regino claimed the Lothar in question was Lothar I rather than his scandalous son.

³⁸ *Die Urkunden Ludwigs des Kindes*, ed. by Schieffer, no. 20, p. 126; no. 55, p. 182; no. 70, p. 206.

³⁹ Hope, ‘Political Development’, pp. 221–26 points out that the charter proclaiming Gebhard’s ducal status was issued during one of the military actions designed to do just that.

⁴⁰ Regino, *Chronicle*, ed. by Kurze, a. 906, pp. 150–53. For this interpretation of the end of Regino’s work see MacLean, ‘Insinuation’.

Both the association of the middle kingdom with Lothar and the image of a coherent political community in that kingdom therefore make sense within the specific circumstances of Louis the Child's reign. This context can help us make sense of the explicit references to 'the Lotharingians' in the *Alemannic Annals*. Both versions of the text are sympathetic to the Conradine family, and particularly to the East Frankish ruler Conrad I (911–18), Gebhard's nephew, who had worked hard to establish links with the monastery of St-Gall, whence came not only the annals but also the charter which had described Gebhard as 'dux'.⁴¹ But it is also worth noting that both versions of the text first use the term in relation to the events of 911, when Gebhard and Louis the Child both died and the West Frankish king Charles the Simple annexed the middle kingdom. According to the version of the annals found in a Monza manuscript, 'the leaders of the Lotharingians (*Hlothariorum principes*) separated from King Louis' and 'the Lotharingians (*Hlodarii*) made Charles into king of Gaul (*rex Galliae*) over them'. Meanwhile, the version found in a Zurich manuscript describes Conrad I's struggles against Charles the Simple 'among the Lotharingians (*in Hlodarios*)' and his attempts to master 'the Franks who are called Lotharingians (*Hlutharingi*)'.⁴² As is well known, Charles ostentatiously proclaimed his acquisition of the middle kingdom in 911 as ideologically significant, defining it publicly as the moment at which he came into his full Carolingian inheritance — it is only from this point that his charters begin to describe him in nostalgic terms as 'king of the Franks'. His rule over 'the Franks', his control of Lotharingia, and his Carolingian heritage were here compressed into a single concept.⁴³ At the time of the annals' composition, the beginning of the 920s, the Frankishness of 'Lotharingia' was pointedly reasserted by Charles at the Treaty of Bonn, and the matter of the middle kingdom was becoming a serious point of tension between Charles and the new East Frankish king Henry I (and between Charles and his own leading men).⁴⁴ In a context like

⁴¹ On Conrad and St-Gall, see *Annales Alamannici*, ed. by Lendi, a. 912, p. 188; Postel, 'Nobiscum partiri'.

⁴² *Annales Alamannici*, ed. by Lendi, a. 911, p. 188. The Zurich text also refers to the 'regnum Hlutharingorum' (realm of the Lotharingians) in 913. The variety of vocabulary here, even within a single text, may also betray the unusualness of the terminology.

⁴³ Schneider, *Auf der Suche*, p. 120.

⁴⁴ For the Treaty of Bonn (at which Charles and Henry recognized each other as Frankish kings — but met on the Rhine, thus pointedly confirming the former's control of the middle kingdom), see *Constitutiones et acta publica*, ed. by Weiland, no. 1, pp. 1–2. For the tension over Lotharingia in Charles's reign see Depreux, 'Le comte Haganon'.

this, language is charged with extra meaning. Those whom Charles defined emphatically as Franks, the annalists saw as ‘Lotharingians’, or at least ‘Franks called Lotharingians’. This terminology can be read as a distancing strategy, a way of diluting the prized Frankishness that underwrote Charles’s claims to the middle kingdom and aligning that *regnum* instead with East Frankish and/or Conradine definitions of political geography.

My suggestion is therefore that the concept of a regnal group of ‘Lotharingians’ originated amidst a cluster of competing assertions generated by the post-888 breakdown of Carolingian political geography and the associated contest for territory and legitimacy. We can tease out another hint of this dynamic from the only other early narrative source which deploys the new term ‘Lotharingians’: the *Annals* of Flodoard of Reims.⁴⁵ This is our only continuous narrative history of the West Frankish kingdom from the first half of the tenth century and runs from 919 to 966. It was written broadly contemporaneously, though it was probably not begun until about 922. West Frankish sources of this period often sought implicitly to deny the Frankish identity of the eastern kingdom and to claim that concept as a western monopoly.⁴⁶ If the wording of the *Alemannic Annals* isolated ‘the Lotharingians’ from an idea of Frankishness which in West Francia was held to carry overtones of political legitimacy and Carolingian continuity, it can be argued that the opening few entries of Flodoard’s *Annals* reflect an opposing perspective. In 919, for example, Flodoard explicitly describes the ‘regnum Lotharii’ as ‘part of Francia’.⁴⁷ This established, he then makes frequent references to ‘the Lotharingians’ as actors on the political stage. Theirs was an area with which Flodoard was intimately familiar: Reims had important lands in the middle kingdom, and its eastern-facing interests help explain why his other work, a history of the church of Reims written *c.* 950, was dedicated to Archbishop Robert of Trier.

But despite Flodoard’s regular and generally neutral use of the term to mean the elites of the middle kingdom, his vocabulary becomes more fine-grained when he gets into the detail of the factional conflicts in and over Lotharingia in the 920s and 930s. His depiction of Gisibert, by far the most powerful figure in the *regnum* in this period, is particularly ambiguous. In his entry for 923, the annalist recounts how Gisibert turned against the West Frankish king Raoul and invited the eastern ruler Henry I to invade — in Flodoard’s telling, it is only those who were then loyal to Raoul, led by Count

⁴⁵ On Flodoard see now Roberts, ‘Flodoard’.

⁴⁶ Schneidmüller, ‘Adso von Montier-en-Der’.

⁴⁷ Flodoard, *Annales*, ed. by Lauer, a. 919, p. 1.

Otto of Verdun, who are referred to as ‘Lotharingians’.⁴⁸ Later, when Giselbert and Otto together made peace with Raoul, there is an implication that in Flodoard’s eyes ‘the Lotharingians’ whom they brought with them were specifically associated with Otto rather than with Giselbert.⁴⁹ And when Flodoard then says that ‘all the Lotharingians’ switched back to Henry I, the context suggests again that he is referring primarily to the southern group around Otto of Verdun.⁵⁰ In fact, Flodoard’s entries in the 920s can be read with surprising regularity as implicitly associating the label ‘Lotharingians’ with groups in the south, around Metz and Verdun.⁵¹ In the 930s, Flodoard’s distaste for Giselbert seems to have diminished (partly because of Giselbert’s supporting role in West Frankish politics) and he is now associated in the *Annals* with the ‘Lotharingians’ and even recognized as ‘dux’, as were to be his successors in that role, Otto of Verdun and Conrad the Red. When Flodoard focuses more closely on Lotharingian affairs in his description of the troubles faced by the latter in the early 950s, however, he again draws some implicit distinctions, for example between the ‘Lotharingians’ whose towers Conrad had demolished and the ‘Verdun-ers’ who were deprived of offices.⁵² In 959, he uses the general term ‘Lotharingians’ for the faction which followed Count Immo in rejecting a new Ottonian duke.⁵³

Flodoard’s infamously terse prose means that even his more straightforward comments often need to be parsed and decoded, so it is very difficult to identify consistent patterns in his *Annals*. Nor can we expect this text to

⁴⁸ Flodoard, *Annales*, ed. by Lauer, a. 923, p. 18.

⁴⁹ Flodoard, *Annales*, ed. by Lauer, a. 925, p. 29 says that Raoul came to Cambrai to meet ‘Lothariensibus atque Gisleberto’ (the Lotharingians as well as Giselbert); but that ‘they’ (apparently meaning ‘the Lotharingians’) did not turn up and instead met him on the Meuse, where Giselbert and Otto made peace with him.

⁵⁰ Flodoard, *Annales*, ed. by Lauer, a. 925, p. 33. In the same passage Flodoard describes Henry effecting a change of bishop in Verdun. Giselbert’s followers are implicitly distinguished by virtue of being described merely as ‘his *fideles*’.

⁵¹ Flodoard, *Annales*, ed. by Lauer, a. 926, pp. 35–36 refers to a conflict in Verdun as a struggle of the ‘*Lotharienses* among themselves’. In 928, pp. 42–43, he describes Count Boso’s attempts to take bites out of Giselbert’s powerbase in the north and the properties of the churches of Verdun and Metz in the south, and refers to the peace subsequently brokered by Henry I as between ‘Giselbert [on the one hand] and the other Lotharingians [on the other]’ (the brackets indicate my reading of Flodoard’s compressed text).

⁵² Flodoard, *Annales*, ed. by Lauer, a. 951, pp. 130–31: the terms used are ‘*Lotharienses*’ and ‘*Virdunensii*’.

⁵³ Flodoard, *Annales*, ed. by Lauer, a. 959, p. 146.

articulate a coherent political position — Flodoard wrote continuously and in the midst of perpetually changing circumstances, so his perspective was not static. This seems to apply even to his use of such an apparently neutral term as ‘the Lotharingians’, by which he does not always refer to the political community of the middle kingdom as a whole, nor to any single group within that community. Sometimes at least Flodoard deploys the label to ascribe or deny legitimacy to specific actors at moments when the politics of the middle kingdom came under his microscope. But even if the thinking behind his vocabulary choices remains ultimately opaque, Flodoard’s fine distinctions do underline the instability of such terminology, especially at moments of tension. In a world where political geography was commonly defined using quasi-ethnic categories, such terms were not merely descriptive — their deployment could carry overtones which defined some groups and not others as representing the essence of a region’s political community.⁵⁴

The ideological weight carried by such terms becomes much greater when they appear in the formal titlature of charters. These were highly stylized texts by means of which rulers of all kinds not only enacted legal transactions, but also refined their self-image and projected it to elite audiences in very precise ways. As mentioned above, one of the striking features of Ottonian royal charters is their drafters’ reluctance to use ethnic qualifiers to enhance the titles of kings or dukes. The charter from 903 in which Gebhard was called duke of ‘Lothar’s kingdom’ and the 936 document in which Gisibert is named ‘duke of the Lotharingians’ are exceptional, and as argued earlier can be explained with reference to the unusual circumstances in which they were composed and issued. Of forty charters, royal and non-royal, in which a ‘dux’ is mentioned in the middle kingdom between 903 and 959, the 936 document is in fact the only one to clearly supply ‘of the Lotharingians’ as an ethnic qualifier.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Cf. *Annales Augienses*, ed. by Pertz, a. 939, p. 69, where we find a report of Otto I attacking the ‘Lutherings’, the term again surfacing in the context of a rebellion (as did the text itself, which was apparently composed for Archbishop William of Mainz at the end of the second Lotharingian rebellion of 953–54).

⁵⁵ This is based on the invaluable table compiled by Schneider, *Auf der Suche*, pp. 127–28 (with his analysis at pp. 124–48). I omit examples of territorial qualifiers: one charter from a monastery in Gisibert’s heartland refers to him as ‘duke of Lothar’s kingdom’ in 934; and two documents from 949 and 951/52 refer to Conrad as ‘duke of the Lotharingian kingdom’ and ‘duke of Lothar’s kingdom’ respectively. Schneider (p. 126 n. 509) excludes as forgeries *Die Urkunden Otto I.*, ed. by Sickel, no. 70, pp. 150–51, no. 140, pp. 220–21, no. 169, p. 251 and no. 179, pp. 261–62, none of which contains an ethnic qualifier (though no. 70 was issued on the intervention of ‘Cuonradi Lodariensis ducis’ (Conrad the Lotharingian duke)).

From the few years after 959, though, we have an unusual group of charters which offer us a glimpse of a duke who styled himself in much grander terms, and who also provides us with the first clear evidence of a Lotharingian identifying him or herself as such: Frederick I. Frederick was count of Bar in the southern part of Lotharingia and belonged to a family whose members dominated the region for much of the later tenth and eleventh centuries — they are known to historians (perhaps misleadingly) as ‘the Ardenner’.⁵⁶ He was very well connected in the south, and especially around Metz and Verdun: he was (probably) the step-brother of Otto of Verdun, and (definitely) the brother of the powerful bishop Adalbero I of Metz (929–64).⁵⁷ It was presumably on the back of these family connections that Frederick was named ‘dux’ in the southern part of Lotharingia in 959 by Archbishop Bruno of Cologne, the brother of Otto I to whom ducal oversight of the region had been delegated.⁵⁸ Despite his family credentials, Frederick’s rise carried the whiff of new money because he seems not to have been a major landowner in the area. What properties he did have came via his marriage to Beatrice, a daughter of the West Frankish duke Hugh ‘the Great’ of Tours who carved out her dower from the southern Lotharingian holdings of the Parisian monastery of St-Denis.⁵⁹ Beatrice’s mother Hadwig, moreover, was a sister of Otto I and Bruno of Cologne. Frederick’s status, then, derived from family, institutions, and offices more than from land per se — control of monasteries and the parading of titles were more important to his rise than the accumulation of property.

This is the context for a series of three documents in which Frederick was identified as ‘dux’ in remarkably exalted terms. The first, composed in 959 at the monastery of Gorze, which had close links to Metz, describes a dispute over land in which Frederick, brokering a compromise, is described as ‘duke by the grace of God and election of the Franks’.⁶⁰ The second, dated 8 September 962, describes how Frederick gave a ruling on the correct ownership of a particular group of properties at an assembly in the cemetery of the monastery of St-Mihiel. He is referred to as ‘duke of the Lotharingians by the compassionate grace of God,

⁵⁶ Margue, ‘Structures de parenté’.

⁵⁷ Parisse, ‘Généalogie de la Maison d’Ardenne’.

⁵⁸ For interesting (but not widely accepted) arguments against Bruno’s formal division of Lotharingia into northern and southern ‘duchies’ in 959, see Barth, *Der Herzog in Lotharingien*, pp. 130–67.

⁵⁹ Parisse, ‘Saint-Denis’; Parisse, ‘Bar au XI^e siècle’; Parisse, ‘In media Francia’.

⁶⁰ *Cartulaire de l’abbaye de Gorze*, ed. by D’Herbomez, no. 108, p. 198 (‘gratia Dei et electione Francorum dux’).

and lord of the monks of St-Mihiel and the community of that institution', and is depicted pompously addressing himself to 'the princes and noble men of my duchy'.⁶¹ The third (966) records a dispute involving the abbey of Bouxières-aux-Dames, a few miles east of Toul, in which Frederick ('duke of the Lotharingians by the grace of God') pronounced in favour of the institution.⁶²

How are we to understand the use of such titles for Frederick, which are unprecedented even from the era of Gisibert, who was a considerably more powerful duke? One solution has been to suggest that the documents are forgeries, or at least that they were touched up between their composition and their insertion into the cartularies where we now find them. There are indeed some peculiarities, particularly in the titles used in the Gorze charter, but numerous details provided by the texts are verifiable, and even the most sceptical commentators have been unwilling to dismiss the St-Mihiel and Bouxières documents.⁶³ The unusual terminology becomes more comprehensible if we take into account the communities which produced these texts and constituted their primary audiences. St-Mihiel on the Meuse was the key institution controlled by Frederick and Beatrice, who had received it as part of her dower at the time of her betrothal in 951 or marriage in 954 — this was the headquarters of their 'rule'. Indeed, a series of kings had competed for influence there at the end of the ninth century, indicating that it was regarded as critical for the exercise of political authority in the region.⁶⁴ Bouxières, by contrast, was a recent aristocratic foundation notionally in the control of the bishop of Toul, but Frederick seems to have had ambitions to dominate it: his (successful) attempt to insert himself as the presiding authority in the 966 dispute was an assertion of lordship, perhaps akin to a takeover bid.⁶⁵ Something similar may have been going on at Gorze, whose protection and patronage was regarded by the community (on the evidence of a text written in the monastery in the 980s)

⁶¹ *Chronique et chartes*, ed. by Lesort, no. 27, p. 120 ('F. Dei miserante gratia dux Lothariensium et senior monachorum sancti Michaelis et familiae ejusdem potestatis').

⁶² *Les origines de l'abbaye de Bouxières-aux-Dames*, ed. by Bautier, no. 33, p. 112 ('F. divina comitante gratia Lothariensium dux').

⁶³ The key discussion of the charters is Parisse, 'Les possessions', pp. 243–47. Schneider, *Auf der Suche*, pp. 265–66 raises doubts about the charters' authenticity based primarily on their titlature.

⁶⁴ Parisse, 'In media Francia', pp. 331–37.

⁶⁵ Nightingale, *Monasteries*, pp. 157–58, 165–66. For conflict between Frederick's family and Bishop Gerard of Toul, see Parisse, 'In media Francia'; and on the latter see also Nightingale, 'Bishop Gerard of Toul'.

as a ducal prerogative.⁶⁶ Given that Frederick's regional position relied on his control of such institutions and on his ability to make good his claims to ducal status, his aggressive advertising of that status to audiences at these communities makes sense — not as a straightforward snapshot of his actual role but as a shrill attempt to strengthen his probably insecure grasp on authority in what he and Beatrice claimed as their sphere of influence.

The declaration in two of these charters that Frederick was duke 'of the Lotharingians' can be seen as part of this legitimating strategy, but also points us towards a broader context. Frederick's elevation in 959 to the status of 'dux' (whatever exactly that meant) and his assertion of leadership over 'the Lotharingians' coincided with a broader political reorientation in the region. This involved an apparent division of the region into northern and southern 'duchies', and was prompted by the exile of the powerful northern Lotharingian magnate Reginar III in 957–58.⁶⁷ Reginar was Giselbert's nephew, and his exile and dispossession appeared to signify the termination of a family line which had enjoyed pre-eminent status in the region's aristocratic community for several generations. The West Frankish rulers then took the unprecedented step of formally renouncing their claims to the middle kingdom in 959, and the Ottonian court moved to reassert its interests in the region, symbolized by a special coronation for Otto II at Aachen in 961 'with the agreement of all the Lotharingians' — a striking representation of the latter as a semi-autonomous political community.⁶⁸ These events inaugurated a period of rapid repositioning among local elites, exemplified by the repeated side-switching of a faction led by Count Immo.⁶⁹ Now, for the first time, the eastern kings were in a position to really make good their claims to rule Lotharingia — and in early 966, Otto I himself took a direct interest for the first time in many years, making a rare personal visit during which he 'arranged all the affairs of the Lotharingian kingdom as he deemed suitable.'⁷⁰

⁶⁶ *Miracula sancti Gorgonii*, ed. by Gouillet and others, 20–22, pp. 188–95. Beatrice was commemorated as a ruler (*ductrix*) at Gorze: Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir*, p. 37. Her absence from the three documents under discussion may be because they are judgements rather than grants.

⁶⁷ Flodoard, *Annales*, ed. by Lauer, a. 957, p. 144; Adalbert, *Continuatio*, ed. by Kurze, a. 958, p. 169; MacLean, *Ottonian Queenship*, pp. 76–86.

⁶⁸ Flodoard, *Annales*, ed. by Lauer, a. 959, p. 146; Adalbert, *Continuatio*, ed. by Kurze, a. 961, p. 171.

⁶⁹ Dierkens, 'Un membre de l'aristocratie lotharingienne'.

⁷⁰ Adalbert, *Continuatio*, ed. by Kurze, a. 966, p. 177. The death of Bruno of Cologne in 965 was another reason for this visit.

As it turned out, none of these events was definitive: Reginar's children would soon be back to stake their claims, West Frankish ambitions were rekindled, and the Ottonians consequently struggled to assert themselves definitively in the area at least until 987 and probably well beyond. Nonetheless, they indicate that our documents' grandiose declarations about Frederick's position were formulated at a particular political moment which made such claims more accessible to the new duke's apologists. Proclaiming leadership of a community of 'Lotharingians' in the context of intensifying Ottonian interest was an opportunistic way of universalizing Frederick's claims to legitimate authority in the middle kingdom as he sought to convert limited resources into a secure powerbase and to orchestrate aggressive expansionary moves.

The moment passed. Frederick's career becomes less clear thereafter, and his successors are shadowy figures even allowing for the patchiness of the evidence.⁷¹ Nonetheless, we may catch a distant echo of these dynamics in the eleventh-century *Chronicle of St-Mihiel*, which in some ways serves as a history of Beatrice and Frederick's family through their association with the monastery. This tells the story of how the duke built his fortress at Bar on the frontier between Lotharingia and Champagne, implicitly placing the border some twenty-five kilometres west of the Meuse; while sources from Toul located it on the Meuse itself, as did Flodoard, who dropped his habitual inscrutability and complained in his *Annals* that Frederick's activity was an encroachment upon the territory of 'this kingdom'.⁷² For the author of the *Chronicle*, therefore, the westward expansion of Frederick's interests constituted the westward expansion of Lotharingia — in effect, Frederick and his family *were* the Lotharingians.

It is possible, then, to understand Frederick's titulature as a form of opportunism linked to his ambitions in the region of Lotharingia around St-Mihiel and Toul. But this evidence is not completely isolated, for we have a hint that Frederick's self-perception was echoed in the political discourse of the royal court. This comes in the shape of a royal charter from June 960 which describes Otto I in highly irregular terms as 'king of the Lotharingians, Franks and Germans'.⁷³ Primarily on the basis of this unique titulature, the text has often

⁷¹ Parisse, 'Les possessions', pp. 247–51; Parisse, 'Les hommes'.

⁷² *Chronique et chartes*, ed. by Lesort, 7, pp. 11–12; Flodoard, *Annales*, ed. by Lauer, a, 951, p. 130; Parisse, 'In media Francia', pp. 327–28. On the frontier in general see Bur, 'La frontière', pp. 241–42; Parisse, 'La frontière de la Meuse'.

⁷³ *Die Urkunden Otto I.*, ed. by Sickel, no. 210, p. 298 ('Otto divina providente clementia rex Lothariensium Francorum atque Germanensium') (one or other of the terms could be read as adjectival, but the general point stands).

been dismissed as a forgery, even though the surviving version appears to be a contemporary document with verifiable historical content.⁷⁴ But the naming of Duke Frederick and his brother Bishop Adalbero of Metz as the people who requested the grant, and the fact that it was issued for — and probably drawn up by — a monastic community under their influence, St-Pierre in Metz, make it plausible that it was a genuine product of the same political context as the documents from St-Mihiel and Bouxières.⁷⁵

Even if the document was composed by and reflected the perspective of the recipients, this does not mean that its perspective was purely ‘private’. The concept of a ‘royal chancery’ staffed by dedicated notaries policing a strictly defined body of formulas seems much less secure today than it once did, with historians now willing to imagine ‘official’ documents as products of collaboration and communication between the royal entourage and external scriptoria, often including the beneficiaries of the charters themselves.⁷⁶ Despite its unusual titlature, the charter for St-Pierre contains almost all of the hallmarks of style and presentation that we expect from authentic royal diplomas of this period — application of Ockham’s Razor would therefore suggest that the document could indeed have been official, whatever we customarily mean by that. That being the case, we have here a sign of convergence between the local and royal discourses describing the political community which Frederick claimed to lead.⁷⁷

This observation gives us a bridge back to our starting point: the world of the Ottonian historians of the 960s, and in particular Widukind of Corvey, who was the first author to describe the Lotharingians as a people (*gens*) with specific attributes. We can hardly call Widukind’s *Deeds of the Saxons* an official history — he was not even a courtier — but it was written towards the court: the dedicatee was Otto’s daughter Mathilda, and the text was certainly informed by the political disputes and discourses of the 960s.⁷⁸ With this in mind, it should be emphasized that Widukind’s novel description of the Lotharingians was not written as a passing comment, but forms part of a coherent and argumentative narrative in book I of his work, which deals with the disintegration of the Carolingian world and its re-coagulation in the hands of the

⁷⁴ Parisse, ‘Les faux diplômes ottoniens’, p. 582.

⁷⁵ Cf. Wolfram, ‘Lateinische Herrschertitel’, pp. 133–37.

⁷⁶ See e.g. Koziol, *Politics of Memory*, pp. 32, 56–57.

⁷⁷ NB the reform of Gorze by Frederick’s brother Adalbero was recorded in a charter dated to the reign of Henry I in *regno Lothariorum: Cartulaire de l’abbaye de Gorze*, ed. by D’Herbomez, no. 92, p. 173.

⁷⁸ Robbie, ‘Can Silence Speak Volumes’.

first Ottonian king Henry I. A series of legendary stories set in the deep past establishes the transfer of power from the Franks to the Saxons, and Widukind then describes the achievements of Henry himself as a sequence of victories over powerful figures cast as leaders of ‘ethnic’ political communities: Eberhard representing the Franks, Arnulf representing the Bavarians, and Burchard the Alemans.⁷⁹ He then turns to the middle kingdom, offering a potted history which culminates in Henry’s collaboration with the cunning Lotharingians to capture Giselbert and gain his submission.⁸⁰ Widukind’s story of Henry I’s rise is, therefore, a story about his progressive acquisition of power over a series of regions characterized as *gentes* led by dukes.⁸¹ Such a view of the structures of Saxon power demanded that the Lotharingians be regarded as a *gens*.

This way of describing the Ottonian kingdom was characteristic of the high point of the reign of Otto (‘rex gentium’) in the 960s, and coincided with the re-emergence of long-form historical narratives.⁸² If the absence of such texts after Regino of Prüm put down his pen in 908 represented a reaction to the dynastic instability of the period amounting to a crisis of representation, then their reappearance around 960 can be linked to the dawning Ottonianization of the post-Carolingian world. With the coronation of Otto II as king in 961 (and as emperor in 967), for the first time in sixty years a post-Carolingian throne passed directly to the third generation of a ruling dynasty. For sympathizers like Widukind and Liudprand, the ‘crisis’ was over. These authors had no problem in confidently describing the way the world was put together and were certain about the location of its political centre. This is why Liudprand’s list of Otto’s peoples (‘Lombards, Saxons, Franks, Lotharingians, Bavarians, Swabians, and Burgundians’) was not only a negative rhetorical attempt to devalue Byzantine notions of Romanness — it also points towards a more positive definition of Western political order. Later in his invective against Nicephorus, Liudprand went a step further, referring to ‘our people (*gens nostra*), namely, all those who are under [Otto’s] rule.’⁸³ For the bishop of Cremona, what bound these groups

⁷⁹ Widukind, *Rerum gestarum Saxoniarum libri tres*, ed. by Hirsch, I.23–27, pp. 35–40.

⁸⁰ Widukind, *Rerum gestarum Saxoniarum libri tres*, ed. by Hirsch, I.28–30, pp. 40–43.

⁸¹ Widukind’s other explicit references to the Lotharingians as a *gens* are also connected to their place in Ottonian structures of authority: *Rerum gestarum Saxoniarum libri tres*, ed. by Hirsch, II.15, pp. 79–80 (Otto visits them after a victory), II.36, pp. 95–97 (Bruno of Cologne is established as their duke).

⁸² Goetz, ‘*Gentes*’, pp. 108–10; Beumann, ‘*Imperator Romanorum, rex gentium*’.

⁸³ Liudprand, *Legatio*, ed. by Chiesa, 40, p. 204 (‘nostram nunc dico omnem, quae sub vestro imperio est, gentem’).

into a people was not the perpetuation of a Frankish past, not some kind of replacement pan-Saxonness, and certainly not the concept of Rome, but the Ottonian dynasty itself. For Liudprand and like-minded apologists for the new order, the Lotharingians were not simply one of the peoples that made up the Ottonian kingdom — they were ‘a people’ *because* they were a constituent part of the Ottonian kingdom.⁸⁴

Conclusion

If the crystallization of the idea of the Lotharingians as a gentile community was an aspect of the hardening idioms used to define the Ottonian *Reich*, this helps explain why this terminology, previously so patchy, becomes more common and less ambiguous from the 960s onwards. Still, the language of Lotharingianness hardly became ubiquitous, even in the eleventh century.⁸⁵ Where we have evidence, self-identification of people in the middle kingdom as Frankish remained common, and Frankishness remained an important element in definitions of royal power well beyond the period discussed in this article.⁸⁶ As will be clear, the vocabulary of Lotharingian group belonging was far from consistent, never mind transparent; and the evidence itself is extremely patchy and requires a lot of detailed analysis to fit it into a broader historical picture. Moreover, we have only looked at explicit references to the Lotharingians *as* a group, which represents only a sliver of the evidence underlying the many major studies on this subject. Conclusions reached on this basis can hardly be definitive.

But even if the sources do not allow us into the hearts of the people described, they can, surely, tell us something about the minds of those doing the describing. By considering the sources precisely as isolated snapshots rather than as links in a continuous chain we catch a flavour of the political anxieties of the earlier tenth century. The variety of the vocabulary in this context attests to the malleability of the underlying concepts, and the various uses to which they could be put in what Robert Bartlett has described as the ‘fertile confusion of post-Carolingian Europe.’⁸⁷ The end of the empire intensified an intermittent

⁸⁴ There may also have been an attempt here to claim for Otto the leadership of all the Christian people, in the sense of Cassiodorus’s commentary on Psalms (as cited by Heydemann, ‘Biblical Israel’, p. 180): ‘[The Psalmist’s] mention of a *gens* in the singular indicates the Christian people (*populus*); for though we are instructed that it is gathered from many *gentes*, they are rightly called a single *gens*, for they are known to be sprung from the one origin of baptism’.

⁸⁵ Bauer, *Lotharingien*, pp. 30–43; Margue, ‘De la Lotharingie à la Lorraine’.

⁸⁶ Schneider, *Auf der Suche*, pp. 258–73.

⁸⁷ Bartlett, *The Making of Europe*, p. 311.

debate over political geography in which ethnic labels could act as proxies for claims to authority in traditional Carolingian idioms — but in a world where the gravitational pull of Frankishness was weakening. As traditional reference points lost some of their hegemony, competing visions of community variously served to legitimize and delegitimize, to strategically distinguish, and to universalize the status claims of regional factions. The concept of Frankishness by no means vanished, but its authority was diluted as different groups and authors improvised new variations on the theme — new identifications rather than new identities — to describe and shape a rapidly changing world.⁸⁸ This was perhaps most evident in contested regions like Lotharingia, whose precarious ‘in-betweenness’ gave rise to the specific conditions discussed above.

Viewed in this perspective, it would be difficult to argue that the persistence of ‘gentile’ terminology is evidence for persistent community feeling. But at the same time there is a danger in reducing the evidence to ‘mere’ discourse, because discourse is also part of social reality. That classification itself is an important means by which social realities (including ethnic identities) are constituted is well appreciated by modern scholars, but was apparently understood even by Regino of Prüm, who wrote in his mini-ethnography of the Hungarians that they must have been a new people because in the past they were ‘never named.’⁸⁹ Names, once institutionalized, can themselves become reference points for self-identifications.⁹⁰ To put this another way, we should not assume that kingdoms are creations of communities and their attendant identities — in fact the reverse is frequently the case.⁹¹ The hardening of Ottonian political structures must have played a part in institutionalizing the idioms and practices amidst which the concept of a Lotharingian community began to take shape. That being the case, perhaps the true starting point for a history of that community should be located in the 960s rather than the 860s.⁹²

⁸⁸ On the advantages of ‘identification’ over ‘identity’ as an analytical concept, see Brubaker and Cooper, ‘Beyond Identity’; Pohl, ‘Strategies of Identification’. On the post-Carolingian period as a time of frantic political improvisation see Airlie, ‘The Nearly Men’.

⁸⁹ Regino, *Chronicle*, ed. by Kurze, a. 889, p. 131.

⁹⁰ Jenkins, *Social Identity*, pp. 126–38.

⁹¹ Brubaker and Rogers, ‘Beyond Identity’, pp. 25–28. This is of course a chicken/egg problem: Pohl, ‘Strategies of Identification’, pp. 44–48.

⁹² This is also the implication of the arguments presented by Schneider, *Auf der Suche*. For valuable feedback I am grateful to Stuart Airlie, Marios Costambeys, Jinty Nelson, Jens Schneider, and Charles West. This article forms part of the HERA JRP III project ‘After Empire: Using and Not Using the Past in the Crisis of the Carolingian Empire’.

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SPACES OF ‘CONVIVENCIA’
AND SPACES OF POLEMICS
TRANSCULTURAL HISTORIOGRAPHY AND
RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN THE INTELLECTUAL
LANDSCAPE OF THE IBERIAN PENINSULA,
NINTH TO TENTH CENTURIES*

Matthias M. Tischler

In memory of Manuel Cecilio Díaz y Díaz (1924–2008)

*State-of-the-Art: Spaces of Interreligious Passages:
A New Paradigm of Research?*

Recent research has shown the interdependence of proximity, distance, and manners of behaviour, when dealing with cultural and religious otherness in the plural Mediterranean societies of the Middle Ages. In analysing the historical contexts of social and religious ‘convivencia’ in the medieval Iberian Peninsula, the paradigm of the ‘spatial turn’ has enriched our understanding of

* Central ideas of this paper go back to my unpublished paper ‘Spaces of “Convivencia” — Spaces of “Polemics”? Tracking Manuscripts of Christian Anti-Muslim Traditions in the Intellectual Landscape of the Iberian Peninsula, 9th to 13th Centuries’, presented at the International Congress ‘Convivencia: Representations, Knowledge and Identities (500–1600 AD)’ (Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas/Max-Planck-Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften), Madrid, 29 May 2009.

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many facets of 'linguistic', 'cultural', or 'religious frontiers'.¹ After Frederick J. Turner's groundbreaking essay on the intrinsic relationship of 'frontier' and 'society-building' in the North America of his day,² we use 'frontier'-terms such as 'frontier monasticism'³ or 'frontier monasteries',⁴ and we talk about 'frontier hagiography'⁵ or 'frontier historiography'⁶ in the cultural and religious contexts of medieval frontier societies. In most recent times, we even rediscover the paradigm of mutual 'passages' between social and religious communities and their agents⁷ for a much better understanding of the medieval Mediterranean world.

Yet, dealing with 'passages' nowadays means not just focusing our scientific curiosity on processes of transfer and transformation in the Mediterranean societies of interreligious passages in the sense of Walter Benjamin.⁸ In contrast to 'transfer', the notion of 'passage' does not observe unilateral and monolinear relations between the starting points and targets of processes of cultural transformation. 'Passage', in fact, is a double-sided concept of space in its interrelational dimension without overly stressing the consciousness of transfer. 'Passage' describes the crossing of mental or real barriers between two cultural, religious, or social entities, spaces, or times; 'passage' itself is exactly this crossing. Because it is not limited to a single way, but is a concept of interrelational correspondences and perspectives, thinking about the concept of the 'passage' in modern historical writing is a form of scientific comparison as well. Furthermore, talking about 'passage' means modifying our present understanding in seemingly given geographical categories of borders, frontiers, and spaces of frontiers,⁹ because it

¹ Constable, 'Frontiers', pp. 17–18; Herbers, 'Religions et frontières'; Tischler, 'Der iberische Grenzraum'; Tischler, 'Grenzen und Grenzüberschreitung'.

² Turner, 'The Significance of the Frontier'.

³ Bishko, 'Salvus of Albelda'.

⁴ Jamroziak and Stöber, eds, *Monasteries on the Borders* (no paper on the early Middle Ages); Burkhardt, 'Iuxta regulam sancti patris Benedicti atque Basilii' (on Latin-Greek monasticism in southern Italy without using the concept of 'frontier monasteries').

⁵ Viñayo González, 'El ideal religioso', pp. 74–77; García de la Borbolla, 'Santo Domingo de Silos'; González Jiménez, 'Sobre la ideología de la reconquista', pp. 158–63; García de la Borbolla, 'La hagiografía de frontera'.

⁶ Tischler, 'Iberian Translation-Based Chronicles', p. 198.

⁷ Tischler, 'Hommes de passage'; Tischler, 'Einleitung'; 'Kommentar'.

⁸ See the works cited in n. 7, in which I have extensively developed the following reflections.

⁹ The most recent collected papers on these paradigms are Bartlett and MacKay, eds, *Medieval Frontier Societies*; Abulafia and Berend, eds, *Medieval Frontiers*. Herbers and Jaspert, eds, *Grenzzräume und Grenzüberschreitungen im Vergleich*, for the first time compared systematically the frontier societies of South-Western and Middle Eastern Europe.

implements mental, linguistic, and religious aspects into the current notion of frontiers. Finally, working with 'passages' avoids the heuristic aporia of endless thinking about frontiers, created and crossed.

Based on these first insights, we should explore the interdependent encounters and perceptions of social and religious communities and their agents most adequately in terms that allow for the analysis of spaces within and between these communities and their populations. Yet what does this concept of constructed and constructing 'religious spaces' really mean for our understanding of 'convivencia' and 'polemics'?

The Problematic: The Relationship of Spaces of 'Convivencia' and Spaces of 'Polemics'

The reflections of my paper are embedded in the current scientific debate on the construction and crossing of socio-religious spaces by means of polemics within historical writing. According to this research, the title of my paper suggests a twofold perspective: on the one hand, traditional social and religious history confirms the widely accepted opinion that transcultural and transreligious encounters and exchanges in societies of 'convivencia' necessarily produce strategies of 'polemics' for constructing identity via the mirror of 'the other' ('othering'). On the other hand, modern theological and philosophical studies¹⁰ wonder whether contextualizing manuscripts of polemical writing allows the reconstruction of concrete social spaces of 'convivencia' and gives insight into the intellectual means of constructing these spaces. As one can detect from this twofold assessment, my paper favours a multilayered concept of 'space': it deals with 'social spaces' of daily encounters and exchanges among the members of the three monotheistic religious systems, which we now call 'Judaism', 'Christianity', and 'Islam'. But my paper also examines 'textual spaces' of the Christian intellectual perception of the 'Jewish' or 'Muslim other' in their historical contexts of production and use.¹¹

Transcultural Historiography in Practice: Some Case Studies

We have no real attempt of a critical survey of this specific Christian landscape of anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim historical writing transmitted in the manu-

¹⁰ 'Modern' here means re-orientated within codicological studies dealing with 'texts in contexts'. On this latter concept: Tischler, 'Der doppelte Kontext'.

¹¹ This concept lies behind Tischler and Fidora, eds, *Christlicher Norden—Muslimischer Süden*.

scripts of the early medieval Iberian Peninsula. I therefore intend to focus on the social and religious contexts of three prominent compendia of legal and historical texts that were produced in the Rioja region since the last quarter of the tenth century. The purpose of my paper is to show how contextualizing this specific Iberian manuscript tradition allows us to refine our comprehension of social and religious ‘convivencia’ in daily life in the immediate contexts of these codices, and to recover the cultural and religious semantics of Américo Castro’s original concept of ‘convivencia’¹² in precise social and religious communities of the early medieval Iberian Peninsula.¹³

The Earliest Lives and Legends of Muḥammad: From al-Andalus to Rioja, Ninth to Tenth Centuries

First, we will look at the earliest Latin *Life of Muḥammad* from not only the Iberian Peninsula but the entire Christian Occident. Obviously produced in the Mozarabic area of al-Andalus in the eighth century,¹⁴ the use of this curi-

¹² Castro, *España*, especially pp. 208–14.

¹³ Castro’s concept has been criticized, re-evaluated, and transformed in recent decades. I give here only a selection of some of the more recent contributions on this issue: Meyuhas Ginio, ‘¿Conveniencia o coexistencia?’ (which embeds Castro’s concept in the wider framework of twentieth-century research on medieval religious ‘tolerance’); Catlos, ‘Contexto y conveniencia’ (which focuses on the topic within the ethno-religious circumstances of medieval Aragón); Catlos, “Conflicto entre civilizaciones” o “conveniencia” (which prefers to use the social and legal term ‘conveniencia’); Wolf, “Convivencia” (which historically contextualizes the concept); Manzano Moreno, ‘Qurtuba’ (which focuses on the concept’s transformation into a political tool that provokes new tasks of historical research in contemporary societies); Szpiech, ‘The Convivencia Wars’ (which embeds the concept within the wider framework of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century development of historical and literary sciences in Europe and the USA). See also the more recent contributions in Scarborough, ed., *Revisiting ‘Convivencia’*. Nikolas Jaspert suggested a preference for the use of the source-based term ‘convenientia’, but this seems to confine the socio-religious dimension of the historical realities to legal aspects.

¹⁴ On the one hand, the text has a common mistake of dating together with the *Chronica Byzantia-Arabica* and the *Chronica Muzarabica*: all three texts count the year of the ‘hidschra’ as the seventh year of the emperor Herakleios, i.e. 618 (656 of the Spanish era): Franke, ‘Die freiwilligen Märtyrer’, p. 45; Colbert, *The Martyrs of Córdoba*, pp. 335–36; García Moreno, ‘Elementos’, pp. 251–54 with n. 18. On the other hand, the text mentions explicitly two churches in al-Andalus, namely in Andújar and Toledo: ‘ecclesia beati Euphrasii apud Iliturgi urbem super tumulum eius aedificatur, Toledo quoque beatae Leocadiae aula miro opere, iubente praedicto principe, culmine alto extenditur’, *Historia de Mahomat pseudopropheta*, ed. by Díaz y

ous biography seems to be encouraged by the Christian Byzantine or Arabic polemics¹⁵ of several Oriental Christians who came from the Sinai Peninsula and Palestine.¹⁶ They lived in the environment of Eulogius and Paulus Albarus of Córdoba, the spiritual leaders of a fundamental Christian resistance movement against the Muslim rulers of their home town, and surely knew the relevant Near Eastern texts of Arabic polemics and their arguments against Islam.¹⁷ The Latin text already dates Muḥammad's life correctly back to the reign of the Byzantine emperor Heraclius and the contemporary Iberian ecclesiastical and secular rulers, Bishop Isidore of Seville and King Sisebut.¹⁸ It is an early

Díaz, p. 157, ll. 5–7 ≈ Eulogius of Córdoba, *Liber apologeticus martyrum*, ed. by Gil Fernández, 16, p. 483 l. 4–p. 484 l. 7; Benedicto Ceinos, 'Apéndice', p. 166; Wolf, 'The Earliest Latin Lives', p. 91; Herrera Roldán, 'Propaganda antiislámica', p. 281.

¹⁵ D'Alverny, 'La connaissance de l'Islam', pp. 588–89; García Moreno, 'Elementos', pp. 266–67 and p. 270 with n. 71; García Moreno, 'Literatura antimusulmana', pp. 30–31 and pp. 33–34 with n. 95.

¹⁶ The most prominent among them is the Syrian monk George from the Mar-Sabas Abbey (near Jerusalem): *Memorialis sanctorum libri tres*, ed. by Gil Fernández, II.10.22–34, pp. 424–30; Millet-Gérard, *Chrétiens mozarabes*, pp. 153 and 159–63. As George masters Greek and Arabic (*Actus vel passio SS. martyrum Georgii monachi, Aurelii atque Nathaliae*, ed. by Jiménez Pedrajas [1970], 40, p. 542b, ll. 30–32: 'Erat autem peritus greca lingua et arabica, quae ismahelitae utuntur'), he is the most probable transmitter of new religious knowledge from the Near East: Díaz y Díaz, 'La circulation des manuscrits', p. 384; López Pereira, *Estudio crítico*, p. 116; Millet-Gérard, *Chrétiens mozarabes*, pp. 153, 159–66, and 180; Coope, *The Martyrs of Córdoba*, pp. 39–40; García Moreno, 'Monjes y profecías', pp. 95–97; García Moreno, 'Literatura antimusulmana', pp. 35 and 41; González Muñoz, 'En torno', p. 12; Monferrer Sala, 'Circularon', pp. 168 and 196; Wasilewski, 'The "Life of Muhammad"', pp. 337 and 348–53 (without reception of the here quoted more recent studies). Also, the monk Servus Dei came from Syria and may have played a certain role in providing new knowledge on Islam: *Memorialis sanctorum libri tres*, ed. by Gil Fernández, II.9, p. 415; Millet-Gérard, *Chrétiens mozarabes*, p. 153 n. 3.

¹⁷ Franke, 'Die freiwilligen Märtyrer', pp. 58 and 129; Colbert, *The Martyrs of Córdoba*, pp. 241 and 290; Cutler, 'The Ninth-Century Spanish Martyrs' Movement', p. 328. George was monk of Mar-Sabas Abbey in whose context John of Damascus and his spiritual disciple Theodor Abū Qurrah had composed their anti-Islamic polemics: Millet-Gérard, *Chrétiens mozarabes*, p. 172; Tischler, 'Eine fast vergessene Gedächtnisspur', pp. 183–84.

¹⁸ 'Exortus est Mahmeth haeresiarches tempore Heraclii imperatoris, anno imperii ipsius septimo [currente aera DCLVI]. In hoc tempore Isidorus Hispalensis episcopus in catholico dogmate claruit, et Sisebutus Toletus regale culmen obtinuit', *Historia de Mahomat pseudopropheta*, ed. by Díaz y Díaz, p. 157, ll. 2–5 ≈ Eulogius of Córdoba, *Liber apologeticus martyrum*, ed. by Gil Fernández, p. 483, ll. 1–4. The *Annales Castellani primi*, the earliest Latin annals from Castile from 939/40 (Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, Vitr. 14–15, fol. 1^o), tell the

example of Christian ‘anti-hagiography’,¹⁹ painting a deliberately distorted picture of the Prophet, thrown into the arena of Christian–Muslim polemics and counter-polemics of Córdoba in the middle of the ninth century.²⁰ At present, we are only able to reconstruct the earliest forms of transmission of this polemical sketch of Muḥammad’s life in a rudimentary way. Although it is clear that a famous, but lost manuscript found by Eulogius at Leyre monastery in 850,²¹

following: ‘In era DCLVI. profetabit Mahomati seudoprofete [!]. in regno Sisibuti regis. et Isidori Palensis episcopi’, ed. by Gómez-Moreno Martínez, p. 23, ll. 6–7; ed. by Gil Fernández, p. 76; Gómez-Moreno Martínez, *Discursos leídos*, p. 10; Díaz y Díaz, ‘La historiografía hispana’, p. 339; Maravall Casesnoves, *El concepto de España*, p. 315; Bronisch, *Reconquista*, p. 156 with n. 548.

¹⁹ Brunhölzl, *Geschichte*, p. 502.

²⁰ The so-called Pseudo-al-Kindī is probably responsible for creating the image of Muḥammad as a godless soothsayer, an impostor of a new doctrine and a seducer of many souls of the crude Arabs (‘coepit [...] inter suos brutos Arabes cunctis sapientior esse [...] coepit inaudita brutis animalibus praedicare’, ed. by Díaz y Díaz, p. 157, ll. 14–19 ≈ Eulogius of Córdoba, *Liber apologeticus martyrurum*, ed. by Gil Fernández, 16, p. 484, ll. 12–18; Franke, ‘Die freiwilligen Märtyrer’, p. 43) who shortly before his death made the false promise of his heavenly assumption. Franke, ‘Die freiwilligen Märtyrer’, pp. 40, 43–44, 118, 123, and 135–42; Millet-Gérard, *Chrétien mozarabes*, pp. 177–79 see only indirect relations with the Pseudo-al-Kindī because they date his work around the middle (Franke, ‘Die freiwilligen Märtyrer’, p. 29, p. 44 n. 318, pp. 118 and 141) or the beginning of the tenth century (Millet-Gérard, *Chrétien mozarabes*, pp. 177 and 179). In the meantime, González Muñoz, ‘Introducción’, pp. liii and lxxviii–lxxx casts doubts on Pseudo-al-Kindī’s influence. Nevertheless, a spiritual sponsorship is also conceivable in other passages, e.g. in the idea that Muḥammad’s coming had been announced since the beginning of time and that Adam had observed Muḥammad’s name in the sky: *Memorialis sanctorum libri tres*, ed. by Gil Fernández, 1.12, p. 379, ll. 10–17: ‘cuius vocabulum rudis protoplastus, cum adhuc olim paradisum incoleret, adnotatum in supernis globoque micantis claritatis immixtum contemplans, quae esset illa lux ceteris praestantior in centro micans quae fulgoribus Dominum expiaret fertur Creatorem Adae interrogasse illumque respondisse: “Hic verus propheta est futurus in mundo, qui ex semine tuo oriens ipso quem radiare nomine obstupescis Mahomad appellabitur, cuius quoque meritis tu creatus subsistere meruisti”’: Franke, ‘Die freiwilligen Märtyrer’, p. 140; Millet-Gérard, *Chrétien mozarabes*, p. 179 with n. 134; González Muñoz, ‘El conocimiento del Corán’, p. 399; García Moreno, ‘Literatura antimusulmana’, p. 40 with n. 128; González Muñoz, ‘En torno’, p. 13. Another central topic of these polemical conflicts is the blazing ‘war of religious symbols’ (the tolling of the bells vs the shouting of the muezzins) in the Iberian Peninsula: Tolan, ‘Affreux vacarme’, pp. 54–59 (with the testimonies).

²¹ Eulogius testifies this stay in his *Epistolae*, ed. by Gil Fernández, 3.2, p. 498, ll. 7–9 (to bishop Wiliesindus of Pamplona): ‘Prius autem quam ad eundum locum accederem, plures apud Legerense monasterium commorans dies praecipuos in Dei timore viros ibidem manere cognovi’. He describes his finding in his *Liber apologeticus martyrurum*, ed. by Gil Fernández, 15,

caused the further circulation of this biographical text amongst the anti-Muslim Christians of Córdoba,²² we do not know the exact codicological forms of either Eulogius's copy or of its Cordoban specimens.²³ In any case, Eulogius

p. 483, ll. 1–5: 'Cum essem olim in Pampilonensi oppido positus et apud Legerense coenobium demorarer cunctaque volumina quae ibi erant gratia dignoscendi incomperta revolverem, subito in quadam parte cuiusdam opusculi hanc de nefando vate historiolum absque auctoris nomine repperi': Franke, 'Die freiwilligen Märtyrer', p. 46; Colbert, *The Martyrs of Córdoba*, pp. 174, 183, 185, 190, 334, and 399; Millet-Gérard, *Chrétiens mozarabes*, p. 69; Wolf, *Christian Martyrs*, p. 90.

²² This is testified by John of Seville in a letter addressed to Paulus Albarus, *Epistolae*, ed. by Gil Fernández, 6.8, p. 200, ll. 1–3: 'Direximus vobis illam adnotatjonem Mammetis heretici in finem epistole huiusce adscriptam, simul et qualem invenimus apud maiores partem illam oratjonis "maturius" quam inquiristis'; *ibid.*, ed. by Gil Fernández, 6.9, p. 200 l. 1–p. 201 l. 12: 'Ortus est Mammet hereticus Arabum pseudoprofetarum sigillus, Antichristi precessor, tempore imperatoris Eraclii, anno septimo, currente era sexcentesima quinquagesima vi^a. In hoc tempore Ysidorus Yspalensis in nostro dogmate claruit et Sisebutus Toletio regale culmen obtinuit. Quem predictum nefandum profetam tantis miraculis cum sequaces sui coruscasse narrantur, ut etjam ardori[s] sue libidinis uxorem alterius auferens in coniugio sibimet copularit, et ut nullum profete fecisse legimus, in camelum cuius intellectum gerebat presideret. Morte vero interveniente cum se die tertja resurrecturum polliceretur, custodientjum negligentja a canibus reppertus est devoratus. Obtinuit principatum annis decem, quibus expletis sepultus est in infernum era MCCXVII'. Wasilewski, 'The "Life of Muhammad"', pp. 341–53, argues for a revision by Eulogius (version B) under the influence of orally transmitted ideas of John of Damascus without considering González Muñoz, 'El conocimiento del Corán'. In contrast to version B, version A qualifies Muḥammad as 'pseudoprofetarum sigillus' and 'Antichristi processor', furthermore as 'hereticus' instead of 'haeresiarches'. According to González Muñoz, 'El conocimiento del Corán', p. 394, the term 'pseudoprofetarum sigillus' is a parodistic reply to the concept of Muḥammad as 'seal of the prophets' in Surāh 33.40, and testifies to a millenaristic perspective typical for Christian al-Andalus around 850.

²³ In addition, we do not know the form of the excerpt that Eulogius made in Leyre Abbey for his short *Life of Muḥammad* in his *Liber apologeticus martyrum* § 16: *Historia de Mahomat pseudopropheta* ≈ Eulogius of Córdoba, *Liber apologeticus martyrum*, ed. by Gil Fernández, 16, pp. 483–86: Serrano y Sanz, 'Vida de Mahoma', p. 376; Sage, *Paul Albar of Cordoba*, p. 20 n. 98; Franke, 'Die freiwilligen Märtyrer', pp. 37–47; Colbert, *The Martyrs of Córdoba*, pp. 156–57, 172, and 334–38; Díaz y Díaz, 'La circulation des manuscrits', pp. 228 and 383; Benedicto Ceinos, 'Apéndice'; Díaz y Díaz, 'Los textos antimahometanos', pp. 150–59; Daniel, *The Arabs*, pp. 39–45; Schwinges, *Kreuzzugsideologie*, p. 88; López Pereira, *Estudio crítico*, pp. 116–17; Kedar, *Crusade and Mission*, p. 22 with n. 45; Millet-Gérard, *Chrétiens mozarabes*, pp. 69, 125–37, and 179–80; Wolf, 'The Earliest Latin Lives', pp. 89–96; Rotter, 'Embricho von Mainz', pp. 84–86; Coope, *The Martyrs of Córdoba*, pp. 47–48; Herrera Roldán, 'Propaganda anti-islamica', pp. 280–84; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, pp. 512–15; Bronisch, *Reconquista*, pp. 149–51; Christys, *Christians*, pp. 62–68; Henriët, 'Sainteté martyriale', pp. 116–17. Nor do we know the transmitted form of the *Life of Muḥammad* used by John of Seville at the end of 851 in his

testifies his discovery of this *Life* in a larger compendium of texts.²⁴ We may therefore suspect that this biography was part of a collection of historical writings because we have four more recent comparable manuscripts with the text in the same recension.²⁵ Yet I strongly suspect that the textual composition of these later codices in each case does not reflect the original Andalusian context of transmission. These three manuscripts are the most famous Iberian compendia of legal and historical texts from the turn of the first millennium: (1) the Codex Vigilanus from San Martín de Albelda (therefore also called Codex Albeldensis) and its copy, the (2) Codex Aemilianensis from San Millán de la Cogolla, and (3) the so-called Codex Rotensis, which partly derives from the Codex Aemilianensis and which would be better called Codex Naierensis, as we will see later. All of these manuscripts were produced by specific ensembles of scribes and illuminators in the three most important neighbouring monastic houses of the Rioja region in that period.²⁶

The so-called Codex Albeldensis²⁷ was written and illuminated during the reign of Abbot Maurellus²⁸ between 974²⁹ and May 976. Its main copyist was the monk Vigila,³⁰ who was assisted by Sarracinus and García.³¹ Between the

letter to Paulus Albarus, i.e. *Epistola* 6 in the letter collection of the latter: *Adnotatio Mammetis Arabum principis* (version A).

²⁴ As n. 21.

²⁵ El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, d. I. 2., fols 247^r–248^r (Codex of Church Councils from San Martín de Albelda, end of tenth century); El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, d. I. 1., fols 394bis^v–395bis^r (Codex of Church Councils from San Millán de la Cogolla, end of tenth century, copy of d. I. 2.); Madrid, Biblioteca de la Real Academia, MS 78, fols 187^r–188^r (so-called Codex of Roda from Santa María de Nájera, middle of eleventh century) and Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, MS 8831, fol. 164^r/^v (end of twelfth century, copy of MS 78).

²⁶ For further orientation, I refer the reader to the comprehensive descriptions of the manuscripts and the related overwhelming bibliography: <<https://icrea.academia.edu/MatthiasMartinTischler>> [accessed 1 August 2020].

²⁷ Because of limited space, the following will focus only on the history of the production of the manuscript.

²⁸ El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, d. I. 2., fol. 19^v.

²⁹ El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, d. I. 2., fol. 72^r shows the adaptation of a date to ‘annus praesens’.

³⁰ El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, d. I. 2., fol. 1^r has an illustration of this copyist.

³¹ El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, d. I. 2., fol. 428^r: ‘Sarracinus socius. Vigila scriba. Garsea discipulus. Vigila scriba cum sodale Sarracino presbitero pariterque cum Garcea discipulo suo edidit hunc librum’. This colophon shows that the priest Sarracinus

original legal corpora of the Visigothic Church, on the one hand, and of the Visigothic dominion, on the other hand, a frame built by the so-called *Collectio Hispana*³² and the *Lex Visigothorum*,³³ several scribes have inserted selected pieces of the Asturian historiography of the late ninth century, of the former Visigothic and most recent local hagiography.³⁴ The full-page illumination at the end of the manuscript³⁵ shows the patrons of the codex, King Sancho Garcés II of Navarra, his wife Queen Urraca, and his brother King Ramiro Garcés. This dedication page and a short list of the first three kings of the second dynasty of Pamplona,³⁶ added to the so-called *Chronica prophetica*³⁷ and the *Chronicon Albeldense*,³⁸ demonstrate the gradual formation of the kingdom of Navarra during the tenth century, as well as an early 'Neovisigothic' affiliation of the new royal house of Pamplona to the history of the former Asturian and Visigothic kings of Oviedo and Toledo, who were conceived as rulers, lawgivers, and protectors of the ecclesiastical and public spheres of Visigothic Spain.

A little, but decisive intervention in the original text of the *Chronica prophetica* that dates the decline of Muslim reign over al-Andalus to 984 instead

collaborated on an equal foot with Vigila, and that García was a disciple of Vigila (see the illustrations on the bottom of fol. 428^r). There are further entries written by Vigila fols 4^r, 22^v, and 429^r (acrostichon).

³² This is a collection of the so-called *Excerpta canonum*, the canons of the general and particular (here: Hispanic) church synods (*Canones generalium conciliorum*) and legal decisions of the popes (*Decretales pontificum Romanorum* and *Epistolae pontificum Romanorum*).

³³ In Spanish *Fuero juzgo*.

³⁴ The block of our historical and polemical texts is inserted here between the *Excerpta canonum* and the *Canones generalium conciliorum* on the one hand and the *Decretales pontificum Romanorum* and *Epistolae pontificum Romanorum* on the other hand.

³⁵ El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, d. I. 2., fol. 428^r.

³⁶ Sancho Garcés I, García Sánchez I, and Sancho Garcés II. On their genealogical link to the first dynasty of Pamplona: Sánchez Albornoz, *Orígenes*, pp. 94–102.

³⁷ El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, d. I. 2., fols 235^r–238^v (only in excerpts in the margins): this is more a collection of materials than a chronicle in its own right. The title stems from the initially cited prophecy of Ezekiel on Ismael's fate and his future rule over Gog (Ezekiel 38), which is interpreted here as the Muslims' rule over the Visigoths.

³⁸ El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, d. I. 2., fols 235^r–242^v: after a series of short biographies of the Roman kings and emperors from Romulus to Tiberius II (beginning of the eighth century) and the 'Ordo gentis Gotorum' from Atanaricus to Rodericus, the chronicle describes the history of the kings of Asturias ('Ordo Gotorum Obetensium regum') and their struggle against the foreign rule of Spain. In so doing, it integrates the Asturian history into the universal and the Iberian horizons of historical perception.

of 884³⁹ may show the atmosphere of harsh physical conflicts under which our manuscript was produced.⁴⁰ Anti-Jewish extracts from Isidore of Seville, a list of the Muslim rulers of the eighth and ninth centuries, and the above-mentioned *Life of Muhammad* from Córdoba at its end⁴¹ form a veritable arsenal of polemical, historical, and biographical writing of a religious community, radiating in the transreligious border region of Rioja in the last quarter of the tenth century.⁴² Never surrounded by a significant Muslim population,⁴³ San Martín de Albelda was rather influenced by the Mozarabic immigrants from the Muslim south,⁴⁴ who had settled in the Iregua Valley. In my opinion, it was this more recently 'imported' anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish environment of Albelda that was responsible for the historical and religious 'update' of the solely legal manuscript, which the Codex Albeldensis originally was.⁴⁵ If I am right, one of the scribes of the manuscript, the priest called 'Sarracinus', could have been an ex-Muslim or at least a descendent of Arabic or Berber origin, and he could have been the source of the specific Andalusian religious polemics it holds.⁴⁶

³⁹ Gil Fernández, 'Judíos y cristianos', p. 75; Martín Rodríguez, 'Reconquista y cruzada', p. 222 with n. 30.

⁴⁰ We only mention here the loss of Calahorra (a. 968) and Sancho Garcés II's defeat by the troops of Caliph al-Hakam II (a. 975): Lacarra de Miguel, *Historia política*, I, 143 with n. 28 and pp. 150–51.

⁴¹ El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, d. I. 2., fols 243^r–247^r: Isidore of Seville, *Contra Iudeos* (excerpts); fol. 247^r: catalogue of the Muslim rulers of Spain, eighth and ninth centuries; fols 247^r–248^r: *Historia de Mahomat pseudopropheta*; fol. 248^r: *Symbolum apostolicum*; fol. 248^v: final poem of the copyists Sarracinus and Vigila.

⁴² For the history of San Martín de Albelda and its cultural impact on the Rioja region from its beginnings to the late eleventh century: Cantera Orive, 'El primer siglo'; Pérez de Urbel, 'La conquista de la Rioja', pp. 507–26; Lázaro Ruiz, 'El monasterio de San Martín de Albelda'.

⁴³ The indigenous Muslim population of the surroundings seemingly stayed there even after the foundation of the monastery (920s or 5 January 925): Lázaro Ruiz, 'El monasterio de San Martín de Albelda', pp. 366–67 with nn. 49–50.

⁴⁴ Bishko, 'Salvus of Albelda', pp. 561–62 with nn. 18–19.

⁴⁵ According to Díaz y Díaz, 'Un poema pseudoisidoriano', p. 399, the texts were originally imported to Albelda by Mozarabic Christians in a manuscript from al-Andalus ('un códice del Sur'). See also the anti-Jewish text *Item coniurationes hebreorum* attached at the end of the *Lex Visigothorum* on El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, d. I. 2., fol. 427^v. The existence of Jews (or a Jewry) in Albelda can be proven from the middle of the eleventh century (1047) onwards: Cantera Montenegro, *Las juderías*, I, 687.

⁴⁶ For the correct appraisal of this name: Oliver Pérez, "'Sarraceno'", p. 117: 'en los documentos notariales de los siglos IX y X encontramos un alto número de personajes cristianos que se llaman "Sarracinus" / "Sarrazinus", nombre que pensamos que hubiera elegido de asociarse

This socio-religious panorama matches perfectly our assumption that Abbot Maurellus was of Andalusian origin too.⁴⁷

Concerning a majority of its texts,⁴⁸ the Codex Aemilianensis⁴⁹ is a more or less exact copy of the Codex Albeldensis, published in 992⁵⁰ by Bishop

con un credo religioso'; *ibid.*, p. 120: 'El hecho de que en unos mismos escritos "sarraceno" designe a árabes y beréberes de al-Andalus y a habitantes de Castilla que ejercen cargos civiles o eclesiásticos pone de manifiesto que en los siglos IX y X 'sarraceno' tiene sentido estrictamente étnico y que, con alguna excepción, todo esos individuos cuyo nombre de bautismo es Sarraceno o aquéllos que lleven por apellido Sarracín son hijos o descendientes de gentes oriundas de Oriente o del Norte de África'; *ibid.*, pp. 129–30: 'la necesidad de revisar la tesis hoy admitida de que son mozárabes todos los castellano-leoneses con antropónimos árabes o beréberes. Si nuestras investigaciones en torno a "Sarraceno" han dado a conocer la existencia en la primitiva Castilla de familias cristianas de origen oriental y norteafricano, cuyos miembros gustan conservar los nombres de sus ancestros, o adoptar el de Sarraceno, tendremos que efectuar nuevas investigaciones orientadas a descubrir la etnia de esos muchos individuos a los que siempre se aplica el calificativo de mozárabes, y a desvelar el papel que jugaron árabes y beréberes castellano-leoneses en la Historia de la llamada España Cristiana'. For Arabic proper names in tenth- and eleventh-century northern Spain (here: León): Aguilar Sebastián, 'Onomástica'; Rodríguez Mediano, 'Acerca'. This Andalusian 'impregnation' could also explain the striking early appearance of the Arabic figures '1'–'9' in the Latin Occident on fol. 12^v of this codex (El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, d. I. 2.): Hill, 'On the Early Use', p. 151, table 1, no. 1 and p. 170, no. 1; Smith and Karpinski, *The Hindu-Arabic Numerals*, p. 116 with n. 2, pp. 137–38 and 140, no. 1; Hill, *The Development*, pp. 28–29, pl. 1, no. 1; Menéndez Pidal, 'Los llamados numerales árabes', pp. 191–92 and figs 4–5 (not quoting the previous studies).

⁴⁷ Rodríguez Mediano, 'Acerca', p. 471 n. 20 hints at the necessity of more in-depth studies of proper names like 'Maurellus' or 'Sarracinus'.

⁴⁸ *Collectio Hispana* (with supplements in the copy) and *Lex Visigothorum*, furthermore *Kalendarium mozarabicum*, *De viris illustribus*, Felix, *Vita S. Iuliani archiepiscopi Toletani* (excerpt), [Vigila,] *Vita Salvi abbatis S. Martini Albeldensis*, *Chronica prophetica*, and *Historia de Mahomat pseudopropheta*. In later times, the monks of San Millán de la Cogolla inserted and supplemented the following sections of the manuscript: El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, d. I. 1., fols 230^r–234^v, of smaller size, originally a quaternio, were inserted at the end of the eleventh century. These pages specifically contain texts on the freshly reconquered metropolitan see of Toledo. Fols 393^r–396^v (rest of an original quinio) were supplemented around 1140 (fol. 396^v shows the date 'Era TCLXXVIII VI idus decembris': Deswarte, *Une chrétienté romaine*, p. 447 with n. 1; Henriët, 'Retour', p. 731 was in favour of the end of the eleventh century): fol. 395^v has the *tract De missa apostolica in ispania ducta*, refusing the introduction of the Roman liturgy in favour of the former Visigothic liturgy, because the latter is also Roman, but already from apostolic times. See furthermore fol. 395^v the immediately following tract *De officio ispane ecclesie in roma laudato et confirmato*.

⁴⁹ We are interested only in the history of production of the codex.

⁵⁰ This date of production matches perfectly the *Nomina diocesum Hispanorum* (El Escorial,

Sisebut of Pamplona (981–97),⁵¹ the priest and scribe Belasco,⁵² and another Sisebut who was the bishop's nephew⁵³ and probably the illuminator of the manuscript.⁵⁴ The interest in this new copy of the above-mentioned legal, historical, and interreligious texts in the nearby monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla and its environment can clearly be detected from the immediate context with some apologetical and polemical texts. They are integrated into the collection of several works of Isidore of Seville, serving the education of the local and regional clergy. Specifically, the *Norma fidei nostre perenniter retinenda* and the *Symbolum athanasianum*, added just after the *Chronica prophetica*⁵⁵ and the Andalusian *Life of Muḥammad*,⁵⁶ explicitly comment on the integration of all the narrative and polemical texts into the Hispano-Arabic history. It is this position of mental, spiritual, and religious resistance against Muslims and Jews that makes the Albelda team of copyists and illuminators work for, or in, San Millán.⁵⁷ This intellectual and religious resistance is even illustrated a little bit later in the same context. Here, the bishoprics of the 'Hispania' and the 'provincia Narbonensis' are represented by the symbolic number of twelve bishops forming an 'ecclesiastical wind rose'.⁵⁸ Besides illustrating some lists of the six church provinces⁵⁹ and their met-

Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, d. I. 1., fol. 392^v) because at that time the ecclesiastical structures (frontiers of bishoprics) of the Rioja region were basically reorganized on the former juridical bases: Sáinz Ripa, *Sedes episcopales*, I, 194–95. The abbot documented in the year 992 was Stephanus: Zaragoza i Pascual, 'Abadologio', p. 190 with n. 6.

⁵¹ According to Martín Duque, 'Del espejo ajeno', p. 37.

⁵² El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, d. I. 1., fol. 13^r: Belasco's inaugural poem, remembering the late Bishop Sisebut, who was the first copyist of the codex.

⁵³ El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, d. I. 1., fol. 13^r: 'cum nepote suo equivoco iam fato'.

⁵⁴ El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, d. I. 1., fol. 453^r: 'Urraca regina. Sancio rex. Ranimirus rex. in tempore horum regum atque regine perfectum est opus libri huius, discurrere era MXXX. Belasco scriba. Sisebutus episcopus. Sisebutus notarius. Sisebutus episcopus cum scriba Belasco presbitero pariterque cum Sisebuto discipulo suo edidit hunc librum. mementote memorie eorum semper in benedictione'.

⁵⁵ El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, d. I. 1., fol. 394^r, but transmitting only the final part of the chronicle.

⁵⁶ El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, d. I. 1., fol. 394^v.

⁵⁷ El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, d. I. 1., fols 341^v–345^v have Isidore of Seville, *Contra iudaeos*. For the relationship of San Millán de la Cogolla with Jews since the eleventh century: Hergueta y Martín, 'La judería'; Cantera Montenegro, *Las juderías*, I, 668.

⁵⁸ El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, d. I. 1., fol. 392^r: Werckmeister, 'Das Bild'.

⁵⁹ 'Galicia', 'Lusitania', 'Bética', 'Cartaginensis', 'Tarragonensis', and 'Gallia'.

ropolitan sees⁶⁰ in Visigothic times, the apostolic number of twelve bishops formulates the clearly orthodox and uninterrupted integrity of the whole Spanish Church even under Muslim control. These lists and another catalogue of the former Spanish archbishops⁶¹ may stem from the immigrated Mozarabic circles living in the immediate environment of San Millán de la Cogolla at the end of the tenth century, which we know from other contemporary sources.⁶²

The Codex Rotensis,⁶³ which would be better called Codex of Nájera, as we will shortly see, is a combination of two parts. The huge first section, containing a Mozarabic copy of the world chronicle by Paulus Orosius from the Rioja region or from San Millán de la Cogolla respectively,⁶⁴ was supplemented in the same monastery at the end of the tenth or in the beginning of the eleventh century by historical texts and further textual snippets of some curious content. By focusing on the history of Spain from the Visigothic and Muslim periods to the course of events of the kingdom of Asturias-León and finally to the fate of the most recent royal house of Navarra, the compiler of the second part of the manuscript goes through Iberian history from Late Antiquity to the present times of Navarra, around the year 1000. Closing his collection

⁶⁰ Braga, Mérida, Seville, Toledo, Tarragona, and Narbonne.

⁶¹ El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, d. I. 1., fol. 360^v has the supplemented *Nomina episcoporum Hispalensium, Toletanorum et Eliberitanorum*, mentioning only the bishops of the Andalusian metropolitan sees under Muslim governance until around 970, but no contemporary archbishops.

⁶² Previous research favoured the opinion that in the immediate surroundings of San Millán we have clear hints for an atelier of ivory carvers from the last third of the tenth century, imitating models coming from Cordoban ateliers: Ferrandis Torres, *Marfiles árabes*, I, 47–48, 101–03, no. 33–34, and pls LXII–LXVII; Díaz y Díaz, 'La circulation des manuscrits', p. 223 with n. 22; Peña de San José, *Los marfiles*, pp. 45–47; de Silva y Verástegui, *Iconografía*, pp. 89–92. More recent research now assumes that we are dealing with original Andalusian products for Christian use made in the context of diplomatic exchanges between the last caliphs of Muslim Córdoba and the Christian royal family of Navarra: Azuar Ruiz, 'Inscripciones', pp. 191–93 and 195–96; Azuar Ruiz, 'De arqueología mozárabe. II', p. 97. The change of opinions on the situation in San Millán de la Cogolla from Manuel Gómez-Moreno Martínez to present times is documented by Azuar Ruiz, 'De arqueología mozárabe [I]', pp. 124–29 and 135–41.

⁶³ For the fate of this manuscript: García Villada, 'El Códice de Roda', pp. 113–14. Its name stems from its long-term place of preservation in the bishopric of Roda d'Isàvena. The manuscript was there at the latest in 1191, the year when the now enlarged and revised list of names of the kings of Navarra was copied into the breviary of the cathedral, now Lleida, Arxiu Capitular, RC_0029 (olim MS 11).

⁶⁴ This section, about three quarters of the whole manuscript, is copied on regular quaternios.

with Isidore's praise of Spain⁶⁵ and the legendary origin of the Goths, the compiler describes a circular movement. Several texts, supplemented about 990,⁶⁶ focus once more on the emerging kingdom of Navarra. This 'royal updating' of our manuscript, comparable to the most recent processes of redaction in the contemporary Codex Albeldensis, leads us to the royal court of Navarra at Nájera, where a group of scribes from the nearby monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla seem to have completed, perhaps under the guidance of Bishop Sisebut of Pamplona,⁶⁷ the present state of the manuscript.⁶⁸

But how shall we assess the anti-Muslim polemics in this more recent supplement of San Millán and Nájera? The close combination of Isidore of Seville's *Historia Gothorum* with an excerpt of the Spanish version of the prophecy on Islam by Pseudo-Methodius,⁶⁹ the Asturian *Chronicon Rotense* with the so-called *Tultusceptra de libro domni Metobii*,⁷⁰ a singular legend of Muḥammad

⁶⁵ Madrid, Biblioteca de la Real Academia, MS 78, fols 195^v–196^r.

⁶⁶ On the one hand, at the end of the Hispano-Visigothic-Arabic history of the 'Iberia', and on the other hand at the very end of the codex, with the Pamplona addition to the *Chronica prophetica*, a continuation from late eleventh-century Nájera (Madrid, Biblioteca de la Real Academia, MS 78, fol. 231^r), and the epithalamium on Queen Leodegundia, a purported daughter of King Ordoño I of Asturias, who is said to have been married to a prince of Pamplona, who is not known by name (fol. 232^{r/v}). The latter text is a fanciful retrospection of the wedding of Ordoño's I son Alfonso III and Jimena of Navarra (a. 869) and further Asturian-Navarrese marriages of the early tenth century, i.e. between Alfonso III's son Ordoño II and his own sons Alfonso IV and Ramiro II exclusively with daughters of Sancho I Garcés of Navarra.

⁶⁷ This connection is very plausible because of some texts with strong references to Pamplona, e.g. the famous letter of the emperor Honorius addressed to his 'militia' in Pamplona c. 418 (Madrid, Biblioteca de la Real Academia, MS 78, fol. 190^r: Lacarra de Miguel, 'Textos navarros', pp. 266–70; Sivan, 'An Unedited Letter'; Larrañaga Elorza, 'Glosa', pp. 137–38; Martín Duque, 'Del espejo ajeno', p. 27 with n. 44–45 and p. 45 nn. 44–45; de Carlos Villamarín, 'À l'ombre de Rome', p. 130), the praise of Pamplona (fol. 190^{r/v}: Larrañaga Elorza, 'Glosa'; de Carlos Villamarín, 'À loa de Pamplona'; de Carlos Villamarín, 'À l'ombre de Rome', pp. 130 and 139–42) or the obituaries of the bishops of Pamplona of the tenth century until Sisebut himself a. 988 (fol. 231^v: Martín Duque, 'Del espejo ajeno', p. 48 n. 108). That means that Sisebut would have initiated the manuscript shortly before the Codex Aemiliensis, in the production of which he was then also involved.

⁶⁸ We have clear hints of the manuscript's preservation in Nájera during the eleventh century: Lacarra de Miguel, 'Textos navarros', pp. 195–96.

⁶⁹ Madrid, Biblioteca de la Real Academia, MS 78, fols 167^r–176^v and fol. 177^{r/v}: Vázquez de Parga, 'Algunas notas', pp. 147–51.

⁷⁰ Madrid, Biblioteca de la Real Academia, MS 78, fols 178^r–185^r and fol. 185^v: *Tultusceptra de libro domni Metobii*: Díaz y Díaz, 'Los textos antimahometanos', pp. 160–64; Vázquez de Parga, 'Algunas notas', p. 152; Wolf, 'The Earliest Latin Lives', pp. 89 and 94–96; Tolan,

from Córdoba,⁷¹ and the integration of further Mozarabic traditions on the

'Tultusceptru'; González Muñoz, 'La nota'; Wolf, 'Counterhistory', pp. 16–19 and 22–26. The poor condition of the text and some distorted words reveal an older model, certainly written in Visigothic minuscule. Reflexes of this Cordoban legend are transmitted by two Angoulême authors, the Benedictine monk Aimericus and the grammarian Siguinus, in their manuals of reading (*Artes lectoriae*) from 1086 and 1087/88 respectively: d'Ancona, 'La leggenda di Maometto', pp. 245–46; Doutté, 'Mahomet', p. 237; González Muñoz, 'La leyenda', pp. 354–55. Both texts mention Muḥammad's coming to Spain in the context of chronological sample calculations — Aimericus, *Ars lectoria*, ed. by Reijnders, III, 141, ll. 7–11: 'Anno Christi DCVII obiit Ocín diaconus quem Sarraceni Maumitum vocant qui ab Osio papa ad Hispanias missus legatione officii fungens sed deceptus deceptit, anni CCCCLXXVIII. Falluntur enim qui Nicolaum unum de septem primis putant. Inde usque ad nos, anno Christi MLXXXVI, anni CCCCLXXIX'; Siguinus, *Ars lectoria*, ed. by Kneepkens and Reijnders, II, 124, ll. 20–23: 'A Christo nato usque ad transitum Ocín quem Sarraceni Maumitum dicunt, quem Osius papa ad Hispanias direxit corrigendi gratia anni sescenti decem. Inde ad nos anni quadringenti septuaginta octo'.

⁷¹ This text shows a certain affinity to the Syro-Arabic legend of Sergius-Bahira circulating in the tenth-century Iberian Peninsula and seems to be contaminated with the memory of Bishop Ossius of Córdoba, who first participated in the struggle against Arius and favoured the Catholic position in the Council of Nicaea (a. 325) and then at the end of his life surprisingly signed in the Council of Sirmium (a. 357) the so-called second Arian creed which strongly formed his memory in the Catholic Church (*Libellus precum Faustini et Marcellini*; Sulpicius Severus, *Chronicon*; Isidore of Seville, *De viris illustribus*): Ulrich, 'Einige Bemerkungen'; Nieto Cumplido, 'De los orígenes', pp. 14–24. The many quotes from Ezekiel at the beginning of the text may also show its Cordoban origin because exactly this prophetic book was intensively studied in ninth- and tenth-century Córdoba. Finally, the name-dropping of Eríbon ('Oríbe') probably shows the knowledge of Pseudo-Methodius (Gil Fernández, 'Praefatio', p. xli; Kedar, *Crusade and Mission*, p. 29; with unfounded doubts González Muñoz, 'Introducción', p. 79) which explains the distorted name 'Metobius' in the title of the work. To the same prophetically charged atmosphere of tenth-century Córdoba belongs the *Liber prophetarum* by ar-Rāzī, *Crónica del moro Rasis*, ed. by Catalán Menéndez-Pidal and Soledad de Andrés, 130.2 and 5, p. 270 (version Ca in Toledo, Biblioteca Capitular, MS 26-24): 'E este [sc. "Gundasulid"] enbio sus cartas a los barbaros [...] E yo falle escrito en los libros de los christianos, en aquellos que fablan de los mandados de los rreys, que este enbio su mandado a los de Oriba et a los de Semedén, e luego se le rrindieron et le obedecieron'. The Arabic original of the *Chronicle* is lost, but testified at the beginning of a Portuguese translation made for King John I of Portugal: 'Incipit liber Rasae, historici Dalharab Marrochiorum Miramolini Cordubaeque regis quem ipsius iussu composuit. Versus est in linguam Lusitanam ex Arabica, per me magistrum Machometum Saracenum nobilem architectum. Et scribebat mecum Aegidius Petri, clericus Domini Petri Joannidae Portellensis, patris Domini Joannis Auolini', *Crónica del moro Rasis*, ed. by Catalán Menéndez-Pidal and Soledad de Andrés, 1–3, p. 3: Colbert, *The Martyrs of Córdoba*, p. 122. The work is also quoted under its Latin title in the *Chronica gothorum Pseudo-Isidoriana* from the first half of the twelfth century: 'hic [sc. "Gondolus"] direxit legatos ad barbaros et ad gentes Oríbe, sicut narrat libri prophetarum', ed. by González Muñoz, p. 178, ll. 3–4: *ibid.*, 'Introducción', pp. 73–74.

Muslims' rule over Spain and their final decline announced in the *Chronica prophetica*⁷² show that contemporary Christians regarded the Muslim presence in al-Andalus as an important and unavoidable part of their own history. Yet, these texts also testify to a growing Christian mental and religious resistance in the years around the first millennium:⁷³ this resistance either favoured renewed prophetic and eschatological thinking about the decline of Islam in general and especially in Spain,⁷⁴ or it returned to the polemics of the Andalusian life against the founder of Islam himself.⁷⁵ The concept of the second part of this manuscript perfectly reflects the atmosphere prevailing in the Rioja monasteries during the time of terror and destruction by al-Manşūr (978–1002).⁷⁶ So it is only reasonable that the manuscript concludes its notes on the interreligious history of Spain with the names of the most important Christian rulers of the Iberian north, especially of the emergent new kingdom of Pamplona, and of the 'Aquitanian' south, who organized the physical resistance against the Muslims since the tenth century,⁷⁷ without showing any concern for the neighbouring

⁷² Madrid, Biblioteca de la Real Academia, MS 78, fols 186^r–189^v.

⁷³ The Jewry in Nájera is traceable since the beginning eleventh century: Cantera Montenegro, *Las juderías*, I, 641 and 644.

⁷⁴ See also the short tract *De fine mundi* of 876 announcing the end of the world in 900 (Madrid, Biblioteca de la Real Academia, MS 78, fols 209^v–210^r): Gil Fernández, 'Textos olvidados', pp. 170–73; Rucquoi, 'Mesianismo', p. 25; Rucquoi, 'El fin del milenarismo', p. 300. On the possible influence of this tract on the development of the *Chronica prophetica*: Gil Fernández, 'Judíos y cristianos', p. 72.

⁷⁵ No wonder that the copy of the Cordoban *Life of Muḥammad* is here integrated in the *Chronica prophetica* between a genealogy of the Saracens and a narration of the Arabic invasion of the Iberian Peninsula.

⁷⁶ Sénac, 'Al-Mansūr', pp. 43 and 45 n. 35. In 1002, San Millán de la Cogolla was pillaged and burned down by al-Manşūr: Sénac, *Al-Mansūr*, p. 131. We do not know whether San Martín de Albedra and Santa María de Nájera suffered the same fate. But there were also political marriages between the house of Pamplona and Córdoba in the time of al-Manşūr, who married two daughters of Sancho Garcés II: Cañada Juste, 'Las relaciones'. Sénac, 'Note', pp. 40–42 has shown that the genealogies in this manuscript (see the following n.) mention several prominent Muslims without any resentment. According to Lacarra de Miguel, 'Las genealogías', p. 216, we should see in the creation of these Latin genealogies the influence of Muslim predilection for genealogical literature.

⁷⁷ Coming from Asturias, Navarra, Aragón, Pallars, Gascogne, and Toulouse. Sénac, 'Note', p. 39 has shown that the redaction of these genealogies did not go beyond 988. But already Menéndez Pidal, 'Sobre el escritorio emilianense', pp. 11–12 mentioned 988 as the last terminus of the neighbouring obituary of the bishops of Pamplona in Madrid, Biblioteca de la Real Academia, MS 78, fol. 231^r. According to Menéndez Pidal, 'Sobre el escritorio emilianense',

north-eastern Carolingian counties of the so-called 'Marca Hispanica', emancipating themselves from the Capetians' dominion since 986 and thus becoming what we call 'medieval Catalonia'.⁷⁸

The three Rioja manuscripts we have briefly presented here form the nucleus of the gradually growing awareness of historical and geographical, but also cultural and religious identities in the Christian north against the Muslim south around the end of the first millennium. Although the polemical notes of these manuscripts were fostered by actual experiences of social, cultural, and religious 'convivencia' made by the Mozarabic Christians who had fled from al-Andalus, these textual spaces are certainly no indicators for 'convivencia' in their new contexts of production. Furthermore, we see, at present, no traces of activating the polemical potential of these manuscripts for the organization of real 'convivencia' in their original contexts of production and conservation.

Results and Perspectives

The purpose of my paper was to show how contextualizing different examples of the Iberian manuscript tradition, especially of Christian anti-Muslim polemics, allows for the refinement of describing our landscape of social and religious 'convivencia' of daily life in the Iberian world. It is first and foremost the northern parts of the peninsula that have formed mental, spiritual, and religious resistance against Muslim power in the south since the late ninth century in rediscovering and reproducing their own cultural and religious identity. At the turn of the first millennium, we see a new, more complex kernel of legal, historical, and polemical resistance against Muslims and Jews, produced in central compilations of the three most prominent monasteries of the frontier region of Rioja. In stark contrast to the Carolingian north-eastern part of the Iberian Peninsula with its parallel ongoing strong transmission of Carolingian texts,⁷⁹ the northern parts

p. 11; Ubieto Arteta, 'La elaboración', pp. 458 and 462–63, we have to think of the year 992 because of a marginal note on fol. 186^r referring to Muḥammad.

⁷⁸ Zimmermann, 'Aux origins'; Zimmermann, 'Le concept'; Zimmermann, 'Le rôle'; Zimmermann, 'La souveraineté'; Chandler, 'Carolingian Catalonia'.

⁷⁹ This was the core issue of the HERA-Project 'From Carolingian Periphery to European Central Region: The Written Genesis of Catalonia' based at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Bellaterra (2016–19): <<http://pagines.uab.cat/unup/>> [accessed 1 August 2020]. A prominent case of interest in Carolingian biographical/historical works is the Ripoll copy of Einhart's *Vita Karoli*, obviously made up to 1018 under abbot Oliba (1008–46) and lost in the burning of Ripoll manuscripts in 1835: Tischler, *Einharts Vita Karoli*, I, 37 and 336–43.

of the peninsula show no generalized or in-depth interest in Carolingian text material for the construction of their cultural and religious identity.⁸⁰

In the next phase up to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, we then observe the development of much more adequate manners of intellectual debates, which shift from more or less legendary biographical traditions on Muḥammad integrated into juridical and historical compendia of the late tenth century to individual interreligious polemics in their own right. This general movement is connected with a shift of the Iberian locations of interreligious polemics that could be characterized as an emancipation of intellectual activity from the old monastic hot spots of Christian resistance against Muslim and Jewish influences to the more recent manners of socio-religious encounters in the newly conquered cities of multireligious 'convivencia', such as Toledo⁸¹ or the coastal towns of the Crown of Aragón.⁸²

Modern scholarship has become more sensitive to social spaces, and the way in which they are constructed in different media can contribute to the recovery of the cultural and religious meaning of Américo Castro's original concept of 'convivencia'. In my opinion, this landscape deserves a new, more refined 'mental mapping' of its intellectual multiplicity. As we have learned in recent decades, it is exactly the frontier position which often moves apparently peripheral knowledge of 'the cultural and religious other' into the focus of the learned interest of a wider audience. It is the periphery that forms adequate manners of social, religious, and intellectual encounters with 'the other'. This 'passage' is evidently a double-sided one: literary manners of encounter and perception configure social spaces of encounters and this constructed space of encounters produces more or less adequate manners of perceptions and encounters in the configuration of social space.

Our concept of 'centre' and 'periphery' therefore depends on a historical point of view and on our modern scientific perspective. Regarding the Iberian Peninsula from a transcultural or transreligious standpoint often means shift-

⁸⁰ This is the general impression given by the overview Díaz y Díaz, 'Textos altomedievales'. An exception that proves the rule seems to be the copy of the *Institutio canonicorum Aquisgranensis* of 816 in the Codex Aemilianensis (El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, d. I. 1., fols 361^r–392^r), not yet transmitted in its model, the Codex Albeldensis. Moreover, traces of Smaragd of St-Mihiel's *Via regia* and *Expositio in regulam S. Benedicti* in the context of excerpts of this *Rule* are transmitted in the Codex Albeldensis (El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, d. I. 2., fols 345^v–347^v and 350^r–351^v) and the Codex Aemilianensis (El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, d. I. 1., fols 348bis^r–349^v and 351^v–353^r) respectively.

⁸¹ Tischler, 'Transfer- und Transformationsprozesse', pp. 338–39 and 342–46.

⁸² Tischler, 'Grenzen und Grenzüberschreitung', pp. 69–71.

ing our understanding of the relations between 'centres' and 'peripheries'. If we take a look, for example, at the 'hagiography of interreligious frontiers',⁸³ which was produced in the Christian spaces of the Iberian Peninsula since the Central Middle Ages, we become aware that modern ideas about the perception of the 'religious other' in the distant past are often theoretical and inadequate. Contemporary pragmatic concepts are very often the much more adequate ones, despite all of the polemics they necessarily carry as well.

Author's Note

I discussed specific aspects of this chapter in two further papers, one on cultural brokers in my paper 'Transcultural Historiography and Cultural Brokers: Assessing Arabo-Latin Processes of Historiographical Transfer and Transformation in the Medieval Mediterranean World, Tenth to Thirteenth Centuries', at the workshop 'The Cultural Broker: Comparing Modes of Dis/Integration of Cultural and Religious Otherness in the Mediterranean World and Beyond', Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Bellaterra, 31 October 2014, sponsored by my Marie Curie Senior Fellow-Research Project 'Muhammad in Latin Christian Contexts: Comparing Modes of Dis/Integration of Religious Otherness in Historiographical Traditions, 8th to 13th Centuries' (ERC/M4HUMAN-Programme of the Gerda Henkel-Stiftung, Düsseldorf, 2013/2014), the other on the relationship of religious normativity and everyday praxis in my paper 'Spaces of "Convivencia" and Spaces of Polemics: Transcultural Historiography and Religious Identity in the Monastic Landscape of the Rioja Region, ca. 1000', at the 5th International Medieval Meeting, Lleida, 25 June 2015.

⁸³ As n. 5.

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MAPPING HISTORIOGRAPHY: AN ESSAY IN COMPARISON

Walter Pohl

This is an essay in the original sense of the word, ‘essayer’, to try: probing into the comparative perspectives raised by the chapters of this volume. These lines of comparison were not set when this volume was planned, but developed from the work done. In the ‘Visions of Community’ project of which the ‘Historiography and Identity’ series of workshops and volumes has been a part, this approach to a bottom-up development of comparative perspectives has proven most productive.¹ Preconceived grids of enquiry often turned out to be built too much on Europeanist presumptions, inadequate for rather different sets of evidence. We also found that rather than starting with preconceived parameters about different ‘cultures’, it is worth returning to the sources to test our assumptions. Therefore, this volume does not offer synthetic chapters about various ‘historiographic cultures’, but contains studies about particular texts or developments in the historiography of, roughly, the second half of the first millennium CE. On the basis of the similarities or differences in

¹ See Pohl and Gingrich, ‘Visions of Community’. I am grateful to Helmut Reimitz, Pavlína Rychterová, Bernhard Scheid, Matthias M. Tischler, Michael Cook, and Edward Wang for their help in preparing this conclusion, to Christina Pössel for correcting my English with an extraordinary sense for the logic of the argument, and to Nicola Edelmann for copy-editing. My thanks also go to the FWF, the Austrian Research Fund, for making this intellectual adventure possible in the context of the SFB F42-G18 ‘Visions of Community’.

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approaches to the past detected in these chapters, we can go beyond wholesale comparison between ‘the’ Chinese, Islamic, or Western historiographies.

The contributions speak to each other in often surprising ways. I can only explore a few possible lines of comparison. Following the layout of the volume, I will seek to map out some relevant traits of the different historiographic traditions, with relatively extensive summaries of the respective chapters. I will then suggest some comparative perspectives, which may be useful for future research. As in the second volume of the *Oxford History of Historical Writing*,² it seems best to start with the Chinese case, surely the most sophisticated and advanced historiography of the period, and end with Latin Europe.³

For scholars of the early medieval West such as myself, placing the Latin historiographic tradition in its wider Eurasian context can provide invaluable inspirations. What we have always taken for granted suddenly stands out in its particularities within the wide range of options found in a much larger universe of history writing. Capturing the ‘phantoms of remembrance’⁴ in writing was a matter of state in some societies and considered hardly worth the investment in others. Written histories were carefully transmitted in some societies, successively modified or rewritten in others, and neglected elsewhere. What has been transmitted represents a tightly controlled official historiography in some contexts, and highlights voices of dissent and bitter criticism in others. The texts range from detailed accounts of events to myths and legends of gods, heroes, and model rulers. Of course, such historiographic frames cannot simply be linked in an ahistorical way to the regional cases discussed in the following. It should be noted that the internal variety and the changes over time in each of the regional historiographies discussed here were much greater than can be addressed in this essay. My intention is not to describe ‘the’ medieval Chinese or Islamic historiography, but to sketch approximate historiographic models to explore the diversity of approaches to literate cultural memory current in the period, and above all to find features where these approaches differed.

² Foot and Robinson, eds, *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, II.

³ Under ‘Latin Europe’, I understand the parts of Europe where Latin writing was predominant.

⁴ Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*.

A Chinese Model 1: State Historiography

China, treated in this volume by Edward Wang and Randolph Ford, lends itself to very promising comparison with the West, a venture in which both authors engage with impressive results. The Chinese Empire is the quintessential case for the development of an official state history. When the system worked, the writing of history was ordered by state authorities, it was carried out by state officials trained in state schools on the basis of official court records, and its diffusion and transmission was controlled by the bureaucracy.⁵ In the period on which this volume focuses, under the Tang and Song dynasties, this system of bureaucratic court historiography reached its full development. The past had already mattered much in the governance of the realm in the first millennium BCE.⁶ It may be indicative that the Chinese graph *shi* 史 at the root of the modern word for history, *lishi* 历史, derives from ‘employee’, in the first millennium BCE used for ‘scribe’ and then also ‘historian’. Soon, a variety of bureaucratic composite titles ending in *-shi* reflected a differentiated hierarchy of court historians. *Guoshi* (国史) is the ‘state history’ that this system produced. And its compiler, or 国史, the state historian, was written in exactly the same characters, suggesting the then dual meaning of the *shi* as both a history and a historian. *Shiguan* is attested as the ‘office of historiography’ at the imperial court, where the state historian worked on his history.⁷ In Chinese, *guo* unproblematically describes the Chinese state and territory; its English counterpart, ‘nation’, is more controversial if used for medieval polities, as is its derivative, ‘national history’.⁸

In his contribution to the present volume, Edward Wang briefly recounts the development of official histories, *guoshi*. Under the Han dynasty, from the second century BCE to the third century CE, it seems that the writing of history was not yet regarded as a fully fledged discipline of its own, but subsumed under the study of the classics, among which the *Spring and Autumn Annals* of the Age of Confucius served as a model. In the post-Han period, history writing gradually became an official practice, and was established as a distinct category

⁵ Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History*; Hartman and De Blasi, ‘The Growth of Historical Method’. See also Ng and Wang, *Mirroring the Past*, on the development of historiography from Confucius to the end of the Tang dynasty.

⁶ Leung, *The Politics of the Past*.

⁷ Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History*, pp. 13–20; Hartmann and De Blasi, ‘The Growth of Historical Method’, pp. 21–23.

⁸ See Wang, in this volume.

in the reorganization of the Imperial Academy in 438 CE.⁹ The establishment of history as a distinct genre also coincided with discussions of the nature of history writing. The later third and fourth centuries saw a remarkable increase in historical writing; ‘interesting times’ stimulated the study of the ancient and immediate past.¹⁰ A fifth-century history of the Han dynasty, the *Hou Hanshu* (‘History of the Later Han’), relates a case in which a historian was accused of compiling a *guoshi* without court permission, which points to the (perhaps retrospective) idea that historiography should be kept under control.¹¹

Edward Wang argues that a decisive step in the development of state history came between the Han and Tang dynasties, that is, in the third to sixth centuries, when China was divided. Han history had provided a universal perspective — *tianxia*, ‘all under heaven’, a cosmological epithet that was used to describe the famous *Records of the Historian* by Sima Qian (transcribed as Ssu-ma chien in the old Wade & Giles system).¹² Sima Qian ‘rationalized’ Inner Asian history, especially the Xiongnu Empire, and included it in a common cosmological frame with the fate of China.¹³ The post-Han time of divisions, on the other hand, gave rise to histories of particular states and dynasties; among the earliest, Chen Shou’s *History of the Three Kingdoms* (third century) and the *Spring and Autumn Annals of the Sixteen Kingdoms* by Cui Hong written around 500. Several more were produced under the early Tang. Edward Wang compares this flourishing of particular state histories with the works of the great historians of Goths, Franks, Anglo-Saxons, and Lombards in the early medieval West.¹⁴ The parallels are very plausible: post-imperial political divisions create a demand for particular histories.

Under the Tang, the bureaucratic procedure of processing governmental data was refined, which started with the keeping of different sets of daily records, for instance of court meetings and statements of the emperor.¹⁵ It then went through a gradual selection process in which annals, biographies, and ‘monographs’ about specific topics were compiled. Institutional history thus developed several genres which made it possible to represent overlapping aspects of

⁹ Lewis, *China between Empires*, pp. 244–45; Lewis, ‘Historiography and Empire’.

¹⁰ Dien, ‘Historiography of the Six Dynasties Period’.

¹¹ See Wang, in this volume.

¹² Nienhauser, Jr., ‘Sima Qian’.

¹³ Di Cosmo, *Ancient China*, pp. 294–311.

¹⁴ See Reimitz and Heydemann, eds, *Historiography and Identity*, II, with the contribution by Pohl, ‘Debating’.

¹⁵ This process was reconstructed in detail by Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History*.

state activity: the chronological frame of events, the role of influential personalities, and relevant issues such as state ritual, finance, law, or the training and organization of bureaucracy. These forms were then compiled into the official state histories, mostly covering the rule of one dynasty and often only produced under the following dynasty. They were written on official orders, mostly by a committee of historiographers under the supervision of a top bureaucrat.¹⁶

The function of these histories was made explicit at an early date, and was basically to learn from precedent. That applied, first, to particular instances or constellations of state activity, for which well-trained bureaucrats and advisors could refer to several parallel cases in the past. Second, it included a level of pervasive moral judgement on the actions of past representatives of the state: history was supposed to confer 'praise and blame' in order to serve as a moral guideline for the present.¹⁷ Third, it made it possible to sustain a cyclical model of the historical process on the basis of previous experience: unified empires rose, declined, and dissolved, which led to a period of warring dynasties and states, until another powerful dynasty united the empire once again: 'the past as a mirror to illuminate dynastic rise and fall', as the Tang emperor Taizong was supposed to have said.¹⁸ This cyclical vision of Chinese history was perfected in the *Zizhi tongjian* ('The Comprehensive Mirror of Aid in Government', 1084) by Sima Guang, the great historian of the Song dynasty. The *Mirror* was intended to 'look into history, identify a past point in a pattern that corresponds to the present situation, read what ensued after that point in the cycle, and so obtain insight to help plan for the future'.¹⁹ Indeed, Chinese history in the last 2200 years has largely followed this preconceived model with some regularity. We may speculate whether the cyclical conception of imperial history with its cosmological background and its detailed historical explication may have contributed to this dynamic.

Chinese historiography, then, reached an 'age of maturity' under the Song dynasty (960–1275), in which all the elements of 'state history' were in place.²⁰ The strict examination system for the selection of top bureaucrats had created an elite of literati geared towards competent administration within established moral categories and professional hierarchies.²¹ They were the ones who

¹⁶ Hartman and De Blasi, 'The Growth of Historical Method', pp. 22–28.

¹⁷ Hartman, 'Chinese Historiography', p. 43.

¹⁸ Ng and Wang, *Mirroring the Past*, p. 108.

¹⁹ Hartman, 'Chinese Historiography', p. 38; see also pp. 46–49.

²⁰ Ng and Wang, *Mirroring the Past*; Hartman, 'Chinese Historiography', pp. 37–56.

²¹ Lorge, 'Institutional Histories', p. 492.

supervised and wrote the official histories, and tended to distribute 'praise and blame' in line with their vision of civil, conservative, and Confucian governance. Erratic emperors, uneducated and sometimes barbarian military officers, and rebellious dynasts were the risk factors in this calculated flow of 'state history'. Song historiography, in spite of its elaborate frame, thus represents a rather particular, if highly educated interest within the complex edifice of the Chinese Empire. Its Confucian outlook was basically preserved within a more complex religious and intellectual landscape, in which Daoism, Buddhism, and other creeds vied for influence.²² Within the discipline of historiography, private works continued to be written, and sometimes in a rather critical vein. Yet even those major works of history that were composed 'in private' were often written by literati that had withdrawn or been banned from the court, as also happened to Sima Guang. However, these histories mostly only survived if they found the approval of later emperors.

A work's chances of transmission also depended on its use in the education of state officials. The more synthetic and morally grounded histories were, the better suited they could be for training bureaucrats, and therefore achieve wide circulation. From the tenth century onwards, they could be distributed in wood-print editions, both state-sponsored and privately produced. Despite this wide circulation, the transmission of original prints and manuscripts of Tang and Song historiography is patchy. The texts were subsequently selected, abbreviated, compiled, and adapted, and later also reconstructed by scholars during the Qin dynasty. As a result of continuous reworking, 'formal written histories outweigh the documents' in the sources preserved from China in the first millennium. The texts that have come down to us have, therefore, often gone through several redactions.²³ Furthermore, many histories kept at court were burnt when the European forces attacked Beijing in 1900. The careful control of state history thus ultimately proved detrimental for the 'chances of transmission' (*Überlieferungschance*)²⁴ of a wide range of texts and documents.

How can concepts of identity contribute to an understanding of this exceptional strand of 'state history'? The easy way would be to state that *guoshi* was

²² Adshead, *T'ang China*, pp. 130–67.

²³ Lorge, 'Institutional Histories', p. 487. This was certainly different in Europe from the eighth century onwards. However, Lorge's contention that 'European cartularies were not compiled into formal histories' (p. 482) is not quite correct, for instance in the case of the Italian 'cartulary chronicles' of the eleventh/twelfth centuries from Montecassino, San Vincenzo al Volturno, Farfa, and other monasteries.

²⁴ Esch, 'Überlieferungs-Chance'.

a way to affirm imperial Chinese identity. However, much of it seems to be Chinese, imperial, and Confucian by implication rather than by explicit affirmation. The Chinese imperial matrix was not in question, while the fundamentals of imperial legitimacy in Rome changed radically after the Christian 'revolution of Constantine'.²⁵ Still, like Western historiography, *guoshi* did have to provide new answers in times of disunity, but without changing the basics. What the identity construction that underlay the writing of Chinese history obviously achieved was a routine of imperial identification that was resilient enough to be maintained across periods of disunity and political upheaval, and could be recast in the mould of previous imperial dynasties after each period of crisis.

In the West, Roman imperial identity was also restated in many works of history, old and new, in the European Middle Ages, and was kept available for reappropriation. Yet however strong the impact of the Roman model was (for instance, in the thousand years of the 'Holy Roman Empire'), the many transmitted elements of empire could never be turned into a new imperial whole again. Roman, Christian, and ethnic elements of political legitimacy remained in an inescapable state of tension. In the medieval West, the contrast between influential ecclesiastic institutions and worldly powers could only be temporarily alleviated, but never resolved. Late antique and early medieval Christian historiography thus remained critical of the Christian emperors, few of whom qualified as role models; only Theodosius I enjoyed an undisputed reputation, principally because of his penance imposed by St Ambrose; even Constantine and Justinian received some scathing criticism.²⁶ Moreover, what Chinese historiography established was not least the ethos and importance of the heads of state, the court, and the educated bureaucrats: the identity of an elite whose success was measured by its commitment to emperor and state, according to Confucian standards. A similarly weighty moral discourse in the West was only developed in the Church, within which the tension between the ecclesiastic institutions and the *ecclesia* as the community of the faithful remained problematic. In spite of their unremitting engagement in mundane affairs and their attempts to provide moral guidance for the powerful, church leaders embedded the ethos of good governance in a religious set of rules of conduct that sat uneasily with the necessities of political leadership.

As Wang argues, both China after the Han and the post-imperial West shared similar interests in the history of particular successor states; yet, the subsequent development took different directions. In China, the Tang dynasty fed

²⁵ Van Dam, *The Roman Revolution*; see also Veyne, *When our World Became Christian*.

²⁶ Pohl, 'Creating Cultural Resources'.

the compartmentalized *guoshi* experience back into dynastic histories of imperial dimensions. In Western Europe, the major ‘ethnic’ histories of Jordanes, Bede, or Paul the Deacon written in the sixth to eighth centuries remained powerful models.²⁷ Carolingian restoration of the Roman Empire had a noticeable impact on the writing of history, but did not create a coherent imperial historiography.²⁸ From the tenth century onwards, a new wave of histories of the emerging duchies and kingdoms — Normans, Saxons, Danes, Rus’, Bohemians, Hungarians — demonstrates that historiography had firmly settled in a political landscape of mid-sized polities.²⁹ This different development corresponds to the different political context — the deep-rooted imperial system that the Tang created in China vs the more ephemeral Carolingian empire. Most notably, relatively resilient ethnic-political identities formed in the West: Franks/French, Angles/English, Danes, Hungarians, and many more. In China, no lasting identities that could provide an alternative to empire remained of the Northern dynasties.³⁰ The Northern Wei dynasty of the Tuoba branch of the nomadic Xienbi (Xärbi) came closest to leaving a trace in the political topography of Asia: the Turks appropriated their ethnonym for China as a whole, which they called Tabghach, a name even mentioned in a Byzantine chronicle.³¹ Yet this term disappeared soon, while the names of the two great imperial dynasties, Han and Tang, as Wang shows, became emblems of being Chinese, *Hanren* or *Tangren*, to this day.³² That is almost as if modern Europeans would still call themselves Flavians, after the name of the Roman dynasty, a designation long used by barbarians as a honorary name or title, but not as an ethnic/national designation.

Chinese-style state histories also influenced historiography in other East Asian polities. The new Japanese dynasty adopted the format of official state histories in the seventh century, still preserved in the Six National Histories (*Rikkokushi*).³³ The two earliest works of Japanese historiography are the topic

²⁷ Reimitz and Heydemann, eds, *Historiography and Identity*, II.

²⁸ Reimitz, Kramer, and Ward, eds, *Historiography and Identity*, III.

²⁹ Pohl, Borri, and Wieser, eds, *Historiography and Identity*, v.

³⁰ See now Dien and Knapp, eds, *The Cambridge History of China*, II.

³¹ *Kültegin Inscription*, South 11–12, see Stark, ‘Luxurious Necessities’, p. 488; Theophylact Simocatta, *History*, trans. by Whitby and Whitby, LXXVII.11, p. 189; Pohl, *Avars*, p. 39.

³² See also Tackett, *The Origins of the Chinese Nation*, pp. 141–210.

³³ Bentley, ‘The Birth and Flowering of Japanese Historiography’, p. 58. See also the contribution by Edward Wang, in this volume. I am grateful to Bernhard Scheid for advice on this section.

of Bernhard Scheid's chapter in this volume: the *Kojiki* (finished in 712) and the *Nihon shoki* (720). The preface of the *Kojiki*, influenced by Chinese rhetoric, reports the decision by the emperor Tenmu (672–86) to charge court officials with the revision of the old histories:

We hear that the royal annals and the words of former ages possessed by the noble houses deviate from what is true, and that many falsehoods have been added to them. If these faults are not corrected now, the original import will be lost before many years have passed. This is no less than the fabric of the realm and the foundation of royal influence. Therefore, it is our wish that the royal annals be edited and recorded and the ancient words of former ages be sought out and examined, so that we may erase falsehood and establish truth, passing this down to later generations.³⁴

Transmitted Japanese historiography thus starts with a reflection on source criticism, and with a clear distinction between truth and false tradition — of course, from the perspective of an emerging central power.

Time passed between Tenmu's order and its impact in writing some four decades later, not least, as Scheid shows, because the use of Chinese characters for rendering a Japanese text was still at an experimental stage. Yet the *Kojiki* became a foundational text, uniting the history of the gods with that of the early emperors, and omitting any reference to China, from where its compilers had clearly taken their cue. The almost contemporary *Nihon shoki* (720) followed the model of Chinese state histories more closely than the *Kojiki*, acknowledged Chinese influences on Japanese culture (for instance the introduction of Chinese writing), and referred to Chinese sources. Moreover, the *Nihon shoki* also emphasizes Tenmu's initiative, who entrusted twelve imperial princes with the task of compiling this imperial record.³⁵

As Scheid argues, the translation of the Chinese 'state history' model into a different context also produced different results. The method of regular record-keeping at court, and of entrusting a group of high-level courtiers with the work, was similar. Tenmu's intention, however, seems to have been to legitimize the coup by which he had ousted a different branch of the dynasty from power. This entailed emphasizing the legitimacy of the dynasty, but also buttressing the claims to superior status of the noble families who had supported his takeover. Therefore, genealogical constructions of the nobility played a crucial role in both the *Nihon shoki* and the *Kojiki*. They harked back to a mythological age,

³⁴ *Kojiki*, trans. by Heldt, Preface, p. 3.

³⁵ *Nihongi*, trans. by Aston, pt 2, p. 350. Cf. *Kojiki*, trans. by Heldt, Preface, pp. 3–4. Brownlee, *Political Thought in Japanese Historical Writing*.

in which the gods had set the stage for the rise of the empire and its leading families. Large parts of the *Kojiki*, in particular, relate myths about native gods, and the ways in which they had shaped the fates of Japan. It is also remarkable that in the *Nihon shoki* and other works of the canon, *nihon* appears in the title: it seems that Tenmu was the one to introduce the name *nihon*, '[land of] sun's origin' for Japan, as well as the ruler's title, *tennō*, 'heavenly sovereign', which reflected the Chinese emperor's title, 'son of heaven'. Unlike most contemporary Chinese 'state histories', then, the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki* did not tell the story of previous dynasties, but affirmed the legitimacy of the reigning one. The imperial order and the state history model advertised in the preface of the *Kojiki* were intended to enhance the credibility of the official politics of memory in the face of competing historiographic efforts, as Scheid shows.

The *Nihon shoki* proved more successful in establishing court control over a plurality of narratives about the past. It corresponded more closely to the Chinese model, and it was more open, allowing for a plurality of genealogical narratives, as Scheid suggests. Unlike the *Kojiki*, it incorporated variant versions of stories, in a way perhaps reminiscent of al-Ṭabarī (see below), or indeed of the New Testament. This 'eclectic inclusivism' of the 'imperial mytho-genealogy', as Scheid calls it, facilitated the rise of a lasting master narrative. Still, the model of state history was abandoned in Japan in the tenth century, and the court office responsible for it was closed in 969. State history was replaced by historical tales that appealed more to the tastes of the courtiers.³⁶ However, the early official histories were preserved and later supplemented by apocryphal works elaborated on their basis. This corpus of texts about the origins of Japan eventually turned into a national legacy.

A Chinese Model 2: Empires and Barbarians

Randolph B. Ford compares the representation of 'barbarians' in a late Roman work, the mid-sixth-century *Wars* by Procopius, and an early seventh-century Chinese text, the *Jinshu* by Fang Xuanling.³⁷ These histories have much in common — they deal with barbarian powers on imperial territories from the perspective of reunified empires (of Justinian and the Tang, respectively), and employ conservative style and rhetoric, moral judgements on political history, and a well-established ethnographic discourse. However, as Ford argues,

³⁶ Bentley, 'The Birth and Flowering of Japanese Historiography', p. 70.

³⁷ See also Ford, *Rome, China, and the Barbarians*.

these ancient stereotypes are used in different ways. 'Barbarian' rulers in former Western Roman lands are hardly styled as such, even when they appear as enemies in the *Wars*. Some, such as the Ostrogothic king Theoderic, even receive praise for ruling diligently in Roman ways. The rulers from the 'barbarian' dynasties on Chinese territory, on the other hand, are described with the full array of barbarian stereotypes, especially in those parts of the text that can be identified as Tang-period additions. They are criticized and derided even when they attempt to follow Chinese ways of government. Of course, when Procopius wrote, 'barbarian' kings still ruled over most of the former Western Empire, while the foreign dynasties had passed when the *Jinshu* was composed. Still, Ford's contention that these texts may have had an impact on later developments is plausible: the imperial restoration under Justinian failed not least because not even conspicuous representatives of the Roman system (such as Procopius) could (or wanted to) challenge the basic legitimacy of barbarian rule over former Roman provinces. These 'kingdoms of the empire' had, as I would add, been formally recognized by treaties with the empire early on. Early Tang historiography, on the other hand, integrated all the foreign rulers since the Han period in a Chinese-style history of successive dynasties with Chinese names — but it also questioned their basic legitimacy. This is in a sense paradoxical, because the Sui and Tang dynasties that achieved Chinese reunification had semi-barbarian origins themselves. Ford argues that this only made the early Tang court more inclined to set itself off as properly Chinese from the preceding 'Northern Dynasties' in the period of divisions. Thus, Tang historiography laid the basis for the cyclical model of Chinese history in which the unified empire was the norm, and the periods of disunity and foreign rule the aberration. In the long run, the Chinese empire was always re-unified after periods of division. In the West, by contrast, the political plurality of Christian peoples and polities became the default setting. The periods of crisis were mostly those in which an empire strove for hegemony in this political landscape: the 'Roman emperor' of the Germans in the Investiture Controversy in the eleventh/twelfth centuries, the Habsburg Empire in the sixteenth/seventeenth centuries, Napoleon, or Nazi Germany.

The example of Chinese and Roman relations with barbarians may be seen as an instance of the impact historiography could have by creating or amplifying models and attitudes that motivate political action. In fact, the differences between the textual representations only amount to nuances. Basically, both cultural spheres operated on the basis of an us-vs-them dichotomy between Hellenes (or Romans) and barbarians, or Chinese (*hua*) and barbarians (*yi*). The Chinese terminology was more differentiated, and mostly distinguished

between different types of barbarians from the four cardinal directions.³⁸ In both worlds, the basic dichotomy could be handled flexibly, in texts as in practice. The difference between the historiographic approaches of Procopius and of the *Jinshu*, and in general between late Rome and China, was not determined by any fundamental divergence in the actual treatment of barbarians. Both empires were forced to negotiate and often also to collaborate with barbarians.

The early Han practised the *heqin* (appeasement) policy towards the Xiongnu, which mainly involved regular 'presents' and also led to several marriage alliances. This policy was resumed in various constellations after the fall of the Han Empire. The late Roman Empire also had to come to terms with barbarian powers, often paid tribute masked as 'the usual presents' (*consuetata dona*) or similar, and recognized their possessions on Roman soil by treaty. Cases in which imperial princesses were given to barbarian kings were, however, rare in the West; the marriages of the Gothic king Athaulf and the Vandal king Huneric with princesses from the Theodosian dynasty were exceptions that happened under duress.³⁹ It was simply unacceptable to send Princess Honoria, who had reputedly taken the initiative for such a union, as a bride to King Attila the Hun. While the Chinese and the nomads shared some religious features, such as a cult of heaven,⁴⁰ Christian imperial dynasties could hardly enter into marriage alliances with pagan rulers from the steppe (although Byzantine emperors sometimes broke that principle under pressure).⁴¹

In the West, there was a considerable difference between barbarians seeking integration into late Roman society (such as Goths, Vandals, or Franks), and steppe peoples (Huns and Avars), who remained outside. Unlike in China, steppe peoples never appropriated Roman infrastructure and state apparatus, just the land, if at all. A characteristic example is the Avar siege of Constantinople in alliance with the Persians in 626: the Avar offer for a surrender of the city was that the population should leave without any possessions and be resettled by the Persians, while the Avars would plunder the empty city.⁴² Thomas Barfield has made much of a similar distinction in Chinese relations between north-

³⁸ Di Cosmo, *Ancient China*; Pan, *Son of Heaven and Heavenly Qaghan*; Drompp, *Tang China and the Collapse of the Uighur Empire*.

³⁹ Wolfram, *Die Goten*, pp. 169–70; Steinacher, *Die Vandalen*, pp. 236–37.

⁴⁰ Skaff, *Sui-Tang China*.

⁴¹ For the marriage project of a daughter of Heraclius with a the Turkish khagan, see Kaegi, *Heraclius*, pp. 143 and 190; Justinian II and a son of Leo III got married to Chazar princesses: Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, pp. 76 and 84.

⁴² Pohl, *The Avars*, p. 298.

eastern barbarians, who could be integrated more smoothly, and the nomads in the north-west. However, subsequent discussions have revealed the inconsistencies in this model.⁴³ Further similarities between Roman and Chinese barbarian policies could be mentioned, such as the employment of barbarian officers and units, who could have brilliant careers (and receive a positive echo in historiography, if they remained loyal). However, in the West there was a glass ceiling which excluded them from the imperial office. Thus, the new polities in the Roman West were ruled by kings, who theoretically remained subordinate to the emperors in Constantinople for a considerable time (although in Greek the title *basileus* was used both for the emperor and for kings).

The nuanced historiographic treatment of barbarians gives us some clues about the attitudes behind imperial (and post-imperial) politics. At first glance, it may seem that 'identity' and 'otherness' are employed in this field in a particularly stereotypical manner: in Procopius, we find some of the same barbarian topoi already employed by Herodotus over a thousand years earlier. Yet at a closer look, as Randolph B. Ford's contribution demonstrates, Procopius uses them in a much subtler way than often acknowledged. We know from his *Secret History* that this former advisor to General Belisarius during his first Italian campaign was very critical of Justinian and his politics of reconquest in the West, and we can detect these subdued criticisms in the *Wars* as well. The relatively positive depictions of barbarian rulers in the former Western Empire can also be understood in this light. Justinian's reign, later regarded as a kind of Indian summer of the Roman Empire, did not appeal to contemporary authors as much as it did to later historians. A unified empire did not seem to be worth either the heavy taxation of its wealthy subjects or the huge expenses for armies overwhelmingly composed of barbarians, who behaved almost as badly as the empire's enemies — and historians did not hesitate to say so, openly or indirectly. Finally, there was no 'office of historiography' at the court in Constantinople which controlled the transmission of the 'truth about the past' and the ideology of the present. It obviously makes a difference whether history is written by a government office, or by (possibly disappointed) government officials.

Sasanian and Islamic Iran

Many polities invested much less in the writing of extensive historical accounts than China, or the classical and post-classical Euro-Mediterranean world.

⁴³ Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*; Di Cosmo, 'China-Steppe Relations'.

There has been much debate about the lack of pre-Islamic historiography in India. Romila Thapar has done much to contest this simplistic judgement.⁴⁴ And indeed, there were forms of historical writing in medieval India.⁴⁵ A chief medium of historical information were inscriptions of rulers or other elite members — direct representations of authority, often containing accounts of military conquests or pious foundations.⁴⁶ These self-laudatory epigraphic monuments easily lend themselves to wide-ranging comparison — pharaonic inscriptions, the *monumentum Ancyranum* transmitting the accounts of the victories of Augustus, the Aksumite Inscription of Adulis, the Sasanian monuments at Naqsh e-Rostam, the ancient Turkish ones in the Orkhon Valley, or the Bulgarian ones at Madara. They largely correspond to what Achim Gehrke has termed ‘intentional history’ in the first volume of this series, identifying inscriptions as a particular thread in Ancient Greek cultural memory, distinctive from long-form historiography.⁴⁷ These forms of self-representation of a historical actor, or of his remembrance in memorial inscriptions, cannot be addressed in the present volume.

Medieval India also knew much longer, discursive forms of remembering the past. Historical tales — heroic epics and poetry, myths and stories about the deeds of gods, rulers, or holy men — were a popular genre. The *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, and (within it) the *Bhagavad Gita* told epic histories infused with divine agency and moral teachings, not unlike the *Ilias* or the Hebrew Bible (which, however, provided much more detail in its historical narrative). The *Puranas* combine cosmology, genealogies of the gods, and legends of kings.⁴⁸ Transmission, use, and comments on the Sanskrit Hindu epics are only attested on a considerable scale from the time of the Gupta Empire (fourth to fifth centuries CE) onwards, although some of them must be much older. The epics played a key role for Hindu teachings, for some form of overarching identity of the subcontinent,⁴⁹ and for the elite status of the Brahmins, and rooted the many dynasties of medieval India in a common mythical past. Yet long-form histories do not seem to have played an important role in this culture of memory.

⁴⁴ Thapar, *The Past before Us*; Thapar, ‘Historical Traditions in Early India.’

⁴⁵ Ali, ‘Indian Historical Writing.’

⁴⁶ Thapar, ‘Inscriptions as Historical Writing.’

⁴⁷ Gehrke, ‘Intentional History’; Luraghi, ‘Memory and Community.’

⁴⁸ Thapar, ‘Historical Traditions in Early India.’

⁴⁹ A common notion of South Asia as *Bhāratavarṣa* (realm of *Bhārata*), or similar, seems to appear in the period, for instance in the *Vishnu Purana* (II.1.31–32); see Wilson, *The Vishnu Purana*, p. xii; Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism*, p. 111.

That seems to have been similar in late antique Persia, the topic of Sarah Savant's chapter in this volume. Sasanian rulers, like Indian princes, invested in monumental relief inscriptions, but do not seem to have promoted large-scale history writing. Legends about figures from the Avesta also existed and were probably written down towards the end of the Sasanian period in the *Kwadāy-nāmag*, and later used in Islamic historiography.⁵⁰ The relative profusion of major histories in Greek and Latin, from Ammianus Marcellinus to Theophylactus Simocata, has often been contrasted to the absence of extant contemporary Iranian chronicles.⁵¹ The *Oxford History of Historical Writing* contains chapters about Coptic, Ethiopic, Syriac, and Armenian historical writing in the Middle Ages, while the 'Iranian historical tradition' is only briefly mentioned as a source for Islamic historiography.⁵² Are Sasanian histories lacking because they never existed, or because they were not preserved under Islamic rule? Sarah Savant explores the second option. Al-Ṭabarī, who compiled a massive history of the world in 1.39 million words, had substantial information about Sasanian Iran, but he did not cite any authors or texts, in contrast to his practice when dealing with Arabic sources. Where did his material come from — were these fully fledged works of historiography?⁵³ Obviously, al-Ṭabarī did not regard his Iranian sources as authoritative in the same ways as his Arabic ones.⁵⁴ If histories from the Sasanian period existed up to the ninth century, they may not have been considered worth transmitting further. The fall of the Sasanian Empire may have reduced the interest in its history: an 'art of forgetting', as Savant puts it — a case quite contrary to the Chinese preservation of historical records even across political upheavals.

However, we should be careful not to juxtapose total recall in Chinese historiography with an eradication of pre-Islamic memories in Iran. The very sophistication in the selection process of Chinese historical records and the near-canonization of its final products, dynastic histories, also implied eras-

⁵⁰ Yarshater, 'Iranian National History'.

⁵¹ An overview in Widengren, 'Sources of Parthian and Sasanian History', with a long list of Latin, Greek, Syriac, and Armenian works of history (pp. 1273–78), and only a few texts in Middle Persian; among them, a legendary account of the reigns of the first Sasanian ruler Ardashīr I and his son Shāpūr I (p. 1278).

⁵² Marsham, 'Universal Histories', p. 436.

⁵³ See also Savant, *The New Muslims*.

⁵⁴ Much of the material he used was mythological; 'he gives the impression of doing that with some reluctance and an apparent unwillingness to take those alien beliefs too seriously': Rosenthal, 'Translator's Foreword', p. 160. Yet he had good relations with Iranians in Baghdad and elsewhere, who surely provided him with information.

ing dissident memories and suppressing original documents. Early Islamic Iran was, then, not so different: as Savant argues, the *ars oblivionalis* exercised in the transmission of cultural memory did not obliterate, but instead transformed pre-Islamic cultural memories. A number of techniques were used to that end: ‘writing over’, that is, substituting narratives, for instance by replacing the history of Muslim conquest with one of willing surrender; ‘crowding out’, that is, reducing Iranian history to a local feature of much richer accounts of Arabs and Muslims; and abstraction, leading to the loss of historical detail. This did not lead to a suppression of the Sasanian past, on the contrary. The *Shāhnāma*, a legendary epic account of the pre-Islamic period composed in the eleventh century, became a foundational text, not least for the eventual development of Iranian political identity as promoted by the Mongol Ilkhans in the thirteenth and fourteenth and the Safavid dynasty of Azeri Turkish origin in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. As early as the tenth century, local history writing in Iranian lands began to develop. The *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, for example, strove to create local pride within the *umma* at large.⁵⁵ Persian also became a language of Islamic history in concise form; while Arabic history writing usually retained a rather tight chronological structure: ‘Persian-writing historians displayed less interest in precise chronologies of events’, which ‘opened the way for more continuous and more unified narratives.’⁵⁶ The merging of Muslim and Iranian forms of identification, and of their rationale, was ultimately more successful than in many other parts of the former Abbasid Caliphate. Still, the break at the end of the Sasanian regime may have interrupted the transmission of much of the historical record that might have existed at the time.

As Michael Cook shows, the blending of Sasanian memories into Islamic historiography was by no means a linear development. The eventual synthesis between Iranian and Islamic identities followed a period of sometimes sharp contrast. Cook demonstrates this tension using al-Ṭabarī’s account of the fall of the Afshīn, the ruler of a peripheral Iranian subject kingdom in the ninth century.⁵⁷ The Afshīn had superficially converted to Islam, but his position and mindset remained rooted in what he called the ‘refined traditions of the Iranians’. When his loyalty to the caliph seemed at stake, he was put on trial. Al-Ṭabarī’s description of this trial is constructed in a series of contrasts between pagan Iranian and true Islamic rulership. The Afshīn was addressed

⁵⁵ Hanaoka, *Authority and Identity in Medieval Historiography*.

⁵⁶ Hirschler, ‘Islam’, p. 268.

⁵⁷ al-Ṭabarī, *History*, trans. by Bosworth, xxxiii, 185–93. For the relevant literature, see the contribution by Michael Cook, in this volume.

by his subjects as ‘god of gods’, possessed books about the pagan past, and had expressed his sympathy for ‘Iranianness’ (*al-a‘jamiyya*). In a political crisis, his traditional Iranian identity and his allegiance to the caliphate came into conflict. In the eleventh century, when the pagan flavour of Iranian memories had largely become a thing of the past, these tensions could more easily be resolved, as Cook demonstrates with the story of the sixth-century rebellion of Mazdak in Nizām al-Mulk’s *Book of Government*, written as a ‘mirror of princes’ for a Seljuk ruler.⁵⁸ Mazdak had astrological knowledge that a new prophet would come, and erroneously believed that he himself was to be this prophet. His presumptuous activities were quelled by a Zoroastrian priest who realized that the new prophet would supersede all previous creeds, and by Prince Nūshīrwān, the future King Khusraw I Anūshīrwān (531–79). In eleventh-century historical texts, Khusraw became the Sasanian model ruler. And it had become possible to claim that the Prophet Muḥammad had been predicted by a Zoroastrian priest. The contrast between the pagan past and the Islamic present had thus been smoothed over.

Cook concludes with a cautionary note that the progressive integration of the pre-Islamic past in Iran was a contested process. Elements of synthesis emerged early on, not least because already the Abbasids relied heavily on Iranian administrators. At the same time, however, ninth-century authors around the Abbasid court engaged in a heated debate about the relative merits of Arabs and Persians.⁵⁹ Anti-Iranian voices still made themselves heard in the eleventh century; but under Turkish rulers whose administrators used a Persian language written in Arabic characters, the political and cultural dominance of the Arabs had faded. In a period of political fragmentation, Iranian identity gained ground, though it could by no means be taken for granted.

It is worth noting that in Arabic, Iranians were not called Iranians or Persians, but ‘*ajam*’, generally denoting those of non-Arab lineage who speak incomprehensibly.⁶⁰ Although this term was somehow less derogatory than the Greek/Latin ‘barbarians’, it denied them any distinctive and positive identifi-

⁵⁸ Nizām al-Mulk, *Book of Government*, trans. by Darke, ILIV.1, p. 190.

⁵⁹ Mottahedeh, ‘The Shu‘ubiyah Controversy.’ A similar polemic took place between Northern and Southern Arabians (Yamanis), see Webb, ‘From the Sublime to the Ridiculous.’

⁶⁰ Webb, ‘From the Sublime to the Ridiculous’, refers to the classification of non-Arabs by the ninth-century polemicist Di‘bil, who ‘uses a triad of words connoting non-Arabness: ‘*ajam* (non-Arab lineage), *nabaṭ* (Iraqi indigenous agriculturalists) and ‘*ilj* (originally “rough wild donkey”, thence “boorish oaf”, and thence “non-Arab non-Believer”); the Iranians thus belonged to the least objectionable group of non-Arabs.

cation.⁶¹ *Ajam* was also used in New Persian, so that Nizām al-Mulk identifies Mazdak as *‘ajamī*, attempting to destroy the royal house of the *‘ajam*, *khāna-i mulūk-i ‘ajam*.⁶² However, Nizām’s *Book of Government* also uses the name Iran for the land, *Irān-zamīn*. Already under the early caliphate, there was a tendency to designate conquered countries with rather generic names. Yemen (*al-Yaman*) was ‘the South’, al-Shām (Syria/Palestine) ‘the North’, Maghreb (*al-Maghrib*) ‘the West’, as seen from the core areas of the Arab Peninsula; ‘the East’ (*al-Mashriq*) was only rarely used for Persia. The cardinal directions mattered for Muslims because they determined the direction of prayer (*qibla*).⁶³ This system of denominations, which largely superseded pre-Islamic terminology, is telling for the emerging imperial identity of the caliphate and for the distinct approach of early Islamic historiography.

Islamic Historiography

Unfortunately, not all contributions about Islamic/Arabic historiography in the eighth to eleventh centuries planned for this volume could be realized. Therefore, as a non-specialist, I can only briefly enumerate a few general points that seem crucial.⁶⁴ Pre-Islamic sources in Arabic mainly include inscriptions (preserved in considerable numbers between the Yemen and the desert fringes of Syria) and poetry (written down in Islamic times).⁶⁵ The Prophet provided a holy book, which contained several references to (not least, biblical) history, but — unlike the Bible — did not tell a (or better, ‘the’) history. After his death, a growing normative discourse, *hadīth*, supplemented the Qur’ān to deal with many aspects of the Prophet’s life and sayings, mostly in legendary form. The writing of history proper in Arabic set in gradually after the conquests, and unfolded into many forms: world chronicles, local histories, biographies, and biographical and genealogical collections.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Kommer, Liccardo, and Nowak, ‘Comparative Approaches to Ethnonyms’.

⁶² Nizām al-Mulk, *Book of Government*, trans. by Darke, ILIV.12, pp. 265–66; see the contribution by Michael Cook, in this volume.

⁶³ Bashear, ‘Yemen in Early Islam’; Antrim, *Routes and Realms*, pp. 96–101; Cf. Pohl, ‘The Emergence of New Polities’. I am grateful to Daniel Mahoney for his suggestions.

⁶⁴ For this, I rely mainly on Humphries, *Islamic History*; Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*; Robinson, ‘Islamic Historical Writing’.

⁶⁵ Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*; Hoyland, *In God’s Path*.

⁶⁶ Rosenthal, *History of Islamic Historiography*; Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*;

The earliest extant texts of Islamic historiography date from the Abbasid period, starting after the mid-eighth century. A differentiated terminology for 'history' and the 'historian' also emerges at that time: *akhbār* (traditions, sg. *khbar*)/*akhbārī* (purveyor of reports about past events), *ta'rikh* (chronology, history)/*mu'arrikh* (chronicler), *ahādīth* (narrative account).⁶⁷ In the third century after the Hijra, the ninth century CE, large syntheses appear, revealing their authors' access to surprisingly rich material. The oldest surviving long-form work of historiography that has come down to us is the *Chronicle* (*Ta'rikh*) of Khalīfa b. Khayyāt, spanning the period from the Hijra (622 CE) to the year AH 232 (847 CE) in annalistic form, and covering the entire Islamic world from the Atlantic to India.⁶⁸ The most spectacular work is the world chronicle by al-Ṭabarī (839–923 CE), the *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa'l muluk* ('History of Prophets and Kings'). It covers the entire period from the Creation up to the year 914/15 CE, a massive work, filling forty volumes in the English translation.⁶⁹ Al-Ṭabarī also included Jewish history, incorporating substantial accounts derived from the Hebrew Bible, as well as some Persian traditions and history, from unknown sources. A similarly broad compilation was written later in the tenth century by Abu Ali Miskawayh, the *Tajārib al-umam*, 'Experiences of the Nations'.⁷⁰ Both of these authors were witnesses of the decline of the caliphate.

In spite of the impact of the Abbasid court in and around Baghdad on cultural life and literary production in the late eighth and ninth centuries, no real official historiography, let alone institutional control on the writing of history was established. Al-Ṭabarī had been drawn to Baghdad from the distant Caspian province of Tabaristan, and profited from the opportunities arising around the Abbasid court. The authority that his writing soon acquired, however, did not stem from any official commission or approbation, but from al-Ṭabarī's erudition and the overwhelming richness of the material he had used (or claimed to have used). To support the credibility of his account, he used the method of *isnād* (support, chain of authorities), already well established by his time. The ascription of specific accounts to named informants could form entire chains of authoritative transmission. Al-Ṭabarī clearly explained his method in his introduction:

Cheddadi, *Les Arabes*, who argues for the appropriation of Greek, Persian, and Syriac models in early Islamic historiography; cf. Di Branco, 'A Rose in the Desert?'

⁶⁷ Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, p. 6; Cheddadi, *Les Arabes*, p. 41.

⁶⁸ Andersson and Marsham, 'The First Islamic Chronicle.'

⁶⁹ al-Ṭabarī, *History*, ed. by Yarshater, 40 vols; Robinson, 'Islamic Historical Writing', pp. 238–42.

⁷⁰ Abu Ali Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, ed. and trans. by Amedroz and Margoliouth.

The reader should know that with respect to all I have mentioned [...], I rely upon traditions (*akhbār*) and reports (*āthār*) which [...] I attribute to their transmitters. I rely only exceptionally upon what is learned through rational arguments and produced by internal thought processes [...] For no knowledge of the history of men of the past and of recent men and events is attainable by those who were not able to observe them and did not live in their time, except through information and transmission provided by informants and transmitters.⁷¹

In the debates between traditionalists and rationalists that took place in Abbasid Baghdad, this remark clearly links al-Ṭabarī's work with conservative Sunni orthodoxy. The method of *isnād* was first and foremost used in collections of the sayings of the Prophet (*ḥadīth*) and in legal manuals. Of course, historiography usually did not face issues about the correctness of religious/legal norms, but only about the veracity of reports about events in the distant past, with more negligible societal consequences. It did not necessarily require decisions, and allowed integrating alternatives. On the other hand, by using methods from theology and law stakes were raised in providing correct narratives of the past, and could provoke a remarkable degree of self-reflexion.

For modern historical critique, the *isnād* strategy of truth raises two problems. First, 'the question is whether *isnāds* (at least those produced by reputable scholars) represent genuine lines of transmission, or are instead forgeries intended to legitimize statements first circulated in a later period'.⁷² And second, al-Ṭabarī and many other compilers often quoted several accounts of the same event, regardless of whether they contradicted each other, without expressing a judgement of their own. 'The historian's task was decisively not to interpret or evaluate the past as such; rather, he was simply to determine which reports about it were acceptable and compile these reports in a convenient order'.⁷³ We rarely hear al-Ṭabarī speaking in his own voice.⁷⁴ For modern historians, this may in fact be the preferable method because it leaves the interpretation to them, in contrast to the Chinese office of historians that decided once and for all which reports to include in the state histories.

Daniel Mahoney, in his chapter, addresses a region fairly distant from the centres of the caliphate, but peripheral only in some respects: South Arabia. Before the advent of Islam, the Himyarites had established one of the early

⁷¹ al-Ṭabarī, *History*, trans. by Rosenthal, I, Introduction, 7, p. 170. See also Humphreys, *Islamic History*, pp. 73–74.

⁷² Humphreys, *Islamic History*, p. 81.

⁷³ Humphreys, *Islamic History*, p. 74.

⁷⁴ Robinson, 'Islamic Historical Writing', pp. 247–48.

Arabic power centres in Yemen, with a rich epigraphic record. In the heyday of the Abbasid Caliphate, Yemenis formed an influential political network relying on claims to strong tribal traditions. Their rivalry with North Arabians gave rise to a rich polemical literature.⁷⁵ Resentments against North Arabians who had settled in Yemen also formed the backdrop to a key work of South Arabian historiography in the tenth century, the *al-Iklīl* by al-Hamdānī. Its ten books (only partly preserved) offer rather varied perspectives on Yemeni history: three volumes contain South Arabian tribal genealogies, three deal with the history of Himyar, and one presents memorable monuments and burial inscriptions, an indication that historiography should be seen in a wider context of cultural memory in which display script and material remains played an important role. The rest of *al-Iklīl* offers poems and proverbs, and engages in arguing for the merits of South Arabians and refuting false reports about them. It is a heterogeneous collection and clearly follows a political agenda, as Mahoney argues: constructing South Arabian identity, and countering a growing North Arabian influence in the region.

Similar to historiographic trends in Persia, the *al-Iklīl* has been seen as representing the emergence of a 'local' (or rather, regional) focus in writing about the past.⁷⁶ It directs attention to the pre-Islamic period, in which the Himyarite kingdom was the foremost Arab polity. This strong pre-Islamic basis for a South Arabian identity in the *al-Iklīl* is not anti-Islamic; it also bolsters the pre-eminence of Yemenis with reference to the prophets of God who had delivered the divine message to South Arabians before the advent of Muḥammad, and turned some of them into believers. The extended genealogical tables also serve as arguments for the virtues of Yemeni tribes. Here, al-Hamdānī also engages in polemics against Hisham ibn al-Kalbi and his father, the authors of classical Arabic genealogical collections. In a world where the cohesion and political standing of the tribes of Arabia had been undermined by their very success, but where tribal affiliation could still ease access to privilege, genealogies were a chief instrument for providing a sense of place in a changing society. Engaging in genealogical argument was bound to provoke controversy, and the fate of both al-Hamdānī and his work demonstrate that they were not always favourably received.

⁷⁵ Webb, 'From the Sublime to the Ridiculous'.

⁷⁶ Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, pp. 158–59.

Syriac Historiography

Syrian speakers of Syriac called themselves *Suryaye* or *Bnay Surya*, the Syrian people, who spoke *leshana Suryaya*, the Syriac language.⁷⁷ However, this solidly established terminology was far from representing a clearly circumscribed identity. Syriac was a branch of the Aramaic language first spoken and written in Edessa, and Christian Syrians continued to occasionally call themselves Arameans under Islamic rule. It was used for Christian liturgy and religious writing from early on, and thus spread as far as China, as a Syriac inscription in Xi'an shows.⁷⁸ Most educated Syrians were bilingual and also used Greek, or later Arabic. They cultivated a tradition of translations of Greek texts into Syriac, and subsequently into Arabic. This provided the main conduit of cultural flows from the classical Greek tradition to the Muslim world. After the Muslim conquest of the Levant in the seventh century CE, the Arab army in Syria, the *ahl al-shām*, formed the core of an alternative, Arab Syrian identity that, however, only became majoritarian in the region after many centuries.

For modern scholarship in English, this raises the problem of whether to speak of 'Syrian' or 'Syriac' historiography. Apart from some ambiguity in the use of 'Syrian' or (predominantly) 'Syriac' for the language, 'Syriac historiography' was not only written in Syriac, but also in Greek and later in Arabic, while some historiography in Syriac was not written in Syria, but in Egypt, in Iran, or even further east. At the same time, a parallel tradition of Arabic/Islamic historiography evolved in Syria. 'Syriac historiography', in this volume, means Christian historiography written by members of Christian denominations rooted in Syria. Christianity provided a unifying frame; yet it was split into four different confessions — the Nestorians/East Syrians, the Miaphysites (condemned at Chalcedon 451), the Melkites/Chalcedonians, who followed Byzantine orthodoxy, and the Maronites.

A single, homogeneous 'Syrianness' thus never really existed, although many authors claimed to represent it; Syrian/Syriac history both played a significant role in driving, and was at the same time driven by, the different confessions' competitive perceptions of the past. Some of the groups claimed to represent 'the' Syrians, others eventually ethnicized their confessional identity and adopted the ancient ethnonym 'Assyrians'.⁷⁹ As Jack Tannous has put it,

⁷⁷ See the contribution by Scott Fitzgerald Johnson, in this volume, and Andrade, 'Syriac and Syrians'.

⁷⁸ Debić and Taylor, 'Syriac and Syro-Arabic Historical Writing'; Wood, 'Historiography'.

⁷⁹ Haar Romeny, ed., *Religious Origins of Nations?*; Haar Romeny, 'Ethnicity'.

the Christian Middle East was a fractured and fracturing, confessionally diverse landscape where educational institutions proliferated and, among the Miaphysites, sophisticated translations and retranslations were produced as church leaders sought to impose order to the disorderly world of the 'simple believers'.⁸⁰

Michael 'the Great' or 'the Syrian', who created a grand historical synthesis from a Miaphysite point of view in the twelfth century, tended to replace 'Syrians' of his sources with 'believers'. That echoed the self-assertive term 'orthodox' used earlier in the Byzantine *oikumene*, but was also equivalent to the *mu'minīn*, the Muslim 'faithful' referred to in the title of the caliph. Syrian Christian identities thus shifted somehow uneasily but stubbornly between religious/confessional, territorial, linguistic, and ethnic allegiances.

As Scott Fitzgerald Johnson demonstrates in this volume, the development of Syrian (and in particular, Syrian Christian) historiography and identity took a very different direction from Iranian historical writing after the Islamic conquest. It is not generally known that the number of historical texts transmitted in Syriac from the second half of the first millennium is unparalleled almost anywhere else in the period. By Johnson's count, there are twenty-five surviving major Syriac chronicles between the sixth and the twelfth centuries, produced by Christian communities of limited size, although scattered between northern Mesopotamia and the Egyptian desert, and beyond, and there are traces of more. Of those that survived, many have actually been preserved in manuscripts written not long after their composition, in contrast to the Byzantine, Islamic, or Chinese historiography of the period. Many Syriac manuscripts were kept in a single Syrian desert monastery in Egypt, where an abbot had collected them in the tenth century. Other Christian centres also kept their libraries: in the twelfth century, Michael the Syrian was still able to insert the sixth-century *Church History* by John of Ephesus into his *Chronicle*.⁸¹ Syriac historical manuscripts offer an almost unique opportunity to trace the development of historiographic practice and intertextual relations between the sixth and twelfth centuries on the ground.

In many respects, Syrian historiography represents a contrast model to the Chinese one: 'a rare example of non-étatist, non-imperial, history writing'.⁸² It

⁸⁰ Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East*, p. 198.

⁸¹ John of Ephesus, *The Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History*, trans. by Payne-Smith; Michael the Syrian, *Chronique*, trans. by Chabot; Honigmann, 'L'histoire ecclésiastique'; Weltecke, *Die Beschreibung der Zeiten*.

⁸² Debié and Taylor, 'Syriac and Syro-Arabic Historical Writing', p. 156; Johnson, in this volume.

was a history produced in ecclesiastic and monastic settings. Syrian Miaphysite dissenters had already distanced themselves from the Byzantine imperial regime before the Persian and Islamic conquests, and certainly did not write state history after that. It is obvious that in order to preserve their separate identities as subservient populations under the caliphate, both Miaphysite and Chalcedonian Christian communities relied on their pride in the past and on well-ordered historical records about their fate as a community and the achievements of their holy men.⁸³ Christians could build on a long history of dissent and the experience of oppression and martyrdom under the pagan empire. As Johnson shows, Syrian Christian communities thus integrated local historical interest and church history into the grand edifice of universal history, largely following the model of Eusebius.⁸⁴ While West Syrians usually chose an annalistic structure and included political events, East Syrians structured their church or monastic histories as chain biographies.⁸⁵ The cultural memory of the Syrian churches prominently included Old Testament history, and more than other Christian communities they could feel entitled to place themselves in the direct succession of the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets. The Syrian model thus also inspired Armenian Christians, who faced a similar challenge of adapting and defending their tradition under first Byzantine and then Muslim rule.⁸⁶

Given the key importance of historical writing in the Syrian tradition, it has been noted that there was no single word for ‘historian’.⁸⁷ Yet unlike the distinctive role of ‘the historian’ at the Chinese court, Syrian historians were not simply historians, but often leaders of their respective communities, for whom the study of the past was an integral part of their work for the well-being and cohesion of their flock. Not even classical and Byzantine writers of history were regarded as purely ‘historians.’ In contrast to the historiography of and about Iran in the early Islamic period, the faithful rendering of a received tradition mattered in Syria. The accepted status of Christian communities as ‘people of the book’ — in contrast to the rather disreputable Zoroastrian *majūs*, magians — surely contributed to preserving the traditional focus in their histories. This might also be due to the different roles Syrians and Persians had under

⁸³ See Haar Romeny, ‘Ethnicity’.

⁸⁴ See also Wood, ‘Historiography’, p. 410. In general, see Allen, ‘Universal History, 300–1000’.

⁸⁵ Cf. Mahoney, Ó Riain, and Vocino, eds, *Medieval Biographical Collections*.

⁸⁶ Greenwood, ‘Negotiating the Roman Past’; Brown, *Rise of Western Christendom*, p. 9; Preiser-Kapeller, ‘Early Medieval Armenia’.

⁸⁷ See Johnson, in this volume.

Abbasid rule. Well-trained Persians made their careers as administrators by becoming Muslims and by skilfully adapting to the cultural environment of the court. Highly educated Syrians were mainly useful to the Abbasid Caliphate as translators and cultural brokers who transmitted the ancient knowledge of the Roman world; they could continue to adhere to their own traditions.

Byzantium

Early Byzantine historiography — written in Greek, apart from some very early works in Latin — continued both the Hellenic tradition of history writing and the imperial Roman outlook. It was very much centred on ‘the’ city, Constantinople (unlike contemporary Latin historiography, whose authors variously wrote from Italian, Spanish, Gallic, or African perspectives). The imperial city became even more dominant in Byzantine history writing after the loss of Syria and Egypt in the seventh century, which had had their own historical traditions. Many fourth- to seventh-century authors were government officials, jurists, or military men, and relied on official sources. As in the Latin West, the high clergy increasingly engaged in the writing of (mostly, but not exclusively) church histories. Still, in the mid-sixth century, Procopius’s massive *Wars* established a strand of ‘classicizing’ lay historiography mainly covering military issues in a careful blend of Thucydidean narrative craft and Roman imperial attitudes. It was continued during the later sixth and early seventh centuries by Agathias, Menander, and Theophylact Simocat(t)a.⁸⁸

It may be taken as indicative that this form of history writing seems to have stopped after Theophylact, who wrote in the 640s but only treated events up to 602, when the usurpation of Phokas and the ensuing Persian attacks set off a chain of events which shattered the empire. The almost 150 years of historiographic silence after Theophylact have been much discussed as an anomaly in Byzantine history. Undoubtedly, this break corresponds with the deep crisis of Byzantium after the Islamic (and Slavic) conquests. The ‘Empire that did not die’, as John Haldon has called seventh-century Byzantium, survived against heavy odds, and maintaining its imperial ‘Roman’ identity was one element in its tenacity; but it did not seem to invest much effort in writing its ‘Roman’ history in the period.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Kaldellis, ‘Byzantine Historical Writing’; Magdalino, ‘Byzantine Historical Writing’; Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians*.

⁸⁹ Haldon, *The Empire that Would Not Die*; Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*.

The two chapters about Byzantine historiography in this volume set in after the ‘historiographic revival’ around 800 CE. Emmanuel C. Bourbouhakis analyses two massive compilations from the ninth and tenth centuries, respectively, that gathered together excerpts from a large number of works of older Greek historiography. In the second half of the ninth century, Photios, who had spent much of his career as a top administrator before becoming patriarch of Constantinople, compiled the *Bibliothēkē*, a selection of excerpts from the works of thirty-three ancient Greek historians, as well as literary texts. As Bourbouhakis argues, this was not a purely literary pursuit (although Photios also commented on the style of the texts he had chosen), but mainly served ‘as a source of guidance in matters of governance’, as Photios underlined in a letter to a court official: ‘The errors of one’s forerunners provide a sufficient counter-example by way of a corrective to future generations in similar circumstances.’⁹⁰ The selection was also intended to help the Byzantine elites ‘to reassert continuity with a Graeco-Roman past which underwrote so much of their political identity’.⁹¹

In the first half of the tenth century, the *Excerpta* (*Eklogai*) were put together on the initiative of Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus. Like Photios’s collection, they contained selections from numerous works from over a millennium of Greek history writing; unlike the *Bibliothēkē*, these were arranged in thematic sections for easier reference. From the few sections that have been preserved, the *Excerpta de legationibus*, collecting accounts of diplomatic exchanges, are perhaps the most frequently used by modern scholars, because they incorporate fragments from otherwise lost late antique works such as Priscus and Menander Protector, who wrote mainly about negotiations with the Huns in the fifth and the Avars in the sixth century, respectively. But there is also a section of excerpts ‘On virtues and vices’, strongly reminiscent of the ‘praise and blame’ focus in Chinese historiography.

Yannis Stouraitis focuses on another of Constantine Porphyrogenitus’s large historiographic projects, known under the name of *Scriptores post Theophanem*, the continuators of the early ninth-century *Chronicle* of Theophanes. The title given in the manuscript is studiously anonymous, ‘those after Theophanes’. ‘According to the proem of the first book, the emperor offered both material and guidance to the actual authors, whereas the rubric of the fifth book [...] implies an active role of the emperor in the writing of the text’.⁹² While

⁹⁰ Photios, *Epistulae*, ed. by Laourdas and Westerink, 187, II, 82; Bourbouhakis, in this volume, p. 206.

⁹¹ Bourbouhakis, in this volume, p. 205.

⁹² Stouraitis, in this volume, p. 222.

Theophanes followed an annalistic⁹³ scheme, the *Scriptores* were structured as serial biographies of rulers, similar, for instance, to the series of papal biographies in the *Liber pontificalis*.⁹⁴ In large parts, it was a dynastic history of the reigning Macedonian family. As Stouraitis argues, this was very much a history of the empire, the court, and the city, defending the sole legitimacy of the Byzantine emperor to represent the entire Roman world. It was not an 'ethnic' or 'national' vision in which the Roman people occupied centre stage.⁹⁵ The imperial outlook also determined the way of production by 'those after Theophanes'. 'By portraying this work as an impersonal product of the highest authority in the imperial office, an implicit but distinct claim to objectivity and authority of knowledge was made.'⁹⁶ The work was not least to be used for teaching new generations of courtiers and administrators.

This is as close as we get to Chinese-style 'state history' in early medieval Europe. However, it did not have the same effect of monopolizing historical truth by creating a canonical account of the past. When John Skylitzes set out over a century later to write a history up to his present, the second half of the eleventh century, he did not continue the continuators, but started all over again where they had begun, in 813, where Theophanes had stopped. In his foreword, he enumerates and criticizes several predecessors who had covered the same period:

For in composing a rambling account of his own times (and a little before) as though he was writing history, one of them writes a favourable account, another a critical one, while a third writes whatever he pleases and a fourth sets down what he is ordered to write. Each composes his own 'history' and they differ so much from each other in describing the same events that they plunge their audience into dizziness and confusion.⁹⁷

⁹³ The terminology is confusing between Latin and Greek; in ancient/Byzantine usage, Theophanes wrote a chronicle, or chronography, similar to the *Chronicon paschale*, whereas a year-by-year structure came to be called annals in the medieval West. Extensive discussion of the terminology in Burgess and Kulikowski, *Mosaics of Time*.

⁹⁴ For the genre of serial biography in a transcultural perspective, see Mahoney, Ó Riain, and Vocino, eds, *Medieval Biographical Collections*. For the *Liber pontificalis*, see McKitterick, *Rome and the Invention of the Papacy*.

⁹⁵ In this point, Stouraitis differs from the assessment forcefully proposed by Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic*; and Kaldellis, *Romanland*. See also Stouraitis, 'Reinventing Roman Ethnicity'.

⁹⁶ Stouraitis, in this volume, p. 224.

⁹⁷ John Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, trans. by Wortley, p. 2.

This negative judgement about the confusing multiplicity of Byzantine historiography reminds one of the criticism about Greek historians voiced a millennium before by Flavius Josephus.⁹⁸ Curiously, Skylitzes does not mention the *Scriptores post Theophanem* (unless he cites them under one of the names unknown to us), although he makes frequent use of the text.⁹⁹ The ambitious attempts by Constantine Porphyrogenitus to establish an official Byzantine 'state history' thus did have an impact, but ultimately failed to achieve their intended purpose. The writing of history in Byzantium remained, for the most part, closely attached to the court — Skylitzes himself is presented in the rubric of his work as 'the *kouropalates* who served as commander-in-chief of the watch'.¹⁰⁰ In a sense, Skylitzes's efforts to remove 'all comments of a subjective and fanciful nature' and 'the writers' differences and contradictions' from his sources parallels the goals of the *guoshi* writing about previous dynasties. Yet no systematic control of historiographic production was established in Constantinople, and we still have access to quite a range of different perspectives on the history of Byzantium.

On the whole, there are several obvious similarities between Byzantine and contemporary Chinese historiography that emerge from the two chapters by Bourbouhakis and Stouraitis. Both historiographies are imperial in outlook, and seek to reaffirm the millenarian tradition of empire in times of adversity and crisis. Both are essentially composed by an elite of administrators close to the court and in the capital, and rely on a long and well-established practice of historiography. Both mainly seek to serve the needs of state by providing precedent from ancient and recent experience for every possible political constellation. This also requires clearly marking out 'praise and blame', 'virtues and vices', good and bad policy and rulership. Both combine the practice of recording more recent events with selections from older texts processed to be more easily accessible in the search for precedent. In both cases, what was also at stake was to reaffirm the centrality of the respective empires and their elites. As Bourbouhakis puts it, for the Byzantine elites, the past 'was pivotal to the perception of their own place in history'.¹⁰¹

Significant differences between Byzantine and Chinese historiographies also emerge from the two chapters. It goes without saying that the Chinese system of providing for 'state history' and strict court control on its transmission went

⁹⁸ Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion*, trans. by Barclay; see my Introduction, in this volume.

⁹⁹ Flusin, 'Re-writing History', pp. xviii–xx.

¹⁰⁰ John Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, trans. by Wortley, p. 1.

¹⁰¹ Bourbouhakis, in this volume, p. 198.

far beyond what was current in Byzantium at the same time. The Chinese court strove to canonize official history books, and often destroyed the documentation used to write them in order to impede later revisions. Stouraitis discusses the model proposed by Masayuki Sato, who distinguishes between East Asian 'normative' and Western 'cognitive' historiography.¹⁰² Sato argues that in Europe the writing of history was a personal endeavour, mostly by single named authors, whereas in East Asia, it was the task of anonymous teams of historians writing on the order of the emperor. Ironically, however, both Bourbouhakis and Stouraitis deal with large historiographic projects executed on the initiative of the emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus by anonymous authors and compilers. Not surprisingly, Stouraitis emphasizes Jörn Rüsen's balanced critique of Sato.¹⁰³ Western historiography also propagated moral norms and underlying meanings, yet in many respects these were and remained negotiable. One might add that a significant minority of major early medieval historiography in the West was also anonymous: the much-discussed 'Fredegar' in the seventh-century Frankish kingdoms, many of the annals in the Carolingian realm and elsewhere, or the *Salerno Chronicle* in tenth-century southern Italy. On the other hand, there are the towering figures of Sima Qian and Sima Guang in Chinese historiography. No single model of historiography was predominant at either end of the Eurasian landmass.

There is a further comparative issue that Sato's model raises: in the absence of canonical holy books, histories could assume a quasi-sacral function in East Asia, unlike their counterparts in Europe and the Middle East, which had to negotiate their relationship with historical information contained in the Bible or the Qur'an. The *Spring and Autumn Annals*, eventually attributed to Confucius, indeed served as a sacred text, as demonstrated by the eighteenth-century calligraphic inscription of the annals and other Confucian classics on a long alley of marble slabs in the temple of Confucius in Beijing. However, one wonders whether there really is a sharp contrast in that respect, or rather a continuum. The Hebrew Bible and the Christian Old Testament were mainly history books, and also considered as such. It is, of course, plausible that there was a difference in degree between East Asia and the West. In a passage from his letter to a court official quoted by Bourbouhakis, Photios argues that 'our Lord and Saviour gave no forethought to the types of government and their respective administration'.¹⁰⁴ Military matters and state negotiations, admin-

¹⁰² Sato, 'Cognitive Historiography'; Stouraitis, in this volume, p. 220.

¹⁰³ Rüsen, 'Morality and Cognition'.

¹⁰⁴ Photios, *Epistulae*, ed. by Laourdas and Westerink, 187, II, 82; Bourbouhakis, in this volume, p. 206.

istration, trade, and justice were matters not to learn from divine teachings, but from experience, not least that of one's forebears, and to be gleaned from historical writing. Chinese officials were supposed to learn from histories in a similar way. However, there is a tension between divine revelation and earthly matters that is fundamental for Christian historiography, which was unlike the concepts of governance in harmony with the divine held by Chinese administrators informed by Confucian teachings.

The Latin West: The Transformation of Carolingian Historiography

In the West, the Carolingian period (c. 750 to c. 900) produced a variety of historical texts, treated in exemplary fashion in volume 3 of the present series.¹⁰⁵ In its heyday under Charlemagne and Louis the Pious, the court seems to have exerted considerable influence on the writing of history.¹⁰⁶ More than in many other European medieval contexts, these were affirmative histories, praising the ruler, legitimizing the dynasty and its takeover from the Merovingians in 751, and supporting its political and cultural agenda.¹⁰⁷ The *Annales regni Francorum* can be regarded as official records of events in the kingdom, and other annals kept at monasteries and bishoprics closely attached to the court, such as Lorsch or Metz, had a similar function. Previous histories were collected in 'history books', subtly tailored compendia, to suit contemporary uses of the past.¹⁰⁸

Some features of history writing under the first Carolingian kings/emperors are reminiscent of the much more sophisticated system of Chinese 'state history'.¹⁰⁹ It relied to an extent on coordinated efforts of basic record-keeping, mostly by regular entries into annals. The perspective was predominantly imperial and dynastic, focusing on the exploits of the ruler, his court, and the

¹⁰⁵ Reimitz, Kramer, and Ward, eds, *Historiography and Identity*, III. Carolingian rule ended in the beginning of the tenth century in the East, and at its end in the West.

¹⁰⁶ Nelson, 'History-Writing', p. 438: 'History's flourishing as a genre in the ninth century to some extent responded to the centripetal pull of courts [...] Yet most history, clearly, was not actually produced in or at the palace.'

¹⁰⁷ McKitterick, *History and Memory*; Innes and McKitterick, 'The Writing of History'; Reimitz, 'The Art of Truth'; Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity*.

¹⁰⁸ Hen and Innes, eds, *The Uses of the Past*; McKitterick, *History and Memory*, pp. 28–59; Gantner, McKitterick, and Meeder, eds, *The Resources of the Past*; Reimitz, 'The Social Logic'.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word*; Meens and others, eds, *Religious Franks*.

army.¹¹⁰ Biographies of rulers (most of all, Einhard's *Life of Charlemagne*) and other notable persons promoted them as role models. Moral messages were always at hand, conferring praise but also blame on political actors. As Helmut Reimitz has observed, no alternative narratives of Carolingian history from before 829, when the *Annales regni Francorum* stop, have come down to us.¹¹¹ Historiography formed an integral part of much wider efforts to promote literacy and education, enhancing the quality of governance, ordering life at court and among the elites, communicating with the provinces and integrating newly conquered regions.

There are also obvious differences, not only in scale. Carolingian authors above all wrote histories of the current dynasty's rule and, quite surprisingly, did not produce a new history of the Carolingians' Merovingian predecessors — that period was mainly covered by a careful selection and subtle editing of older works in history books.¹¹² The authors were not specially trained bureaucrats and court historians, but mostly erudite clerics with close relations to the court, in several cases members of the Carolingian family. Many works, not only of history, were produced by monastic scriptoria, closely linked to the orbit of the court, but often also geared to particular interests. As Reimitz put it, 'they all talk to and not from the centres of royal power'.¹¹³ That also meant that throughout the Carolingian period, a wide variety of forms of historical writing were produced and disseminated in the empire.¹¹⁴ Historians of the period did not reduce the multiplicity of genres and texts that they had inherited from the age of the Merovingians, but rather extended it further: like their predecessors, they had a variety of choices.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, no institutionalized control was exerted by the emperor or his administration. Thus, within the general frame of an affirmative Carolingian grand narrative of the past, criticism could be expressed, indirectly or directly. Even Einhard's *Life of Charlemagne*, a classicizing and very favourable posthumous portrait of the emperor that did much to establish his reputation for posterity, could at the

¹¹⁰ Nelson, 'History-Writing', p. 436, about the 'court-centredness' of Carolingian historiography; McKitterick, *History and Memory*, p. 154: 'a major and widespread effort to transmit a particular political message'; 'an extraordinarily focused sense of the past'.

¹¹¹ Reimitz, 'Histories of Carolingian Historiography'; Airlie, 'The Cunning of Institutions'; McKitterick, 'Political Ideology'.

¹¹² Reimitz, 'The Social Logic'.

¹¹³ Reimitz, 'Histories of Carolingian Historiography'.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Brunner, *Oppositionelle Gruppen*; Nelson, *Opposition to Charlemagne*.

¹¹⁵ Reimitz, 'Genre and Identity'.

same time be understood as implicit criticism of the regime of his son, Louis the Pious.¹¹⁶

From the 830s, when the dynasty became enmeshed in internal conflict and suffered repeated external defeats, contemporary historiography switched into much more ambiguous modes, and bitterness about the shortcomings of the rulers and about the divisions between and within the Frankish kingdoms crept in.¹¹⁷ This could also include voicing retrospective dissatisfaction, as in the *Epitaphium Arsenii*, a biography of Charlemagne's cousin Wala written in 835.¹¹⁸ Mostly, writers addressed contemporary events gone wrong, such as Nithard's *Histories* written in the fraternal wars of the 840s, one of the rare historiographic works by a lay aristocrat. Much more than Einhard's biography, Notker's *Life of Charlemagne*, produced at the end of the ninth century, fashions the first Carolingian emperor as an almost miraculous model ruler in sharp contrast to his successors in Notker's day. In 907/08, during the reign of Louis the Child, the last Eastern Frankish king from the Carolingian family, Regino of Prüm composed, in Goldberg and MacLean's words, 'the first complete history of the empire's rise and fall'.¹¹⁹ Regino's history begins with the incarnation of Christ, but his narrative of the years of glory of Charlemagne is surprisingly patchy, and even more so about the successive period: 'Concerning the times of the emperor Louis [the Pious], I have included very little because I have not found written texts, nor have learnt from the elders anything that was worth committing to memory'.¹²⁰ Was Trier (where Regino wrote) devoid of the many works from which Regino could have gained information on the crucial period in which Carolingian empire-building began to plummet into a phase of decline? Or was he perhaps weary of repeating the depressing stories of the struggles, first between Louis and his sons, and then among the sons for the best bits of the Carolingian heritage? By the early tenth century, historiography had again become an idiosyncratic venture under often adverse political conditions, in which access to the material and processing unpleasant memories had

¹¹⁶ Tischler, *Einhard's Vita Karoli*; Nelson, 'History-Writing', p. 439.

¹¹⁷ Matthias Tischler has recently argued that the unrest and disputes already began to creep in earlier, for instance at Attigny 822: Tischler, 'Karl der Große'; Tischler, 'Karolingisches Schweigen'.

¹¹⁸ De Jong, *Epitaph for an Era*.

¹¹⁹ Goldberg and MacLean, 'Royal Marriage', p. 108. See also MacLean, *History and Politics*; Kortüm, 'Weltgeschichte am Ausgang der Karolingerzeit' (arguing that it was not world history).

¹²⁰ Regino, *Chronicle*, trans. by MacLean, a. 813, p. 129; ed. by Kurze, p. 73.

become a challenge: a historiography of disillusion, as I have argued in my contribution to volume 3 of *Historiography and Identity*.¹²¹

In spite of Regino's dissatisfaction (and that of other authors of the period), many of the parameters of their social world had been established in the Carolingian period. 'Regino's view of the social world as a world divided among peoples [...] had slid more firmly into place only in the century before he wrote', as Helmut Reimitz has observed.¹²² Reimitz has also shown that early medieval Western historiography was characterized by constant shifts in the strategies of identification. In the late sixth century, Gregory of Tours wrote Frankish identity out of his history, and instead promoted identifications with the church of Gaul, with the sacred topography on which it built, and with the episcopal networks of proud senatorial families that governed it. The author of the so-called *Fredegar Chronicle* in the seventh century, by contrast, emphasized Frankish identity in an attempt to subtly direct loyalties away from the turbulent Merovingian kings of his day, and to appeal to groups of Frankish aristocrats increasingly represented by the ambitious Pippinid/Carolingian family from the north-east of the realm.¹²³ This line of argument was taken up in the eighth century by the 'continuators' of *Fredegar*, closely linked to the Carolingian rulers, who included strong expressions of Frankish agency in the historical narrative in order to establish the legitimacy of the ascending dynasty in the eyes of potential aristocratic competitors.

As Charlemagne successfully continued the trajectory towards empire and incorporated Bavarians, Lombards, Saxons, Avars, Slavs, and others into his realm, Frankish ethnic rhetoric gradually subsided, and imperial unity and multiplicity came to dominate the history books. Perhaps paradoxically, this opened new spaces for the affirmation of politically subaltern, but regionally dominant identities.¹²⁴ Romanness remained a symbolically potent, but at the same time counterfactual and ambiguous scheme of identification, a contradiction that was to haunt the recreated Roman Empire in all the thousand years of its existence. As Carolingian rule eroded in the second half of the ninth century, 'Frankishness' largely receded to core regions of the eastern and western kingdoms, which eventually were to become Rheinfranken, Franconia, and the Île de France, respectively. Beneath an often-precarious layer of royal power only intermittently defined as Frankish, regional units mostly

¹²¹ Pohl, 'Historiography of Disillusion'.

¹²² Reimitz, *History*, p. 444. See also McLean, *History and Politics*.

¹²³ Wood, 'Fredegar's Fables'.

¹²⁴ Reimitz, 'When Did the Bavarians Become Bavarians?'

ruled by dukes regained considerable room to manoeuvre. Many of them could mobilize ancient ethnic/regional solidarities: Bavarians, Swabians, Saxons, Burgundians, Aquitanians. Others were of more recent formation; in particular, the Lotharingians came to be called after Lothar II, the rather ill-fated king of a short-lived Carolingian splinter kingdom.

Simon MacLean's chapter surveys the traces of the 'Lotharingians' in the written record of the late ninth and tenth centuries, and particularly during the over fifty-year break in 'long-form' historiography between Regino and the 960s, when Liudprand of Cremona and Widukind resumed the writing of large-scale histories. In the emergent Ottonian Empire, the historiographic framing of its rise was still tentative; and similarly, the terminology of the political units and of the peoples that the Ottonians claimed to represent was volatile. As MacLean shows, most occurrences of 'Lotharingians' or 'Lotharingia' can be contextualized in particular political scenarios in which mentioning them made specific sense. The two terms only really became standard when the revived *imperium Romanum* of the Ottonians could be defined through the multitude of its ethnic components: Liudprand of Cremona, Otto I's envoy to Constantinople, recounts that when the Byzantine emperor Nicephorus challenged him: 'You are not Romans, but Lombards!', he replied that 'we, that is, Lombards, Saxons, Franks, Lotharingians, Bavarians, Suavians and Burgundians, regard "Roman!" as one of the worst insults'.¹²⁵

Lotharingia was a paradoxical case: the former Carolingian heartlands around Aachen, Trier, and Metz had become a contested region on the frontier between the eastern and the western Frankish kingdoms, without consolidated political structure or firm loyalties. What is striking about its very tentative nomenclature is that its inhabitants could not simply remain 'Franks', not even with a regional specification like the *Ripuarii* of the late Merovingian period.¹²⁶ There was no sufficiently strong regional identity that corresponded to the delicate geopolitical situation and to the contingencies of post-Carolingian power games. On the other hand, the eventual emergence of a Lotharingian identity (still preserved today in the French region of Lorraine) attests to the need of rooting political power in a recognizable people. 'Ethnic labels could act as prox-

¹²⁵ Liudprand of Cremona, *Relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana*, ed. by Becker, 12, pp. 182–83 (or ed. by Chiesa, p. 192); for an excellent analysis: Gandino, *Il vocabolario*, pp. 257–70.

¹²⁶ In the *Annales Xantenses*, what was to become Lotharingia is repeatedly called *Ripuarua*, its inhabitants *Ripuarii*; ed. by Simson, a. 861, p. 19 and a. 870, p. 28, Lothar II is called *rex Ripuariorum*. However, these attempts to revive the Ripuarian tradition did not have lasting success.

ies for claims to authority', as MacLean puts it. If none were available, they had to be devised, even from unlikely sources, as the Lotharingian case demonstrates.

While MacLean's contribution deals with a former core area of the Carolingian empire, Matthias M. Tischler presents a case study from a peripheral area in the Iberian Peninsula, Asturia. This region was peripheral in every sense: it had been peripheral in the former Visigothic kingdom that had been overcome by Islamic forces in 711; and in the ninth to eleventh centuries, it remained a frontier region on the edges of the dominant Umayyad Caliphate in al-Andalus. It was also far removed from the centres of Latin erudition (and historiography) in the Carolingian world. As Tischler remarks, unlike the Catalan monasteries, which engaged in lively exchanges with the Frankish realms, Asturia did not have much access to texts and manuscripts from north of the Pyrenees. Nevertheless, the monastic centres on these northern fringes of the peninsula produced a historiography that catered not only for their own needs, but also furnished identifications for the emergent regional Christian kingdoms. Similar to contemporary southern Italy, their historiography was transmitted in mixed compendia which also contained legal, hagiographical, polemical, and monastic texts.¹²⁷ Southern Italian monastic centres such as Montecassino also faced grave threats from Muslim raiders and mercenaries, but they were confronted with a confusing multitude of enemies: Naples, Byzantium, and not least the Lombard princes, who were engaged in continuous infighting.¹²⁸ In comparison, Asturian historiography was much more structured by the fundamental binary opposition between Christians and Muslims.

Thus, the manuscripts discussed by Matthias Tischler present a particular mix of local interests, transcultural perspectives, and apocalyptic undertones. The histories emphasize the link of the Asturian kingdom to the Gothic identity of the former kingdom that had fallen in 711, and their heroic resistance to the Islamic conquerors, which assumes particular urgency through the eschatological visions offered in the texts. This is most obvious in the late ninth-century texts nowadays known as the *Prophetic Chronicle* and the *Chronicle of Albelda*.¹²⁹ The rather brief *Prophetic Chronicle* is in fact a strange combination which represents the ambiguous horizon of Asturian historiography. It begins with the prophecy about Gog, the apocalyptic riders from the book of Ezekiel,

¹²⁷ Cf. Pohl, 'History in Fragments'.

¹²⁸ Pohl, 'Historiography of Disillusion'.

¹²⁹ *Chroniques Asturiennes*, ed. by Bonnaz: *Chronique prophétique*, ed. by Bonnaz, pp. 1–9; *Chronique d'Albelda*, ed. by Bonnaz, pp. 10–30. See also Marschner, 'The Depiction of the Saracen Foreign Rule'; Marschner, 'Ethnic Naming'.

adapted and commented to fit the present. Following Isidore of Seville, Gog is identified with the Goths, and the text culminates in the prophecy that after 170 years, Gog would do to Ismael what Ismael had once done to him.¹³⁰ A long genealogy from Abraham and Ismael to the Umayyad caliphs follows, which traces the pedigree from the relatives of the Prophet Muḥammad up to Abd Allāh (d. 912) according to contemporary Islamic knowledge. This genealogy is then complemented by a detailed list of rulers of al-Andalus. Both texts must ultimately derive from the Umayyad court. The short life of the ‘pseudo-prophet’ Muḥammad, by contrast, which Tischler calls ‘a piece of Christian anti-hagiography’, shows little awareness of Islamic traditions about the Prophet.¹³¹ The *Chronicle of Albelda* adds an extensive geographical section focusing on Spain (and including an overland itinerary from Cadíz to Rome and on to Constantinople), and three historical sections: an *ordo Romanorum* from Romulus to Tiberius III (d. 705); an *ordo gentis Gothorum*, from Athanaric to Roderic and the Muslim conquest; and an *ordo Gothorum regum* of the Asturian kingdom of Oviedo from the conquest to the present, that is, the year 883.

The monastic authors and copyists in Christian Asturia saw themselves in a Roman and Gothic tradition. They had records about Byzantium, at least until the early eighth century; they knew a lot about the rulers of al-Andalus and their background; but they cared little about events north of the Pyrenees. Some traits of the Asturian ‘frontier historiography’ remind one of Syrian Christian historiography — both were minority cultures of memory rooted in the greater social whole of Christianity, who clearly used the production and transmission of texts to affirm and defend an identity under pressure from the expansive dynamic of dominant Islamic religion, culture, and politics. Unlike Christian Syrians (and also the Christians of al-Andalus), who were well integrated in Islamic societies and accepted their subaltern but protected *dhimmī* status, the Asturian chroniclers lived outside the sphere of direct Islamic rule. They relied much on biblical and more recent history to understand the test of faith they had been subjected to, and this purpose clearly determined their historiographic choices.

Thus, both the late to post-Carolingian historiography in which Lotharingian identity gradually emerged, and the histories in which Asturian identity was attached to ‘Gothic’ precedent, did not operate on the basis of well-established, commonly accepted identities. Instead, these identifications

¹³⁰ *Chronique prophétique*, ed. by Bonnaz, 1–2, pp. 2–3.

¹³¹ Cf. Tolán, *Faces of Muhammad*.

were precarious, shifting, and insecure, and writers of histories sought to respond to these insecurities by projecting past identities into the future (in the Asturian case), or by using a vague term for categorization, which in this way became inscribed on the mental map. In this, the history writers were able to rely on the precedent of more successful polities, on time-honoured strategies of identification, and on ancient models of Roman, Christian, and ethnic community. Taken together, these provided a flexible matrix for ordering the historical scenarios of the recent past and the present into meaningful notions of history. Christian concepts of truth-in-history were open to interpretation by hermeneutics and exegesis. They offered several proven explanations for evident failures to solicit divine grace: the workings of providence; punishment for sins; snares of the devil; trials of faith; or eschatological signs. In the medieval West, empire remained deeply ambivalent. On the one hand, eschatological speculation asserted that the Roman Empire had to last until the drama of the apocalypse took place. On the other hand, the Byzantine model of a Christian Roman Empire increasingly appeared as 'Greek' and alien to the Latin commonwealth of peoples and kingdoms. In spite of the ambitious attempts under Charlemagne and Otto I to resurrect the Roman Empire, no particular polity in the medieval West succeeded in claiming a hegemonial role in the history of salvation. Thus, even smaller kingdoms and communities in crisis, under threat, or after defeat, could hope for a privileged role in the divine plan of salvation. The Asturian chronicles are a case in point, showing how traditional identifications could be recast in the mould of a biblical vision of the past and the future.

Comparative Perspectives

In conclusion, I would like to outline several themes, or axes of comparison, which have emerged from the chapters of this volume. It is no surprise that Chinese 'state history' differed in its control of cultural memory from the polyphony of classical/medieval European historiography. Yet in this volume, we have been able to transcend the Weberian ideal types on either side of this comparison, and shown that there was a diverse range of tendencies in each historiographic culture. In China between the Han and the Tang dynasty, a multiplicity of sub-imperial formations had their particular histories, which were integrated subsequently into the wider imperial frame of a succession of dynastic 'state histories'. On the other hand, the grand historiographic project of the Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus represents an effort to create an authoritative and centrally controlled history which, however, as we

have seen, did not curb the multiple perspectives on the imperial past in subsequent historiography. Few of the historiographic cultures addressed in this volume can simply be located on one end of the axes that I will briefly sketch here. Rather, they all fluctuate along the spectrum, with only relative differences between them. Yet it would be wrong to conclude that these differences therefore did not matter. All ‘cultures’ may be hybrid, but not in the same way.¹³²

Strategies of Truth

Several of the lines of comparison we have traced are linked to what Jörn Rüsen has identified as a core parameter of global comparison in historiography: the ways in which the reliability and truthfulness of a historical account could be claimed.¹³³ Plausible narratives were necessary to establish trust in the models of identification proposed in histories. In the introduction to this volume, I have used *Against Apion* by Flavius Josephus as an example of an elaborate argument about historical truth that combines several criteria of truthfulness:¹³⁴ a class of priests as guardians of historical memory; ancient literacy, documentary and archival practice; ethnic purity as a precondition for undiluted historical memory; codified divine truth; methodological standards of historiography such as accuracy, eyewitness evidence, impartiality, reliable sources; and, respectively, consensus or critical debate. Similar ‘strategies of truth’ appear in different constellations, if mostly less explicitly, in the historical cultures presented in the chapters of the present volume.

Sources, Witnesses, and Consensus

Early Islamic writers of history relied much on *isnād*, chains of authorities, to enhance the credibility of their information. In less elaborate ways, medieval Latin historiography often refers to written sources, to eyewitness accounts and to oral informants, though these were not always regarded as a guarantee of truthfulness. In many historiographic cultures, dissent and controversies were regarded as problematic, on the basis of the belief that truth ought to be consensual. It was rarely noted in the period that controversial debate might be a way to approach the truth, although a multiplicity of opinions has been part of

¹³² Cf. Rogers, ‘Cultures in Motion’, pp. 6–8.

¹³³ Rüsen, ‘Einleitung’; see my introduction, in this volume.

¹³⁴ Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion*, trans. by Barclay, particularly the section 1.7.24–1.8.43, pp. 24–32.

the European tradition of historiography since its inception in classical Greece, and also pervaded Islamic history writing.

Transcendental Foundations of History

Transcendental or revealed truths are central to many cultures of memory. For Jews (for instance, Flavius Josephus) and Christians, the Bible was *historia* par excellence: a history based on revealed truth. Josephus's *Against Apion* allows us to gauge what strong aggregates of ethnic and religious identification were possible.¹³⁵ Many Western history books started with a summary of Old Testament history (as did some Islamic histories). Some (such as Otto von Freising's twelfth-century *Chronicle*)¹³⁶ even ended with a history of the future, the apocalyptic prophecies offered in the New Testament Book of Revelation. Many Christian writers of history sought to decipher disquieting events as apocalyptic signs. The Christian world view was framed as a history of salvation. Still, claims of truth in Christian historiography rarely built on divine revelation or at least indirect divine warranty. Divine truth, as most Christians were ready to acknowledge, was unfathomable to humans.¹³⁷ Therefore, late antique 'Christian historians fully appropriated the classical demands for exactitude and precision as hallmarks of history. [...] Theology of history is left to other works', as Peter Van Nuffelen states.¹³⁸ This required the joint efforts of the author and his readers in the search for truth.¹³⁹ The same goes for Islamic historiography. Outside the highly codified revelations in the Qur'ān, the words and deeds of the Prophet transmitted in the *hadīth* had to be ascertained by chains of authorities, *isnād*. By adopting the same instrument that conferred religious authority to norms and decisions, historians could stake a high claim of veracity, although unlike the jurists they had the option to leave many questions undecided.

Guardians of Memory

A caste of priestly 'guardians of memory' as in Flavius Josephus's argument is only found in some traditions. In China, the *shiguan* system came close, although the courtiers entrusted with record-keeping were not a hereditary

¹³⁵ Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion*, trans. by Barclay; see also my Introduction, in this volume.

¹³⁶ Otto of Freising, *Chronica de duabus civitatibus*, ed. by Hofmeister, VIII, 390–457.

¹³⁷ Van Nuffelen, 'The Many and the One', p. 301.

¹³⁸ Van Nuffelen, 'Theology vs. Genre?', p. 194. See also Van Nuffelen, *Orosius*, pp. 1–20.

¹³⁹ As argued by Reimitz, 'Genre and Identity'.

class, but highly educated professionals selected by exams. In the Latin West, many authors were clerics, but record-keeping and even more so, writing history, was just one of their many tasks of writing, catechesis, or administration. Laymen prevailed among writers of history in China, in the Islamic world, and in Byzantium. In many cases, the dedicatees of works, who had often themselves commissioned their production, must have played a role in the shape and distribution of historiographic texts.

Memory Control or a Multiplicity of Voices

Chinese 'state history' was the model discussed at the beginning of this chapter, and it represents by far the most elaborate form of central control over the past discussed here. In fact, it combines several forms of appropriation of the past: record-keeping routine and archival practices organized by central institutions; governmental initiative for the production of historical works; trained historians integrated into the administration; high-level supervision of the selection and interpretation of the material; a unitary frame for a historical master narrative; official distribution of the resulting histories; elimination of alternative historical narratives and of the underlying documentation. At least, that is the 'ideal type' model for the *guoshi* of the Tang and Song periods.

Some of these elements are also present, if in different combinations, in other historical cultures. The relatively parallel set of features described by Flavius Josephus shows that no 'state' was necessary for the preservation of controlled and codified memories of the past: it could also be a religious elite that organized the transmission of relevant historical narratives. These elites could rely on a sense of divine election and/or on ethnic framing, and could preserve the memory of a former state and homeland (as the Jews did). Another case of a stateless historiography are the Syrian Christians, where confessional strife led to a competitive streamlining of narratives relevant for maintaining the cohesion of the group. The rich production of Armenian historiography in times of foreign domination provides a further example.¹⁴⁰ Such histories had to find a balance between a focus on a restricted community and claims of representing the true spirit of Christendom as a whole.

One might assume that due to their effective organization and wide-ranging agenda, Christian churches could have determined the writing of history more than other religious institutions. The production of the *Liber pontificalis* by the papal administration, traceable from the fifth to the ninth centuries, could be a

¹⁴⁰ Preiser-Kapeller, 'Early Medieval Armenia.'

case in point.¹⁴¹ It was based on administrative documentation (which allowed its authors to list promotions, church buildings, or pious donations, among others), closely linked to the interests of the institution and repeatedly, sometimes continually updated by anonymous officials. On a smaller scale, episcopal and monastic histories displayed similar historiographic strategies, but were mostly occasional activities. The majority of early medieval historians in Europe were clerics or monks; yet the institution they represented did not streamline historiography in the same way as it sought to do with theology, preaching, or liturgy.

Nor did empires or other power centres attempt to exert any message control in the early medieval West. Carolingian ‘imperial historiography’ under Charlemagne came closest to reaching some unity of purpose, but this faded quickly once the basic consensus among the elites eroded in the 830s and 840s. Individual works might always extol a particular ruler or a dynasty, but no system to marginalize opposing views was in place. In the medieval West, the writing of history was a multipolar activity. It was not concentrated at courts or in urban centres (as it was in Constantinople), but could take place in bishoprics or monasteries all over the continent, providing us with often rather decentralized perspectives of events.

Continuing or Rewriting Accounts of the Past

The basic unit of Chinese historiography was the dynasty, and official historiography under the Tang and Song was therefore structured as a succession of dynastic histories. These histories were mostly written under the successor dynasty and therefore always retrospective, so that overly laudatory narratives could be avoided. In later centuries, these official histories were reworked, and selections from them were produced. No other tradition of medieval historiography was as clearly structured as *guoshi*. The extent to which the need to rewrite the past was felt could differ widely among and within Eurasian historiographic traditions.

Continuation rather than rewriting was a frequent approach in the Christian Roman Empire. Jerome’s Latin translation of the *Chronicle* of Eusebius was continued by generations of — mostly named — authors, and the ensuing compilations were copied as a basis for further continuations, forming veritable ‘chains of chronicles.’¹⁴² Similarly, a number of classicizing authors in sixth- and seventh-century Byzantium successively continued Procopius’s *Wars* and

¹⁴¹ See McKitterick, *Rome and the Invention of the Papacy*.

¹⁴² Wood, ‘Chains of Chronicles’.

its continuations. However, other authors synthesized much larger chunks of history, such as Malalas or Theophanes. In the Carolingian empire, instead of writing new works of synthesis those interested in history produced historiographic compendia, combining copies or excerpts of earlier histories in order to provide an overview of Frankish history. In general, however, many Western historians preferred to rewrite the past, even though they rarely introduced any fundamental changes into the received narrative.

The *isnād* system in Islamic historiography represented a particular approach to the preservation of earlier records. It could be used to group excerpts from the available sources ascribed to their authors (and to chains of transmission) around specific events or topics, even if they contradicted each other, omitting only implausible ones; al-Ṭabarī and others left it to their readers to judge which version was correct. As most of the sources for the early Islamic period are lost, it is hard to judge in what ways bias or details changed in the process of transmission. The method of *isnād* lent itself to successive selection and recombination of historical accounts and thus preserved some of the polyphony of early Islamic writing of history.

The Persona of the Historian

To what extent the author is recognizable in a text differs considerably between the different works of historiography discussed in this volume. Many authors remain anonymous, and sometimes we do not even know whether we are dealing with a single-authored work, a compilation, a chain of continuations, or a group production. Masayuki Sato has juxtaposed Chinese histories written by anonymous teams with European ones written by named authors.¹⁴³ There is some truth to that but, as I argued above, things were more complex. First, the concept of the famous ‘master historian’ is not alien to the Chinese tradition. And second, a considerable part of the early medieval historiographic production in Europe was anonymous. In Islamic historiography, where chains of named authorities were central to the claims of truthfulness, we know most authors’ names.

There is a further element, underlined by Nino Luraghi in his chapter in the first volume of the present series: what historians say about themselves as characters or historical actors in their work cannot necessarily be taken at face value. It may also be a, sometimes stereotypical, persona that an author assumes in order to lend more credibility to the message of the text: the politician in exile,

¹⁴³ Sato, ‘Cognitive History’.

the priestly intellectual of a polity overwhelmed by Hellenic or Roman power, or the senatorial competitor for rank and status in the Roman Republic.¹⁴⁴ In medieval Europe, it could be the bishop under pressure from lay powers, the pious monk worried about moral decay, or the courtier who had fallen from grace, among others. However, as Simon MacLean remarks in his chapter, in the later first millennium CE many authors of Latin histories feature quite prominently in their own accounts, and often bemoan their adverse fates: for instance, Paul the Deacon and Erchempert, Nithard and Regino, Liudprand of Cremona and Thietmar of Merseburg. There is a story to tell about ‘authors and their identities’, and often enough, it spells out ‘ego trouble’.¹⁴⁵

For good Christians, self-identification might also mean castigating and debasing themselves with all the literary means that ancient rhetoric offered. Thus, the early eleventh-century German bishop and chronicler Thietmar of Merseburg presented himself as the greatest of sinners, far beyond what the topos of modesty might have required. Even more drastic, the controversial tenth-century bishop Rather of Verona, maybe the most fascinating and idiosyncratic character of his time, wrote whole books of mock autobiography in which he accused himself of all evils under the sun.¹⁴⁶ Ancient topoi, rhetorical playfulness, Christian ascetic self-stylization, bitterness about enemies and competitors, and an acute sense of irony or even parody could contribute to such paradoxical strategies of self-identification.

Strategies of Identification

Universal, Imperial, or Particular Framings of the Historical Narrative

Thomas Göller and Achim Mittag have proposed a twofold matrix of comparison between different historiographies along the axes of universal vs particular and inclusive vs exclusive.¹⁴⁷ It is important to note that these are not equivalent contrasts. The established typology of medieval historiography distinguishes between different genres; most lists include universal chronicles, annals, ‘national histories’, episcopal and monastic chronicles, dynastic histories/genealogies, and biographies (hagiographic and secular).¹⁴⁸ Of course, the

¹⁴⁴ Luraghi, ‘Memory and Community’.

¹⁴⁵ McKitterick and others, eds, *Ego Trouble*.

¹⁴⁶ Van Renswoude, ‘The Sincerity of Fiction’.

¹⁴⁷ Göller and Mittag, *Geschichtsdenken*, p. 12.

¹⁴⁸ For instance, the Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental (TYP) includes vol-

typology is often problematic; how universal is ‘universal’? In particular, what such simple categorization cannot capture is the rather frequent ‘zooming in’ in the course of a book of history, which might begin on a cosmological level but then focus in on a particular community. Conversely, imperial histories often ‘zoom out’ in their emplotment of imperial expansion. We could also use different parameters to define ‘genres’: Where do histories begin, who are the main actors, on which forms of social cohesion do they build their narrative?¹⁴⁹ Such categories would correspond to different levels of identification, from a (not ‘the’) world via larger and smaller communities down to families or individuals.

Christian and Islamic histories were deeply rooted in the Old Testament. The Hebrew Bible conceptualized the history of one people and region through its privileged relationship with the one and only, almighty God. Christian histories elaborated on the universal potential of this biblical *historia*. The first great Christian chronicle, written in Greek by Eusebius and later translated into Latin by Jerome, combined Old Testament history with Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman historical traditions into a synoptic overview of the *fila regnorum*, parallel columns synchronizing events in the different kingdoms of the known world. Eusebius/Jerome provided a sound ‘universal’ basis to which narratives with rather different foci could be added.

Unified Time

In Song China in the mid-eleventh century, a ‘concept and possibility of a standard, “orthodox” universal history of China’ was established, above all through the work of Ouyang Xiu.¹⁵⁰ Before that, the chronology of the separate dynastic histories had followed individual regnal dates, which had hardly allowed establishing a unified temporal frame, especially in the periods of division, during the ‘Northern’ or ‘Five’ Dynasties. Now all these separate dynastic strands could be drawn together within the wider imperial frame of ‘legitimate’ dynasties, including those established by ‘non-Han’ rulers of foreign origin.

umes on annals (vol. 14, McCormick), genealogies (vol. 15, Gécicot), universal chronicles (vol. 16, Krüger), *gesta* of bishops and abbots (vol. 37, Sot), and hagiography (vols 24–25, Philippart) <<http://www.brepols.net/Pages/BrowseBySeries.aspx?TreeSeries=TYP>> [accessed 1 August 2020]. See also the forthcoming collection by Van Nuffelen and Van Hoof, eds, *Clavis historicorum antiquitatis posterioris*. On the problem of genre in early medieval historiography, see Reimitz, ‘Genre and Identity’.

¹⁴⁹ Reimitz, ‘Genre and History’; Pohl, ‘Historiography and Identity — Methodological Perspectives’.

¹⁵⁰ Hartman, ‘Chinese Historiography’, p. 39; Lorge, ‘Institutional Histories’, pp. 490–91.

This step must have had deep implications for the affirmation of an inclusive identity focused on state and empire. In the Roman Empire, a variety of dating systems were used, counting from the foundation of the city of Rome, or the Olympiads, the consular year, provincial eras, and later the indiction, a nineteen-year tax cycle. In the eastern parts of the Roman Empire, Christian historians introduced the Jewish system of world years calculated on the basis of the dates found in the Bible. However, there were different ways to establish a chronology of the Old Testament which could never quite be synchronized. The *annus mundi* system was also closely linked to eschatological speculations that the world would come to an end after six thousand years, when God, to whom 'a day was like a thousand years', would rest on the seventh day.¹⁵¹ In the West, from the sixth century onwards the years began to be calculated from the birth of Christ, although regnal years remained in use throughout the early Middle Ages. Annals, which became an important genre north of the Alps in the eighth century, were often linked to calculations of time.¹⁵² In the Islamic world, the Hijra provided a common chronology. The idea of a unified time enabled historians to construct a universal frame in which particular or overarching identities were contextualized: imperial time in China, religious time in Europe and the Middle East.

Anchors in the Deep Past

Medieval Latin chronicles often start with biblical epitomes, which remain understudied because modern editors often omitted them, on the grounds that they did not offer any 'original' historical material. Yet they have a bearing on the ways a text constructs or subverts identities. When in the sixth century CE Jordanes prefixed an account of Eusebian/biblical history to his *Romana*, the Roman past became subsumed within a broader Christian history. The Romans had become one Christian people among many within the wider frame of Christian salvation history, as is indicated by the (rarely cited) full title of the work: *De summa temporum vel origine actibusque gentis Romanorum*.¹⁵³ This plurality of *gentes* in the medieval West also set the stage for what could continue to be universal in Latin chronicles as they moved into the Christian centuries. In different sections, these narratives could move from the Middle Eastern universality of the biblical salvation narrative to the imperial inclu-

¹⁵¹ Koder, *Die Byzantiner*, p. 51.

¹⁵² Borst, *The Ordering of Time*.

¹⁵³ Pohl and others, eds, *Romanness*.

siveness of the Roman *orbis terrarum*, and on to some of the shared history of Western Christendom (before zooming in on more specific scenarios). All three levels continued to provide frames of identification with a 'larger social whole' and routinely served as keys to the interpretation of historical events. However much the interpretation of current events might shift or remain contentious, this massive substructure of medieval Western history remained almost unchanged throughout the Middle Ages, up to Hartmann Schedel's *Weltchronik* printed in Nuremberg in 1493.¹⁵⁴ Extensive historiographic efforts went into keeping the deep past present and reinforcing its links to more recent events.

In the West, this inevitably meant that the first sections of historical works that included accounts of the biblical past centred on the Holy Land, just as medieval T-shaped world maps had Jerusalem at their centre: a remarkable decentrality of Western historiography. That was different in Islamic historical writing, which also appropriated the biblical past, but did so within an obvious geographical continuum. One way to integrate the Jewish-Christian tradition into Islamic history was as a history of prophets, as suggested by the title of al-Ṭabarī's *History of Prophets and Kings*.¹⁵⁵ The Qur'ān had incorporated previous Jewish and Christian prophets as legitimate precursors of Muḥammad, just as Jewish prophets had been regarded as prefigurations of Christ from a Christian point of view. Yet the Qur'ān also stated that ultimately all previous peoples and states had failed to follow the divine message. This provided the other grand narrative for incorporating pre-Islamic histories, for instance in Abu Ali Miskawayh's *Experiences of the Nations*.¹⁵⁶ Islamic history could thus easily absorb the preceding stages of the history of salvation.

Origins and Beginnings

Referring to or simply including earlier texts is one way to deal with a fundamental question of 'identity': the origins of the community or communities one feels part of. Where do histories begin, and how did authors link these beginnings to their present? Are these origins inclusive or exclusive? Do they matter? This certainly is a key question in research about the construction of identities.¹⁵⁷ It is not at the core of the present volume, but it is a possible line of comparison between its chapters. Some histories mentioned here begin with

¹⁵⁴ Schedel, *Weltchronik*, ed. by Füssel.

¹⁵⁵ al-Ṭabarī, *History*, ed. by Yarshater.

¹⁵⁶ Abu Ali Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, ed. and trans. by Amedroz and Margoliouth.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Pohl and Mahoney, eds, *Narratives of Ethnic Origin*.

the creation of the world, others with the birth of Christ or with the Hijra, others again with the foundation of a state or empire, or with the rise of a dynasty. Some contain rather elaborate arguments about who 'we' are, others do not discuss this at all or take it for granted. If the issue is whether 'identities' mattered or not, it is difficult to find out whether distant origins or acts of foundation are omitted because they went without saying, or because an author preferred to write them out of the narrative. If, however, the issue is how identities were constructed in historiography, the question can be posed in a more productive way: Was little or no narrative effort invested in stressing a core element of group identification — where do 'we' come from? — or do works of history begin with elaborate origin stories of peoples or kingdoms?

It also makes a difference whether or not a history is grounded in supernatural beginnings. A clear example of this is the Japanese *Kojiki*, in which the affairs of the gods only gradually give way to human agency. Biblical histories, from the Creation to the Passion of Christ, take up considerable space in many Christian works of history, such as in Eusebius/Jerome, Sulpicius Severus, Jordanes' *Romana* or Fredegar. They also do in al-Tabarī's *History*, who extensively explores discordant opinions, including on the Creation.¹⁵⁸ Some early histories of the Latin West also contain 'pagan' traces of divine agency in ethnic origin narratives, but they are mostly related with a disclaimer — which may also be taken as an indication that these pre-Christian memories could not simply be erased.¹⁵⁹

The Role of 'the Other' and 'Identities of Contrast'

Identity is a relational principle, ordering the social world according to principles of inclusion and exclusion. 'Othering' is a strategy of implicit identification that does not focus so much on what 'we' have in common, but how 'they' are different.¹⁶⁰ In some cases, the option of othering is obviously chosen because the common ground between 'us' is not extensive enough to make a shared identity plausible; the outside threat is what brings out the common interest. In other cases, there is a strong idea of shared values and interests that is pitched against 'barbarians', 'pagans', 'heretics', or 'magians'. The more negative the depiction of the 'others', inside or outside a given society, the more may

¹⁵⁸ al-Tabarī, *History*, trans. by Rosenthal, 1, 168–249.

¹⁵⁹ Pohl, 'Narratives'.

¹⁶⁰ 'Historische Erzählungen präsentieren nicht nur die eigene kulturelle Identität, sondern sie beschreiben zugleich die Differenz zu den anderen und deren Anderssein.' Rösen, 'Einleitung', p. 23.

we assume a lack of confidence that the shared identity can guarantee social cohesion and successful defence against outside attacks. However, active othering is not the only way to place one's community (or communities) within a landscape of diversity, and to highlight the particular significance of one group. 'Identities of contrast', as Peter Van Nuffelen has shown, can also be constructed in rather subtle ways.¹⁶¹ Syrian historians could, but did not always choose to adopt polemical tones to carve out the unique position of their particular Christian grouping.

Multiple Identifications

Historiographic strategies of identification are rarely aimed exclusively at the group with which the work's audience is supposed to identify. They are always relational and construct both identity and difference. However, historiography does not only differentiate between 'us' and 'them'. In most cases, it also distinguishes among multiple groups of 'them'. Most importantly, it addresses several levels of 'us', from local and regional ones to overarching frames of identification. Thus, as Helmut Reimitz has shown, representations of a particular community usually place it within a 'larger social whole' (for instance, Christianity, empire, or a landscape of Christian kingdoms and peoples) to which it is related in rather complex ways.¹⁶² Writers of history provide patterns of identification anchored in the past to guide their readers through present options of identification. Everyday identifications may be fuzzy, situational, or contradictory, and the weight of history can help to accentuate or even streamline them. We should not exaggerate the flexibility of such choices, and of the range of options that could be made plausible through historical arguments. There was more *Spielraum* in scenarios of shifting identities: religious change, the dissolution of empires, or the fall of kingdoms.

It is often hard to prove the short-term impact of such strategies of historiographic identification, and in some cases, it may have been very limited. The manuscript transmission or subtle rewriting of a text are usually reliable indicators of its long-term relevance. We can trace to a degree what a historian was trying to achieve, and what he was reacting to, and thus recover some of the multiplicity of dissenting voices from the past. Historiographers are often 'cultural brokers' — their 'visions of community' are not simply affirmations

¹⁶¹ His example is the depiction of dissenting currents in the East Roman 'Church Histories' of the fifth century: Van Nuffelen, 'The Many and the One', pp. 302–04.

¹⁶² Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity*.

of ethnocentrism, but take complementary and/or competing narratives into account. Tensions in a text can be read as evidence of the author's efforts to negotiate overlapping and often conflicting modes of identification. It is highly unlikely that none of these efforts had an impact on their audience. In the Chinese case, it would be hard to argue that imperial state histories had no effect at all, although one should not be tempted to overestimate their unanimous acceptance either. In general, traces of controversy in a text may be taken as a sign that this was an issue that mattered.

Affirmation or Criticism

Histories are rarely affirmative throughout; even the most flattering portrait of a ruler needs its foil against which he stands out. More extensive historical narratives require ups and downs, successes and failures, challenges and responses, praise and blame. Anything else would put the 'truth effect' of a historical work at risk. Within these requirements of genre, historical works differ widely. A text's tenor may be more optimistic (as in early Carolingian historiography) or disillusioned (as during the late Carolingian period); it may mainly criticize one's own community or the 'others', or distribute praise and blame rather evenly; it may be restricted to a rather straightforward factual narrative in which the author's position may only be read between the lines, or it may offer explicit moral and political judgements. It seems that the latter was more current in Chinese and Western histories, while classical Islamic historiography tended to let its sources speak for themselves. Judgements were more institutional in China and often rather idiosyncratic in the West. But these are only superficial observations, which require more precise study.

As I have argued in my chapter in volume 3 of this series: 'Positive affirmation is not the only form of identification. Ferocious critique of or desperation about the actions of other representatives of one's group may be a strong statement of identity: because one's affiliation mattered, and there was no escaping it'.¹⁶³ Identification with a social group does not require agreeing with what its representatives do. The most devout Christian authors condemned the sins of the Christians more fiercely than others. Identity is constructed in a field of tension between the community as it is, and as you think it should be. Seen the other way around, emphatic affirmation of a group identity may mean that the author felt the need to reverse current trends to the contrary, while silence about it may indicate that he took the cohesion of the group for granted.

¹⁶³ Pohl, 'Historiography of Disillusion'.

Historiography does not offer a mirror image of identities that unquestionably existed outside the author's scriptorium, but is a part of the ongoing efforts of constructing, modifying, or undermining identities.

Histories of Peoples, States, and Countries

The focus of many of the histories discussed in this volume, and thus also of the respective chapters, is on large, inclusive social groups and their leaders: the Chinese Empire or sub-imperial dynastic realms into which it had split; the Sasanian Empire; the caliphate; the Byzantine Empire; and the Carolingian realm. It also addresses some of the smaller groups that operated beyond their frontiers, or on their territories as autonomous units or as new powers in periods of imperial decline. Many works could be classed as imperial histories, although they revolved around precarious empires. They dealt with polities, but were not simply political histories. The allegiances and identities that mattered could be imperial or political, yet they could also refer to a — well-established or emergent — people, to a political elite, a tribal system (South Arabia), a region (Lotharingia), a religious creed or institution (Syrian Christendoms), a cultural tradition (pre-Islamic Persia), memories of past polities (Visigothic Spain), and in most cases, aggregates of some of these forms of identification.

Most (though not all) of the historical works addressed in this volume could be classed as 'national histories' or 'state histories' (Syriac and Yemeni historiography are the main exceptions). Yet that is a rather vague and possibly misleading label. 'National history' is a very European concept, bringing the early history of peoples and polities in line with the supposedly equivalent modern nations, and not very adequate for Islamic and other Asian histories. It is, however, hard to replace. As I wrote elsewhere, 'the focus of these histories fluctuates between the people, the polity, its territory and its Church. Authors do not necessarily distinguish between these forms of identification'.¹⁶⁴ As the selection of exemplary topics in this volume shows, imperial, post-imperial, sub-imperial, and clearly non-imperial histories share many features, and probing into these case studies from the point of view of 'identity' is a useful approach to detect such common features (as in the points sketched above).

No clear typology emerges from the comparative discussion attempted here, and that comes as no surprise. Many emerging communities used historiography to create a sense of their past 'with verve and a sense of urgency'.¹⁶⁵ Some

¹⁶⁴ Pohl, 'Debating Ethnicity'.

¹⁶⁵ Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, pp. 8–9.

of these historiographic enterprises were hugely ambitious, such as the work of the Tang office of historiography, the historical collections guided by Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus in Byzantium or the *History* of al-Ṭabarī. Relatively small communities could hold on to their identities under pressure from superior powers, such as the Syrian churches or the Christian kingdoms of northern Spain. Other creations of identity happened in series of almost casual remarks reflecting particular political interests, such as the invention of the Lotharingians; or they represent an ‘art of forgetting’ such as the Islamic ‘writing over’ the Sasanian past. Some of the most interesting works were rather idiosyncratic creations, for instance al-Hamdānī’s *al-Iklīl*. These are just examples of the different forms that works of history could take towards the end of the first millennium. Whether such histories focused on the rule of Chinese dynasties, on the meaning of being an Iranian Muslim, on the genealogies of the tribes of Yemen, on the role of Syrian or Iberian Christian communities in the history of salvation, on the glorious imperial past of the Byzantine Romans, on the deeds of the Goths or the Franks, or on the precarious situation in the former heartland of the Carolingian empire implied particular historiographic choices. Yet these invariably tell us something about the dynamics of identification in often difficult political landscapes. We owe a number of very pertinent insights to the fascinating case studies presented in the chapters of this book.

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