

Empires and Communities *in the* Post-Roman and Islamic World, c. 400–1000 CE



Edited by

WALTER POHL AND RUTGER KRAMER

EMPIRES AND COMMUNITIES IN THE
POST-ROMAN AND ISLAMIC WORLD,
C. 400–1000 CE

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Contents

Preface	vii
List of Contributors	ix
1. Introduction: Empires and Communities in the Post-Roman and Islamic World <i>Walter Pohl and Rutger Kramer</i>	1
2. The Emergence of New Polities in the Breakup of the Abbasid Caliphate <i>Hugh Kennedy</i>	14
3. The Emergence of New Polities in the Breakup of the Western Roman Empire <i>Walter Pohl</i>	28
4. Comparative Perspectives: Differences between the Dissolution of the Abbasid Caliphate and the Western Roman Empire <i>Walter Pohl and Hugh Kennedy</i>	64
5. Fragmentation and Integration: A Response to the Contributions by Hugh Kennedy and Walter Pohl <i>Peter Webb</i>	76
6. Historicizing Resilience: The Paradox of the Medieval East Roman State—Collapse, Adaptation, and Survival <i>John Haldon</i>	89
7. Processions, Power, and Community Identity: East and West <i>Leslie Brubaker and Chris Wickham</i>	121

8. Death of a Patriarch: The Murder of Yūḥannā ibn Jamī (d. 966) and the Question of “Melkite” Identity in Early Islamic Palestine <i>Daniel Reynolds</i>	188
9. Diversity and Convergence: The Accommodation of Ethnic and Legal Pluralism in the Carolingian Empire <i>Stefan Esders and Helmut Reimitz</i>	227
10. Franks, Romans, and Countrymen: Imperial Interests, Local Identities, and the Carolingian Conquest of Aquitaine <i>Rutger Kramer</i>	253
11. From the Sublime to the Ridiculous: Yemeni Arab Identity in Abbasid Iraq <i>Peter Webb</i>	283
12. Loyal and Knowledgeable Supporters: Integrating Egyptian Elites in Early Islamic Egypt <i>Petra M. Sijpesteijn</i>	329
13. Concluding Thoughts: Empires and Communities <i>Chris Wickham</i>	360
Bibliography	367
Index	437

Preface

THIS volume is the result of a memorable collaborative effort. The authors of the chapters met in Vienna four times to discuss topics, presentations, and drafts of papers, in order to arrive at a more differentiated picture of the relationship between late antique and early medieval empires and particular communities within their range of control. Specialists in the late antique/early medieval West, Byzantium, and the early Islamic period contributed their different perspectives on the Roman Empires in East and West and the Umayyad/Abbasid caliphates. Rather than using a strict common grid of questions and criteria, we worked with the different angles that emerged from a divergent source base and disciplinary state of the art, and we explored differences and commonalities resulting from the various case studies. It was an intellectually stimulating venture, and we hope that readers will be able to share some of this experience.

This collaboration was made possible by a large interdisciplinary project funded by the Austrian Research Council, Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung in Österreich (FWF): *Visions of Community: Comparative Approaches to Ethnicity, Region and Empire in Christianity, Islam and Buddhism (400–1600 CE)* (VISCOM) F 42–G 18, a Spezialforschungsbereich (SFB) that was active from 2011 to 2019 and involved medieval history, social anthropology, Islamic studies, and Buddhist studies. It was based both at the University of Vienna and at the Austrian Academy of Sciences. The working group was hosted by the Institute for Medieval Research of the Austrian Academy. The editors are grateful to all institutions involved, and especially to Nicola Edelmann for her tireless efforts helping to bring this volume to fruition.

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Introduction

Empires and Communities in the Post-Roman and Islamic World

Walter Pohl and Rutger Kramer

EMPIRES are not an underresearched topic. Recently, in fact, there has been a veritable surge in comparative and conceptual studies, not least of pre-modern empires.¹ The distant past can tell us much about the fates of empires that may still be relevant today, and contemporary historians as well as the general public are mostly aware of that. Tracing the general development of an empire, we can discern an imperial dynamic that follows the momentum of expansion, relies on the structures and achievements of the formative period for a while, and tends to be caught in a downward spiral at some point. Yet single cases differ so much that any general model is bound to falter under closer scrutiny.

There is, in fact, little consensus about what exactly constitutes an empire, and it has become standard in publications about empires to note the profusion of definitions. Some refer to size—for instance Peter Turchin, who suggested it refers to states “greater than a million square kilometers.”² Apart from that, many scholars offer more or less extensive lists of qualitative criteria.³ Some of these criteria reflect the imperial dynamic, for instance, the imposition of some kind of unity through “an imperial project,” which allows moving broad populations “from coercion through co-optation to cooperation and identification.”⁴ Some catalogs of criteria practically exclude most premodern empires (did any of them successfully impose a monopoly of violence?). Others allow including a rather broad range of ancient and medieval polities. The definition given by Burbank and Cooper is quite adequate for empires in the pre-modern era: “Empires are large political units, expansionist or with a memory of power extended over

1. See, e.g., Eisenstadt, *Political Systems*; Pagden, *Peoples*; Roy, *Ordinary Person's Guide*; Münkler, *Imperien*; Morris and Scheidel, eds., *Dynamics*; Mutschler and Mittag, eds., *Conceiving*; Scheidel, ed., *Rome*; Bang and Bayly, eds., *Tributary Empires*; Bang and Kolodziejczyk, eds., *Universal Empire*; Gehler and Rollinger, eds., *Imperien*; Duindam et al., eds., *Prince*; Gehler and Rollinger, eds., *Empires*.
2. Turchin, “Theory,” p. 192; or “a state established by conquest that has sovereignty over subcontinental or continental sized territories and incorporates millions or tens of millions of people within a unified and centralized administrative system” (Barfield, “Shadow Empires,” p. 29).
3. Münkler, *Imperien*; Gehler and Rollinger, “Imperien,” pp. 3–8.
4. Barfield, “Shadow Empires,” pp. 30–33.

space, polities that maintain distinction and hierarchy as they incorporate new people.”⁵ In any case, it is important to note that there is no qualitative difference between empires and large states but rather a continuum, as Chris Wickham notes in his conclusion to the present volume.

The main interests of most comparative studies have been synthesized in four key questions by Haldon and Goldstone in their introduction to *The Dynamics of Ancient Empires*: “How did they come into being? How did they survive? What was the structure of military/political and ideological power relations that facilitated this (or not)? And what was their economic basis in respect of the production, distribution and consumption of wealth and also of the expansion of the base upon which wealth could be generated?”⁶ Other scholars would certainly add the problem of the fall of empires as a fifth question.⁷ The present book mainly addresses the third question. We would like to highlight two aspects of that issue here.

One aspect is the connection between “military/political power” on the one hand and “ideological power” on the other. How are these linked? There is no doubt that political, military, and economic aspects of power relations carry great explicatory weight if we want to understand the workings of premodern empires. “Ideology” is a shorthand term often used to explain how an empire wins the loyalty and shapes the cognition of the people, a necessary condition to maintain its rule.⁸ The concept of ideology has the advantage of including the impact of ideas in its definition. In this sense, the current scholarly opinion may be summed up as: if it does not work, it is not ideology.⁹ However, all this presupposes that “ideology” is a conscious and coherent construct; this surely makes sense for many modern political ideologies, but it somehow limits the range of the concept for the study of the distant past. For instance, it seems safe to say that the Roman Empire propagated an explicit, well-designed, and highly visible imperial ideology. Yet this ideology of empire was set in a much wider context of attitudes, values, creeds, and convictions concerning what could be said and done and what was true and false. For many purposes, it may therefore be more appropriate to speak of discourses (in a Foucauldian sense) informed by cultural resources, which an empire could only modulate and control to a limited extent.¹⁰ Ideological constructs such as identity politics, othering, and the propagation of certain allegiances over others only worked on the basis of such wider discourses.

5. Burbank and Cooper, *Empires*, p. 8.

6. Haldon and Goldstone, “Introduction.” Their questions echo, for instance, the four “sources of social power” identified by Mann, *Sources of Social Power*, pp. 22–33.

7. Gueniffey and Lentz, eds., *La fin*; Pohl and Wieser, eds., *Shadows*.

8. Minar, “Ideology”; Hawkes, *Ideology*; Owen, *Clash*.

9. See Mullins, “On the Concept.”

10. Foucault, *Lordre*; Foucault, “Discourse.”

Most chapters of this book choose an integral or even holistic approach to this conceptual challenge, in which interests and identities, power and ideology, discourses and practices are treated as deeply entangled phenomena. Many of the source texts we have worked with were biased in their accounts of the workings of empire and its relations with particular communities. There is a wide range here, between the exceptional documentary evidence preserved in the papyri used by Petra Sijpesteijn and the mock partisan poems analyzed by Peter Webb in their chapters. Yet all of these texts “happened” in the real world, as an integral part of social practices. They were shaped by the social dynamic of their environment and left their mark on it.

The second important point is the relational element in the third question posed by Haldon and Goldstone: an empire is based on “power relations.” Much research on empires concentrates on the agency of empires (or their eventual loss of it). In his classic 1986 book, Michael Doyle already conceived of empires in terms of power relations between imperial centers and peripheries and argued that in the long term, there was a dynamic in which the core area could hardly avoid empowering its peripheries until it would eventually lose its hold on them.¹¹ Such power relations are a central theme of this book. However, we do not frame them in a center-periphery model. Empires need to relate with groups and communities across their territory, cater to their interests to some extent, and channel their activities into their own web of power. Their rule depends on acceptance and cooperation as much as on force and imposition.

This book deals with the ways empires affect smaller communities—for instance, ethnic groups, religious communities, local or peripheral populations—and how their activities reflect back on the imperial superstructure. This enterprise is set in the conceptual frame of the “Visions of Community” project (see the preface). It raises the question of how these different types of community were integrated into the larger edifice of empire and in which contexts the dialectic between empires and particular communities could cause disruption. How did religious discourses or practices reinforce (or subvert) imperial pretenses? How were constructions of identity affected in the process? The time frame is roughly between the fifth and tenth centuries CE, a period with a particular dynamic of empires in Europe and the Middle East. While successive parts of the Roman Empire eroded, its Byzantine core areas (“the Empire that would not die,” as John Haldon put it)¹² showed a surprising resilience. Islamic expansion led to a succession of caliphates in a wide area previously dominated by the Roman and Sasanian Empires. The Franks, meanwhile, attempted to recreate a Western Roman Empire, albeit with limited success. The period is thus exceptionally well suited for studying the various expansive and erosive dynamics of empires and

11. Doyle, *Empires*.

12. Haldon, *Empire*.

their interaction with smaller communities. How were Egyptians accommodated under Islamic rule, Yemenis included in an Arab identity, Aquitanians integrated into the Carolingian Empire, Christians in the caliphate?¹³ Why did the dissolution of Western Rome lead to the emergence of ethnically denominated kingdoms, while the breakup of the Abbasid caliphate produced mostly dynastic realms?¹⁴ How did the Byzantine elites preserve their empire in the seventh century, and how did the Franks go about constructing theirs in the ninth?¹⁵ How did processions in early medieval Rome and Constantinople promote social integration in both a local and a broader framework?¹⁶ In a sense, this book is not so much about empires as about the different sub- and post-imperial realities that emerge in them. The focus is on the social worlds of groups of people that have to come to terms with empires, and vice versa. Under what conditions do empires manage to integrate particular communities that are closer to the hearts and minds of their members? And when do they lose control?

In this book, these questions are addressed from a comparative perspective, by looking at three areas: the Latin West, Byzantium, and the early Islamic world. The volume does not aim at an overall model but at mid-range comparison that does not take the West (and its notions of empire) as a conceptual benchmark. It is the work of an international research group uniting some of the best scholars in their respective fields, who came together in yearly meetings between 2013 and 2017 to develop the research questions and discuss successive drafts of the papers. Such an enterprise does not lead to a homogeneous block of papers carefully trimmed to fit a common grid. We believe that in this case they should not, either. This is a volume intended to open debates rather than give a conclusive overview about an issue. Still, the chapters reverberate with the discussions we had in those years, and it is possible to detect a common spirit in them. Although the authors come from different disciplines and have chosen different “plots” for their chapters—from case studies of single events to problem-oriented syntheses of large issues—they share an approach that is close to the sources but open to larger, current, and new issues in the historical disciplines.

Some of the broader issues in global medieval studies deserve a brief discussion here, not least because they are far from consensual in the field at large. A first issue is the “Global Middle Ages.”¹⁷ In its title, the 2019 meeting of the Medieval Academy of America proclaimed “The Global Turn in Medieval Studies.” Medieval history has been late to open up to the prospects of global history.¹⁸ Now this has become a wide and fast-expanding field and has raised

13. See the contributions by Petra Sijpesteijn, Peter Webb, Rutger Kramer, and Daniel Reynolds in this volume.

14. See the contributions by Walter Pohl and Hugh Kennedy.

15. See the contributions by John Haldon and by Helmut Reimitz and Stefan Esders.

16. See the contribution by Chris Wickham and Leslie Brubaker.

17. See Holmes and Standen, eds., *Global Middle Ages*.

18. For global history in general, see, e.g., Belich et al., *Prospect*; Inglebert, *Histoire universelle*.

rather diverging expectations.¹⁹ It has enormous potential to open up rather self-contained fields of research, not least in European history, and transcend “methodological nationalism.”²⁰ There are, however, several reasons why working in this field may be controversial. Research on relations between Europe and the Islamic world is particularly delicate in the present political situation. More general, as scholars trained in Europe or the United States, we have acquired a particular form of historical consciousness and of perception of the Other. Postcolonial theory, critical race theory, and similar paradigmatic approaches have offered ways in which researchers can position themselves as they approach the histories of Asia or Africa and adapt their language and preconceptions accordingly. We have chosen a rather soft approach to these challenges. We are aware of the paradox of overcoming Eurocentrism as scholars working in Europe or the United States and remain critical of the social and political context in which we pursue our research. Yet, in order to effectively communicate with one another and across disciplines, we cannot step outside the research settings in which we operate. We hope for the transformative power of good research accompanied by a thorough reflection of its goals, assumptions, and methods and conducted within a community that openly discusses its approaches and results with a healthy dose of scholarly self-awareness.

Second, this has important methodological implications. The study of foreign “cultures” has been linked, since the Enlightenment period, to implicit judgments on their “backwardness” by European standards of “progress” and “civilization.”²¹ As research since Edward Said has shown, “orientalism” is not limited to negative views of non-Europeans. Even positive perceptions and prejudices may serve to essentialize Afro-Asian societies as seemingly static, ahistorical units unfit for European-style progress.²² It has been argued that comparison as a scholarly method inescapably reifies non-European “cultures” as objects of Western perceptions. Instead of comparison, connectivity and hybridity should be in our focus to write a “*histoire croisée*,” an entangled history of the world.²³ To an extent, the present volume offers approaches to an entangled history of imperial and post-imperial situations between Aachen and Fustat, Constantinople and Shiraz, but it also addresses issues of comparison. Of course, we have to take fuzziness and flux, complexity and hybridity into account in research about empires, communities, and identities. Yet acknowledging the fluidity and hybridity of past communities does not mean that they were all essentially subject to the same historical processes everywhere or that their differences did not matter. In particular, that should not make it impossible to engage in wide-range comparison. Differences mattered,

19. For an excellent introduction, see Holmes and Standen, “Introduction.”

20. Wimmer and Glick-Schiller, “Methodological Nationalism.”

21. Luhmann, “Kultur”; Geertz, “Impact.”

22. Said, *Orientalism*; Varisco, *Reading*; Wolf, *Europe*.

23. Werner and Zimmermann, eds., *De la comparaison*; Werner and Zimmermann, “Beyond Comparison.”

between individuals as between macro-regions and their societies, and it should be possible to focus on them in research—of course, considering that they could change over time and rarely followed the boundaries drawn on historical maps.

The methodological road maps that we can follow to avoid reifying units of comparison are still in the making.²⁴ It is clear that we should not depart from a fixed notion of “the” West and “the” Islamic world, which we could then confidently reaffirm by accommodating all sorts of differences detected in our research in this bipolar scheme. Neither do we take our cue from grand narratives such as “The Great Divergence” or “The Axial Age,” which risk leading to self-perpetuating, circular debates. In this volume, we start with precisely defined phenomena in particular macro-regions and explore lines of comparison that are compatible with the source base and the historical context on all sides of the equation. This overall frame of comparison may sometimes be “the Roman Empire” and the “caliphate” if the focus is, for instance, on imperial strategies or dynamics. Yet on such an inclusive level, internal differences and hybridity within these units tend to come in the way of significant results of the overall comparison. Mid-range comparison works best if it addresses comparable structures or situations that are accessible through comparable sources. In our discussions, we first strove for a much closer comparison between several case studies of integrating Egypt and Syrian Christians into the caliphate, Yemenis into an Arab identity, Jews into the Fāṭimid state (a contribution that unfortunately did not arrive in time), barbarians into the post-Roman world, and Aquitaine and the eastern duchies into the Carolingian Empire, and of keeping Anatolia integrated within Byzantium. Yet in following the traces of the integration of a particular community into an empire or what remains of it, what productive questions are largely follows the availability of adequate sources. For instance, Egypt is unique in the period for its rich and partly unexplored textual record in papyri, on which Petra Sijpesteijn can base her account of the vicissitudes of integration into an Islamic empire. A similarly differentiated history of the fates of local elites in a new empire could not have been written about any other region of the period. Therefore, it seemed more promising to avoid referring to a more elaborate grid of comparative questions and get a richer and more varied picture of the different case studies instead by going back to the sources first, and worry about comparability second. The chapters by Pohl and Kennedy, organized around a more narrowly defined axis of comparison—the role of ethnicity in the emergence of post-imperial powers in the late Roman West and in the tenth-century Abbasid caliphate—provide an example of direct comparison, with its great potential and its limits. We sought to round off the comparison with a joint conclusion and a response by Peter Webb.

A third controversial issue in the field of the “Global Middle Ages” is language. The terminology generally used in historical studies on communities and

24. See Gingrich, “Comparative Methods.”

states poses a particular challenge, not least because we often use terms that are current in everyday language or carry specific (and sometimes harmful) political connotations. Problems arise because of their political and ideological overtones but also because, due to their public use, they are hard to define, and their meanings are often opaque or contradictory. They also tend to project modern ideas (for instance, about the state) into the past. Among these loaded terms, “ethnicity” and “identity” are both heavily used in contemporary identity politics.²⁵ “Ethnicity” is often understood as a biological given into which one is born, whereas most recent research has brought out its constructed and negotiable character.²⁶ Some scholars tend to exaggerate its fluidity and malleability, while others advocate avoiding both badly defined terms and, even better, the entire field of unpleasantly atavistic affiliations. Remarkably, both “identity” and “ethnicity” have only spread in the mid-twentieth century, in order to replace even more loaded terms such as “race,” “tribe,” or “*Volk*.” Replacing them by yet other words or, worse, returning to the old ones, would not change much in the tormented character of the social field, which makes it so important an issue to study. “Religion” is almost as problematic, mainly because it tends to project a Christian model of what religion means onto other belief systems that are often much more restricted to cultic practices or to ideas of salvation or liberation from worldly concerns.²⁷ And it may project Enlightenment ideas about the separation of religious and lay spheres into the past. Similar, if so far slightly less controversial, debates have concerned “culture,” “the state,” and, of course, “community.”²⁸

Finally, “Middle Ages”/“medieval” has been challenged, both as a meaningful category for the history of Europe,²⁹ and even more so, for Asia or Africa.³⁰ The problem of periodization has three aspects. First, the modern European notion of “medieval” still carries overtones of a teleology of progress, so that in popular use, it marks outdated, irrational, or atavistic behavior. Yet that is hardly what medievalists think about the period. Second, it may imply an inner coherence of the period (“an age of faith” or similar) that can be misleading. It may inadvertently de-emphasize other aspects of society. For instance, choosing “religion” as the phenomenon that defines “the medieval” risks losing sight of economic connections that spanned the globe, whereas an overemphasis on pre-Columbian exchange networks may, conversely, lead to an almost mechanistic vision of the Silk Route economy without taking into account the complexities of the communities linked to it. And third, overall global periodization will be necessarily fuzzy, at least at the edges, in most regions. Still, these problems of

25. Pohl, “Introduction: Meanings.”

26. Pohl, “Introduction: Strategies.”

27. Fitzgerald, “Critique.” See also Tolan, “*Lex Alterius*.”

28. Pohl, “Comparing.”

29. Reuter, “Medieval”; LeGoff, *Must We Divide*; Jussen, “Wer falsch spricht.”

30. Davis and Altschul, eds., *Medievalisms*; Bauer, *Warum es kein islamisches Mittelalter gab*.

misconception are not unavoidable. There is some pragmatic use in a “weak” periodization with flexible boundaries according to region and the topic of research. Catherine Holmes and Naomi Standen have recently argued strongly for a pragmatic use of the concept and suggested looking at the period on its own terms—not as a necessary contrast or prequel to modernity but as an “Age of Experiment” and of intensification, “characterized by networks, mobility, mediation, interaction,” and diversity.³¹

Readers will realize that we have not avoided loaded terms and concepts in this book. Loaded terms and fraught concepts are usually an indicator that the subject matter continues to be relevant today, and there is no easy way out of that. Convincing alternatives are rarely suggested. To replace the concept of “identity” by seven different, more specific terms, as suggested by Brubaker and Cooper, is not very practical, either.³² Conversely, avoiding the entire field of study (because communities are only “culturally constructed” anyway) is no solution: why should we want to ignore all “imagined communities” because they are not “really” real, when it has been made abundantly clear that communities become “real” by virtue of being “imagined”?³³ We have to be aware that these terms may be misunderstood, and we have to be careful not to smuggle in unwarranted assumptions by using them. It can be very productive to look for more precise, “low-threshold” terms to be used instead of the broader ones or try to frame the question differently by choosing a different conceptual angle, but that does not always work well. There may be many “wrong” ways to speak as a scholar about controversial fields, but there are no unquestionably “right” ways that anyone can prescribe.

The chronological range addressed in this volume is rich in controversial debates. In Europe and the Middle East, it is marked by several developments that have had an impact on the modern order of these regions: the Christianization of Europe; the rise of a plurality of post-Roman peoples and states in the West; the different development of Western and Orthodox Christendom; the spread of Islam; and the Arabization of much of the Middle East and Northern Africa. These processes have rarely been studied in conjunction, although they are all inextricably linked. Debates about the “transformation of the Roman world” or about the rise and decline of the caliphate have mostly been conducted within their respective fields. That has been particularly inadequate in the case of the Western Roman Empire, because its dissolution was often regarded as “the” Fall of Rome, without paying much attention to the continuing fortunes of the eastern half of the empire, inhabited by mostly Greek-speaking “Rhomaioi.”³⁴

31. Holmes and Standen, “Introduction,” pp. 15–20, 41–44.

32. Brubaker and Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity,’” pp. 14–21. For a balanced critique, see Jenkins, *Social Identity*, pp. 12–16.

33. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 6; see also Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*.

34. For an overview of debates, see Pohl, “Rome.”

Only recently has a wider perspective on the fundamental changes that marked the end of Roman domination over most of the Mediterranean gained ground, not least by the work of some of the authors of the present volume.³⁵ The comparative perspective offered in this volume allows us to identify some of the elements that drove these transformations.

This volume looks at several scenarios in which integration or disintegration of empires was at stake. Its contributions have many aspects in common with others or invite comparison between them. For instance, the chapters on the dissolution of the Western Empire and of the Abbasid caliphate embark on a direct comparison of two processes that show surprising parallels but also characteristically different outcomes: Hugh Kennedy (chapter 2, “The Emergence of New Polities in the Breakup of the Abbasid Caliphate”) and Walter Pohl (chapter 3, “The Emergence of New Polities in the Breakup of the Western Roman Empire”) compare the dissolution of the Western Roman Empire and of the Abbasid Caliphate. Kennedy presents a general overview of the role of ethnic groups and tribes in the early Islamic world. The sources of the period are very much concerned with tribal identities and genealogies and with ethnic differences. Yet, in spite of the literary styling and the significance of tribes in internal politics, none of them carved out a lasting tribal dominion. In the second part of the chapter, Kennedy addresses the more straightforwardly ethnic groups within the caliphate, principally Armenians, Kurds, and Iranians. Of these, only the Armenians developed strong potentials for identification, which were closely connected to their country, their brand of Christian religion, and their language and script. At the other end of the spectrum, no strong common identity of the Kurds emerged in the premodern period, although there were some successful Kurdish dynasties and rulers (such as Saladin, whose empire was never considered Kurdish). From among the multitude of possible identifications available to the populations in the early Islamic world (religious, tribal, linguistic, cultural, or urban), ethnicity thus did not have a specific impact on the constitution of states.

The chapter by Pohl explores the manifold meanings of ethnicity in the post-Roman West. The Romans, who regarded themselves as a *populus* defined by law, categorized the surrounding *gentes* by descent. These distinctions remained but were modified by the impact of Christianity in each of the new kingdoms. The new religion endorsed ethnic identities of the new peoples who ruled over former imperial provinces and gave new meanings to the “ethnic” law codes and the political prerogatives of new barbarian warrior elites. Historiography endowed these peoples with political agency. The sense of common origin of these rather composite groups was flexible enough for them to form loose aggregates of ethnic, political, territorial, and religious identities that could provide some stability of

35. Wickham, *Framing*; Haldon, *Empire*; Sijpesteijn, *Shaping*; Pohl, Gantner, and Payne, eds., *Visions*.

identification. A joint conclusion by Pohl and Kennedy identifies ten elements in which differences between the roles of ethnicity in the process of imperial devolution become visible, in the context of partly striking parallels. The result of the comparison is a complex web of similarities and differences, in which rather different outcomes are the result not of any deep-seated alterity between the two societies but of varieties in the combination of mostly quite similar conditions. Adding to the complexity of the issue, finally, is the commentary by Peter Webb (chapter 5, “Fragmentation and Integration: A Response”), in which the contemporary frameworks for expressing notions of unity and diversity are brought to the fore.

John Haldon (chapter 6, “Historicizing Resilience: The Paradox of the Medieval East Roman State—Collapse, Adaptation, and Survival”) introduces the concept of “resilience” and offers various ways in which this can be used to understand sociopolitical frameworks within which empires and communities move through history. Haldon does this by applying C. S. Holling’s Theory of Adaptive Change to the idea of the “collapse” of the Byzantine Empire in the face of the rise of the caliphate. By showing the persistence of institutions and the adaptability of the identities of the people living in frontier zones and contextualizing them in a larger—and quite unyielding—ecosystem, Haldon argues for a more holistic approach to questions of collapse, conquest, and continuity. Whether or not a political institution collapsed or was brought to its knees by outside forces is invariably the result of a dynamic interplay of a great number of phenomena and not simply the result of military contingency, after all.

Leslie Brubaker and Chris Wickham (chapter 7, “Processions, Power, and Community Identity: East and West”) look at the different ways in which processions (liturgical, triumphal, or otherwise) strengthened the social cohesion among participants and onlookers alike. Processions are an important phenomenon in this regard. As they are happening, they become flashpoints for imperial or religious authority, highly public events that serve to remind everybody involved of the social and hierarchical makeup of society. At the same time, their prescriptions and descriptions—everything from panegyrics exalting the organization to the routes to be followed within and around a city—latch on to long tradition and emphasize that any given procession is, in fact, part of a much longer process. In the right hands, processions may anchor a community to an even larger social whole by means of the persons, institutions, and buildings involved. Conversely, their highly public nature also makes them exponents for social change, whether at the hands of the authorities themselves or of those who find themselves on the outside looking in. Comparing the uses and development of this phenomenon in both the Eastern and Western Mediterranean, this chapter sheds a refreshing light on the many practices of community in the (post-)Roman world, at times uniform but also highly diversified by necessity.

Daniel Reynolds (chapter 8, “Death of a Patriarch: The Murder of Yūḥannā ibn Jamī [†966] and the Question of ‘Melkite’ Identity in Early Islamic Palestine”) latches on to the observations made by Brubaker and Wickham and applies them to a singular, highly public event set in the volatile world of tenth-century Jerusalem. The murder of the Melkite patriarch during the urban Eastern liturgy of 966, as well as the way it was subsequently described, not only becomes a case study for the treatment of the Christian community in Palestine but also analyzes the way different identities could be politicized to serve the needs of local powerbrokers dealing with an overarching empire.

Stefan Esders and Helmut Reimitz (chapter 9, “Diversity and Convergence: The Accommodation of Ethnic and Legal Pluralism in the Carolingian Empire”) apply a similar concept to the rise of the Carolingian Empire and how the new ruling dynasty dealt with the reality of Frankish and other identities within its realm. Charlemagne and his legal advisers reinforced a legal pluralism that had grown out of the Roman Empire and had been further developed under the Merovingian predecessors of the Carolingian rulers. In this process, the legitimization of acts of legislation depended less and less on centralized authority or office-holders. They were mainly based on agreements between rulers and groups through which authority was acknowledged in exchange for the confirmation or grants of rights and privileges for specific groups and individuals. The accommodation of this kind of legal pluralism was already framed in ethnic terms in the course of the seventh century under the Merovingian kings. The interdependence of claims of ethnic identity and legal status, however, came to be intensified in the context of the Carolingian rise to power in the eighth century. But the increasing politicization of ethnic traditions and communities and their legal rights and claims also worked against the political integration of Carolingian rule. The elites of Alamans, Bavarians, Thuringians, Lombards, and others now also emphasized their own customs and rights vis-à-vis the new Frankish kings. The imperial framework allowed for accommodating all these different claims along with the variety of Frankish ones in a Christian-imperial framework. Esders and Reimitz note an interesting paradox: whereas the Carolingians used an imagined Frankish identity upon which to build their empire, the very expedient of highlighting this ethnic identity catalyzed the fragmentation of the empire as a whole; as the core was strengthened, more peripheral communities used those same mechanisms to find a voice of their own.

A specific case study that brings together these themes of resilience and adaptation, empire, and ethnicity, Rutger Kramer’s chapter 10 (“Franks, Romans, and Countrymen: Imperial Interests, Local Identities, and the Carolingian Conquest of Aquitaine”) zooms in on the various mechanisms employed to integrate the semi-independent polity of Aquitaine into the emerging Carolingian realm—and to deal with their significance in the sources composed in retrospect. Basing his

examination around the “official” absorption of the duchy in 767/8, Kramer looks at the various modes of identification not only employed by Aquitanians, but also visible within Carolingian chronicles, capitularies, and hagiographical narratives as they tried to make sense of this region, which was rich in Roman history but had a population keenly aware of its Visigothic and Basque roots as well.

Peter Webb (chapter 11, “From the Sublime to the Ridiculous: Yemeni Arab Identity in Abbasid Iraq”) looks at various expressions of identity and identification within a community that encompassed various groups vying for power and influence. Even if they were only loosely connected to whatever being Yemeni in South Arabia might mean, a Yemeni (“Southerner”) faction in the centers of Abbasid power launched a hefty polemic against Northern Arabs. Analyzing the multivalent uses of the designation of an identity as being “Yemeni,” especially in poetry composed around the Abbasid court, Webb shows that it was precisely the rich history attached to this name that made it a flexible tool in the hands of skilled authors commenting on the world around them. Polemical strategies of identification could be employed in seriously vying for political influence but also for courtly entertainment. Webb shows that in a society where everybody was aware of the layers of meaning underlying such markers of identification, no single definition encompasses any of them, and no source should be taken for granted.

Petra Sijpesteijn (chapter 12, “Loyal and Knowledgeable Supporters: Integrating Egyptian Elites in Early Islamic Egypt”) takes the volume full circle by showing different ways in which the imposition of an imperial political structure—especially one for which “religion” is a major constituent of the court’s self-understanding—affects the makeup of more localized communities with histories predating the arrival of the new authorities. In so doing, she highlights another aspect of the issue underpinning this volume, namely, the way central authorities conceived of the reality of a multitude of communities under their sway—and how the way these communities themselves chose to work with or against the newcomers affected ideas about the empires as they were being built. Sijpesteijn argues that the new regime initially relied on the services of the local elites without seriously affecting social roles and identities. Therefore, these elites were slow to be fully integrated into the Muslim and Arab community, while Arabs became more “Egyptian” in their outlook. Interests and identities were linked in a process that left many options open to those who could afford to choose them.

As also highlighted in the conclusion by Chris Wickham (chapter 13, “Concluding Thoughts: Empires and Communities”), several common themes emerge from these chapters. They all address questions of what holds communities together and what explains their resilience against outward pressure or foreign rule. They highlight the ways in which empires engage with the plurality of populations under their sway and can thrive on their inner multiplicity. They also

show that imperial hegemony is always precarious and based on a swift handling of political, economic, and cultural resources. Some of the chapters expose the centrifugal dynamics that threaten imperial cohesion and analyze strategies to maintain control. The theme of identity plays a role throughout the volume, whether as a strategy for identification of groups exposed to imperial domination, as a dialectic of inclusion and exclusion, or as a form of cultural capital created by an imperial project. Many contributions give pride of place to the role of Christianity and Islam within the deeply entangled aggregates of politics and religion that the powerful belief in a revealed and ultimate truth created. The volume shares an integrated approach, balancing basic socioeconomic insights with an awareness of the forces of discourse and cultural patterns. It shows how in different historical scenarios, similar processes could lead to different results. It does not aim for a wholesale comparison of “East” and “West,” of Islamic and Christian societies but for a deeper understanding of the way communities emerge—and fade away again.

The Emergence of New Polities in the Breakup of the Abbasid Caliphate

Hugh Kennedy

IN the first half of the tenth century, the Abbasid caliphate disintegrated. In the years between 908 and 945, it changed from being a major regional power, ruling the lands from the western border of Egypt in the west to the frontiers of Khurasan in the east with pretensions to universal sovereignty over the Muslim world, to a caliphate whose borders were confined to the Abbasids' half-ruined palace in Baghdad. Political power had been seized by the family of Persian fishermen from the shores of the Caspian Sea.¹

In some ways, this development can be compared to the collapse of Roman rule in the Western Empire during the fifth century. In both cases, we can see the failure of an imperial ideal to bind together different groups, the influence of a military establishment that was as ineffective as it was expensive and whose needs and demands came to dominate the business of state. In both cases, the breakup of empire led to the emergence of new, effectively independent polities and new elites from groups that previously had been excluded from power and influence, such as the Būyid fishermen just mentioned.

But there were significant differences as well. In the West, the end of empire was marked by an influx of new people from beyond the frontiers, groups with new languages and new identities. The tenth century saw no such migrations in the Middle East; not until the coming of the Seljuq Turks and their Ghuzz followers in the mid-eleventh century were there substantial movements of people.² In the West, we can see the gradual emergence of new kingdoms, based on ethnic identities. In the Middle East, this did not happen. New polities certainly emerged, but, with one important exception, Armenia, they were not based on ethnic identities. This was not because there were no ethnic differences: Arabs, Persians, Daylamites, Soghadians, Khwarazmians, Baluchis, Kurds, and Berbers all had some measure of ethnic identity, but none of them formed a lasting state by harnessing these ethnic identities.

1. For an overview of this period, see Kennedy, *Prophet*, pp. 172–294; Kennedy, “Late Abbasid Pattern”; for a good general discussion of allegiances and identities in this period, see Mottahedeh, *Loyalty*.

2. For the early Seljuks, see Peacock, *Great Seljuk Empire*.

This inquiry has an importance that goes beyond questions of medieval history, fascinating though they are. The “failure” to establish viable nation-states in the Middle East, whether in the tenth or the twenty-first century, feeds into a whole orientalist discourse about the political “backwardness” and “failure” of Islamic societies. Part of the argument is that political allegiances were formed and dominated by tribal and sectarian divisions, inevitably considered both pointless and destructive, which prevented the natural and healthy growth of nation-states that had made Western Europe so great.

In this chapter, I shall discuss what identities people did adopt in the confused political society of the tenth-century Middle East, where everyone could see that the old certainties were disappearing but nothing new appeared to replace them, and why these identities did not give rise to states comparable to those of Western Europe half a millennium before. The first section will focus on tribal identities and the circumstances in which they might provide the basis of state formation. I will then turn to legal identities and the contrast between the ethnically based law systems of Western Europe and the law systems of the Middle East, which were based on religious affiliation. The third section will look at Muslim sectarian identities and try to suggest some reasons these did not form the basis of state identities before the coming of the Safavids in sixteenth-century Iran. I shall then address two examples: the Armenians and the Kurds. The Armenians did eventually form the basis of a nation-state; the Kurds did not. Finally, I will deal with the question of Persian and Egyptian identities and why neither of these developed into a national identity.

TRIBAL IDENTITIES

In the first two centuries of Islam, up to the Abbasid Revolution of 750, and in some ways up to the death of Hārūn al-Rashīd in 809, Arab tribal identities were the most important signifiers of status and connection. Nor were Arab tribal identities the only ones in play. The Kurds also had tribal identities that reflected the structures of their often transhumant societies, but they never developed the position in literature and the wider elite culture enjoyed by the celebrated ancient tribes of the Arabs. Tribes play an important, even central, role in the history of the first two centuries of Islamic rule as presented by the Arabic sources.³ Tribal rivalries and conflicts are a major part of the sources’ understanding of this history. There is a developed vocabulary to describe these identities. These words (*‘ashīra*, *ḥayy*, *qabīla*, to name only the most common) are used extensively. However, like much of the lexicography of classical Arabic, it is very difficult to work out any regular rules for the use of these terms or any sort of hierarchy

3. Crone, “Tribe”; Hoyland, *Arabia*, pp. 113–134; Dawod, ed., *Tribus*, with the contribution by Godelier, “À propos des concepts.”

(e.g., whether an *‘ashīra* is larger or smaller than a *qabīla*, or if the differences are regional, temporal, or authorial). What is clear is that they present themselves as the “sons” (*banū*) of a common ancestor, thus Banū Tamīm, indicating and claiming a biological link.

Classical Arabic names, like personal names in late republican Rome, are things of beauty and conveyors of a large amount of information. From the point of view of this discussion, the key element is the *nisba*, which is usually the final element in the name; so in the case of Abū Sa‘īd Yazīd b. Mazyad al-Shaybānī, it is the al-Shaybānī element that is important. *Nisbas* can relate to a tribe (as in this instance) but can also relate to a place of origin or a profession.

The concern with tribal identity gives rise to a vast and complicated schematic literature in which literally thousands of names are listed in complicated genealogical schemes. In Ibn al-Kalbi’s *Jamharat al-nasab* (Compendium of Genealogy) as tabulated by Werner Caskel,⁴ there are some twenty thousand named individuals, all of whom died before the year 800 and all of whom are assigned to their tribal lineages. So far, so good; it is a wonderful schema and pays powerful tribute to the tribal ideal as an organizing principle in society.

But we should not be deluded into believing that this elegant picture reflects the reality of tribal allegiances. For this, we need to seek the help of the social anthropologists of the twentieth century, most important, William Lancaster.⁵ These present a number of challenges to the Ibn al-Kalbī vision. First, this work suggests that for most Bedouins, the limit of genealogical memory is at most five generations; before that, it is vague or nonexistent. The only exceptions to this are certain “sheikhly” lineages that are remembered for longer, because they can be used to legitimize social status.⁶ Even in these cases, the pre-five-generation sections of the genealogy will present only one name in each generation. The effect of this is that people simply do not know how they are related to most other individuals who bear the same tribal *nisba*. Rather than a complicated schema of relations among distant cousins, people tend to resort to “must have been,” genealogies that argue that “we camp together, we tend our animals together, we go on raids or smuggling expeditions together, so we must be related at some point in the past.” That is to say that present relationships of convenience are deemed to have a biological origin because that is how the society works and explains itself.

This gives rise to the idea of what Lancaster calls the “generative genealogy,” that is, that people adopt the tribal identification that suits their needs at the time. Although the tribal network presents itself as biologically determined, it is, in fact, just like any other signifier of identity, a description of where individuals

4. Caskel and Strenziok, *Ġamharat An-Nasab*.

5. Lancaster, *Rwala Bedouin*.

6. See Kennedy, “Arab Genealogical Literature.”

want to place themselves in a wider society. Though there are real constraints of immediate kinship-group memories and perhaps differences of accent and dress, individuals can and do change their tribal identity to suit changing circumstances. Tribal identities are, in fact, the logical expression of social and economic aspirations couched in the language of kinship. They are not irrational, pointless, or destructive but rather working out of important and lasting concerns among the populations that use them. Bearing these considerations in mind, we can see how these genealogical concerns can shed light on behaviors of groups and individuals in the early Islamic world. A few examples must suffice.

The early Islamic conquests had the effect of intensifying tribal links, at least in the short term and at least in Iraq. It might be thought that the opposite would occur, that a new Islamic identity would come to replace tribal affiliations. That this was not the case was, in part at least, the result of the settlement of the Arabs in the garrison cities of Basra and Kufa. For administrative purposes, and above all the purposes of payment, the Arab settlers were divided into tribal groups, the diwans that recorded their names were listed under tribal headings, and the distribution of payment was entrusted to those whom the authorities deemed to be the heads of the tribes. Thus, members of Shaybān who had never had any contact with one another before, now found themselves part of a new tribal community with a common interest in securing their share of resources. In some ways and for some individuals, the conquest and the settlement that followed intensified the importance of tribal identities. In other cases, it did not. In a paper I published with John Haldon, I argued that at the battle of Siffin (656) between the supporters of 'Alī and Mu'āwiya, regional identities (Iraqi and Syrian) essentially overrode tribal bonds, pitching Iraqi Shaybānīs against Syrian Shaybānīs.⁷

When we come to look at the post-Abbasid period in the second half of the tenth century, we see another situation in which Arab tribal identities become important. With the breakup of the Abbasid caliphate, many individuals and families in the Fertile Crescent found themselves looking for new identities after the collapse of the imperial system. At this time, we see the emergence of Arab Bedouin tribes as major political forces. But in the main, they were not the tribes that had been important at the time of the first Arab conquests. A good example is the case of the Banū 'Uqayl, who founded an important dynasty in what is now northern Iraq.⁸ The 'Uqayl were an ancient tribe (at least according to the genealogists) but not a very prominent or numerous one. In the tenth century, however, they came to dominate this area. It is, of course, possible that they bred faster than their neighbors, but this is hardly a sustainable explanation. Much more likely is that an ambitious and successful dynasty of 'Uqayli chiefs attracted followers from many different groups who then defined themselves as 'Uqaylīs

7. Haldon and Kennedy, "Regional Identities."

8. Kennedy, "Uqyalids."

and were welcomed as such. Many may have come from other, less dynamic tribal groups, but there is a further possible explanation. Archaeological and textual evidences point to the abandonment of much of the agricultural settlement in the Jazira in the course of the tenth century,⁹ an abandonment caused in large part by the collapse of the markets for agricultural produce in Baghdad during this period. It may well be that many of the peasant farmers of the area opted to become pastoralists and assimilated to the major nomad tribes of the area, taking their identity and inserting themselves into the tribal genealogy.

DYNASTIC AND SECTARIAN IDENTITIES

The most obvious identities when reading the chronicles of the time are dynastic. History is divided and punctuated by the rise and fall of dynasties, Samanids, Saffarids, Ghaznavids, and so on, a structure that informs medieval sources and continues to be used by modern historians. Dynastic prestige and ancient lineage, especially if connected to the glorious Iranian past and its celebrated ruling family, the Sasanians, provided an important legitimizing discourse for the assumption of power, but it did not create a wider identity. The Samanid dynasty in its heyday was widely respected within and outside the borders of the lands over which it ruled, but the inhabitants did not describe themselves as Samanids any more than the inhabitants of Central Europe in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries would have defined themselves as Habsburgs. If they went to Baghdad, they might say they came from Khurasan or more likely that they came from a city such as Nishapur, Bukhara, or Samarqand.

It is perhaps surprising that religious sectarianism did not play a larger part in state formation in the post-Abbasid period. There were areas—to call them states suggests a formalism and structure that they lacked—that had Shi'ite identities and accepted the authority of an imam from the house of 'Alī, but these only established themselves in remote and poverty-stricken parts of the Muslim world, cut off by deserts and mountains from the wider Muslim world. The Zaydī realms of the small towns and villages of the mountains to the south of the Caspian Sea and of northern Yemen are part of this. Zaydī rule in the Caspian provinces lasted until the sixteenth century, in Yemen until 1962, but as already pointed out, it was religious allegiance rather than ethnic identity that ensured their longevity.

The Fāṭimids established a state first in North Africa and then in Egypt in which the caliph's right to rule was based on his descent from Prophet Muḥammad and his daughter Fāṭima, but this did not result in an Egyptian state with a Shi'ite identity. The Fāṭimids established their new center of government in Cairo and a new center of learning, the Azhar, to elaborate and propagate their ideology, but

9. Berthier, *Peuplement*.

they did not attempt to convert the majority of the population to their beliefs. When Fāṭimid rule collapsed in 1171, Shi'ism almost entirely disappeared in Egypt. It is not until the sixteenth century in Iran that we can see a state whose identity is totally bound up with its sectarian allegiance. Until the sixteenth century, Iran was not in any real sense a Shi'ite country. True, there were Shi'ite groups living there, but they were scattered among the broader population. The Safavids changed all that. In a development strikingly similar to those in Western Europe in the same period, they decided that the religion of the ruling house, Imami Shi'ism, should be the religion of the whole country, *cuius regio eius religio* as expressed in the treaty of Augsburg (1555) at exactly the same time as the Safavids were consolidating their power in Iran. To do so, they had to import scholars, mostly from what is now Lebanon, to construct a coherent ideology. For the first time in Islamic history, a large polity had what was in a real sense a state religion, and this lasted over the next four centuries. Well beyond the fall of the Safavids in 1722, Iranian identity became inextricably linked with Shi'ism, a faith that separated them from their Sunni neighbors, the Ottomans to the west, and the Uzbeks and Afghans to the east, more clearly than any political frontier.

WARLORDS AND WARLORDISM

“Warlordism” is not an elegant word in English (indeed, it may not be a real word at all), but it is a useful basis of discussion. The word can be used in a general way to describe any military leader, but it would be helpful to attempt a more circumscribed definition. A warlord in the tenth-century Middle East was a man who took control of an area and, most important, the revenues it yielded to employ soldiers (*ghilmān*, sing., *ghulām* is the term most often used in this period) to maintain his power. The warlord was essentially a self-made figure, he was not the scion of a well-respected family, there was no ideological or religious foundation of his power, and he was not the leader of a powerful tribe relying on his fellow tribesmen to support him. His power might be impressive, but it was also ephemeral. On the death of the great man, there were no bonds of kinship or faith to hold his followers together, and they scattered to find new paymasters. The swift rise and even swifter fall of the warlord was a characteristic feature of the history of the tenth-century Middle East. The warlord's domain had some of the features of a proto-state, notably the existence of a military force and an apparatus for collecting taxes and tribute, but it had no tribal, ethnic, or religious bonds to hold it together. These were states but essentially one-generation, pop-up states that left no legacy beyond records in ancient chronicles.

A classic example of this sort of warlord was Yūsuf b. Abī Sāj (d. 928).¹⁰ He came from a family of Eastern Iranian origin, but there is no indication that his

10. For a meticulous account of the Sajids, see Madelung, “Banū Sāj.”

followers had any bonds of Iranian ethnic identity. It was his ability to pay rather than any other claims that attracted his followers and retained their services. His brother Muḥammad had established himself as a military leader in the mountainous areas of Armenia and Azerbaijan. On his death, his *ghilmān* rejected the claims of his son and transferred their allegiance to Yūsuf, no doubt reckoning him to be a better paymaster. Yūsuf claimed to be governing on behalf of the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad and made a bargain with the court of the sort that was called *damān*, essentially an agreement to pay some of the revenues to the caliph if and when it suited him. If he failed to pay, which was often, the caliph had the choice of sending a military expedition, expensive and of uncertain outcome, or negotiating a smaller sum. Yūsuf was, to all intents and purposes, an independent ruler. He also conducted an entirely independent policy with the Christian Armenian princes. In the Armenian sources, he is portrayed as a tyrant and oppressor, though reading between the lines, it is clear that he tried to play the princes off against one another. Interestingly, despite the fact that he was a Muslim leader fighting Christian enemies of the faith, he never claimed to be a *ghāzī* or leader of a *jihād*. Although he defined himself, at one level, against the Armenians, his following never claimed any ethnic identity that we can discover. His downfall came when the government of the caliph al-Muqtadir (r. 908–932) persuaded him, with vast sums of money and a free hand in spending it, to leave his upland fastnesses and come to the plains of Iraq, where the Shi'ite Qarāmiṭa rebels were threatening to take Baghdad itself. His troops, used to mountain warfare, were outmaneuvered by the Qarāmiṭa, and he himself was taken prisoner and put to death. His followers were dispersed, and his ephemeral state vanished.

Yūsuf b. Abī Sāj was a characteristic figure of the age, taking advantage of the revenue system to maintain his military power but making no effort, it would seem, to establish a lasting state. Perhaps his career, with its ambiguous relationship with a decaying imperial authority, has more in common with Stilicho or Aetius than with the kings of the Franks or Burgundians.

ARMENIANS AND KURDS

To investigate the nature of ethnic identities in the Middle East during this period, I would like to examine and compare two quasi-ethnic identities and their functions in political life: the Kurdish and the Armenian. The fundamental question is why the Armenians seem to have retained an ethnic identity that defined their political reality for centuries to come, while the Kurds did not, or, to put it another way, why there is now a republic of Armenia and not a republic of Kurdistan. And then the further question: how much of this contrast is the result of events in the tenth century?

Armenian identity has been the subject of much historical discussion, much of it very parti pris, but despite the tendentious nature of many of the claims, there is still a basic reality that merits discussion.¹¹ The first factor must be geography. From the first centuries of the Common Era, if not before, Armenians are to be found in Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus, and there have been populations defining themselves as Armenian in these uplands ever since. This does not mean, of course, that there was always an Armenia with generally recognized borders. In the eleventh century, the Kingdom of Armenia was conquered first by the Byzantines and then by the Seljuq Turks. Many Armenians left their ancestral lands and established themselves in Cilicia in Southern Anatolia, where in due course a new Armenian kingdom with a very distinctive Armenian culture was founded, lasting almost to the end of the fourteenth century. In the ancient lands, the loss of the kingdom and the political identity that went with it never led to the loss of a cultural and religious identity, all of which made possible the revival of Armenian nationalism in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This territoriality was reinforced by the fact that most Armenians led settled lives in agricultural villages and small towns. There must have been transhumant shepherds, but even they would have kept to familiar pastures and well-trodden ancestral routes.

A common language was, of course, an important factor. Not only was the language a common speech among the Armenians, even though very few non-Armenians would have learned it, it was also a written language from at least the fourth century onward. This writing was the bearer of a whole wealth of historical identity, tales of kings, of heroic fights with outside invaders, of saints and martyrs who had given their lives for their faith and their people. Even in times when there was no independent state, this literature kept alive the memory that there had once been one, a glorious and heroic one, which might again be restored.

The third element was religion. This was doctrinally distinctive and separate from Byzantine orthodoxy. It was also exceptional in that it was coterminous with the linguistic group. It was, and always has been, impossible for non-Armenians to convert to Armenian Christianity; it is thus a national church in a way that no other Christian or Muslim sect has ever been. Furthermore, the religious institution had an impressive physical presence in the landscape. The churches and monasteries, superbly built of the hard stones of Eastern Anatolia and the southern Caucasus, were a constant reminder of the ancient heritage, and though the kings and princes might have vanished, their memories were kept alive by the monks and priests and the iconography and inscriptions of the buildings. A hierarchy from Catholicos to humble priest provided a vision of organization even

11. For the general history of Armenia in this period, see Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces*. For the question of Armenian identity in the ninth and tenth centuries, see Vacca, "Conflict."

when the secular one had disappeared. No one factor accounts for the persistence of Armenian ethnic identity through centuries of political disaster and geographical upheaval, but no one can deny its reality.

Like Armenian identity, Kurdish identity was well established at the time of the Muslim conquests.¹² The earlier history of the Kurds is difficult to establish, and the debate tends to get bogged down in unresolvable philological problems. What is clear is that the Arabic sources recognize the Kurds as a group from an early period and talk about their geographical distribution and political role. Let's start with geography. By the time the Arab geographer al-Iṣṭakhrī was writing in the 930s, he was able to give a detailed account of numerous Kurdish camps (*zumūm*) with their own leaders and their own fiscal regime in Western Iran between Shiraz and Isfahan.¹³ In his words, the Kurdish chiefs had taken over all the functions of the *sulṭān* (the state in this context) including collecting the *ṣadaqa* alms tax and other dues and keeping the roads safe from robbers. From other sources, we know of Kurds in Azerbaijan and Southeast Anatolia. In fact, their geographical distribution was widespread but not concentrated.

Their identity was partly based on their lifestyle and the way in which they exploited their environment. The Kurds seem to have lived a largely transhumant existence, moving from summer pastures in the Zagros Mountains to winter pastures in the plains of Iraq, along well-established and well-defined routes. The occupation of this ecological niche enabled them to live a semi-independent life without infringing on the rights and livelihoods of other populations. From the point of view of identity, one important aspect of this pattern should be noted: the Kurds moved through mountain valleys cut off from other groups by mountain barriers. They did not, therefore, necessarily come into contact with other Kurdish tribes, living a similar but parallel lifestyle. There was no shared space in which they would gather and affirm their common identity.

The geographical range of the Kurds also changed in the early Islamic period. Sometime around the end of the first millennium CE, the Kurds of Fars and the southern Zagros disappear, to be replaced by Turkish-speaking transhumant groups such as the Bakhtiari and Qashqai still to be found in the same area today.¹⁴ What changed here is difficult to reconstruct. It may be that the Kurds were driven out by incoming Turkish-speaking populations whose advance was connected with the coming of the Seljuqs. It is equally possible that the Kurdish populations assimilated to an incoming Turkish-speaking elite, adopting their language and tribal identities and redefining themselves as Turks. Or most likely, it was a combination of both. Be that as it may, the Kurds continued to dominate

12. On the Kurds and Kurdish identity, see James, "Territoire"; James, "Arab Ethnonyms."

13. Al-Iṣṭakhrī, *Al-Mamālik wa'l-Masalik*, ed. de Goeje, pp. 113–115.

14. Vanly, "Déplacement."

in the northern Zagros and in the mountains of Southeastern Anatolia, areas in which, of course, they remain an important element in the population down to the present day.

Like the Armenians, the Kurds had a distinctive language, an Indo-European language quite unlike Arabic and only distantly related to Persian. Unlike Armenian, however, it was never a written language. Unlike with Arabic, there was no intellectual discussion in Kurdish, and it was never used for any form of written administration. Unlike New Persian, which was establishing itself as a language for poetry and history during the tenth century, Kurdish remained nothing more than a rural vernacular. Why this happened is not entirely clear. Part of the explanation is certainly that Kurdish was not used in any religious discourse. There is no hint that anyone even considered translating the Qurʾān or any of the works of Greek learning that were appearing in Arabic at this time into Kurdish. When Kurdish-speaking rulers patronized literature or learning, it was always in an Arabic medium, and there was no national myth that even remotely resembled the *Shahnameh*.

There was, in short, no elite patronage of a distinctively Kurdish culture. Here again, there is a striking contrast to both Armenian, where the church and some princely households patronized literature, and New Persian, which was enthusiastically adopted as the medium for court poetry and an increasingly wide range of secular literature. This disdain for Kurdish is reflected in the titles borne by Kurdish leaders and chiefs. Whereas Armenian nobles clearly bore Armenian names and titles and Persian rulers might take old Iranian names and titles, Kurdish leaders had Arabic names, and their choice of titles was always taken from the onomasticon of contemporary Arab rulership. Equally, the Kurds had no pre-Islamic history to remember and to provide a legitimizing discourse. The Armenians, of course, had memories of the early days of Christianity and the heroism of Armenian warriors and saints in resisting Sasanian persecution, while the Persians could look to the vast history of monarchs and heroes, both mythical and historical, that made up the *Shahnameh* tradition.

As we have seen, the Armenian presence in the landscapes of Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus was visibly asserted by a very distinctive style of architecture. The churches of this period are unmistakably Armenian. In Bukhara in the tenth century, a distinctively Persian architecture was announced by the building of the Samanid mausoleum. There is not much extant building that can be linked to Kurdish patronage, but what there is shows no distinctive “ethnic” character but rather works in Arabic and Persian styles.

What perhaps lies at the heart of this is that there was no attempt to articulate Kurdishness as a bearer of power or a vehicle to create alliance across tribal boundaries. There were Kurdish dynasties, such as the Marwanids of Diyarbakır who ruled much of Southeast Anatolia from the 980s to 1085, when their territory was conquered by the Seljuqs, but their chronicler, Ibn al-Azraq, recounted

their deeds in Arabic as virtuous but conventional Muslim monarchs, hardly mentioning their Kurdish identity. The *‘ulama* and poets who ornamented their court wrote entirely in Arabic. A century later, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (Saladin) was known to be of Kurdish ancestry, but he never used it to develop his political power, identifying instead as a Muslim and a servant of the Abbasid caliph, nor did his enemies ever use it as a way of denigrating him. It was simply not relevant.

In this respect, there is a possible parallel with position in Egypt.¹⁵ The breakup of the caliphate did not see the emergence of an Egyptian ethnic identity. Egypt was, of course, a wealthy and distinct province, but the culture was clearly Arabic, and Coptic culture retreated to cloister and the liturgy. One reason for this may have been that the Egyptians of the tenth century had no real access to the great history of pharaonic times. It was probably around 400 CE that the last person able to read hieroglyphs died. Egyptians in the early Islamic period knew that there had been pharaohs, because both the Torah and the Qur’ān told them so, painting unflattering pictures of proud tyrants. But they did not know the name of a single pharaoh or have access to any mighty deeds that they might celebrate. Of course, the relics of pharaonic architecture were all around—after all, you could not fail to notice the pyramids, but it is a measure of the lack of any ethnic self-confidence that they were held to be Joseph’s granaries, because Joseph was a familiar figure from the Qur’ān, denying any agency to any native Egyptian enterprise. It might be interesting to reflect just how different the history of the Middle East might have been if the *Histories* of Herodotus had been translated into Arabic. They would have opened up a whole world of memory of Pharaonic Egypt and Achaemenid Iran which might in turn have provided the foundations of a conscious ethnic identity. But they were not.

IRANIAN IDENTITY IN THE POST-ABBASID PERIOD

What can be said about Iranian ethnic identity during the long tenth century? Was there ever the potential to create a political identity? Why was there no equivalent of the Iranian state that the Safavids were able to create from 1501 on?

In this context, it should be noted that “Iranian” was never used as an ethnic description or even as a geographical term. “Eran” and “Eran-shahr” had been used in pre-Islamic times and extensively in *Shahnameh*, but it was not applied to contemporary Iran by Muslim authors until the fourteenth century, when the concept was developed by the Il-Khanid descendants of Genghis Khan, searching for new narratives to bolster their rule.¹⁶

15. On local identity in early Islamic Egypt, see Omar, “‘Crinkly-Haired People.’”

16. For recent discussions of Arab and Iranian identities in the early Islamic period, see Savant, *New Muslims*; Savran, *Arabs*.

In some ways, the prospects look favorable for the development of an ethnic identity. Iran had, by this period, a distinct linguistic identity. By this time, Middle Persian (Pahlavi), the language of the Sasanian kings and the Zoroastrian *mawbadhs* and *herbadhs*, had almost ceased to be a spoken language. In his very interesting account of the province of Fars in the early decades of the tenth century, al-Iṣṭakhrī explains that there were three languages in use.¹⁷ There was the *fārisiyya* (New Persian), which was the most generally used vernacular; Arabic, which was the language of the *sultān*, that is, the administration; and finally, there was the *bahlawiyya* (Pahlavi), the language of the Magians, which they spoke among themselves. By the beginning of the next century, Pahlavi had ceased to be a current language just as most of the fire temples in the area had fallen into disuse.

That left New Persian, which is clearly based on Middle Persian but with an Arabic overlay and an Arabic alphabet (with three additional letters). The relationship between the Persian and Arabic elements in the language is broadly comparable with that between the Anglo-Saxon and Latin elements in English. The language of everyday life—food, drink, beasts, members of the family, things that you can touch and see—are Persian words, whereas the vocabulary of administration, abstract thought, and, above all, religion is of Arabic origin. The grammatical structures are Persian. The origins of this mongrel language remain the subject of discussion. Richard Bulliet argues that it arose as a vernacular to service the cotton trade and other commercial activities across the different Arabic and Persian dialects.¹⁸ I believe that it starts as, literally, an *urdu*, a language that began in the military camps of the armies of the Abbasid armies, where Arab and Persian speakers worked together and had to find a vehicle for mutual comprehension. In the course of the early tenth century in the hands of poets such as Rudaki (d. 329/940–41), this language became a written one in which poetry, especially panegyric and love poetry, was expressed. By the mid-tenth century, the great history of al-Ṭabarī was translated into this new language, and at the beginning of the eleventh century, it was consolidated in Firdawsī's great *Shahnameh*, a work that established New Persian in the sort of way in which the *Authorized (King James) Bible* established English six hundred years later.

In *Shahnameh*, this language became the bearer of a strongly nationalist message, stressing the antiquity of the royal tradition and the ancient rivalry between Iran and Turan (the Turkish world) to the east. Iran had an ancient tradition of monarchy, which, unlike the ancient Egyptian tradition, was well known to people in the tenth century. Firdawsī encapsulated and immortalized this in his great epic poem, the first half of which was devoted to the history of the

17. Al-Iṣṭakhrī, *Al-Mamālik wa'l-Masalik*, ed. de Goeje, pp. 138–139.

18. Bulliet, *Cotton*, pp. 140–141.

dynasty of Kayanid kings and the great hero Rustam. As far as we know, these kings had no basis in historical fact. The medieval Persians knew no more of the Achaemenids, builders of such highly visible monuments as Persepolis, than medieval Egyptians knew of the pharaohs, but at least they had a tradition that went back to the earliest days of the human race. With Alexander the Great, the *Shahnameh* becomes historical, at least after a fashion, and the long account of the deeds of the Sasanian kings is effectively versified history. Although Firdawsī was a Muslim, the whole epic ends with the coming of Islam and a great melancholic threnody for the splendors of the old Persian monarchy and its court.

The Persians had an ancient language and culture or, rather, cultures. In the formative tenth century, there was a marked difference between Eastern and Western Iran, the border lying in the great salt desert that occupies the central lands of the Iranian plateau and at the city of Rayy, just southeast of modern Tehran. The new Persian culture flourished in the east, at the court of the great Samanid emirs in Bukhara (287–395/900–1005), who proclaimed their descent from the Sasanian kings of old. In the west, at the same time, the leading political power was the Būyids, already mentioned.¹⁹ Although they sometimes revived Sasanian royal names (Fana-Khusraw, Fīruz),²⁰ they used Arabic titles, and their rich and varied court cultures were entirely conducted in Arabic. Furthermore, in an age when the divisions between Sunni and Shi'ites were becoming increasingly defined, the Samanids were clearly Sunni, self-proclaimed supporters of the Abbasids, while the Būyids were Shi'ites.

Neither of these dynasties attempted to make use of the concept of Iran as a political identity or assert itself as rulers of all Persians; instead, the identities they worked with were regional and sectarian. The Būyids and their military following were not described as Persian. They were Daylamites with a distinct language and mountain culture. They were foot soldiers rather than the successors of the heavily armored cavalry of late Sasanian Iran. As with the case of the Kurds, there was no Daylamite literature, no Daylamite architecture. At one level, the Būyid rulers did encourage an ethnic and religious identity among their followers, based on their infantry military traditions, their styles of dress (which, it seems, clearly distinguished them from their fellow citizens when they came to rule areas such as Fars), and their religious identities, for the Daylamites and their leaders were Shi'ites in contrast to the majority of the populations they ruled. Like the Arian Visigothic kings of Spain, they were separated from the majority of their subjects by this different religious identity.

19. Bosworth, "Iran"; Donohue, *Buwayhid Dynasty*.

20. Madelung, "Minor Dynasties."

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This is necessarily a short and rather speculative argument, but it raises significant issues. Faced with the disintegration of the imperial power, the people of the tenth-century Middle East had multiple identities that might provide a narrative for their lives. They could look to tribal identities, lifestyle identities, linguistic identities, identities forged from cultural memories, and religious identities. They could also look to urban identities as Baghdadis, Damascenes, and so on. Perhaps these many possibilities are why ethnic identities were so rarely developed. There is no doubt much more to be said on this subject, and the true explanation may never be agreed on, but the subject is an important one: the absence of national states, at a time when the nation-state was regarded as the pinnacle of human social organization in the nineteenth century, became a device used by both imperial administrators and academic orientalist to denigrate the peoples of the Middle East and undermine their claims to political and cultural independence.

The Emergence of New Polities in the Breakup of the Western Roman Empire

Walter Pohl

IN the course of the fifth century CE, the Western Roman Empire gradually disintegrated. It was largely replaced by kingdoms distinguished by ethnic names: the *regna* of the Goths, Vandals, Burgundians, or Franks. Most of them were rather short-lived or at least instable. Yet, in the following centuries, more regional polities emerged that followed this model: kingdoms of the Lombards, the Angles, the Bulgars, the Danes, the Hungarians, the Poles, and several more. A look at the map of Europe in 1000 CE¹ already indicates a political landscape that seems to resemble the Europe of nations on the map a thousand years later. Modern Western historiography has taken this apparent line of ethnic-national continuity for granted, mostly without even accounting for it. It seemed natural that the “universal” Roman Empire was replaced by the states of the particular peoples who had conquered it and that a plurality of nations had then organically emerged in the political landscape of Europe. This allowed regarding other parts of the world where no stable nations with a long history existed—in particular, the Islamic world—as backward and unfit for political self-organization.

However, it is unlikely that the emergence of a plurality of ethnic kingdoms and the eventual development of modern nations largely building on that precedent were a “natural” process. The history of these states was everything but organic: the kingdom of the Franks split into half a dozen modern nations; England was conquered by the Normans; Bulgaria, Hungary, and Poland lost their independence and unity for centuries. Still, the resources of political memory were preserved to an extent that allowed reappropriating them, often centuries later. It was not the unbroken vitality of single nations that accounted for their resilience. What remained stable was above all the general layout of the political landscape: a

1. Research for this chapter was supported by the FWF (the Austrian Research Fund) in the SFB (Spezialforschungsbereich) F 42-G 18, “Visions of Community,” and it sums up research done in my ERC Advanced Grant project, “Social Cohesion, Identity and Religion in Europe, 400–1200 (SCIRE),” which has received funding from the European Research Council in the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007–13) under the ERC grant agreement No. 269591. I would like to thank Hugh Kennedy, Helmut Reimitz, and Peter Webb for help and comments and Nicola Edelmann for help with the notes and bibliography.

I apologize for using Common Era dates here without Islamic Era equivalents even for events of Islamic history, which I discuss for comparison as a nonspecialist.

plurality of midsized states with at least notional continuity and a name that stuck. In this multipolar system, more or less ethnic states were complemented by smaller polities (regional duchies or city-states). All these polities were supposed to represent the people and the land; the “people,” *populus*, endorsed the legitimacy of the political order, although in practice that might be a rather small elite group.

No similar, relatively stable plurality of established polities-and-peoples emerged in Asia in the premodern period. Empires and shifting dynastic realms dominated the political game. Patricia Crone characterized the case of Iran in the following way:

The populations successively ruled by the Tāhirids, Saffārids, Sāmānids, Ghaznavids, and Seljuks, for example, did not see themselves as members of an enduring kingdom of eastern Iran, or of Iran as such, within which dynasties rose and fell (as did dynasties in Byzantium or medieval England, for example); rather, each dynasty represented a short-lived kingdom of its own within the Community of Believers.²

There was some continuity of midsized states based in medieval Egypt, in al-Andalus or (to an extent) in Yemen, much less so in al-Shām (Syria) and al-Jazira (Northern Iraq). The generic terms by which these regions were called in Arabic indicate that, in fact, they offered weak territorial distinctions: Yemen was “the South,” al-Shām “the North,” Maghreb “the West,” as seen from the core areas of the Arabian Peninsula; al-Jazira was “the island/peninsula,” the north Mesopotamian interfluvium between Euphrates and Tigris. Still, a sense of regional pride and superiority did occur in Syria or Egypt, which could have been transformed into political identities.³ Yet none of the states established in these countries was predominantly legitimized as Egyptian, Syrian, or Yemeni in the way in which France was a kingdom of France or England remained England even after the Norman Conquest. Similar points could be made about China, whose dynastic divisions never acquired a lasting political identity of their own, or about the successive realms in medieval Northern India.⁴ Therefore, we cannot take the European development that ultimately led to the formation of nation-states for granted. This means, in the first place, asking why kingdoms named after peoples came into existence after the disintegration of the Western Roman Empire and why this model became mainstream in the course of European history.⁵

2. Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*, p. 397.

3. See Webb, chapter 5 in this volume.

4. Abramson, *Ethnic Identity*; Tackett, *Origins*; Thapar, *History*, vol. 1.

5. For previous research on this issue, see Pohl, “Introduction: Ethnicity”; Pohl, “Christian and Barbarian Identities.”

This chapter, with the companion chapter 2 by Hugh Kennedy, is an attempt to tackle the problem through a focused comparison and one that, to my knowledge, has not been attempted before: the dissolution of the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century versus that of the Abbasid caliphate in the tenth century. Instead of retelling the story of the “ethnic” transformation of the Roman West,⁶ I will try to reverse the perspective; thus, this chapter will be structured according to Kennedy’s argument, trying to identify areas of comparison and possible structural differences that may contribute to a better understanding of a different dynamic in the formation of new polities in post-Roman Europe and in the early Islamic world. Even in sophisticated comparative research, Europe often remains the implicit model, and the intention is to discover where and why Asian or African societies diverged from the successful development of the West.⁷ In a study of the second half of the first millennium CE, this perspective is particularly unsuitable; no doubt, the Islamic world was far more dynamic than Christian Europe. It may quite adequately provide the measure of comparison.

This is, first of all, an attempt to defamiliarize the history of “the West,” with its national master narratives and its controversial debates about the importance of ethnicity and the (primordial or modern) origins of nations.⁸ Although I hope that this will emerge clearly from my argument, I would like to stress that I do not intend to confront “the” West and “the” Islamic world as two essentially different and ultimately unhistorical entities and, even less, affirm any teleological process by which an early “parting of the way” inescapably led to Western dominion and Islamic backwardness. It is, indeed, very doubtful whether the political significance of ethnicity and the rise of nationalism in the West is an indicator of progress or, rather, an atavistic trap in which Europe fatally got caught in the nineteenth century and may be about to get enmeshed once again. As already argued in chapter 1, global comparison is not about reifying the units of comparison. The aim is to avoid “methodological nationalism” and the severe limitations of a self-referential history of just one part of the world and, most of all, Europe.⁹ A closer look at the Islamic world, which shared much of its ancient heritage with Europe but also organized many things differently, may help to obliterate any notion of teleology from histories of “the West.” It can also give us a sense of the inner multiplicity of both worlds and of the variety of options that both could offer.

6. See Pohl, “Christian and Barbarian Identities.”

7. For a balanced critique, see Belich, Darwin, and Wickham, “Introduction”; Holmes and Standen, “Introduction.”

8. See, e.g., Smith, *The Nation*; Breuilly, “Changes,” and other contributions in the same volume; Gat, *Nations*; Reynolds, “Nations.”

9. Wimmer and Glick Schiller, “Methodological Nationalism”; Gingrich, “Nodal Conglomerates.”

HOW CAN WE USE “ETHNICITY”?

The choice of the term “ethnicity” as an axis of comparison requires an explanation. It is a term, and a subject area, that many scholars find misleading or at least uncomfortable,¹⁰ for two reasons. First, it figures prominently in political debates and has an infamous record of ideological misuse. In fact, the very terms “ethnic”/“ethnicity” came to be used exactly because other words such as “racial”/“race,” “tribal”/“tribe,” or the German “*völkisch*”/“*Volkstum*” had been deeply compromised by previous nationalist and racist uses. In my view, it is exactly that ignoble history of political appropriations and identity politics that makes it so important to deal with this issue in a critical manner. Replacing the vocabulary would make little difference, as the swift political misuse of “ethnicity” and “identity” demonstrates.

The second critique is that “ethnicity” has become so opaque and impossible to define that it has lost its analytical value. Of course, with a term so widely used in identity politics and public debates, ambiguity is inevitable. However much scholars have insisted that the notions of common blood by which ethnic groups are often defined are discursive constructions, and do not necessarily represent an actual common origin of peoples, in public perceptions, the idea that ethnic identities are biologically determined is still very present. Recently, it has been reinforced by illusionary expectations in genetics: the attitude is that genes can tell us who we “really” are.¹¹ What is worse, many critics of research on “ethnicity” subscribe to this reifying definition of objective ethnicity and then try to prove that “ethnicity did not matter.”¹² In my view, this is no viable solution if we want to get rid of atavistic and potentially disruptive forms of ethnic chauvinism; we should not leave the field to nationalist and racist ideologies by claiming that this is not a “real” phenomenon and therefore no real problem. The only thing we can do is to keep arguing that the heralds of ethnic identity politics have got it wrong: ethnicity was important and sometimes very resilient in many historical contexts (although not in all of them), but there was nothing natural or meta-historical about ethnic groups, and there is no moral value in making up for their past defeats or in emulating their victories. Therefore, we need to understand better what ethnicity meant when and where and how its significance changed in the historical process.

This requires thoroughly historicizing ethnicity as a mode of constructing community. The theory of ethnicity has mostly been debated in the social

10. E.g., Gruen, “Did Ancient Identity Depend?” See also the related problems with the term “identity”: Brubaker and Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity,’” with the response by Jenkins, *Social Identity*, pp. 8–15.

11. For a critique, see Wailoo, Nelson, and Lee, eds., *Genetics*; Jobling, Rasteiro, and Wetton, “In the Blood”; Geary and Veeramah, “Mapping.”

12. See, e.g., Fine, *When Ethnicity Did Not Matter*; Gruen, “Did Ancient Identity Depend?”; Gillett, “Was Ethnicity Politicized?”

sciences, and that has produced a wealth of models and approaches.¹³ Historians have often been rather eclectic in their uses of theory, not least because they have to adapt general models to specific historical contexts. The salience and significance of ethnic identities shifted considerably between different times and places and could also be controversial in a given historical context (as Helmut Reimitz has shown).¹⁴ Therefore, definitions are problematic. It is of little use, as is often done, to define ethnicity by features that refer to composite ethnic, territorial, cultural, legal, political, or religious identities. Shared territory, culture, customs, or institutions define not only ethnic groups but also many cities, regions, religious, or political communities.

I would therefore define ethnicity more narrowly as a way to distinguish between social groups that are regarded as naturally and intrinsically constituted: the main principle of distinction is assumed to lie in the people themselves and not in their homeland, social status, political affiliation, or religious creed.¹⁵ This definition is relational in two ways. First, it points to distinctions between one ethnic community and a plurality of similar groups (and not simply an indistinct mass of “others”). And second, the ethnic identity in most cases is only one element of a more complex system of distinctions, in which territory, status, political organization, or religion also matter to a different extent; few groups are only ethnic. This concept of “embedded ethnicity” is most adequate to the questions raised here. Debating whether a group “was” ethnic or not has little value. What we can do is assess for which purposes ethnicity was used in a particular context, how it was perceived, and thus how salient it was.

Ancient and medieval texts relatively rarely transmit direct expressions of ethnic self-identification; what we mostly have are instances of ethnic ascription or classification.¹⁶ Scholars therefore tend to discard the latter as potentially misleading and conclude from the scarcity of direct attestations of ethnic identity that ethnicity did not matter much in the society under study.¹⁷ Such an approach obliterates no less than a main cognitive tool by which social groups were distinguished: by collective names of “peoples.” These peoples may have been regarded as more or less “ethnic” in the sense of the definition given above, and in many cases, we may not be sure whether they were actually united by a strong sense of identity. Still, classification by ethnonyms was the main principle of distinction in many societies and certainly in the early medieval West. It rested on the assumption that *gentes*, peoples, were fundamental units of social and political

13. E.g., Smith, *Ethnic Origins*; Eriksen, *Ethnicity*; Romanucci-Ross and de Vos, eds., *Ethnic Identity*; Hutchinson and Smith, eds., *Ethnicity*; Malešević, *Sociology*; Brubaker, *Ethnicity*; Jenkins, *Rethinking*; Wimmer, *Ethnic Boundary Making*.

14. Reimitz, *History*.

15. Argued extensively in Pohl, “Introduction: Strategies.”

16. Cf. Eriksen, *Ethnicity*, pp. 36–45.

17. E.g., Amory, *People*.

life, to which affiliation was normally conferred by birth (as the etymology of *gens* clearly suggested). In Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies*, the approximately 150 names of the *gentes* are the only extensive list of named social groupings in this encyclopedic work (if we discount the lists of heresies and of imaginary peoples), and almost all of them correspond to current definitions of "ethnic."¹⁸ Within this conceptual grid, groups of rather different size or character were accommodated. This is even true for Isidore's list, which includes the Romans (certainly regarded as one *gens* among others by Isidore and identified with the Byzantines)¹⁹ alongside pre-Roman groups in Italy such as the Marsi or the Tuscans or smaller *Germanicae gentes* from the time of Augustus.

One conceptual challenge that this chapter and the companion chapter by Kennedy have to meet is the difference between the Latin and the Arabic conceptual matrix by which peoples are distinguished. Bernard Lewis has remarked that although Arabic, Persian, and Turkic disposed of a rich vocabulary for ethnic groups, few of these terms have been employed in the political language of modern nationalism.²⁰ The semantic range in the two languages is conspicuously different. In the early Middle Ages, the Latin term *gens* is almost exclusive in its use for what we would call "ethnic groups," carries a clear implication of biological origin, and can cover the entire range from a noble family to an umbrella term such as "Scythians" or "Germani."²¹ The words "*natio*," "*genus*," and "*populus*" can carry a similar meaning but are mostly used differently. In Arabic, by contrast, there is a striking variety of terms for "peoples" and "tribes," ranging from "*umma*" or "*milla*," denoting the community of believers, to mostly mid- or variable-range terms such as "*sha'b*" or "*jins*" (derived from the Latin "*gens*"?), to a wealth of terms for "tribe," such as "*ashīra*," "*qabila*," "*haiy*," "*batn*," "*āl*," or "*bayt*."²² They can express differentiations in size, hierarchy, or degree of organization. Many of these terms were, however, quite flexible, so that *umma* could (especially in the plural, *umam*) also denote smaller peoples or tribes, for instance, of the Turks or in Africa.²³ It is remarkable, for instance, that the work of Abū 'Alī Miskawayh, our main source for the "eclipse of the Abbasid caliphate," should be called *Tajārib al-umam*, "Experiences of the Nations." As the book covers the whole of history, this refers to a succession of "peoples" rather than to their coexistence, but still, it highlights plurality.

To an extent, this semantic variety corresponds to a wide range of forms of peoplehood: from the "peoples of the Book" and the Islamic community to the inclusive (and expansive) ethnonyms "Arab" or "Turk," other rather broad ethnic

18. Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, ed. Lindsay, 9.2.

19. Pohl, "Introduction: Transformations."

20. Lewis, *Political Language*, p. 41.

21. Heydemann, "People(s) of God?" See also Pohl et al., eds., *Ethnic Terminologies*.

22. Heiss and Hovden, "Political Usage"; Orthmann, *Stamm*, pp. 259–266.

23. Heiss and Hovden, "Political Usage," pp. 62–64. See also Lohlker, "Jamā'a."

groups such as Persians or Kurds (typically with more than one Arabic designation), regional Bedouin or Yemeni tribes, or the “tribal” networks or factions such as the Yamani in Iraq under the Abbasids.²⁴ While differing in many respects between East and West, “ethnicity” (and “tribes”) had divergent meanings within the post-Roman West and within the later Abbasid caliphate. As Peter Webb suggests in chapter 5 of this volume, “ethnicity” may not even be a useful concept to grasp the multiplicity of concepts of community current in the first centuries of Islam—although, of course, ethnonyms are used in the sources. These issues of method in themselves can tell us much about the range of options that existed in the early Middle Ages. Companion chapters 2 and 3 in this volume aim at addressing these complex differences in a comparative perspective.

TRIBES, ETHNICITY, AND GENEALOGY

Traditionally, the “invaders” who threatened the Roman Empire had been regarded as “Germanic tribes,” or “*Stämme*.”²⁵ This also had a teleological function in German national history: it was a way to smooth over the difficult transition from *Germanen*, the ancient Germans, to *Deutsche*, the modern Germans (only the English language uses the same name for both). In this view, Franks, Alamans, Thuringians, Saxons, and Bavarians as “*deutsche Stämme*” represented the continuity of the German people (while other “*deutsche Stämme*” such as Goths, Vandals, and Burgundians had heroically failed in pushing German domination even further).²⁶ Although German nationalists would hardly have endorsed the parallel, there was a biblical motif behind this positive view of the historical role of tribes: the people of Israel was constituted by its twelve tribes. After 1945, the ideology-laden term “*Stamm*” was gradually abandoned in German scholarship of the period. It is not very useful anyway. One could describe the rather small-scale *gentes* east of the Rhine at the time of Augustus as “tribes,” but Franks, Goths, or Alamans were larger and less circumscribed than one would expect from a tribal society. The Latin terminology did not distinguish between “tribes” and “peoples”: both would usually be called *gentes*, regardless of their size or cohesion. There is little indication that the umbrella term “*Germanen*” was relevant for self-identification; it had been “invented” by Julius Caesar as an ethnographic category and as such proved more useful to Roman authors than to members of regional groups inhabiting the *Germania*.²⁷ Therefore, there are no two clearly distinguishable levels on which “tribal” distinctions could be juxtaposed with more inclusive ethnic ones.

24. See Webb, chapter 11 in this volume.

25. See Pohl, “Introduction: Ethnicity.”

26. See, *Barbar*.

27. Beck, ed., *Germanenprobleme*; Lund, *Zum Germanenbild*; Pohl, *Die Germanen*.

“Tribe” has a different ideological connotation in Islamic studies. The European ethnographic view since the eighteenth century differentiated between an enlightened Europe constituted by its peoples and nations and the “primitive” tribal societies in many other parts of the world. Today many social anthropologists therefore tend to avoid the term “tribe” altogether. However, the medieval evidence (and in some regions such as the Yemen, even the contemporary situation) suggests using the category “tribes” for groups such as the Shayban or the Banu ‘Uqayl, which can neatly be differentiated from larger “ethnic units” such as Arabs, Persians, Armenians, or Kurds.²⁸ Even though, as Webb has argued, we should not take the importance of an Arab identity for granted in the time after the Muslim conquests, it provided a level that could become relevant for political identifications and distinctions.²⁹ It seems that the field of ethnicity in a broad sense covered a much wider range of groupings and forms of identity in the East than in the West: umbrella terms with a great potential for self-identification, such as Arabs or Turks; established ethnic groups that often lived scattered throughout the Middle East, such as Persians, Armenians, or Kurds; relatively weak territorial identities, such as Syrians or Egyptians; stable tribal societies, as in the Yemen; tribal affiliation as a means for negotiating status in the centers of Islamic dominion, such as Yamanis in Iraq;³⁰ the Jews as an ethno-religious people in diaspora; or regional religious groups that more or less ethnicized their sense of belonging, such as Copts or Assyrians. Arabic terminology for all these forms was very differentiated, although not very precise for distinguishing between different types of community.

There is also an interesting contrast between the post-Roman West and the early Islamic world as far as personal names and genealogies are concerned. The Arab naming system was multiple; it included both genealogical references (*ibn*, “son of”) and the *nisba*, which could refer to tribal or territorial origin. This is remarkably close to the Roman mode of personal naming: the *tria nomina* included the *nomen gentilicium*, which expressed affiliation to a named patrilineal descent group called the *gens* (Claudia, Iulia, Flavia, etc.).³¹ In spite of their often elaborate genealogies, these Roman *gentes* were rather inclusive groups.³² Liberated slaves and new citizens could adopt a gentile name, often that of a patron, so that in the later empire, it gradually lost its distinctive character. This resembles the Arab practice of *walā’*, the clienthood of freedmen.³³ In the fifth century, the

28. Gingrich, “Envisioning.”

29. Webb, *Imagining*. For more essentialist concepts of “Arab ethnogenesis,” see al-Azmeh, *Emergence*, pp. 100–114 (I am skeptical of a rather generalized assumption of populations of “Arab stock” in the late antique Fertile Crescent); Retsö, *Arabs*, assuming a key role of Arab language.

30. See Webb, chapter 11 in the present volume.

31. Salway, “What’s in a Name?”; Solin, “Zur Entwicklung.”

32. Smith, *Roman Clan*.

33. Crone, *Roman, Provincial and Islamic Law*.

classical Roman naming system faded out. The Germanic peoples arrived with single, mostly bipartite names—Theoderic, Clodowech/Clovis, or Alboin had just this one name.

Even the names of families or dynasties were rarely used in the post-Roman period. It has always been assumed that “Germanic” peoples had a stronger sense of family and genealogy, but in fact, both are better attested among the Romans. The seventeen-generation genealogy of the Ostrogothic Amals has unproblematically been regarded as proof of Germanic pride of pedigree, but the impresario of dynastic prestige was the Roman Cassiodorus, who proudly wrote in a speech to the senate that the Amals now equaled the noble senatorial lineages.³⁴ Later, this genealogy appeared in Jordanes’s *Getica* which advocated the integration of the Goths in Justinian’s realm.³⁵ Lombard historiography accentuated its lists of rulers by indicating the names of their mostly short-lived dynasties, but it rarely attributed any particular significance or agency to them.³⁶ Merovingians and even Carolingians were hardly publicized as such in the Frankish kingdoms. Of course, one knew that the realm was ruled by long-haired kings descended from Clovis or later by the offspring of Charlemagne. However, what mattered was that sons succeeded their fathers, and their noble descent was routinely mentioned in panegyrics, mostly without providing details of the pedigree.

On the whole, the use of fancy genealogies is rarely attested on the early medieval European continent. Most important for our purpose, they hardly allow linking individuals to a tribal lineage. No genealogical specialists constructed grandiose trees of interlocking tribal pedigrees, as Ibn al-Kalbī or al-Hamdānī did in the early Islamic world.³⁷ A member of Charlemagne’s clerical entourage called in a scholar from Italy, Paul the Deacon, to establish a five-generation pedigree back to the king’s predecessor, Arnulf, a saintly bishop of Metz.³⁸ This genealogy was later extended to an unknown Gallic senator with a Germanic name and to include Merovingian connections through the female line. Notably, no more heroic alternative for the pedigree of the most powerful family of the period emerged.

In Ireland and England, genealogies were much more important in the early Middle Ages, and Asser, the biographer of King Alfred, constructed a wonderfully hybrid genealogy which traced Alfred’s lineage back through the pagan gods Woden and Geat to the biblical ancestors Noah and Adam, supplemented by one for his wife, who was made out to be of Gothic (i.e., Jute) descent.³⁹ But on

34. Cassiodorus, *Variae*, ed. Fridh, 9.25, p. 379. For this and the following, see Pohl, “Genealogy.”

35. Jordanes, *Getica*, ed. Mommsen, 14.79, p. 76; Wolfram, *Goten*, p. 42; Pohl, “Genealogy,” pp. 236–238; Pohl, “Gotische Identitäten.”

36. Pohl, “Memory.”

37. Szombathy, *Roots*; Mahoney, “Political Construction”; Brandt, “Heroic History.”

38. Kempf, “Introduction”; Pohl, “Genealogy,” pp. 244–246.

39. Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, trans. Keynes and Lapidge, p. 67.

the continent, it seems that it was sufficient that the claim to be of noble descent was acknowledged, while details remained in the shade. The language of kinship, so valuable as a means of negotiating status in the Arab world, seems to be strangely absent from debates about royal succession or aristocratic prerogative on the early medieval European continent.

If “tribes” can be understood, as Crone has argued, as societies “which create all or most of their social roles by ascribing social importance to biological characteristics, in other words, societies ordered with reference to kinship, sex and age,”⁴⁰ then tribes did not matter much in early medieval Europe. This definition is certainly controversial, and in many cases, ecological niches, shared economic aspirations, or networks of mutual political promotion may have been more important in the development of tribal identities. As Webb shows in chapter 11 of this volume, “Yamani” could acquire various meanings in the early Islamic Empire. Although Yamani were supposed to be descended from a tribal ancestor, Qaḥṭān, and are generally regarded as a tribal grouping, the elite networks of “Southerners” in the early Abbasid caliphate had little to do with Yemen and its tribes. This is, in fact, an interesting example showing that in some cases, processes of ethnic (or tribal) identification can be based on networks. If a successful network needed to be stabilized and established as a “natural” unit, it could claim ethnic origins. Therefore, network theory cannot replace research on identities (as sometimes claimed); they are complementary.⁴¹

In any case, distinguishing tribes and ethnicity on a theoretical level poses difficult problems. One option is to regard tribes as smaller units or component parts of ethnic groups (as in the Bible)—as defined, for instance, by Maurice Godelier.⁴² His definition is certainly adequate to the more varied phenomenology of midsized groupings found in the sources about the Islamic world, though less so for the early medieval West. I would agree with regarding tribes as small-to-medium face-to-face or also imagined communities but would rather see allegiance to a tribe as a particular mode of ethnic identification. In any case, either way would not change much in the argument in this chapter.

The aim of this chapter and chapter 2, then, is not to argue for a particular definition or consistent role of ethnic groups versus tribes in the early medieval West and in the early Islamic world. We use this, admittedly loaded and imprecise,

40. Crone, “Tribe.” For different definitions, see Lindner, “What Was a Nomadic Tribe?”; Godelier, “À propos des concepts”; al-Azmeh, *Emergence*, p. 127 (“tribes, as suggested, result from politics, and do not emerge from nature”).

41. Cf. Collar, “Networks.”

42. See the definitions given by Godelier, “À propos des concepts,” p. 290: “Une tribu est une société réelle qui vit en s’appropriant et en transformant les ressources d’un territoire, d’une portion de la nature qu’elle revendique comme sienne”; “une ethnie c’est un ensemble de groupes locaux (tribus ou autres formes de communautés) qui se reconnaissent une origine commune lointaine, parlent la même langue ou des langues apparentées . . . , suivent en gros les mêmes principes pour organiser la vie sociale et partagent des normes et des valeurs semblables.”

terminology to circumscribe a set of discourses and social practices by which we can compare conditions and effects of key transformations in both societies. The basic issue at stake here is to understand why post-Roman rule in the West came to be notionally derived from a particular people and/or country, and in the Islamic world, this was rarely the case—apart from the *umma*, the Islamic community in a general sense.

LATE ROME AND THE ABBASID CALIPHATE: COMPARING DISSOLUTION

It has often been remarked that the dissolution of the Roman Empire in the West and the Islamic conquests of the Eastern Roman provinces followed rather different patterns. The new “barbarian” elites in the West were familiar with the imperial lands, and most of them had served in Roman armies or even commanded them. Some of the Islamic invaders did know Syria or Egypt well from their trade experiences; yet those who conquered Roman and Sasanian provinces were not the Ghassanids and Lakhmids, who had long helped to defend the desert frontiers of the two empires, but came from more distant areas.⁴³ Greek and Latin texts are full of names of the barbarian peoples beyond the northern frontier of Rome. The tribal structure of the Arabs in the Peninsula was less familiar in East Rome and obviously did not influence outside perceptions of the “Saracens.” Unlike in the West, there was no phase of accommodation of the newcomers within the Roman imperial system, during which particular groups could carve out their regional realms. Neither did Roman diplomacy succeed in playing off ethnic or tribal groups among the Muslims against one another during the conquests, as it had consistently done in the West. The Muslim conquerors founded a new empire with a strong expansive spin, not a plurality of regional realms. They were highly motivated by their own religion and did not gradually convert to the Christian religion of the Roman Empire, which would have entailed respecting the religious authority of mostly Roman bishops and religious leaders. For these and other reasons, the comparison between the Islamic conquests and the disintegration of Western Rome is less productive for the issues pursued here.

The dissolution of the Abbasid caliphate provides much closer parallels. The Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates were the direct heirs of two empires, Rome and Sasanian Iran, and they continued a millenary tradition of empire in the lands between the Eastern Mediterranean and the Iranian highlands. It is worth noting that Rome had built an empire where none had existed before (with the exception of its oriental provinces). It may be no coincidence that the ancient Orient was the only part of the Roman Empire where it was swiftly replaced by another

43. See Shahid, *Byzantium*, vol. 2/1; Kennedy, *Great Arab Conquests*; Bianquis, Guichard, and Tillier, eds., *Débuts*; Hoyland, *In God's Path*; Fisher, ed., *Arabs*; a comparison in: Meier, *Geschichte*, pp. 1074–1076.

empire, the caliphate. Byzantium, “the empire that would not die,”⁴⁴ survived in the periphery of the area that shared a deeper imperial past. All of these ancient empires had more or less succumbed to similar processes of erosion and conquest. That happened, not least, because their armies ceased to be drafted from the core areas of the empire, and their loyalties with the state became more conditional. Rome’s more than half millennium of domination around the Mediterranean marks it out as particularly successful. For a long time, the Roman Empire had secured the loyalties of the regional elites and provided career options and an adaptable frame for displays of status. Rome had been very flexible in allowing emperors from all parts of the empire and from rather varied social and ethnic backgrounds to ascend the throne.

Around 400, a new Romano-barbarian military aristocracy began to eclipse the old senatorial elites.⁴⁵ Many of them were migrants or their offspring, some of whom could compete for the highest commands in the imperial army. Rome was relatively flexible in giving them access to privileges and high office. There was no attempt to lock them in a subaltern role, as in the Abbasid caliphate and other Islamic polities that sought to contain the careers of Turkish and other mercenaries by a notional slave status. However, there was a glass ceiling implicitly imposed by the Roman system, in that generals of “barbarian” extraction could not become emperors; they could only “make” and control them. Ultimately, their only option for becoming their own masters was to become kings. Thus, the Roman Empire was apportioned between Roman commanders inserting elements of barbarian legitimacy into the imperial system. That was not unlike the dissolution of the Abbasid caliphate, in which warlords did not appropriate the title but bullied the caliphs. Both Romans and the later Abbasids sought to pacify ascending warlords whom they could not control with fancy titles, if rather differently styled: for instance, *patricius* or consul in Rome, *imād al-dawla* (support of the dynasty/state) or *rukn al-dawla* (pillar of the dynasty/state) in the caliphate.⁴⁶ In both systems, that obviously helped to maintain some kind of imperial matrix within which ambitious military leaders could compete.

In the West, the titles of the emergent barbarian rulers soon began to include a reference to their respective *gentes*. Among the late-fifth-century examples, there is a seal ring of the Visigothic king Alaric II, *rex Gothorum*, in the Vienna Kunsthistorisches Museum, or the title *rex Hunirix Vandalorum et Alanorum* in an edict of the Vandal king Huneric in 483.⁴⁷ The ethnic title in documents of self-representation took time to spread; it is not a proof of unquestioned ethnic

44. Haldon, *Empire*. See also Haldon, chapter 6 in this volume.

45. On the events, see Wolfram, *Römerreich*; Pohl, *Völkerwanderung*; Heather, *Fall*; Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations*; Meier, *Geschichte*; Kulikowski, *Tragedy*.

46. Kennedy, *Prophet*, p. 218; al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, pp. 151–152 (“reflecting notional vassalage to the Abbasid house”).

47. Steinacher, *Vandalen*, pp. 251, 264; Wolfram, *Intitulatio I*, pp. 76–89.

self-assertion from the beginning.⁴⁸ It reflects common Roman usage in its dealings with barbarian kings, which could always be adopted by the kings or their subjects themselves. Thus, Caesar defined Ariovist as *rex Germanorum*.⁴⁹ According to the gospels, Jesus was ridiculed by the inscription on the cross: *Jesus Nazarenus rex Iudaeorum*.⁵⁰ This title had not been current in the Hebrew Bible but appears occasionally in Flavius Josephus's works.⁵¹ Later, Christ's ethnic title in the gospels could provide a powerful Christian precedent for the ethnic royal title in the Latin West. Titles such as *rex Francorum* (first used in official letters in the late sixth century), *rex gentis Langobardorum*, *rex Anglorum*, and so on, became standard, although never exclusive practice in the early Middle Ages, often with the epithet *gratia Dei*, by the grace of God, or similar.⁵²

Similar practices were not completely unknown in the Arab world. An ethnic title was also used in a fourth-century Namāra inscription, a funerary monument of a Lakhmid king, who is called *malik al-'Arab*.⁵³ This might, however, reflect the above-mentioned Roman usage to design a client king as—in this case—*rex Araborum*, not least because the text goes on to state that “his title of honour was Master of Asad and Madhhij.”⁵⁴ In any case, the ambitious title had no future. Michael Cook has collected later instances of the Islamic realm being called *mulk al-'Arab* or *dawlat al-'Arab*, kingdom or reign of the Arabs.⁵⁵ These are outside designations, as the title *rex Arabum* in Crusader sources for the Mazyadid ruler Sadaqa I (1086–1108); however, the title is also attested as *malik al-'Arab* in Arabic.⁵⁶ That was a time when Arabs as rulers had become an exception in the Islamic world, and the Mazyadids came from the Bedouin tribe of Asad. Most interestingly, there were instances when Daylamite rule was addressed as such, *al-dawla al-Daylamiyya* or similar.⁵⁷ Webb, in chapter 5 of this volume, mentions the twelfth- to fourteenth-century Kurdish kingdom, al-Mamlaka al-Ḥasina al-Akrādiyya (*Akrād* is the plural of *Kurd*).⁵⁸ “The practice of naming polities after

48. In this respect, the critique of older scholarship on the topic by Gillett, “Was Ethnicity Politicized?” is correct. However, it does not follow that ethnicity was not “politicized,” just that this was a development in the Christian kingdoms and not a primeval Germanic practice.

49. Caesar, *De bello Gallico*, 1.53.4. Wolfram, *Gotische Studien*, pp. 51–52.

50. Matthew 27:37 (*Jesus rex Iudaeorum*), Mark 15:26 and Luke 23:39 (*rex Iudaeorum*), John 19:19 (*Jesus Nazarenus rex Iudaeorum*).

51. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquitates Iudaicae*, ed. Niese, 15.409, vol. 3, p. 406 (for Herodes); Flavius Josephus, *Bellum Iudaicum*, ed. Vitucci, 1.14.4, p. 114 (plan to raise Antipater).

52. Pohl, “Regnum und gens.”

53. Cook, “Comparing.” For the Namāra inscription of Imru' al-Qays, see Bellamy, “New Reading,” pp. 31–48 (with translation); Shahīd, *Byzantium*, vol. 2/1, pp. 52–53; Hoyland, *In God's Path*, p. 26; al-Azmeh, *Emergence*, pp. 109–110.

54. Webb, *Imagining*, p. 75.

55. Cook, “Comparing,” p. 201. These occurrences mostly come from philosophical and astrological writings. There could also be a multitude of “kings,” such as the *Mulūk Fārs*, the heads of the leading families of Fārs in the 9th to 11th centuries, defined by a traditional territorial designation: Paul, “Who Were the *Mulūk*.”

56. Bosworth, *New Islamic Dynasties*, p. 87; Cook, “Comparing,” p. 201.

57. Madelung, “Assumption”; Cook, “Comparing,” p. 201.

58. James, “Construction.”

peoples was not in itself unusual,” as Cook concludes.⁵⁹ These cases show that recourse to ethnic/tribal legitimation was possible in Islamic polities. Yet, even allowing for a number of further examples, the political significance of ethnic legitimation was much less consistent than in the West. Daylamite rule and its political tradition disappeared in the eleventh century, just as Gothic, Burgundian, or Lombard rule had disappeared from the West centuries before. Yet in the West, peoples, polities, and regions continued to be named after the long-gone post-Roman kingdoms (for instance, Gotland, Burgundy, or Lombardy), and, of course, after those that had survived. There was something to be gained from these old ethnic labels that could not be gained from the names of former tribes and peoples in Islamic realms.

In the fifth-century Roman West as in the tenth-century caliphate, the Christian *res publica* and the Islamic *dawla* gradually lost any actual control of government. What differed was the long-term result: the new polities in Abbasid lands disappeared within a few generations, and different configurations of power kept emerging. In the West, several names of the founding *gentes* remained on the map. Many of the post-Roman kingdoms also disappeared, but even their ethnic names could be adopted and adapted for centuries to come. Those that remained, such as the Franks, maintained the cultural memory of a seemingly unbroken history.

It is remarkable how difficult it has been since the demise of Rome to establish another empire in Latin Europe that could successfully accommodate the wide variety of population of the western parts of Europe in a single polity.⁶⁰ In spite of the Roman legacy, no “imperial project” could gain sufficient momentum. All attempts encountered growing resistance, from within or from without. Medieval and early modern empires could survive or form in Eastern Europe, where Byzantium, Russia, and the Ottomans controlled large, relatively heterogeneous areas for centuries. In Western Europe, attempts to build an empire, from Charlemagne to Napoleon, or even to establish a hegemony over a pluralist state system failed in the long run. Most prominently, the long-lived, prestigious, but also precarious Holy Roman Empire only created a consistent imperial dynamic in brief periods.⁶¹ The medieval and modern West was too resiliently multipolar to allow for consequent imperial expansion of any one of its constituent parts. That does not mean that there were no expansive powers.

59. Cook, “Comparing,” p. 202.

60. An observation also made in Scheidel, *Escape*.

61. Of course, the Roman Empire of the Franks and Germans subsisted for more than a thousand years. In most of the Middle Ages, it could count as an empire by the definition given by Burbank and Cooper, *Empires*, p. 8, which is quite adequate for ancient and medieval empires: “Empires are large political units, expansionist or with a memory of power extended over space, polities that maintain distinction and hierarchy as they incorporate new people.” Yet there were only brief phases in which it could actually control political activities by its component parts.

Yet expansion mostly meant attaching existing polities to one's realm while respecting its own system of governance. In this way, Charlemagne took on the title of a king of the Lombards when he had conquered their kingdom; the Salian and Staufer emperors attached Burgundy to the empire without interfering much in its affairs; Scotland was joined to the English crown; and the late medieval/early modern Luxembourg, Jagiellonian, and Habsburg dynasties collected countries and titles to form heterogeneous Central European realms. The Roman imperial heritage was largely adopted by the emerging early modern nations.⁶²

ORIGINS AND MIGRATIONS

As Kennedy notes, the disintegration of the Abbasid caliphate was brought about by groups that had long lived within the empire, whereas the "fall of Rome" is mostly described as the result of barbarian migrations and conquest. The new elites that entered the power games in the caliphate in the tenth century, mostly Bedouins, Iranians, or Kurds, came from areas that had been subject to the caliphs for centuries. Indeed, some of the new dynasties had started out with governors appointed by the caliph who had later broken away. Others, such as the Kurds from the Zagros Mountains or the Bedouin tribes from the pastoral margins of Iraq, had lived close to the core areas of the caliphate but had hardly participated in its prosperity. Others again had come from frontier areas, such as the Berbers involved in the Fātimid bid for power, or the Daylamites (from Daylam, a mountainous area southwest of the Caspian Sea) mobilized by the Būyid dynasty. The Būyids then built their power base in Iran, among others, in Fārs, with the support of local notables, and finally established an often-contested control over the caliph in Baghdad for about a century. Thus, there is no clear pattern. Yet most of the new powers were based on military groups from marginal zones, arid or mountainous areas, as the invaders in the Fertile Crescent had always done.

More than texts from the later Abbasid caliphate, contemporary perceptions of the disintegration of Western Rome highlight the otherness of the barbarians, their migrations and conquests. Increasingly, the historiography of the new kingdoms addressed the *origo gentis*, the more or less mythical origin stories of their peoples: Goths and Lombards from Scandinavia, the English from the continent, or the Franks, like the Romans, from Troy. This genre reached its peak later in the Middle Ages, and many European origin stories begin with migrations from the margins of Europe, preferably from Troy, Scythia, or Scandinavia.⁶³ Such stories might be relevant for a sense of ethnic identity, at least among the elites; at the same time, they placed a particular people in a privileged position within a shared mythical heritage of old Europe.

62. Hirschi, *Origins*.

63. Pohl, "Narratives." See also Plassmann, *Origo gentis*; Coumert, *Origines*.

To modern scholars, the seemingly authentic character of some of these stories appeared to express a strong primordial identity and thus to explain smoothly why ethnic groups could establish “their” states in Roman provinces.⁶⁴ In reaction to this simplifying migration paradigm, the extent and impact of migrations have often been doubted in recent scholarship.⁶⁵ However, this reasonable skepticism should not be pushed too far. A few hundred Vandals could not have conquered Africa.⁶⁶ What the written sources highlight are predominantly movements of warriors with their families, in rare cases up to tens of thousands, who aspired to an existence as professional soldiers in the Roman system. Such movements were the exception in a more or less steady flow of warriors and peasants into the Roman Empire, which had begun long before the “migration period.” The Romans normally had a clear idea who moved and used ethnic labels to distinguish between different groups. Most of the major migrations had been planned and often also prearranged with partners on Roman territory who had an agenda for what these armies should achieve. Thus, the major migrations were surrounded by rumors and political propaganda: did Stilicho call the Vandals to Gaul (unlikely) and Boniface call them to Africa (possible), or did Narses ask the Lombards to come to Italy (a particularly successful story, as it excused both the Lombard invasion and the weak Roman defense)?

In any case, none of the successful kingdoms on Roman territory was established by a barbarian group that had been in Roman provinces for less than a generation. Without a measure of integration and experience in a Roman environment, and close collaboration with Roman churchmen and administrators, none of these kingdoms would have been viable. The difference to the groups that grabbed power during the decline of Abbasid rule is thus only gradual. In none of the two cases did the empire simply disintegrate into preexisting units, so that it was neither emirates of Iran or Syria nor kingdoms of Gaul or Britain that emerged but units defined by the new rulers. In Europe, these new designations remained in many cases; in the Islamic world, they did not.

An at least partial integration of the migrating groups in the late Roman Empire may, perhaps paradoxically, help to explain the role of ethnic identities in the process. First, the Romans had always perceived of the barbarian lands beyond their frontiers as inhabited by a multitude of *gentes*, peoples or tribes, and Roman diplomacy had successfully incited their rivalries. Roman perceptions of these barbarians continued to rely on the familiar ethnic terminology when they inhabited Roman territory, however adequate these distinctions may have been in various cases. Second, auxiliary units of the Roman army—which many of

64. A key text about the impact of “gentile traditions,” as he called it, on barbarian identities (a term he did not use), is Wenskus, *Stammesbildung*. See also Pohl, “Von der Ethnogenese.”

65. Most forcefully by Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*.

66. On the events, see Steinacher, *Vandalen*.

these barbarian groups formed—had always been distinguished by ethnonyms, which corresponded to certain military skills deemed typical for the respective *gens*. The names of these units usually remained regardless of their changing composition. Third, the otherness of the barbarians remained a sort of stigma in late antiquity, and barbarian stereotypes continued to be used by the Roman elite (the famous poem by Sidonius Apollinaris about the heavy-drinking seven-foot-tall Burgundians with rancid butter in their hair is just one example).⁶⁷ Pogroms against Vandals or Goths happened occasionally both in Italy (after the murder of Stilicho) and in Constantinople (the riots against Gainas).⁶⁸ Unsurprisingly, this seems to have led to an affirmation of difference on the other side. Fourth, it was in the best interest of the migrant armies to elect their own leaders to increase their autonomy and cohesion. Unlike the armies of the great Roman generals and military impresarios of the fifth century, Aetius, Boniface, or Felix, which were disbanded or transferred to another commander after their death, Gothic armies stayed together when their leaders died and elected another one.⁶⁹ These mobile “barbarian” rulers without a country were often awarded with fancy titles (as mentioned), generous stipends, or actual commands by the empire, in a drive to harness their military capacities to its purposes (or those of one of its power brokers)—or at least in order to pacify them. Similar to the Būyids, Burgundian or Gothic kings were technically regarded as commanders in the service of Rome, while they carved out their own kingdoms. To some extent, these kingdoms remained in the orbit of the empire, as did Būyids and others in the caliphate.

A FURTHER SCENARIO: THE DECLINE OF THE CAROLINGIAN EMPIRE

Apart from marginal but partly integrated forces from within and outside an empire or external invaders (as in the Muslim conquests), there was another option to replace imperial power. That was the scenario of the dissolution of the Carolingian Empire of the Franks in the later ninth century, almost simultaneously with the decline of Abbasid rule.⁷⁰ Empire (in the sense both of territorial expansion and of Roman imperial ideology) made Frankish identity, which had played a major role in the rise of the Carolingian kings in the eighth century, less salient and required a rhetoric of *imperium*, *ecclesia*, and *populus Christianus* encompassing a multitude of subject peoples.⁷¹ That, in turn, as Reimitz has

67. Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmina*, ed. Anderson, 12, p. 212.

68. Pohl, “Dinamiche.”

69. Pohl, “‘Pistis.’”

70. For the comparison between Carolingians and Abbasids, see Drews, *Karolinger*; Cook, “Comparing”; and other contributions in Tor, ed., *Abbasid and Carolingian Empires*.

71. De Jong, “Ecclesia,” pp. 113–132; de Jong, “State.”

argued, opened new spaces for regional and particular ethnic identities in the vast Carolingian realm.⁷² Bavarians, Saxons, Aquitanians, or Bretons, all of whom had lived in these regions for centuries, were now gaining ground again. In the time of Charlemagne, members of the Frankish aristocracy had taken high office in the extensive non-Frankish areas of the empire. Over time, they had formed new regional elites, together with the descendants of the former regional aristocracies. Now their loyalty to the imperial power faded. Peripheral regions slipped out of central control. In the tenth century, the two main components of the former empire, the eastern and western Frankish realms, practically disintegrated into a number of duchies that enjoyed considerable political leeway.⁷³ Rather than the kingdoms, these regional units now were the principal nodes of identification. It is pointless to argue whether these duchies were ethnic, regional, or political. What is striking is that in spite of their very diverse origin—ancient or recent, ethnic, territorial, or contextual—they developed into a plurality of analogous political units that taken together formed a relatively stable territorial configuration. In the tenth century, the duchies represented an alternative to the often precarious East Frankish and West Frankish/French kingdoms, to which they formally still adhered.

Like the post-Roman kingdoms, the post-Carolingian duchies acquired an impressive resilience despite their uneven political fates. They relied on a strong sense of agency and participation of their politically active population. Thus, even Lotharingia, named after the Carolingian king to whom this artificial product of regnal divisions had been entrusted, could be territorialized and ethnicized to some extent—in historiographic accounts, the Lotharingians eventually appeared as collective political actors.⁷⁴ As a consequence, Lotharingia/Lorraine still exists as a region. The revived Ottonian Empire of the late tenth century could be perceived as a conglomerate of ethnic groups represented in the duchies. In Liudprand of Cremona's tenth-century account of his embassy to Constantinople, he responded to the invective of the Byzantine emperor Nicephorus—"You are not Romans, but Lombards!"—with an emphatic multiple identification: "we, that is, Lombards, Saxons, Franks, Lotharingians, Bavarians, Swabians and Burgundians, regard Roman! as one of the worst insults."⁷⁵ A little later, in 987, according to Richer of St. Rémi, the duke of the Franks Hugh Capet was "established as king over the Gauls, the Bretons, the Normans (*Dahis/Danis*), the Aquitanians, the Goths, the Spanish, and the Gascons."⁷⁶ His actual royal control was much more limited;⁷⁷ therefore, it did not suffice to represent his rule as

72. Reimitz, *History*, pp. 453–455. See chapter 9 by Esders and Reimitz in this volume. For the development of Frankish identity in the Merovingian period, see also Buchberger, *Shifting*.

73. Cf. Schneidmüller, *Nomen Patriae*; Barthélemy, *France*.

74. McLean, "Who Were the Lotharingians?"

75. Liudprand of Cremona, *Relatio*, ed. Becker, 12, p. 182.

76. Richer of St. Rémi, *Histories*, ed. and trans. Lake, vol. 2, 4.12, p. 22. Barthélemy, *France*, p. 37.

77. Menant et al., *Capétiens*, pp. 32–41.

a *regnum Francorum* anymore, because the Francia had become just one of the duchies. More ambitious pretensions now had to be expressed as kingship over several peoples.

Unlike in the decline of the Abbasid caliphate, these old or new post-Carolingian identities were essentially represented by the elites of the empire, who had in part realigned themselves and insisted on their autonomy from the royal centers of power.⁷⁸ In Italy, it is particularly conspicuous that the leading Frankish families who had once been put in charge of duchies such as Friuli and Spoleto now competed for the rule of Italy. Charlemagne had endowed his “imperial aristocracy” (*Reichsaristokratie*) with land and office in different parts of the empire. Their descendants now sought to expand their position on a more regional level. The duchies, except for Lotharingia and Normandy, built on pre-Carolingian identities. In a paradoxical way, the very success of the Franks in extending the Carolingian Empire and reviving the Roman imperial tradition, and in integrating many other ethnic and regional groupings, had reinforced the role of alternative ethnic identities in their realm—Bavarians, Suabians, Saxons, Bretons, and others. Thus, they were (much less paradoxically) ready to regain more or less autonomous political agency as *gentes* within their duchies when Carolingian rule crumbled. It seems that during the erosion of imperial power in the caliphate, a similar process evolved in a slightly different way. As Kennedy shows in this volume’s chapter 2, tribal identities lost their significance in providing access to prestige and legitimacy in the course of the ninth century. Members of the Muslim elite increasingly dropped their tribal *nisbas*, the name element indicating tribal or regional origin and affiliation. This may have made room for new tribal allegiances that entered upon the scene in the core areas of the caliphate.

Similarities and differences between these cases—the demise of the West Roman, Abbasid, and Carolingian Empires—can be demonstrated by three random examples. The Būyid Aḥmad, who reputedly came from a family of fishermen on the Caspian Sea, joined a Daylamite mercenary army with his two brothers, who soon grasped the occasion to establish regional powers in different parts of Iran. While his elder brother Alī consolidated his rule over Fārs, Aḥmad intervened in Baghdad in 945, where he was appointed *āmīr al-umarāʾ*, commander of the commanders, and received the honorific Muʿizz al-Dawla, Glorifier of the State.⁷⁹

Quite similarly, in 472, the Western emperor bestowed the titles of *magister militum*, commander in chief of the Italian army, and the honorific *patricius* on Gundobad. He was from a Burgundian family later called the Gibichungs, who had only recently consolidated their kingdom which controlled communications

78. Barthélemy, *France*, pp. 13–19.

79. Kennedy, *Prophet*, pp. 213–218.

between Italy and Gaul. However, Gundobad soon decided to withdraw from the contested political scene in the heartland of the Western Empire, with its frequent coups and rebellions, and returned home to become king of the Burgundians.⁸⁰ The Burgundians, first mentioned in what is now Poland, had long lived in the Main valley, close to the Roman frontier, had crossed the Rhine soon after 400, and had been settled by the Roman general Aetius, after a crushing defeat, in Gaul along the middle Rhône in the 440s as Roman federates.⁸¹

Count Eberhard came from a noble family in Northern Gaul (called, again by modern scholars, the Unruochings), whose possessions lay around Lille. In 828, Emperor Louis the Pious appointed him margrave of Friuli, one of the key positions in Carolingian Italy, in an area that had seen much unrest in recent years. Some years later, Eberhard married one of the emperor's daughters. In 888, when the Carolingian Charles III was dethroned, their son Berengar had himself proclaimed king of Italy but remained hard-pressed by King Arnulf (to whom he was forced to submit) and, after Arnulf's death, by other Frankish nobles in Italy. In 915, he managed to be crowned emperor by the pope but never actually succeeded in overcoming his rivals in the kingdom of Italy.

Aḥmad came from the periphery to the center to pursue his career, Gundobad moved from the center to the periphery, and Eberhard had been sent from the center to the periphery, where his son severed ties with the remaining Carolingians. In all three cases, post-imperial power was forcefully contested, not simply between individual warlords but by their families and networks. Ways to power in the phase of dissolution of the three realms were in many respects similar. Yet the origins of the new ruling groups differed. In the Abbasid caliphate, power went to military commanders and their following from marginal areas and tribal territories inside the realm. In the Western Roman Empire, a new military elite emerged that had arrived some time ago from the barbarian lands beyond the frontier but had been socialized in somehow precarious positions as federate troops inside the empire. In the Carolingian Empire, members of the imperial aristocracy who had been loyal to the empire for a long time used their regional positions in all parts of the realm for bids for more or less autonomous power. Only in the European cases, the new powers were framed in more or less given territorial units, which had largely formed in the course of the dissolution of the Roman Empire and were still the bone of contention in the post-Carolingian period. In the caliphate, the struggle seems to have revolved more around the control of large urban centers such as Baghdad, Mosul, Aleppo, or Rayy, from which the countryside was administered.

80. Wood, "Political Structure"; Wood, "Roman Barbarians."

81. Kaiser, *Burgunder*, pp. 15–40.

TRIBES, ETHNICITY, AND THE ARMY

In both the Roman Empire and the caliphate, the army had been a principal agent of integration of multiple tribes and ethnic and regional groups, which had, for a long time, successfully instilled in its soldiers a sense of common purpose. At the same time, it had not only acknowledged but to an extent institutionalized this internal multiplicity. After the Islamic conquests, the *diwan*, which recorded the payments due to the garrisons of Basra, Kufa or Fustāt, was structured according to tribal categories.⁸² Many units of the Roman army (and not only the “barbarian” auxiliary units) were also named after the peoples or provinces from which they had initially been recruited; the early-fifth-century *Notitia Dignitatum* gives an impressive overview of this multiplicity. Under the late Roman system, the *annonae* (rations for the soldiers) were distributed by the civil administration to the responsible officers of military units, including barbarian federates. When leaders of a barbarian group were acknowledged as Roman military commanders, they gained the opportunity of controlling the regular flows of money and goods to their followers but still had to negotiate the appropriate supplies with the representatives of the Roman state.⁸³ Outsourcing military force was cheaper for the Roman state than managing the sophisticated apparatus of the Roman army and its provisioning from top to bottom. Increasingly, in the fifth century, the Roman authorities made wholesale deals with barbarian warlords or ethnic leaders, which came at a discount but endorsed a barbarian system of self-governance. The Gothic or Burgundian kings of the fifth century knew how to increase their budget by occasional rebellions, raids, or pressure on the Romans.⁸⁴

The future lords of the land in the late Roman West negotiated their maintenance with the late Roman/early Byzantine Empire which they ultimately apportioned among themselves. The Roman *foederati* established their control over Roman provinces separately and in sharp competition with one another. This pre-conquest scenario differed from the post-conquest situation in the early caliphate, in which a new imperial government had to accommodate all conquering armies. Yet the long-term dynamic in the way the late Roman Empire and the Umayyad/Abbasid caliphate distributed pay and rations among particular ethnic and tribal groupings in their armies displays comparable elements. As Kennedy explains in chapter 2 of this volume, the Arab tribes after the conquest (just as

82. Cf. Kennedy, chapter 2 in this volume. In general, see Kennedy, *Armies*, pp. 59–95 (esp. p. 78); Sijpesteijn, *Shaping*, pp. 78–79.

83. Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, vol. 1, pp. 458–460, 626–630. There is a considerable debate and literature on the “accommodation of barbarians” in the West, opened by Goffart, *Barbarians*, who argued that the barbarian soldiers received tax shares, which would be similar to the *iqta’* in the caliphate. For a brief and critical overview, see Wickham, *Framing*, pp. 80–87; for extensive debate, see Porena and Rivière, eds., *Expropriations*.

84. Wolfram, *Römerreich*.

did the Goths, Burgundians, or Franks) “found themselves part of a new [ethnic] community with a common interest in securing their share of resources.” The tribal communities all depended on the benefits of the diwan and, ultimately, on the Commander of the Faithful. At the same time, they were involved in a complicated competition with other tribes for an adequate share in the resources of the empire. In the course of the Abbasid period, the Arab soldiers of the caliph were gradually replaced by Turks and others. In the tenth century, these were mostly organized in so-called *ghilmān* units, serving as mercenaries without strong links of loyalty to their employers or to other Turkish units. In many of the new realms that evolved in the tenth-century Abbasid caliphate, *ghilmān* forces complemented or replaced the tribal/ethnic military basis of the rulers and thus diminished the solidarity and loyalty of their armed forces.⁸⁵ Mu‘izz al-Dawla, after establishing his control over Baghdad, had severe problems with “his” Daylamites, especially as he was often short of money to pay his troops. “Necessity compelled him to attach the Turks more closely to himself, promote them higher and higher, and rely on their aid against the Daylamites,” whom he could not pay adequately anymore.⁸⁶

The Goths (and other successful *gentes*), on the other hand, as members of the *exercitus Gothorum*, the Gothic army, soon enjoyed a monopoly in their respective kingdoms qua being Goths, in whose name a king now ruled an imperial province. These armies often were rather hybrid in composition; in 568, the Lombard king Alboin reputedly led an army composed of Lombards, Gepids, Suevi, Pannonian and Norican provincials, Sarmatians, and Bulgars to Italy.⁸⁷ Foreigners (called *waregang* in Lombard law) could be co-opted.⁸⁸ However, there was one hegemonial force in each of these armies. Belonging to the army entitled one to a guaranteed income without labor and eventually to heritable landholding, which contributed decisively to the consolidation of the new community. Gothic or Lombard soldiers had rather straightforward joint purposes: most of all, to defend their privilege as Gothic or Lombard army against the inclusion of too many newcomers, so as not to deplete the limited resource base of the kingdom in the face of the decay of the Roman tax system. The way to privilege in the post-Roman *regna* in the West was affiliation to the right ethnic group.

The examples show how one or a few elements in a set of similar conditions can have a long-term impact leading to very different results. Again, a comparable dynamic can be detected in the further development of the imperial/in-tertribal army of the caliphs and of the royal/ethnic armies of the West. In both worlds, the inherited privilege to serve in the army did not always go along with

85. Kennedy, *Prophet*, pp. 206–211.

86. Abū ‘Alī Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, ed. and trans. Amedroz and Margoliouth, vol. 2, 5.99–100, p. 105; see also vol. 2, 5.163–164, pp. 174–176; and vol. 2, 5.173–174, pp. 186–188.

87. Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. Bethmann and Waitz, 2.26, p. 87.

88. *Edictus Rothari*, trans. Fischer Drew, 367, p. 124; ed. Bluhme, 367, p. 85.

a commitment to actually do so. Eighth-century Lombard kings repeatedly issued decrees to enforce participation in military expeditions with adequate equipment;⁸⁹ and the Carolingian kings discovered the grave offense of *harisliz*, leaving the army on the march.⁹⁰ Thus, maintenance of privilege could lead to a stagnation or even a decrease in numbers for the effective armed forces of the kingdoms. In consequence, the seventh century seems to have been one of the most peaceful periods in Europe in terms of interstate warfare.⁹¹ This development may also help to explain why in 711, the Visigothic kingdom could not mount sufficient resistance to the expedition of Tariq.⁹² Ultimately, Goths and Vandals left only a faint heritage in the political landscape of Spain, of Italy and of Africa. Only the name Andalusia could be a trace of the Vandals, preserved in the enigmatic Islamic designation al-Andalus.⁹³

FORMS OF ETHNICITY

In the East as in the West, there was a wide range of ways in which peoples and ethnic groups were constituted; their significance, coherence, self-perception, cultural affinity, and sense of a common past differed considerably. Comparison of the Armenians, Kurds, Egyptians, and Iranians, as presented by Kennedy, provides a valuable example. An important factor is the (present or past) existence of a common state, which Armenians and Iranians had once had, the Kurds had not, and the Egyptians had almost forgotten. Apart from that, differences lie on the level both of unifying discourses and of social and economic practice. Common language may facilitate internal communication and a sense of belonging, but it does not in itself provide a sufficient frame for unity, as the example of the Kurds shows. In the West, the Germanic languages spoken in most of the successor kingdoms are never highlighted as an important element of cohesion or identity, and their disappearance in Spain, Italy, and Gaul goes surprisingly unnoticed in our sources.⁹⁴ Arabic (as well as Latin and Greek) received more attention as a marker of identity. Written memory also makes a difference for the creation of a lasting repertoire for identification. What is striking is that it took so long until Iranian-ness came to be used as a point of reference for legitimizing a state after the Islamic conquest. Paradoxically, it seems that two dynasties of non-Iranian origin finally promoted Iranian traditions to legitimize

89. Ratchis, ed. Bluhme, 4, pp. 184–185; Aistulf, ed. Bluhme, 2, p. 196.

90. Becher, *Eid*; Krah, “Herisliz.”

91. Wood, *Transformation*, p. 82.

92. For a reflection on the possible reasons for this quick collapse, see Arce, “Visigoths.”

93. This etymology of al-Andalus is, however, mostly regarded as superseded, although no alternative has been agreed upon. See Bossong, “Name al-Andalus.”

94. Pohl and Zeller, eds., *Sprache*.

their rule: the Mongol Ilkhans in the thirteenth/fourteenth century and, later, the Turkic Safavids, who even claimed to be descended from Muḥammad.

In early medieval Western Europe, ethnicity and ethnic identities could also take quite divergent forms. What ethnonyms designated were rather disparate forms of notional groups or communities. Some names served mostly as ethnographic categories. The overarching name “*Germani*” was a Roman outside designation and is only attested for self-identification by some Roman officers on the west bank of the Rhine. It largely ceased to be used for contemporary peoples in late antiquity.⁹⁵ Scholars may decide to class the post-Roman kingdoms as “Germanic,” for instance, to account for the native language of their ruling elites (which these eventually abandoned), but they have to be aware that this is a modern classification, not a contemporary notion. No European state ever relied on a self-identification as “Germanic” in any inclusive sense, a fact obscured by the undifferentiated English use of “Germans.” This is quite unlike, for instance, the use of “Turks” in Central Asia, already well documented as emphatic self-identification in the seventh-century Orkhon inscriptions.⁹⁶ Even though Webb has demonstrated that the name “Arabs” is not as consistently used as it may seem, at least it served for the overarching self-identification of some people some of the time and had political potential.⁹⁷ Different again is the meaning of “Slavs”; Florin Curta may have pushed this point too far, but the name seems to have spread mainly by its Byzantine use.⁹⁸ The alternative term “Wends” was certainly derived from a Germanic outside designation, analogous to **walhisk*–Welsh for the Germans’ western neighbours.⁹⁹ However, it is clear that eventually, **slovene*–Slavs came to be used, at different levels, for self-identification. “Franks,” by their very success, sometimes also tended to become a generic term, most obviously in the era of the Crusades. On the other hand, it could shrink to a regional designation both west (Francia/Île de France) and east of the Rhine (*Franken*).¹⁰⁰

The relation between peoples and states was thus rather varied. Initially, the post-Roman ethnic groups formed a small and mostly military elite in the kingdoms named after them. Where these kingdoms were successful, the names spread to include much wider groups in the respective kingdoms. The case of the Lombards is characteristic.¹⁰¹ Alboin’s army that invaded Italy in 568 counted at the most one hundred thousand people, including families and dependents but also Gepids, Suebi, Pannonian provincials, and others. These Lombards ruled over a vast majority of Romans and other groups. In the course of centuries, the

95. Pohl, “Germanenbegriff.”

96. Cf. Tekin, *Grammar*; Golden, *Introduction*.

97. Webb, *Imagining*.

98. Curta, *Making*; Pohl, *Avars*, pp. 118–126.

99. Pohl, “Walchen.”

100. Petersohn, *Franken*.

101. Pohl, “Memory”; Gasparri, *Prima delle nazioni*.

name came to designate the Romance-speaking population of Lombardy, in contrast to that of the neighboring Romagna, the former territory of the Byzantine exarchate. What is striking is that contemporary authors did not monitor this process at all: neither the progressive inclusion of the non-Lombard population nor the linguistic and cultural assimilation of the Lombards came into focus.¹⁰² The same holds true for the Franks, who ultimately became the French. The remarkable difference between the two cases is that “French” identity spread in the kingdom of France, while the Lombard kingdom had been taken over by the Franks in 774, and the *regnum Langobardorum* was increasingly understood as a *regnum Italiae*.¹⁰³ Again, it is clear that neither the immutability and coherence of ethnic identities nor political success can explain the continued use of old ethnic identifications for new purposes.

At the end of a centuries-long process, the German-speaking Franks had become the French, and the Lombards were now the Italian-speaking population of Lombardy. In the process, ethnic identification sometimes seemed to become unimportant. However, the ethnonyms, with their entire load of social memories, remained and were available for new appropriations. The Burgundians are an obvious example. Although their kingdom around Lyon and Geneva had been conquered by the Franks in the 530s, the ethnic designation was used for different polities in different regions for another millennium: a Merovingian kingdom in the sixth to eighth centuries, a post-Carolingian kingdom along the lower Rhône and in Provence in the late ninth to eleventh centuries, a French duchy in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, and a practically independent grand duchy expanding from Dijon to the Low Countries in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The territorial configuration of these entities shifted; it was the legitimacy of rule grounded in a legendary people and its kings in a distant past that still counted.

There were, of course, comparable developments in the Islamic world, through which the majority of the population in many Islamic countries came to regard themselves as Arabs. Unlike the Germanic-speaking elites in the West, the Arabs preserved their language and gradually Arabicized most of their subjects. However, before the independence of Saudi Arabia after World War I and Gamal Abdel Nasser’s ephemeral foundation of a United Arab Republic in the 1950s, no Arab state was called Arabia in the way in which France was named after the Franks or England after the Angles. What explains these different developments? As we have seen, it was not the sheer vigor of timeless ethnic identities that can explain their resilience in the West. Neither was it the stable political framing of ethnic groups in “their” states that allowed them to maintain an unquestioned ethnic basis. What European peoples shared was not an ideal-type process that

102. Pohl, “Paolo Diacono.”

103. Pohl, “Gens Ipsa Peribit.”

shaped their identities and states; the cases are too different to be easily subsumed under a common model. On the other hand, contingency cannot offer a convincing explanation for developments that were in themselves contingent but somehow followed a similar logic. The eventual development of European nations seems to have worked like a multiplicity of texts on the basis of a shared grammar.

SOCIAL COHESION AND IDENTITIES

Face-to-face communities and small groups that routinely interact easily develop a sense of “us and them,” which can help to mobilize consensus and commitment.¹⁰⁴ Such sentiments may be very stable in an environment where they can be communicated on a regular basis. They may enable armies engaged in frequent campaigns to enhance their sense of purpose and their feelings of solidarity. That can also apply to the ruling group of a new realm, as long as it still shares the experience of its joint exploits. Common origin, often expressed in tribal or ethnic affiliations, may help minority groups to maintain their particular identities versus the majority population over a long time. In larger groups, even though they may have a common name, identity is by no means self-perpetuating. Such affiliations may support a vague sense of belonging in a rather diffuse population such as the Kurds or the Slavs, which could enable punctual solidarities. However, it does not become very tangible to its members except on a rather regional level, and it clearly cannot always prevent endemic rivalries.

Legitimizing and integrating larger polities thus requires much effort, on the level of both discourse and practice. This can be achieved by collective rituals, for instance, by the yearly march field on which the Frankish army assembled, greeted by a king of the Franks, often, but not always, in order to go on campaign together. Such meetings could give the occasion for both formal ritual and informal negotiation: for smaller or larger political assemblies, for the settlement of disputes and legal business, for religious ceremonies and banquets, perhaps also for remembering ancient and recent deeds of the Frankish people.¹⁰⁵ Social identities can also be furthered by authoritative representatives who explain the common cause, its past and future. What matters are also external perceptions. Roman and Christian observers tended to tell the history of the “others,” barbarians and pagans, in the ethnic mode. I have expounded this model elsewhere: ethnic identity can be described as the result of a circuit of communication between

104. The distinction made here between face-to-face communities and larger groups corresponds with the distinction between “Grundstrukturen” and “Steigerungsformen” of identity proposed by Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, pp. 131–138.

105. For a brief summary of (controversial) debates on assemblies, see Reuter, “Assembly Politics,” p. 197. A classic passage is Gregory of Tours, *Histories*, ed. Krusch and Levison, 2.27, p. 72 (Clovis and his army on the *campus Martis*). See also Barnwell and Mostert, eds., *Political Assemblies*.

people who identify with an ethnic group, the representatives of this group who define it and stage collective rituals, and outside observers who acknowledge the existence of this group.¹⁰⁶ Social discourse in the broader environment frames this circuit of communication about identity and community and has an impact on what kinds of identification are likely to be successful. What a society does not vividly imagine usually cannot be constructed.

The spectacular success of the Islamic conquests relied on a powerful religious discourse that allowed a swift integration of the most varied groups of population. Islamization in the caliphate was a slow process, but it succeeded without the pressure on conversion often exerted by contemporary Christian states. The Islamic expansionist drive also rested on a parallel, rather different process of integration, the unification of the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula within an empire that was, at least notionally, theirs. This integration was never without conflict, and the more the elites of the caliphate in Damascus and Baghdad adapted to a Fertile Crescent mode of imperial politics, those who had maintained the traditional lifestyle of the Bedouins in the Arabian Peninsula receded into the periphery again.¹⁰⁷ Islamic historiography and literature certainly maintained a high profile of tribal identities, but glorifying Bedouin ways in poetry also tended to archaize them. In the centers of Islamic power, tribal affiliations could count in the context of career networks and factional strife and help to channel conflicts about status and access to privilege.¹⁰⁸ Tribes or ethnic groups were much less regarded as potential state builders with independent political agency and military power, in a way in which Goths, Burgundians, or Franks were in the late Roman West.

ETHNICITY AND RELIGION

Before the spread of Christianity and Islam, religious identities had often more or less coincided with ethnic, regional, civic, or political allegiances. The universal messages propagated by Christians and Muslims superseded such direct links of cult and community. Yet the two religions also offered new opportunities for enabling and reaffirming ties to particular communities.¹⁰⁹ This religious grounding for ethnic or political identities was inescapably more complex than the old veneration of the “own” gods of a community. It could take different forms. To be the “chosen people” of the one God, as in the Hebrew Bible, was the most obvious but not the prevalent form. The Christians needed more sophisticated ways to appropriate notions of divine election from their “Old Testament” and to disown

106. Pohl, “Introduction: Strategies.”

107. Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, pp. 251–260.

108. See Webb, chapter 11 in this volume.

109. Pohl, Heydemann, and Hartl, eds., *Ethnicity*.

the Jews of that status. One could also believe to live in a community that (had) responded particularly well to divine revelation. That was certainly the case with the Arabs, who were convinced to be the only ones who had honored the message of the Prophet, after other peoples had spurned the message of their prophets.¹¹⁰ Or, at least, one could see one's community as a type of grouping endorsed by the holy scriptures. As I have argued elsewhere, this was the case with the *gentes* in Christianity.¹¹¹ Here I would like to pose the question of whether there may have been a difference in the impact of Christianity and of Islam on the political role of ethnic identities.

It is perhaps no coincidence that the only example of a relatively stable ethnic identity that could, at different points in history, legitimize and help to integrate a state (or keep the desire for a state of one's own alive) in the early Islamic world were the Armenians, as argued by Kennedy in chapter 2 of this volume.¹¹² They had a fatherland full of landmarks, a written language, a shared history described in many works of historiography and hagiography—and they were Christians, with an acute sense of the particularity of their creed. Although it sounds counterintuitive, Christianity provided important models of identification with ethnic groups.¹¹³ In the Old Testament, ethnicity plays a key role. The people of Israel was under a covenant with God and was surrounded by *goyim*, *gentes*, which God often used to punish the Jews when they had strayed from the covenant. The New Testament is more ambivalent. On the one hand, Paul's epistle to the Colossians (3:11) emphatically states that among the Christians, "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and in all." On the other hand, Jesus also calls upon the disciples at the end of the gospel of Matthew (28:19): "Therefore go and make disciples of all *gentes*." Thus, the *gentes* could be perceived as part of God's plan of salvation.

Conversion meant, as many early medieval authors stress, election by God—Franks, Angles, or Irish had now become his people.¹¹⁴ Similarly, the Armenians were proud that they had been among the very first peoples to be converted. Such a sense of election was rarely based on a triumphalist rhetoric of identifying one's own people with biblical Israel and claiming exclusive rights to the grace of God.¹¹⁵ Rather, it mostly provided a moral grounding for admonitions to a people and its representatives not to squander divine protection by sin and

110. Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, p. 27, with reference to a passage in the letter of al-Walid II translated at pp. 118–119.

111. Pohl, "Disputed Identifications."

112. As in the European cases discussed here, this is not intended as a teleological argument. The fact that today there is a sovereign Armenian state but no Kurdish one is contingent on events in contemporary history. However, the resources of identification built up in the course of a long history may play a role; they surely did in the period under scrutiny here.

113. Pohl, "Christian and Barbarian Identities"; Pohl, "Christliche Dimension."

114. Cf. König, *Bekehrungsmotive*.

115. Garrison, "Franks"; O'Brien, "Empire."

misconduct.¹¹⁶ It also served as a reminder of God's grace and of saintly leaders in the past. Christianity was both inclusive and distinctive. It could legitimize all peoples by connecting them to a transcendental point of reference, the "calling of the nations." Or it could highlight the history of one particular Church and people. Eusebius/Rufinus had written a history of "the" Church in the fourth century; Gregory of Tours a history of the Church of Gaul in the sixth; and Bede, in the eighth century, a *Historia Ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*. When Bede wrote, no kingdom of "the" Angles existed yet, but arguably, his work contributed decisively to setting the stage for the eventual unification of England.¹¹⁷

Bishops could admonish kings to lead their people on the path to salvation. In Alcuin's view, the Viking raid on Lindisfarne was a punishment for the sins of the English and for the shortcomings of their bishops: "Our fathers, God allowing, although pagans, took this land by their bellicose virtues. How big is our disgrace that we Christians lose what those pagans won." Alcuin identifies himself as an Angle both in an ethnic sense (as descendant of the pagan Angles who conquered Northumbria) and in a broader, Christian/ethnic meaning, as a member of the *ecclesia Anglorum*, the Anglian/English Church—which included the Saxons.¹¹⁸ The bishops, he argues, have a particular responsibility for guiding the people to a moral conduct that would be pleasing to God. Clerical neglect and too many sinners invariably incurred God's wrath against the people as a whole: if the shepherds failed, the entire flock was in danger. The Old Testament narrative but also the punishment of the Jews whose high priests had pressed for Christ's crucifixion seemed to make it clear that God protected or punished entire peoples, not only individual souls; the *gentes* were the main actors in the history of salvation.

It is no coincidence that the two strongest statements of the importance of common blood and ethnic identity in the eighth century came from two bishops: the missionary Boniface reminded the Anglo-Saxons that they were of "one blood and one bone" with the continental Saxons in order to encourage them to engage more in the Saxon mission;¹¹⁹ Pope Stephen III used strong ethnocentric language to dissuade Charlemagne from marrying a Lombard princess.¹²⁰ Christian clerics knew how to manipulate the language of ethnicity if necessary, and they could expect their lay audience to be able to decode both sides of the message, the rhetoric of Christian inclusion and of ethnic distinction. Within the larger social whole of Western Christendom, a plurality of peoples could be accommodated, with all their complex differences and interrelations. Religious discourses of unity and an awareness of ethnic difference, therefore,

116. Pohl and Heydemann, "Rhetoric."

117. Wormald, "Engla Lond."

118. Alcuin, *Epistolae*, ed. Dümmler, 17, p. 47; Pohl, "Ethnicity."

119. *Miseremini illorum, quia et ipsi solent dicere: de uno sanguine et de uno osse sumus*, in *Epistolae Bonifatii*, ed. Tangl, 46, p. 77; Flierman, *Saxon Identities*, p. 97; Pohl, "Sächsische Identitäten."

120. *Codex Carolinus*, ed. Gundlach, 45, pp. 560–563. Pohl, "Why Not Marry?"

were not necessarily in contradiction; taken together, they could help to enhance the cohesion of social groups. The Church had not only assumed the responsibility for the remembrance of the ancestors of individual families.¹²¹ The institutional repositories of churches and monasteries could also provide archives for ethnic memory.¹²²

Islam does not seem to have allotted a similar role to peoples in general. If ethnicity could ease the way to salvation, then only for the people of the Prophet. The privileged position of the Arabs among the Muslims is repeatedly highlighted.¹²³ Elsewhere, the message is different, for instance: "O people! Truly your God is one, and you are all descended from the same ancestor! Truly the Arab has no superiority over the non-Arab, nor the non-Arab over the Arab, nor black over white, nor white over black, except in piety."¹²⁴ This has an almost Pauline ring to it.¹²⁵ Debates about Arab superiority were controversial, and the bias shifted from the glorious days of Arab rule in the caliphate to the later period when Arabs came under the rule of foreigners. Cook has made an important distinction: "In this earlier period non-Arab *people* could convert to Islam, but non-Arab *peoples* could not; in that sense the community remained effectively mono-ethnic."¹²⁶ Conversion to Islam was an individual act, in which the converts became clients (*mawalī*) of individual Arabs; this only changed gradually from the late ninth century onward.¹²⁷ Early Islam could hardly be used to affirm non-Arab identities.¹²⁸ Obviously, all of this was very different from late antique Christian practice, where missions to the *gentes* targeted entire peoples. The conversion of the Frankish king Clovis (together with thousands of his followers) was thus regarded by contemporaries as the conversion of "the Franks."

Among the Arabs, the Prophet's tribe, the Quraysh, enjoyed unrivaled prestige, in a way no Westerner could ever hope to do: claims to blood relation with Jesus Christ were only acceptable in a metaphorical or allegorical sense. Thus, Christianity could support a non-hierarchical framework in which the *gentes* could compete for God's grace and in which their position only depended on their correct creed and moral behavior. The kingdoms of the *gentes* took shape in the context of an increasingly sophisticated Church organization. In the view of Christian literati, the *gens* as the collective bearers of the kingdom and the *populus* as the Catholic community were united in the Church of the realm

121. Goody, *Development*.

122. Cf. Pohl, *Werkstätte*.

123. Bashear, *Arabs*.

124. Qurtubi, *Jāmi'*, cited after Cook, *Ancient Religions*, p. 8.

125. Colossians 3:11; see above.

126. Cook, *Ancient Religions*, p. 10. In general about conversion to Islam, see Bulliet, *Conversion*.

127. See also Crone, *Roman, Provincial and Islamic Law*, pp. 38–40.

128. Cook, *Ancient Religions*, p. 17.

(Peter Brown's "micro-Christendom")¹²⁹ and shared the responsibility to act according to God's will for the benefit of all.

AGENCY, LAW, AND PARTICIPATION

When barbarians entered the Roman Empire and when pagans converted to Christianity, they remained, to an extent, what they were, at least in the language of historiography: barbarian *gentes*. The distinction between barbarians (or *goyim* in the Jewish tradition) according to their ethnic classification was sufficiently established in a millenary tradition of classical ethnography and of biblical history. It did not only allow identifying who a stranger was; it was also an essential device to tell the history of these barbarians and understand their behavior. These *gentes* had agency and kept history moving, they raised kings, migrated, waged war, concluded peace, or became allies of the Romans. It is remarkable that other collective agents of history are hardly present in late antique and early medieval historiography. No doubt, kings reigned and acted, and so did other officials and dignitaries of the state. Yet the state, the *regnum*, had no agency in early medieval historical narratives, in contrast to modern political accounts.¹³⁰ Neither were dynasties regarded as collective agents.

The Merovingians and later the Carolingians (or should we say Pippinids or Arnulfings?) are hardly ever named in Frankish historiography before the later ninth century.¹³¹ We have become so used to ordering medieval historical narratives by dynasties that we tend to forget that this scheme took some time to unfold.¹³² Islamic historians refer much more to dynastic leadership, for instance, the Banū Umayya, the Umayyads; although it has to be noted that "Būyids" rarely figure as such in Abū 'Alī Miskawayh's account: he mostly names dynastic leaders by the honorifics bestowed on them by the caliphs.¹³³ The presence of dynasties is most prominent in Chinese historiography, which was structured by dynastic periodization and official dynastic histories from the time of the Han onward.¹³⁴

In Western historiography, collective agency was chiefly attributed to *gentes*, which represented the kingdoms and were in turn represented by kings. This was not only a cognitive device but also expressed adequate perceptions where power

129. Brown, *Rise*, pp. 355–380.

130. Fried, "Gens," has recognized this and drawn the conclusion that in the early Middle Ages, an abstract concept of *regnum* was lacking. That does not necessarily follow from his valuable observations; see Goetz, "Regnum"; Pohl, "Staat."

131. Pohl, "Genealogy," p. 240.

132. For a general critique of the "dynastic" view of European history, see Afanasyev and Banerjee, "Modern Invention"; and Afanasyev, "Did Bohemian Jagiellonians Exist?" Cf. Pohl, "Genealogy," p. 260.

133. Abū 'Alī Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, ed. and trans. Amedroz and Margoliouth, vol. 3, Index, 36, s.v. "Buwaihīd family."

134. For a comparative view on the role of dynasties in a later period, see Duindam, *Dynasties*. On the key role of dynasties in nomadic empires, see Sneath, *Headless State*. On the development of Chinese historiography, see Wang, "National History"; Hartman and de Blasi, "Growth."

was based in the early medieval kingdoms: in the army. Military service was by legal definition the exclusive prerogative of the *gens*: the *exercitus Gothorum* or *Langobardorum*. Notionally, it was the *gens* who ruled the kingdom, a concept that also emerges in the Visigothic councils. A programmatic phrase in the canons of the Fourth Council of Toledo states that clearly: “May the glory of Christ confirm the kingdom of the people of the Goths in Catholic faith (*Corroboret Christi gloria regnum illius gentis Gotorum in fide catholica*).”¹³⁵ The *regnum* is understood here as the rightful rule of the Goths as a *gens* over Hispania, endorsed by Christ. Toledo V (636) and VI (638) established Gothic origin as a prerequisite for becoming king.¹³⁶ The *gens* as a whole was perceived as having a hereditary claim to the throne of the realm, which it had won and could only lose by right of conquest. When Charlemagne conquered the Lombard kingdom in 774, he took on the title “King of the Franks and Lombards,” and contemporaries believed that the Lombards had now forfeited to the Franks their hereditary right to govern Italy.¹³⁷

From a Western perspective, the Romans or “Greeks” of Byzantium soon formed part of this world of *gentes*. This was an aspect of a deeper process in which the *gentes* turned from “them” (the barbarians) to “us” (the Christian peoples). The distinction between the Roman *populus*, established by free association and law, and the barbarian *gentes*, constituted by birth and nature, became blurred.¹³⁸ Christianity contributed further to a smooth blending of the two concepts: through conversion, the pagan *gentes* became part of the Christian *populus*. Early medieval *gentes* thus were not only natural communities anymore, but they were also defined by (ecclesiastic and secular) law as the Roman *populus* had once been.

Law books that were soon issued in almost all of the post-Roman realms—by Burgundians, Goths, Franks, Lombards, Anglo-Saxons, Bavarians, and others—legalized and confirmed ethnic identities in many respects, if to a different extent.¹³⁹ Many, although not all, of them carried the name of the *gens* in the title in a good number of the manuscripts. The prologues usually specified the link to the ruler and the people; they underlined the agency of the king and of other representatives of the people in the compilation of the law.¹⁴⁰ Sometimes they stated that the law had been approved by the people: *Per gairethinx secundum ritus gentis nostrae confirmantes*, “confirming by the formal procedure according to the usage of our people,” as underlined in the Lombard *Edictus Rothari*.¹⁴¹

135. *Toledo IV*, ed. Martínez Diez and Rodríguez Barbero, 75, p. 259. Pohl and Dörler, “Isidore.”

136. *Toledo V*, ed. Martínez Diez and Rodríguez Barbero, 3, p. 282; *Toledo VI*, ed. Martínez Diez and Rodríguez Barbero, 17, p. 326.

137. Pohl, “Gens Ipsa Peribit.”

138. See Gantner et al., eds., *Transformations*.

139. On this and the following, see also Esders and Reimitz, chapter 9 in this volume.

140. Wormald, “Lex Scripta.”

141. *Edictus Rothari*, trans. Fischer Drew, 386, p. 129; ed. Bluhme, 386, p. 90. Dilcher, “‘Per gairethinx.’”

Ethnic classifications also played a role within the law books, privileging the ruling *gens*. For instance, in Frankish law, killing a Frank in most cases cost twice as much in recompense (*wergild*) than killing a Roman.¹⁴² Ethnic and social status thus tended to converge, at least in the law books, although reality was more dynamic. Ethnic categories provided a way to naturalize social hierarchies and to base privilege, often also personal freedom, firmly on ethnic origin.

Roman citizenship and law had once granted access to an elevated social status and enhanced legal protection; now that system had been turned upside down.¹⁴³ Roman law was still widely used for the majority of the “Roman” population, and Visigothic or Burgundian kings issued a Roman law book for the use of their Roman subjects.¹⁴⁴ Legal pluralism was a distinctive feature of the early medieval kingdoms, reflecting their ethnically heterogeneous population.¹⁴⁵ Rather than being an ancient Germanic legal principle of the “personality of the law,” legal pluralism was a functional choice relying on ancient precedent. It reached its peak in the Carolingian period, when the accused had to profess his legal identity before the judge and had the right to be judged according to the law of his people. We have complaints from the period that people wrongly claimed a legal identity that would allow them to avoid severe punishment more easily than submitting to other law codes.¹⁴⁶ Individual professions of law did not always coincide with other forms of ethnic identification. Yet in general, it made explicit ethnic identification a decisive feature of social practice and routinely linked ethnic identity to legal status, a scheme of classification that required formal identification. In a constellation in which the *gens* ruled the kingdom, it could grant access to privilege for its free members and allow formally co-opting or excluding others. Yet even after the fall of the respective kingdoms, most law codes remained in use for centuries and continued to provide a frame in which identities could legitimately be preserved, renewed, or appropriated.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE DISSOLUTION OF THE WESTERN ROMAN EMPIRE AND THE ABBASID CALIPHATE

On the whole, numerous parallels can be discerned between the dissolution of the Western Roman Empire and that of the Abbasid caliphate and the establishment of new powers on their territories. Both the Roman Empire and the caliphate had been well entrenched for centuries in their extensive dominions,

142. *Pactus legis Salicae*, ed. Eckhardt, 41.1; 5; 8; 9, pp. 154, 156, 157; Olberg, *Bezeichnungen*, p. 69; Bothe, “From Subordination.”

143. Esders, “Roman Law.”

144. Liebs, *Römische Jurisprudenz*.

145. On the term in general, see Davies, “Legal Pluralism.”

146. Agobard of Lyon, *Adversus legem Gundobadi*, ed. Dümmler, pp. 158–164; Wood, “Ethnicity,” pp. 53–54; Esders, *Agobard*.

and both had fundamentally transformed these regions. They had been flexible enough to accommodate cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and religious variety in their realms and offered paths of integration and social ascent. Thus, they had turned many of their subjects into Romans (or *Rhomaioi* in the Byzantine East) or Arabs, respectively. By the time when they began to lose their cohesion, they had converted a large part of their populations to the religion of state—regardless of the considerable difference that the Roman Empire had appropriated an originally Jewish creed that it had previously sought to suppress, while the faith of the caliphate had sprung from the very roots of its imperial expansion. Both empires had created an inclusive cultural *koinē* essentially built on previous cultural idioms and styles.

The transformations that ended up sealing the fates of both empires were in many respects due to their very success. The armies that had been at the core of their rise to empire had guaranteed their superior power for centuries, were essentially funded by tax revenues, and had maintained their own privileged position in the state. Gradually, though, the core population withdrew from military service, and the ranks were filled with soldiers from the peripheries, or even from beyond the frontiers, increasingly under their own commanders. Thus, the late Roman army was barbarized up to its highest ranks in the fourth and fifth centuries. Likewise, “the profession of arms became confined to certain, mostly marginal, groups within the Muslim community.”¹⁴⁷ The Abbasids owed their rise to power mainly to soldiers from Khurassan: “the *ahl al-Shām* (Syrians) were replaced by the *ahl Khurāsān*.”¹⁴⁸ The integration of soldiers from the peripheries worked well for a while, but in times of trouble, they began to follow their own interests. Turkish slave soldiers appear in the caliphate in ever greater numbers in the course of the ninth century.¹⁴⁹ Thus, the Western Roman emperors after 400, just as the Abbasids after 900 did, discovered themselves at the mercy of troops whose loyalty to the state was limited. Barbarian units of the late Roman armies, just as the *ghilmān* of the tenth century, were military professionals who were loyal to their leaders rather than to the sovereign.¹⁵⁰ In both empires, civil and military elites had become separated from each other.

Arguably, the extension of a common imperial identity, due to the very success of the two empires and their ideologies, actually weakened their cohesion: “The break-up of the Caliphate was in no way a reaction against Muslim conquest, it was rather a natural product of its success, and the evolution from a Muslim empire ruled by a small Muslim élite to a Muslim commonwealth where most of the population were Muslims.”¹⁵¹ Romanization and conversion to Christianity seem

147. Kennedy, *Prophet*, p. 205.

148. Kennedy, *Armies*, p. 96.

149. Crone, *Slaves*.

150. Kennedy, *Prophet*, p. 207.

151. Kennedy, *Prophet*, p. 203.

to have had an effect comparable to that of conversion to Islam and Arabization. We can, however, note substantial differences in the process: the Roman state promoted Romanization more actively by the granting of Roman citizenship, culminating in the *Constitutio Antoniniana* of 212, which turned all free subjects into Romans. It was also much more repressive in pushing for Christian conversion and even sought to enforce the right Christian creed. Still, the effects seem to have been similar: while to some degree, “early Muslims preserved a sense of common identity, usually coupled with the common language of Arabic,” when Islam had become majoritarian, “the élite lost its cohesion.”¹⁵² Although late Roman elites maintained a strong rhetoric of Romanness and of its shared values, in the fifth and sixth centuries, their cohesion became weaker, too; many of them collaborated with the new Romano-barbarian aristocracy, not only to save their skins but also to reap the benefits.¹⁵³

Collaboration of new military powers with regional civilian elites was another comparable feature in the dissolution of West Rome and the caliphate. Visigoths, Burgundians, and Franks owed their ascendancy in Gaul to the support of local magnates and bishops in ways similar to the Būyids in Fārs, who could rely on landowners and bureaucrats of the region.¹⁵⁴ Both the “barbarian” kings in Gaul and the Būyids on the Iranian plateau were also legalized by the central authorities. The new rulers did not strive to destroy or replace the empire. The Būyids did not terminate the caliphate when they entered Baghdad in 945, and neither did they usurp the office themselves, although they soon replaced the caliph. Similarly, in the last years of the Western Roman Empire, barbarian commanders “made” emperors, but none of them dared to take on the imperial title himself. When Odoacer finally dethroned the last Western emperor in 476, he proclaimed himself king and sent the imperial robes to the emperor in Constantinople, asking for approval. None of the new rulers, in both cases, was strong enough to build an empire. Only the Fāṭimids, supported by Berber forces from the Maghreb, eventually established a new caliphate centered in Egypt, which had imperial aspirations.

There is a further element that, although less highlighted in scholarly literature, may have had an impact. In the Roman Empire, efforts to establish a purely Christian society intensified in the fifth and sixth centuries; the propagation of a Christian imperial ideology reached its peak under Justinian, in parallel to his conquests in the West, but ended up in creating new fissures.¹⁵⁵ Likewise, the Abbasids “aimed to create a truly Islamic state . . . it was a very ambitious programme of moral reform . . . a bold attempt to restructure society according

152. Kennedy, *Prophet*, p. 202.

153. Pohl, “Identities”; Pohl, “Social Cohesion.”

154. Kennedy, *Prophet*, p. 218; Busse, “Iran” (with a slightly anachronistic definition of the Būyid regime as “military dictatorship”); Paul, “Buyids.”

155. Leppin, *Justinian*, esp. pp. 293–307.

to the vision of the prophet.”¹⁵⁶ The contemporary Carolingian regime pursued analogous goals.¹⁵⁷ It has not been acknowledged sufficiently that in both East and West, the early Middle Ages were a period of unprecedented moral and social reform efforts targeting a broad population in order to create a society that was pleasing to God.¹⁵⁸ Ultimately, all these high ambitions did not create but rather eroded consensus, as can be gathered from the endless dogmatic debates in the late Roman Empire or from the controversies between Sunnis and Shi’ites under the Abbasids. In both cases, the successor states were not committed to policies of moral reform and were often explicitly heterodox, such as the Arian Goths or the Shi’ite Būyids. Both could live with the Catholic respectively Sunni creed of the majority population. These parallels are remarkable because they emerged in spite of considerable and often-noted differences in religious governance between a hierarchic Christian Church alongside the empire and the kingdoms and a “Commander of the Faithful” guarding over a much more disparate set of Islamic scholars and authorities.¹⁵⁹

Eventually, most of the new powers collapsed. In the West, the Burgundians succumbed to the Franks in the 530s, the Vandals and the Ostrogoths to the Byzantines between the 530s and the 550s, the Visigoths to Muslim armies in the 710s, and the Lombards to the Franks in 774. Of the direct successor states on the continent, only the Franks, and their periphery of more or less dependent smaller realms of Alamans, Bavarians, Thuringians, Saxons, and Lombards remained. The Anglo-Saxon/English kingdom was taken over but continued by the Normans in 1066. In the Abbasid realm, the Fāṭimids maintained their rule until 1171, while the other dynasties mostly disappeared within a century.¹⁶⁰ As argued above, it was certainly not the resilience of the post-Roman kingdoms or peoples in the West that can explain why many of their names remained on the map of Europe.

Assessed against all these similarities, then, the differences between the two cases are less straightforward and more gradual than it might seem at first. They do not support the notion of any deep-seated otherness of “Islamic East” and “Christian West.” Yet, taken together, they add up to different dynamics. Ethnicity (or tribalism) mattered in both worlds but in different ways, as chapter 4, by Kennedy and myself, sets out. Webb’s comments in chapter 5 add to and elaborate the points made in chapters 2 to 4.

156. Kennedy, *Prophet*, p. 205.

157. See Esders and Reimitz, chapter 9, and Kramer, chapter 10, in this volume.

158. Pohl and Wood, “Introduction.”

159. Drews, *Karolinger*.

160. Bosworth, *New Islamic Dynasties*, pp. 63–65 (Fāṭimids), 91–92 (Uqaylids), 106 (Ḥamdānids), 154–157 (Būyids).

Comparative Perspectives

Differences between the Dissolution of the Abbasid Caliphate and the Western Roman Empire

Walter Pohl and Hugh Kennedy

WHAT has emerged from our joint analysis in chapters 2 and 3 was not intrinsic divergences between “the Islamic world” and “the West” but, first of all, differences between two historical cases of the breakup of empires. They may have had some long-term conditions and consequences, but these did not add up to any inescapable “parting of the ways.” The initial question on the European side was how ethnicity could become embedded in the emerging structures of political identification in the early medieval West. Successive history shows that this did not determine future development, but it created a discursive and legitimizing potential that could be reappropriated in rather different historical contexts. Ethnically defined early medieval states with Christian forms of legitimacy did not necessarily lead to modern nations, neither in individual cases nor as a general structural feature. Yet they provided resources that could ease the development of nationalisms with a sense of providential mission. Options for linking people, state, and religion also existed in the early Islamic world, but they were not developed further at successive occasions. Whether that was more of a strength or a weakness depends on value judgments that are not an issue here.

Ten differences between the two cases have emerged from the comparative studies attempted in chapters 2 and 3.

First, there was a gradual difference in the origin of the new ruling groups. In the Western Roman Empire, those who took power were “barbarians” who had relatively recently come from outside the Roman *limes*. Some of the ethnic groups that grabbed power in the West are already attested centuries before, sometimes with slightly modified names, far beyond the Roman borders: Gutones/Goths, Vandili/Vandals, Burgundiones, Langobardi, and others. However, all the groups that successfully established kingdoms in Roman provinces had spent at least a generation on Roman territory before that.¹ The new ruling groups of Abbasid territories, on the other hand, had been dependents of the caliphate for centuries

1. Pohl, *Völkerwanderung*; Meier, *Geschichte*.

and came from within the realm, although mostly from deserts or mountains outside the core areas of the Fertile Crescent. This amounts to at least a gradual difference. Remarkably, none of the two cases followed the ancient oriental model of warlike invaders overwhelming a saturated empire, as the Muslim conquests of the Middle East in the seventh century did. Both processes rather resembled the replacement of an old military elite by a new one within a changing society whose essential parameters continued to exist.² In both cases, the warriors who grabbed power were already integrated into the military machine of the empire.

It has often been assumed that the ethnic identities of barbarians who had entered the Roman Empire had simply been transplanted onto Roman territory, which could explain their continuing significance. There are good arguments against such a model of straightforward ethnic continuity in the West: migrations, wars between barbarian groups, and the dramatic events of the “Migration Age” had repeatedly interrupted barbarian state-building and “ethnogenesis.”³ Comparison with the Abbasid case provides further clues. The “barbarians” who came from beyond the frontiers of the caliphate, mostly Turks, were not at all organized in ethnic/tribal units; they were integrated into the Abbasid military system as mercenaries with unfree status. The ethnic/tribal groups that grabbed power in the caliphate had existed before; the rule of the caliphs had not disrupted processes of tribal or regional identity formation as much as the Roman Empire did, where only few units with strong internal cohesion, such as the Isaurians, had survived on imperial territory into late antiquity. Even so, the sense of community of Daylamis or Uqaylis was not strong enough to survive the political turmoil of independent rule. We may conclude that it was not the deep-past continuity of coherent barbarian groups that predetermined the long-lasting impact of the post-Roman kingdoms.

The resources of memory and the sense of a shared past of particular peoples may, however, have had some influence on the respective developments. Ethnic origin stories, *origines gentium*, were transmitted for many of the post-Roman peoples.⁴ They were based more on classical models (for instance, the Trojan progeny of the Franks) than on “authentic” tribal memories, but they could reaffirm a sense of distinction among “barbarian” elites in a post-Roman environment, while reassuringly placing them within a shared literary heritage of Latin migration narratives. Such texts are lacking for the new powers within the Abbasid realm. Neither did the inhabitants of Egypt, Palestine, or Syria have access to comparable resources of memory to create a particular sense of a shared past. Only in Iran did the *Shāhnāma* transmit legendary pre-Islamic memories, but it was only composed four centuries after the fall of the Sasanian Empire.⁵

2. For a detailed overview, see Wickham, *Framing*.

3. Pohl, “Von der Ethnogenese.”

4. Pohl, “Narratives.”

5. Savant, “Iran’s Conversion.”

It seems that it was not until the Il-Khanid period in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries that an Iranian political identity began to form the basis of an ethnic memory, a process that was to lead to the development of an ethnically justified state under the Safavids in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the post-Roman West, the ancient particular identities of Gaul, Italy, or Spain did not provide a strong basis for political units that could have replaced the empire, either. Gaul turned into France, Spain did not become a state of its own before the early modern period, and the Kingdom of Italy that emerged from Carolingian partitions never achieved a strong political identity or territorial cohesion. New ethnic names came to shape the political landscape of Europe, to an extent to which they never did in the medieval Islamic world.

Second, the barbarian neighbors of Rome had gone through a process of transformation and concentration in the course of the Imperial Age, which was not least due to the continuing threat of Roman imperial policy. During the early Roman Empire, both Germanic and “Scythian” barbarians had mainly lived in relatively small, regional groupings that could be described as tribal. The way they held each other in check more or less corresponds to ethnological descriptions of tribal systems.⁶ Attempts to create stronger, expansive units (by Ariovist, Arminius, or Marbod) ultimately failed.⁷ From the third century CE onward, larger groups began to form, which were also capable of seriously challenging the Roman Empire: Goths, Franks, Vandals, and others. Using the opportunities offered by the Roman state, they finally asserted themselves on Roman territory.

Among the Arabs, such mid-range centralizing tendencies never developed in the tribal areas; the tribal structure prevailed.⁸ Islam, the *umma*, the caliphate, and the Arabic language of the Qurʾān provided a platform on which all tribal groups could directly be integrated into a larger social whole. The systems of payments based on tribal affiliation, real or invented for the purpose, and distributed through tribal leaders strengthened tribal identities while at the same time incorporating them into a wider political structure. The Islamic empire made it easier to fill the umbrella term “Arabs” with life, which provided an overarching identity in which North and South Arabians could blend and which could also incorporate foreigners (for instance, Persians).⁹ Nothing comparable happened with the overarching term “Germans,” which, on the contrary, practically fell out of use in the very time when the post-Roman kingdoms were established.¹⁰ Regional/military bodies, for instance, the Ahl al-Shām (the Syrian army that supported the Umayyad side against the ‘Alids), were committed to issues of empire, not of emerging regional or ethnic identities. Supra-tribal groupings such

6. Cf. Crone, “Tribe”; Tapper, *Frontier Nomads*; Orthmann, *Stamm*.

7. Wolfram, *Gotische Studien*, pp. 15–65.

8. Cf. Orthmann, *Stamm*.

9. Webb, *Imagining*.

10. Pohl, *Germanen*.

as Yemenis and Qays (South and North Arabians) remained elite networks and did not develop into stable units.¹¹ The tenth-century Middle East, in fact, offered multiple identities that might provide a narrative for peoples' lives; ethnicity was just one of these options (and tribalism was another). Basically, that was not so different in late antique Rome. Yet there, emerging midsized ethnic groups provided a possible focus for a wide range of options for identification. Thus, in the sixth-century Ostrogothic kingdom, the military community of the *exercitus Gothorum*, the superior social status it could procure, Gothic language and script, the religious dissent organized in the Arian Church, and the legal system defined by Theoderic's edict could all crystallize around Gothiness, although the groups defined by these features overlapped only partially.¹²

Third, in late Rome as under the later Abbasids, the military commitment of Romans and Arabs, respectively, in the core regions had almost faded out. Peripheral peoples and tribes could fill the gaps by becoming professional soldiers and giving their military leaders political momentum. These constellations can be described as warlord systems.¹³ Some of these groups consolidated themselves, attracted new followers, and might also claim a noble past and a common purpose. In some cases, in the precarious situation of Abbasid decline, this process came close to what has been described as the "ethnogenesis" of barbarian peoples that ran parallel to the establishment of their post-Roman polities in the West.¹⁴ That this identity formation had no lasting success in the East was hardly predetermined. To an extent, the reasons for this failure can be sought in specific developments in each case.

One general problem of the new powers on Abbasid territory was that dynasties with a strong tribal following had to compete with those that mostly employed *ghilmān* mercenaries.¹⁵ The *ghilmān* were mostly cavalry units (unlike the Daylamites, who fought on foot), were more expensive, and thus required a functional tax system, and they were not easy to control. They could be won over by the winners, which could support a process of concentration of power. However, they also prevented a stabilization of successful groups because their main priority was securing their wages and their continued employment. If these were not forthcoming, they rebelled or deserted to find new and more ambitious employers elsewhere. Differences of language and political culture in no way inhibited the movement of these skilled but expensive military cadres. Professional barbarian warriors in the West also changed sides in fluid situations, both to more successful barbarian competitors and—if the pay was attractive—to the Roman army. Yet, on balance, post-Roman military leaders integrated their

11. See Webb, chapter 11 in this volume.

12. Pohl, "Gotische Identitäten."

13. MacGeorge, *Late Roman Warlords*; Wiemer, "Goten."

14. Pohl, "Von der Ethnogenese"; and see Kennedy, chapter 2 in this volume.

15. Kennedy, *Prophet*, pp. 210–211.

ethnic following more easily. In the long run, the cohesion of barbarians who fought in their own interest proved superior to an imperial army composed of a dozen or more different ethnic contingents, a problem also discussed by Roman observers.¹⁶

On the whole, we have to be aware that most processes of ethnic and state formation also failed in the post-Roman context, and only very few of the many kingdoms founded in the fifth and sixth centuries survived. Thus, the eventual disappearance of the Banū Taghlib after the end of Hamdanid rule or of the Uqayl who succeeded them in the rule of the Jazira does not prove that tribal/ethnic rule was impracticable in the long run in Muslim lands,¹⁷ as little as the demise of the Vandals or Goths does in the West. Here the age of ethnic kingdoms might very well have been over when most of their remains were integrated into the Carolingian Empire. Stefan Esders and Helmut Reimitz, in chapter 9 of this volume, discuss some of the reasons it was not. Some of them can be detected beyond contingency or pragmatic failure on the level of discourses and social construction. Legal multiplicity was one of these reasons.

Fourth, while legal distinctions were constituted by rival schools of Islamic law and of Christian and Jewish law in the East, its main expression in the West was the differing “Germanic” laws of the *gentes*.¹⁸ All of them had been promulgated in the respective kingdoms, often with reference to prior, orally transmitted norms. Many contained Germanic legal terms, but most were written in Latin (with the exception of Anglo-Saxon law). These laws clearly differentiated between the ruling *gens* and its Roman subjects, which were of lower status, as becomes obvious in the lower compensations for killing or injuring them.¹⁹ Some of these law books long survived the fall of the respective kingdoms, so that there were still Goths, Burgundians, and Lombards in the Carolingian Empire who preserved their legal status. In fact, the Carolingian Empire acknowledged ethnic/legal pluralism as a principle of imperial rule.²⁰ At court, a statement of legal affiliation (*professio legis*) was required, a rare formalized act of ethnic self-identification. Law could thus reaffirm and preserve ethnic identities. However, the group of those who professed a particular law was not necessarily coextensive with those who felt a sense of belonging to the respective people. That may have differed, in particular, with some of those professing the laws of kingdoms that had disappeared.²¹ Yet even so, ethnic law could reinforce the notion that clear ethnic divides permeated the overarching Christian society and that it had

16. Pohl, “‘Pistis.’”

17. Kennedy, *Prophet*, pp. 306–308.

18. See Kennedy, chapter 2, and Esders and Reimitz, chapter 9, in this volume.

19. Esders, “Roman Law.”

20. See Esders and Reimitz, chapter 9 in this volume; and Pohl, “Ethnicity.”

21. See, for example, the complaint by the ninth-century bishop Agobard of Lyon, *Adversus legem Gundobadi*, ed. Dümmler; Wood, “Ethnicity,” pp. 53–54; Esders, *Agobard*.

important implications for social status and for affiliation to an overarching community.

Ethnically based legal systems have no equivalent in the Islamic world, and this marks one of the most significant differences with the post-Roman West. There might be Kurdish or Daylamite tribal custom, but there could be no written and developed “Kurdish” or “Daylamite” law comparable to Burgundian or Anglo-Saxon law. You did not have to declare an ethnic identity to bring a legal case, so perhaps you did not have to have such an identity at all. This is not to suggest that legal distinctions lay at the heart of ethnic consciousness, rather that they could reinforce it by routines of ethnic identification. The absence of such distinctions in the Islamic world must have had a significant effect on how people perceived their status in the wider society.

Fifth, the political role of ethnicity in the West did not mean that ethnic affiliations, in particular, the belief in their natural character, was stronger than elsewhere. On the contrary, ethnicity seems to have been successful as a convenient and flexible political matrix precisely because, as we have seen, common blood was neither propagated in the ideology of the *regna* nor used as a decisive criterion of distinction in practice. Perhaps, on the other hand, the limited significance of Arab (or other Islamic) tribes as a focus for larger political units was paradoxically due to the wealth of cultural memory attached to them—ancient poetry, genealogies, tales of valor, which circumscribed what it meant to live in a tribe much more vividly than the barbarian traditions were pictured in the West.²² Epics that glorified the heroic past of Burgundians, Goths, Britons, or Huns were surprisingly slow to appear and only really began to spread in the chivalric age.²³ A similar difference is apparent in the divergent interest in genealogies in early medieval Europe and the Islamic world.²⁴

On the whole, this seems to have eased integration into the leading ethnic groups in the West. In this way, the ruling minority of the Germanic-speaking Franks could eventually be transformed into the Romance-speaking majority population of the French, and even “Burgundians” and “Lombards,” whose kingdoms had been destroyed by the Franks, became names of proud Romance-speaking regional populations. This aggregation of a population strong enough to establish long-term regional or even supra-regional domination was crucial for the preservation of political identity. On the other hand, as Chris Wickham argues in chapter 13 concluding this volume, “if different sorts of community . . . —religious, military, factional, urban—overlapped sufficiently,” it was more difficult for any of them to steer an independent course. This is what seems

22. Cf. Webb, chapter 11 in this volume.

23. “Although Germanic legend in old-English literature is a small and much-trampled cabbage-patch, the pre-1100 harvest from Scandinavia and the continent is even sparser.” Frank, “Germanic Legend,” p. 89.

24. Pohl, “Genealogy.”

to have happened in the Abbasid caliphate. Both the post-Roman West and the later caliphate offered a wide range of options for community identities; but the new kingdoms in the West were more successful in bringing them in line: they maintained the ethnic stamp of their army, the diversity of their law and privileged legal status, and encouraged the Church of the kingdom to adapt its structures to the boundaries of the realm.

Sixth, ethnic perceptions in the Islamic world mostly concerned non-Arabs. As in the Roman Empire, ethnicity was mostly about “them,” not “us.” Military groups active in the “eclipse of the Abbasid caliphate” were readily identified as Turks, Daylamites, or Kurds in tenth-century Baghdad, just like Goths, Vandals, or Huns featured in texts from fifth-century Constantinople.²⁵ Ethnic classifications were not always straightforward, though, as shown by the different terms for the Persians, often summarily called ‘*ajam*, those who speak incomprehensibly, or also *abnā*’, sons (of the Persian settlers in Yemen).²⁶ Many examples of ethnic resilience of non-Arabs under Islamic rule can be found, whether of majority populations or of minorities: Iranians and Jews, Armenians and Copts, Greek or “Assyrian” Syrians. Ethnicity mattered to them to a very different extent.²⁷ Empires usually accept or even encourage such multiplicity. Becoming Arab was a gradual process, furthered by Islamization and by the centrality of the Arab language. The decline of the Abbasid caliphate marks the beginning of a process in which, in turn, Arabs came to be ruled by foreign dynasties in many Islamic countries: by Iranians and Turks, by “Frankish” crusaders and Kurds, by Berbers and Mongols. This did not impede the centrality of Arab identity in the Near East—perhaps to the contrary. And the shifts among ruling elites did not create a lasting association between state and ethnicity, perhaps with the exception of the Ottoman Empire—which, however, only really became a self-identifying Turkish state in the late nineteenth century, largely in response to Western imperialists proclaiming the advantages and modernity of their nation-states.²⁸

Seventh, ethnicity was more resilient in the Islamic world, as it seems, in minorities than in hegemonic identities. Some ethnic minorities survived since Antiquity in Europe, too, from the Basques to the Vlachs. On a regional level, territories (*Länder*, such as Aquitaine, Bavaria, Lotharingia, or Lombardy) could also develop rather durable ethnic and/or regional identities, usually with forms of autonomous political representation. Yet the dominant model of ethnic resilience in Europe was hegemonial and unfolded in connection with large states but not empires. This hegemonial model was in most cases linked to the institution of

25. See Abū ‘Alī Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, ed. and trans. Amedroz and Margoliouth, Index, vol. 3, pp. 38 (Dailemites), 77 (Kurds), 134–135 (Turks).

26. Kommer, Liccardo, and Nowak, “Comparative Approaches.”

27. Haar Romeny, “Ethnicity.” See also Reynolds, chapter 8, and Sijpestijn, chapter 12, in this volume.

28. Cook, *Ancient Religions*, pp. 3–8.

kingship. For many early medieval Latin writers (for instance, the eighth-century Lombard historian Paul the Deacon), the loss of kingship and sovereignty endangered the very identity of the *gens*. Royal legitimacy was derived from the people and the country, closely linked with each other; and that was often expressed in the “ethnic” royal title, King of the Franks, Angles/of England, and similar. Such titles with an ethnic, tribal, or territorial reference are rare in the Islamic world. The Būyids, for example, were conscious of their Daylamite identity and depended on Daylamite soldiers but were not fashioned as “rulers of the Daylamites.”

Eighth, ethnic identity was not just an ideological expedient that allowed the new rulers of post-Roman Europe to legitimize their rule. It was also an expression of social status and privilege and, in many early medieval polities, channeled access to it. The sense of community was reinforced by assemblies and organized political participation, which a ruler had to take into account. As Wickham puts it in his conclusion to this volume, “Assemblies, not dynasties, carried ‘Frankishness.’” Michael Mitterauer has argued that under Christian influence, descent relations (*Abstammungsbeziehungen*) lost some of their importance, so that communal forms could spread.²⁹ The process of loosening descent relations was already at work in the early Middle Ages.³⁰ The *gentes*, while retaining a general sense of a common origin, opened up to flexible forms of belonging and participation.

It is generally held that access to formal political participation differed between the West and the Islamic world.³¹ There were no regional assemblies in the Arab world. When governors wished to address people of a city, they would gather in the mosque, and the governor would speak to them from the pulpit. On occasion, the participants would shout out their objections. But they gathered as Muslim inhabitants of the city, not as Arabs, Kurds, or Persians. In any case, such large gatherings, and the public rhetoric that went with them, had almost entirely disappeared by the beginning of the ninth century.

Ninth, a continuing sense of the political significance of the *populus*, the people, in the West was clearly derived from the Roman tradition and transmitted to the successor states by way of the Latin language of state. Of course, much

29. Mitterauer, *Warum Europa*, pp. 70–108, p. 286 (“Die Lockerung von Abstammungsbeziehungen hat den Aufbau genossenschaftlicher Sozialformen begünstigt”); English translation: *Why Europe*, pp. 58–98 and 283–286. According to him, “communalism” and political participation were a medieval precondition of a later European *Sonderweg*, the particular development that may help to explain the success of Europe in the nineteenth century (*Warum Europa*, pp. 284–287). The teleological implications of a *Sonderweg* concept are unhelpful here, but the observation merits further study.

30. Goody, *Development*, pp. 34–47.

31. For a strong statement against the role of formal participation of political bodies in the caliphate, see Crone and Hinds, *God’s Caliph*, p. 106: “No representative bodies ever did emerge.” They argue that in the West, the political leverage of medieval dukes and barons who disposed of their own lands against the king was far superior to that of the tribal nobility in the early caliphate which owed its income to the state.

changed after the end of the Western Empire—the emperor and the Roman army disappeared at once, and the republican offices and the senate faded out in the West in the sixth century, while a standing army, the tax system, and the provincial bureaucracy disappeared out in different regional rhythms.³² However, in many provinces, Roman law and Roman citizenship, some bureaucratic and military titles, Latin literacy and written administration, and, not least, some classical education and political rhetoric remained. This body of knowledge provided basic ideas about the *res publica*, its governance, and the state, which could be recovered whenever deemed necessary.³³ It is interesting to compare the rather different set of practices of state that remained in the Eastern provinces after the Islamic takeover: empire (although without an “emperor”), a standing army, much of the tax system, and the lower ranks of the provincial administration (and, for some time, their bureaucratic Greek), as the Egyptian papyri demonstrate.³⁴

Roman political language and Latin texts about the state and society, never prominent in the Greek East, had little impact in the Islamic world. Under the Abbasids, many of those who implemented Islamic politics came from Persian backgrounds and were conscious of the ancient Persian traditions of statecraft. From the tenth century onward, philosophers such as Abū ‘Alī Miskawayh and al-Fārābī turned to Plato’s “Republic” and to Aristotle to reinforce their notion of Islamic values; but, as Patricia Crone argued, “the Muslims did not inherit a republican or democratic tradition from the Greeks.”³⁵ Of course, the successor states of West Rome were neither republican nor democratic, but from the Latin tradition, they preserved the idea that a ruler represented the *populus* and that this entailed some form of assembly politics, informal counsel, and formal consent. In the course of the early Middle Ages, the Roman contrast between the *populus* as constituted by law and the *gens* as constituted by birth lost some of its distinctive character, and the concept of *gens* was increasingly complemented by legal and political overtones. Muslim rulers, of course, were supposed to look after the Muslim people, defend them against their enemies, and be just and, it was hoped, merciful; but their responsibility was to God, not to any *populus*.

Tenth, the fading of both late Roman and Abbasid rule left the scriptural culture basically intact, in both forms: as general literacy and in the centrality of holy scripture. In both cases, its main representatives were educated clerics and laymen, rarely the new military elites. Still, there was a gradual difference as to how the new ruling groups and their identities came to be featured in this literate discourse. As Andre Gingrich has underlined, scriptural religious minority groups had better chances of long-term survival in the Islamic and

32. Pohl, “Transformation.” For Byzantium, see also Haldon, chapter 6 in this volume.

33. Pohl, “Creating”; Hirschi, *Origins*.

34. See Sijpesteijn, chapter 12 in this volume; and Sijpesteijn, *Shaping*.

35. Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*, p. 279; see also pp. 169–172.

Buddhist worlds.³⁶ This also applies to ethnic groups; the Armenians and the Jews are remarkable examples for a strong scriptural tradition, which in their case also supported an ethnic identity. However, the literary presence of the peoples who had been accommodated within the Roman West was generally more conspicuous than that of their counterparts within the caliphate. Goths, Franks, Longobards, Angles, and others were soon featured in what has often been called, somehow misleadingly, “national histories.”³⁷

As argued by Walter Pohl in chapter 3, this attention to peoples in the West also had a “scriptural” dimension. Early medieval ideas about the role of peoples were shaped by Christianity. The Old Testament provided a historiographical matrix for the fates of peoples, while the New Testament gave indications for their role in salvation history. On a pragmatic level, the Church offered both an institutional prop for the patchy governance structure of the kingdoms and a model for the constitution of communities. To quite an extent, the Islamic *umma*, the community of the believers, and the *populus Christianus*, the Christian people, are related concepts and were conceived as unified entities. The Christian people, however, was also organized in a particular institutional body, the *ecclesia*, the Church.³⁸ Much has been made of this obvious distinction between the ecclesiastic hierarchy of Western Christians, which left room for a separate sphere of lay power, and the political/religious unity of the caliphate, which blocked such differentiation. In reality, it seems that both societies could very well work around this distinction, carving “micro-Christendoms” or “national Churches” out of the universal Church, and particular powers out of the community of the believers. Still, the political role of particular peoples could more easily be accommodated within the *ecclesia* than within the *umma* model.

All these differences, most of them gradual, do not explain by themselves why the dynamic of the new polities that replaced the Western Roman Empire and the Abbasid caliphate differed. Taken together, in the West, these elements created a rather stable landscape of a plurality of kingdoms that were to some degree defined by participation of their peoples. Notions of collective political agency, legal community, legitimate representation, and internal religious unity could link people and kingdom, both in perceptions and in political practice. All four elements provided rather flexible frames to circumscribe who belonged to a people and who did not. And they all could most conveniently be distinguished by ethnonyms: the *gens*, *rex*, *leges*, and *ecclesia* of the Franks, Angles, or Lombards. Ethnicity was not the natural core of political, legal, or religious forms of identification, but it offered the option to be used as a common denominator. Ethnonyms provided the only consistent way to distinguish between named

36. Gingrich, “Nodal Conglomerates.”

37. See the extensive discussion in Pohl, “Debating.”

38. Drews, *Karolinger*, p. 384.

overall groupings, and therefore they were widely used for the purpose, even when a particular group did not quite correspond to our concept of ethnicity. Only the imprecision in the terminology made it sufficiently flexible to cover the entire range of actual social groups and situations.

Ethnicity could serve as a matrix for social organization in post-Roman Europe exactly because it did not impose clearly delineated social boundaries. Rather, it provided a common denominator for a number of different social distinctions: the legitimacy of a ruling elite eager to participate in the political theatre, the privileges of a class of warriors and landlords, the legal status of peasants who strove to maintain their freedom, a post-Roman cultural profile that had become more accessible to a broader population after the demise of classical Roman standards, the clerics organized in the Church of the realm who sought to shape politics and society in the name of their moral responsibility, and increasingly also the common interests of the Christian subjects of the kingdom. Christianity created a “larger social whole” in which different procedures of ethnic mapping and identification could be accommodated. And it offered providential messages and moral standards by which particular *gentes* could emphatically represent themselves as living in accordance with God’s will. Identifications with Angles, Lombards, or Franks thus relied on relatively time-resistant conjunctions of ethnic, political, territorial, and religious identities. These aggregates of affiliation were never without inner shifts and contradictions, but they established lasting and adaptable routines of identification. The interests behind such acts of identification could differ widely, but they acknowledged and reinforced an underlying grammar of identity and alterity.³⁹

This conjunction of “visions of community” facilitated a process by which the identities of ruling minorities spread out to include other populations living in the same state or region. Newcomers (such as the new Eastern European kingdoms of the eleventh century) asserted themselves within this system. A well-established Christian discourse about the significance of the *gentes* in the history of salvation lent a providential flavor to all these kingdoms. Ultimately, this accumulated potential for strengthening social cohesion could lead to the emergence of nations. Establishing an empire proved hardly viable under these conditions—unlike in Eastern Europe. As in the Islamic East, multiple social identities were available in the West. They could be based on urban communities and civic privileges, on linguistic and cultural difference, on religious dissent or on spiritual segregation, on imperial ambitions or on the hope for true unity of the Church. The establishment of ethnic polities, embedded in this variety of possible social distinctions, and later the emergence of modern nations were by no means natural developments. This process required constant efforts both in

39. Cf. Baumann and Gingrich, eds., *Grammars*.

theory and in practice. Its ultimate success has to be explained in its successive historical contexts. An important part of the explanation lies in the periods when the first Christian empire broke apart. The fate of the Islamic caliphate can provide important clues to what is specific about the development in the West and what could have developed differently.

Fragmentation and Integration

A Response to the Contributions by Hugh Kennedy and
Walter Pohl

Peter Webb

A COMPARATIVE history project probing why Western political communities developed differently from Eastern political communities lays a delicate line for historians to walk. I am reminded of Roland Barthes's acerbic review of the film *The Lost Continent*. Barthes critiqued the film's presumptions of fundamental human unity that led it to blur lines between Orient and Occident and to interpret differences between peoples as merely an "oecumenicity of forms," that is, just variations within one pan-human whole.¹ For Barthes, universalizing approaches risk obscuring the significance and real meaning of difference, and accordingly, comparison of post-Roman and post-Abbasid state formation is confronted by a challenge. We cannot presume that an essential core of human existence unfurls an eternal compositioning of men into communal units when an empire falls, and Kennedy and Pohl, in their chapters in this volume, make a key observation that the Roman and Abbasid decompositions constitute two "different historical cases." This in turn invokes a further wrinkle from Barthes, for he wonders whether, as a matter of theory, all different places and times have enough capital-H "History"² in common to epistemologically ground comparison. This "History" I interpret to mean the legacy and lived experience of intellectual traditions, and so, as Kennedy and Pohl debunk the hackneyed notions of a "parting of ways" between East and West and the putative superiority of Europe's ethnic nations, we are now challenged with striking a balance that avoids essentializing while still entertaining consideration that humans can develop very different traditions for conceptualizing themselves and their communities and that long-term ramifications flow from these differences.

Herein, the ten broad categories that Kennedy and Pohl identify as contrasting the post-Roman and post-Abbasid experiences of territorial reorganization unfurl the specter of very meaningful divides. The differing effects of local and imperial traditions on disparate, situational contexts appear to have shaped

1. Barthes, *Mythologies*, pp. 109–111.

2. Barthes, *Mythologies*, p. 111.

relationships between power consolidation strategies and conceptions of communal solidarity into forms which may have been more intrinsically different than we might at first suppose.

Into the thicket of difference, the nexus between “ethnicity” and “community” looms saliently. Pohl reveals how protracted the road to the rise of European ethnically labeled communities was, but nonetheless, the widespread use of ethnonyms to establish legitimate senses of kingship in the fragmenting Roman Empire clearly contrasts the absence of ethnic language underwriting the successor states to the Abbasid caliphate. As a phenomenon, therefore, post-Roman military leaders could “integrate their ethnic following,” but is it a matter of whether they were able to do so “more easily” than post-Abbasid rulers? This suggests that *ethnos* was a form of conceiving community available to both and that circumstances enabled post-Roman rulers to put it to more concerted use. When appraising this second-level issue of comparison, the analytical framework of “*ethnos*” itself may become our problem. The conceptual category of “*ethnos*,” alongside “state,” “empire,” and other labels for community, direct the kinds of questions research poses to historical material and impose particular analytical lenses to view the past. I wonder whether these paradigms distort our vision of post-Abbasid communities, such that we seek comparisons between cases that are much more uneven than our methods reveal. We might then take a step further back from the ring of comparing, and via consideration of one event in early-eleventh-century Cairo and its ramifications, I would like to proffer a rationale.

The event is recorded in the annals for the month of *Şafar* 415 AH (April 1024 CE). An envoy of the Ghaznavid sultan (*Şāhib Khurāsān*)—Khurasan was a vast region that included Eastern Iran and Afghanistan—had performed the hajj in Mecca with pilgrims from Ghaznavid territory, but insecurity on the pilgrim routes from Arabia back to Iraq and Iran made it dangerous for them to return. Fearful of kidnap and ransom, or worse, at the hands of northeastern Arabian Bedouin groups, the envoy went westward, and as he presented gifts at the Fāṭimid court in Egypt, the contemporary chronicler, al-Musabbiḥi recorded further detail:

News reached us that the People of Khurasan were prevented from returning by the Mecca-Baghdad road by which they had come, and hence necessity compelled them to travel to Ayla, and thence to al-Ramla from where they returned to Baghdad via the Syrian road. It was said that their caravan was 60,000 camels-strong; there were 200,000 pilgrims. The Purified Presence [the Fāṭimid caliph] had official decrees sent to all the governors of the garrisons in Syria with orders to meet and give generous hospitality to the Khurasanians, and to ensure that each locality was stocked with food and fodder for them. This was done, and the pilgrims beheld such justness of the Purified Presence and such bounty in the lands

that they could never have imagined! The Syrian people (*ahl al-Shām*) provided funds, and the Khurasanians were delighted to visit and make pilgrimage to Jerusalem. This purged the former opinions they had held about the apostasy and religious depravity of our Blessed State, and they returned to their country thankful and singing our praises. We thank God for seeing this boon served to our State.³

The context of the story is typical of the interstate competition following the collapse of the Abbasid caliphate. The Fāṭimids were an Ismaili Shi'a state ruled by imam-caliphs who claimed descent from a privileged line tracing to Muḥammad, and at the time of the anecdote, they controlled parts of North Africa, Egypt, and Syria (along with nominal power in Mecca itself). On the other side, the Ghaznavids were a Sunni state run by a Turkic warlord and his entourage; they controlled Eastern Iran to the borders of India and were vocal supporters of Sunni Islam and the then very anemic Baghdadi Abbasid caliphate, whom the Ghaznavids loudly swore to protect and uphold against what they claimed was the apostate Fāṭimid Shi'a movement. And in Arabia, a complete lack of central control had made it a dangerous place for outsider travelers in the tenth and eleventh centuries, including pilgrims (as the Ghaznavids experienced). In order for the Ghaznavid pilgrims to return home safely in 415/1024, they had to venture into Fāṭimid-controlled Syria, from whence they took a safer road back east. Despite the doctrinal friction and tense political relations between Fāṭimids and Ghaznavids, the Fāṭimid caliph made great show of magnanimity toward the Ghaznavid pilgrims while they were in his territory, in the hope of demonstrating that he was far from the unbelieving heretic as claimed by official Ghaznavid rhetoric and that he was instead a truly righteous ruler. Our Fāṭimid chronicler believes they took the message to heart.

From the perspective of empires and communities, this anecdote and its surrounding context are an insightful window into the complexity of such concepts in medieval Islam. Our Fāṭimid chronicler, al-Musabbiḥī, does not refer to the Ghaznavids as a family dynasty but instead refers to their sultan as *Ṣāḥib Khurāsān*—the “Ruler of Khurasan,” and his subjects are equally not “Ghaznavids” but instead are called “Khurasanians” (*ahl Khurāsān*); expressly spatial terminology identifies them. Khurasan was a familiar toponym: while its precise borders were variable, it stood for a large territory that the contemporary reading public would recognize. Why al-Musabbiḥī did not use a dynastic term or an ethnic term (e.g., “Turks”) to refer to the Ghaznavid sultan and his people is intriguing. It is quite common in Arabic literature to find rulers referred to as the “lords of a place,” but perhaps it is also a slight—instead of acknowledging the rival as a dynast, al-Musabbiḥī may intend to belittle the Ghaznavids’ importance

3. Al-Musabbiḥī, *Akḥbār Miṣr*, ed. Millward, pp. 42–43.

by merely referring to them as current occupiers of a region, a more transient and perhaps less legitimate portrayal of leadership.

To refer to his own state, in which al-Musabbihī was a relatively high-ranking official, we find terminology mixing the divine and the temporal: it is a “Blessed State” (*al-dawla al-mubāraka*), and the caliph is alluded to impersonally as the “Purified Presence” (*al-ḥaḍra al-muṭahhara*), thus melding the Fāṭimid ruler with the conceptual center of the realm and the center of God’s blessing. When referring to the Syrian governors and subjects of the Fāṭimid caliphate, however, al-Musabbihī does not use terms of communal inclusion: they are neither “our governors/subjects” nor “the Fāṭimid governors/subjects” nor “righteous elect/Divinely-sanctioned servants of the blessed realm,” and Syria is not referred to possessively as “our territory” or dynastically as “the caliph’s territory”; it is simply referred to as a space, and no pretension of its inclusion with Egypt under the umbrella of one “natural” empire is betrayed. The mixture of a universal “divine” label for the Fāṭimid caliph with a prosaic, purely spatial, fragmented description of the realm begins to uncover intriguing complexities involved in al-Musabbihī’s conception of empire and community.

The Fāṭimid dynasty was declared at the beginning of the fourth/tenth century. Prior to that, its precise roots are unclear: the Fāṭimids maintained that their first leaders lived in hiding in Syria, while their agents spread their messianic message through Iraq, Iran, Yemen, and North Africa during the third/ninth century. Doctrinally related movements enjoyed success in parts of Syria, Iraq, and Arabia, but the Fāṭimid caliphate itself rose thanks to a political message embraced by a Berber tribe, the Kutāma, in what is now the border region between Algeria and Tunisia. When the Fāṭimids declared their caliphate after replacing the nominal governors of the Abbasids in Tunisia, their armies mainly consisted of Berbers, sub-Saharan African slave soldiers, and some Tunisians and Sicilians. They never played to any of these identities, however, and interestingly, once their regime gained expansionist power, the caliphs adopted a curious naming pattern. The given name of their third caliph, al-Manṣūr, was Ismā‘īl (Ishmael), his son, the caliph al-Mu‘izz was named Ma‘add, and his son, the caliph al-‘Azīz, was named Nizār. The names Ismā‘īl, Ma‘add, and Nizār are instantly recognizable to Arabic-speaking audiences as the three key root-generations of the Arab family tree as it was imagined at the time.⁴ The Fāṭimid naming practice therefore projected their caliphs as mirroring the founding generations of mythical Arab ancestry, while they controlled an army of non-Arab Africans and while simultaneously projecting their leadership as a messianic movement of divinely approved rulers who would lead their community to heaven on Judgment Day. And although they originated in North Africa and established their capital in a brand-new

4. For the linking of Ma‘add and Ismā‘īl with Arab prophetic genealogy, see Webb, *Imagining*, pp. 205–213.

town, al-Mahdiyya, which they projected as the epicenter of their pure messianic community as expressed by its very name (the “City of the Savior”), they soon moved to a new capital of al-Manṣūriyya, named after the caliph al-Manṣūr, and shortly thereafter, to Egypt, where they established a newer new capital, Cairo, “The Victorious” (and *not* named after its founding caliph).

Returning to our anecdote, we have on one side the Ghaznavids, represented as a spatially identified entity, versus the Fāṭimids, whose empire straddled several separable regions, whose capitals were deliberately situated in uniquely proprietary cities, whose lineage traced to Muḥammad, whose caliphs named themselves after primordial Arabs, who controlled a multiethnic, multitribal army (of which almost no members were actually Arabs at all), and who projected themselves as a divinely ordained movement of global salvation. And while the Ghaznavids are identified spatially as Khurasanians, a key point of contention between the two is presented as a matter of faith: the very Muslim identity of the Fāṭimids was in dispute, and such discourses were a linchpin in the Ghaznavid rhetoric against Fāṭimid claims of legitimacy. In short, we are confronted by the most multifaceted array of ways to define community possible, and this extreme multivalence in thinking about peoples and rulers is further and comprehensively reflected at the fundamental level of the terminology that Arabic literature itself uses to think about peoples.

A full discussion of Arabic terms for “peoples” is for a different forum.⁵ Here it may suffice to note that there are some twenty different premodern Arabic words to express the concept of ‘peoples’ or ‘tribes’, not including a panoply of other terms to delineate smaller groups. The terms for large-scale communities of people—*milla*, *umma*, *sha‘b*, *jins*, *jil*, *qawm*, *ma‘shar*, *qarn*, *ahl*—all have varying connotations, too. *Milla* was almost always used to connote peoples united by faith; *sha‘b* usually referred to those united by common descent; *ahl* often connoted spatial identities; but there were few hard-and-fast rules, and peoples could be defined by different terms and with different conceptualizations. The array of different terms and their frequent citation illustrate that issues of social identity were operative in the minds of medieval Arabic writers, but they were expressed in manifold guises, which appear more multivalent than examples from Latin literary contexts, where the number of ethnic terms is much lower and the connotations of ethnic groups somewhat more familiar.⁶

During the waning years of the Abbasid caliphate, one could pretend to be an Arab, like the Syrian-Christian poet Abū Tammām: everybody seemed to know his claim was false, but no one seemed to mind. One could write in Arabic,

5. Webb, “Naming.”

6. In the post-Roman West, ethnic terminology tended to cluster around just three terms: *gens*, *natio*, and *populus*. These terms were not used with exact consistency, but they seem to have had less contradiction and complexity as compared to the Arabic. The terminological streamlining may reflect what Pohl identifies as a background tendency toward “ethnic” thinking in post-Roman state formation.

like our Fāṭimid al-Musabbiḥī, but he only reserved the ethnonym “Arab” in his writing to connote pesky Bedouin groups outside of both central control and urban domicile.⁷ The name of a famous Arabic poet in the Umayyad era, Ziyād al-A‘jam, means, literally, “Ziyād the non-Arabic-speaker,” but it might actually have intended a spatial meaning, “Ziyād the Khurasanian.” The Fāṭimid rulers articulated an Arab genealogy, but conversely, this began at a time when they sought control over Berber tribes, and they never would claim that they were natural leaders of an Arab *sha‘b* (people/ethnos). In the third/ninth century, populations in Iraq began dropping the Arab tribal affiliations they had embraced since the Muslim conquests, whereas populations in Muslim Spain conversely began articulating more express self-identification as “Arabs” than ever before. The word ‘*ajam* in some cases meant any “non-Arabs,” whereas in others, it connoted the ethnonym “Persians” specifically, while in yet other cases, it was used synonymously with the spatial term “Khurasanians.”⁸ Other ethnonyms—Persian (*furs* and/or *fārisī*, in addition to ‘*ajam*), Berber, Turk, Kurd, Arab, Copt, and so on—circulated fast and frequently in literary sources, but the ever-presence of these identities in texts is contrasted by the near complete absence of “ethnic” states in the political realm; however, there are nonetheless rare exceptions, such as the twelfth- to fourteenth-century Kurdish kingdom al-Mamlaka al-Ḥasina al-Akrādiyya (*Akrād* is the plural of *Kurd*).⁹ And where faith intersected with communal terminology, all Muslims nominally fit within one *umma* (or one *milla*), but Fāṭimids and Ghaznavids mutually vituperated each other as apostates, while also exchanging gifts on occasion.

The Arabic terminology and its usage reveal a multivalence of identity across the East, but there is a perceptible importance of “faith community” embedded in the terms, as well as in some salient cases of imperial ideology. In this vein, the Fāṭimids did pitch their legitimacy in terms of messianic salvation, which, in the round, was rather clever. Instead of championing a limited community of “Berbers” or “Arabs,” they could articulate a highly inclusive platform which theoretically enabled them to appeal to all Muslims and thus legitimized expansion across different regions of the Middle East. Various other empires were associated with a doctrinal identity—for example, the al-Murābiṭūn (Almorads) and the al-Muwaḥḥidūn (Almohads) used a message of radical Sunni reform to forge empires straddling Morocco, Mauritania, and Spain; the fourth/tenth-century Būyids in Iran and Iraq and the Ḥamdānids in Syria were known as Shi‘a; the Seljuks and Ayyūbids promulgated Sunni revival and intra-Sunni reconciliation

7. See, for examples, al-Musabbiḥī, *Akhbār Miṣr*, ed. Millward, pp. 40, 181, 183.

8. For an outline of critical appraisal of the term ‘*ajam*, see Savant and Webb, “Introduction,” p. xvii. Though the word most commonly connotes “Persian,” the range in meanings is rich. For example, in North African contexts, it is found to label populations as distinct from the Arab peoples of Kairouan (see, e.g., al-Mālikī *Riyāḍ al-nufūs*, ed. al-Bakkūsh, pp. vol. 1, pp. 33, 234).

9. James, “Construction.”

as they formed multiregional empires. The appeal of “faith” as a marker of legitimate and unique identity accordingly had some traction. In contrast, Pohl demonstrates that while some European states developed in close connection with the Church of their realm, these nonetheless shared an overarching existence within the “Roman” Church, which obstructed chances to use faith as a means of competing with or usurping other states. Groups with divergent Christian doctrines, such as the Arian Goths, faced challenges in promoting their particular belief systems as a centerpiece of an independent identity. In contrast, Muslim rulers could advertise the uniqueness and urgent superiority of their particular sect to the broader Islamic umbrella. Europeans would not be able to truly enjoy this kind of freedom of political legitimation until the rise of Protestantism, and by that time, they had been “thinking ethnic” for a millennium.

Although faith points us toward an important ingredient in Middle Eastern states, far from everyone was invested enough in matters of faith to enable its use as a sure-fire means of political mobilization. The Fāṭimids never converted many Egyptians to Shi’ite Islam, yet Egypt’s Sunni majority was content to have Shi’ite “Purified Presences” run their land, whereas Berber tribes that presumably embraced more of the Shi’ite rhetoric were in fact the first groups to break away from Fāṭimid control. And likewise, radical Sunni movements such as the al-Murābitūn and the al-Muwaḥḥidūn violently punished what they deemed aberrant practices amongst their Muslim subjects at first, but they mellowed quickly and did not involve themselves in forced conversions of, or vigorous proselytizing to, their Christian and Jewish subjects.

Another Fāṭimid-era example well illustrates the equivocal position of sectarianism in politics. The Fāṭimids captured Cairo in 358/969 and Damascus in 359/970, but they soon faced challenges from several directions: Damascene urban groups were resistive, remnants of Damascus’s previous regime sought to retake the city, and a rival Shi’ite group, the Qarāmiṭa, aimed to take over both Damascus and Cairo for themselves. Damascus changed hands several times, Cairo was threatened, and in this instability, the scope for sectarian mobilization seems obvious, but Arabic historiographical sources are divided on the extent to which faith actively features as a legitimizer of political action and a basis of communal consolidation.

Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373) laments the Fāṭimids’ imposition of the Shi’ite call to prayer and their sectarian bias against Islam’s first two caliphs, and he writes an exasperating prayer (one usually recited upon hearing the news of a death) when concluding his remarks on the Fāṭimids’ changes to the public performance of Islamic ritual when they conquered Egypt.¹⁰ Ibn Kathīr usually

10. Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, ed. Muḥim et al., vol. 11, p. 284. He writes: “We are from God, and to Him we return.”

identifies the Fāṭimids as *al-Fāṭimiyyūn*—a term that articulates their claims to Shiʿa ancestry—and hence he embraces a doctrinally charged name for their regime.¹¹ Ibn Kathīr also refers to the Qarāmiṭa as *al-Rawāfiḍ* (the “Rejectors”), another doctrinally charged label used in Sunni polemic against Shiʿa. And in the same vein, he relates a report in which a political leader contemporary with the events declared that if he had ten arrows, he would fire nine at the Fāṭimids and only one at the Byzantines, since the Byzantines were just Christians, whereas the Fāṭimids had “changed the religion of the *umma* (i.e. Muslim community).”¹² Concerning the strife in Damascus, Ibn Kathīr expressly states that the population of Damascus opposed the Fāṭimid garrison because they were both (1) oppressive, and (2) of a different sectarian “creed” (*iʿtiqād*). Ibn Kathīr was first and foremost a Sunni traditionalist, and hence scholars of his kind could evidently explain the conflict attendant upon the rise of the Fāṭimids in faith-based terms of Sunni resistance to Shiʿa expansion.

Other historians are not nearly so clear-cut. Ibn al-Qalānīsī (555/1160) also reports that the local Damascenes were opposed to the “creed” (*iʿtiqād*) of the Fāṭimids, but this was merely in addition to an aversion to their oppressive behavior (*qubḥ sīra*) and for being illiterates (*ummiyyūn*).¹³ Probing further, Ibn al-Qalānīsī makes no other reference to the Fāṭimids’ Shiʿism when explaining the unrest in Damascus, and he does not, in fact, refer to the Fāṭimids via their Shiʿite-inspired name “Fāṭimids,” and instead Ibn Qalānīsī prefers to label them *Maghāribā* (“Westerners”), a spatial term expressing the soldiers’ origins in Tunisia and Algeria, or to the regime itself, which originated in Tunisia—note also that he does not refer to them ethnically as “Berbers.” Ibn al-Qalānīsī was Damascene himself, and in an instance where he describes violence waged between “the locals (*al-baladī*) and the Westerners,” he reveals his perception of the history as a conflict between “us” and “them,” but he constructs that narrative to reveal the violence in Damascus as the tragic fallout between the rapacious, foreign, “Westerner” garrison and the urban mob of Damascus’s *neer-do-wells*; the bulk of Damascenes are portrayed as bystanders trying to broker peace between belligerent elements within their own society and the belligerent occupiers. Sectarianism is thereby accorded almost no causal relationship to political action and violence.¹⁴

Ibn al-Qalānīsī’s spatial, nonsectarian interpretation is salient in al-Maqrīzī’s (d. 845/1442) two accounts of the events in *Ittīʾāz al-Ḥunafāʾ* and *Kitāb*

11. Ibn Kathīr refers to the Fāṭimids once spatially, as “Westerners” (for more on this term, see below), whereas “Fāṭimid” is used throughout his text (Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, ed. Muḥim et al., vol. 11, p. 287 [for “Westerners”]; pp. 295, 299–300 [for “Fāṭimid”]).

12. Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, ed. Muḥim et al., vol. 11, p. 304.

13. Ibn al-Qalānīsī, *Tārīkh Dimashq*, ed. Zakkār, p. 30; see also p. 31.

14. Ibn al-Qalānīsī, *Tārīkh Dimashq*, ed. Zakkār, pp. 7–20.

al-Muqaffā, where he avoids matters of faith altogether.¹⁵ The Fāṭimid garrison is only referred to as “Westerners,” and the violence is explained as stemming from a clash between Damascene ruffians, exacerbated by the Westerners’ rapacious and oppressive antics.¹⁶ According to al-Maqrīzī, the Damascenes considered the Westerners as “ugly-faced, shoddy-dressed, foul-talking unreasonable boors” (*jufāt qibāḥ al-manẓar wa-l-zayy wa-l-kalām nāqīṣū al-‘uqūl*), but he never connects the discord to Shi’ism,¹⁷ and al-Maqrīzī places the blame for the disorder on the Westerner commanders’ failure to control the situation.¹⁸ His narrative features economic interests and political intrigue more than faith-based mobilization, even concerning conflict between the Fāṭimids and their rival Shi’ite movement, the Qarāmiṭa.¹⁹ Al-Maqrīzī, though trained as a Sunni scholar like Ibn Kathīr, was reasonably well disposed to the Fāṭimids,²⁰ and he interpreted the violence and the creation of Fāṭimid rule in Syria without recourse to Sunni-Shi’a tension. Medieval historians thus do not all distill history through a sectarian funnel; while some, like Ibn Kathīr, could view political community with faith at the fore, others left the complexities of conflict bare, enabling us to discern a range of concerns and options. And notably, spatial aspects—the status of local stakeholders and control over resources on local levels—feature in the perceptions of community and social boundaries.

Turning to space directly, the ready mutability of imperial borders in the post-Abbasid Middle East ostensibly suggests the weakness of midsized territorial identities within the Muslim world. This contrasts with the European case, and it appears to explain why territorial-ethnic identities did not catch on in the East, unlike in Western Europe. Such a view, however, is ultimately not quite sustainable. We saw how regional identities featured in narratives of the Fāṭimid takeover of Damascus and how al-Musabbiḥī conceptualized the Ghaznavids via the region of Khurasan, which was a mainstay in the political map of early Islam, and many individuals, including powerful political groups, thought of themselves, at least on occasion, as *Khurāsānī*.²¹ Likewise, pride for being Egyptian

15. The editor of al-Maqrīzī’s *Ittī’ āz al-Ḥunafā’* considers the possibility that al-Maqrīzī based his narrative on al-Qalānisi’s account (al-Maqrīzī, *Ittī’ āz al-Ḥunafā’*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1, p. 247, n. 1), though, as discussed here, al-Maqrīzī downplays the sectarian element even further than al-Qalānisi.

16. Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Muqaffā* ed. al-Ya’lāwī, vol. 1, pp. 81–86; *Ittī’ āz al-Ḥunafā’*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1, pp. 242–246.

17. Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Muqaffā*, ed. al-Ya’lāwī, vol. 3, p. 32.

18. Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Muqaffā*, ed. al-Ya’lāwī, vol. 1, p. 86; vol. 3, p. 35; *Ittī’ āz al-Ḥunafā’*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1, pp. 242–243.

19. Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Muqaffā*, ed. al-Ya’lāwī, vol. 3, p. 168.

20. See al-Maqrīzī, *Ittī’ āz al-Ḥunafā’*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1, pp. 32, 41–42, 235.

21. Al-Jāhīz, *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn*, ed. Hārūn, vol. 1, p. 49; vol. 3, p. 366. Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr’s *Kitāb Baghdād* also treats Khurasanians as an identity (p. 316), but elsewhere, when quoting from Khurasanians themselves about the inside of their community, we see that they sometimes imagined a multiplicity of identities within the *Ahl Khurāsān*: Turk (*atrāk*), “Persian,” or, perhaps more accurately, “native Khurasanian” (*‘ajam*) and “Arab-Persian” (*abnā’*), betraying the presence of some ethnic lines of categorization (Ibn Ṭayfūr, *Kitāb Baghdād*, ed. al-Thāmīrī, pp. 97–98).

or Syrian was effusively expressed in the post-Abbasid world: Egyptians wrote books on the merits of Egypt, while Syrians retorted with the merits of *al-Shām*.²² The sense of place, proprietary regional history, and even the articulation of prophetic links with territory were sufficiently developed to cement midsized regional identities and could have formed the basis of state legitimation, but this was not fully consummated in the medieval period. Like doctrinal identities, spatial belonging was an emotive marker of community, but it was nonetheless not productive as a nexus for states or imperial communities.

Conceptions of social identity and markers of political community accordingly crisscrossed the medieval Middle East in configurations that we still do not wholly grasp. The European ideas of looking for “land” or looking to “ethnos” do not solve our questions, but neither do essentialized Islamic ideas such as “faith community” or “messianic leadership.” The basis on which states formed; the unique power of Turkic war bands in Central Asia in contrast to the very settled regional identities in Iran, Syria, Egypt, and Iraq; and the perceived triangulated relationship between the identity of rulers, the ruled, and faith confound strict application of the analytical categories of ethnos, empire, and space that emanate from the European examples, which, as Pohl’s findings demonstrate, formed in a rather different world.

While Edward Said admonished the Academy for its habit of exoticizing “the East,” full flight from the specter of difference also can lead us away from understanding the histories of disparate regions. I wish to close here by drawing attention to a fascinating point Pohl raises—which also forms his concluding remarks—about the long and venerable tradition of thinking about foreign peoples in ethnic terms among the elites of the classical world.

From an imperial Roman perspective, different, separable, and identifiable *gentes* surrounded the empire, which itself, since the Edict of Caracalla, was legally recognized as populated by one *gens*, the *populus Romanus*, the Roman people. When outsider groups inherited parcels of the collapsing empire, they had already been ethnically identified by Roman officials, and they partitioned the empire along geographical lines that melded contingent configurations of space with impressions of the origin and affiliation of the military groups that occupied them. The new rulers remained impressed by the traditions of Rome, and Pohl shows that the tradition of thinking about the world as an amalgam of *gentes* seems to have persisted as one of the important ingredients in subsequent vocabularies and paradigms to legitimize post-imperial state formation.

22. Books with titles on the theme of “Virtues of Egypt” (*Faḍā’il Miṣr*) appear relatively early: al-Kindī (d. 350/961), Ibn Zūlāq (d. 387/997), al-Quḍā’ī (d. 454/1062–63); see also the ninth-/fourteenth-century Ibn Ḍahīra. In Syria, the earliest extant “Virtues” book (*Faḍā’il al-Shām wa Dimashq*) is by al-Rab’ī (d. 444/1052–53), another was written by al-Sam’ānī (d. 562/1166–67), and there are several from the seventh/thirteenth and eighth/fourteenth centuries. The Syrian texts are collected and edited in *Faḍā’il al-Shām*, ed. Abū ‘Abd Allāh ‘Ādil ibn Sa’d.

Most of these fourth- and fifth-century *ethnē/gentes* disappeared, but in hindsight, it is not surprising that some persisted and that an “ethnic gaze” survived best in those parts of late antique Europe that had previously been organized for centuries of Roman rule.

Pushing Pohl’s findings further, the Abbasid caliphate was established on starkly differing paradigms in this respect. The caliphate had been shaped and organized by militarized groups hailing from Arabia in the seventh century CE, a region that was not so rich in ethnic taxonomies. There were myriad ways of thinking about smaller-scale lineage groups within pre-Islamic Arabia, and there was awareness of “others,” but crucially, there is scant evidence for an awareness of large-scale pan-Arabian senses of “self.” Thinking along Western ethnic paradigms, Western scholars have long liked to think of Arabia as the home of “the Arabs”; after all, the Romans thought as much. But when we ask pre-Islamic Arabians if they thought of themselves as “Arabs,” their records greet us with silence. Arabia was divided into zones of political and geographical fragmentation which seem to have effectively prevented senses of a single, commonly held ethnic community from congealing. This also is reflected in the ways pre-Islamic Arabians conceptualized others. For some, the world was based around tribes—Romans were *Banū al-Aṣfar* (Sons of the Yellow Skin), while Persians were *Banū al-Aḥmar* (Sons of the Red Skin), but in other cases, Romans were called *Rūm*, while Persians were *Furs*—Arabic pronunciations for the groups’ own names. And matters were yet more complicated. Arabic writers later wondered if the Persians were *Furs* because they hailed from the region of *Fārs* (a spatial identity, then) or because they were the descendants of an eponymous *Fāris* (an ethnic affiliation, in this case) or perhaps both; while some even opted to imagine that the Greeks were originally Arabs, that Alexander the Great’s father was Yemeni, and that the Persians were descendants of Isaac.²³ Moreover, Persian control over Iraq did not make all of its inhabitants “Persian”: from the Arabic perspective, the rulers were *Furs*, but the actual inhabitants of the land were *Nabaṭ*, a word of uncertain origin which seems to have been coined as a reference to their occupational identity as farmers, neither a race nor a space. Likewise, not everyone who lived in the former Roman Empire were *Rūm*, while *Rūmī* was also used to connote peoples outside of the empire;²⁴ Arabic terminology evidently paid little heed to Caracalla’s Edict. Empire and community were thus not axiomatically linked in Arabic terminology, peoples were not all conceptualized as lineage groups, and not all Arabians had one form of community to describe themselves before Islam, either.

23. For outlines of views on the origins of Persians, Greeks, and Romans, see Ibn Nubāta, *Sarḥ al-‘Uyūn*, ed. Ibrāhīm, pp. 55–56, 61, 63–64.

24. For the wide and mutable ambit of “Rūm” in Arabic geographical writing, see Durak, “Who Are the Romans?”

Into this mix, the caliphate arose. Compared to the Roman Empire, it was an unusual state, and it faced its task differently. The caliph called himself the “Commander of the Believers” (*amīr al-mu’minīn*), but caliphs did not seek to forge religious homogeneity in their realm. Unlike Roman efforts to legally ground the empire in Christianity, the caliphs let the majority of their subjects practice religions other than Islam, and hence their strategy reveals itself as a doctrinally legitimized office of leadership over a heterogenous state. In the Marwanid period of the Umayyad caliphate (64–132/684–750), efforts to articulate an ethnic unity of the military elite under the term “Arab” are discernible—this is the first time Arabic records evidence people readily identifying themselves as “Arabs,”²⁵ but the caliphs themselves nonetheless preferred to retain the doctrinally legitimizing title for their office; they make no efforts to rebrand themselves as “King of the Arabs.” This makes sense, since there was no dominant ethnos within the caliphate—Arabian groups who called themselves “Arabs” enjoyed status, but the precise ways in which “Arab” groups related to one another were uncertain in the Umayyad era, as an Arab family tree had yet to be articulated in a standardized form, and power, though in tribal hands, was not vested in every tribe. The micro-sized lineage groups of the Meccan Quraysh had the ultimate power: legitimate caliphs could only arise from Quraysh families, and access to real power in the Umayyad period involved proximity to the ruling circles dominated by Qurayshite political figures or, in some cases far from the center, sub-clans of military commanders.

The Umayyad and then Abbasid caliphs thus labeled themselves with a doctrinally rooted title, but their office was available only to members of particular lineage-based clans, and they controlled an empire populated with only a small minority of “Believers,” who were not all organized as one cohesive ethnos and who did not possess traditions of thinking about themselves as one ethnic group or about the wider world in terms of “ethnic peoples.” This is a very polyvalent set of affairs indeed, and this kind of empire is not going to fragment in the same way as a rigorously managed one where one state religion was officially enforced, where administrators had long traditions of labeling peoples and military units as ethnic groups, and where expressions of pan-Roman citizenship within the empire had been current for centuries. The open-ended notions of community and identity in al-Musabbihī’s excerpt on the Fāṭimids and Ghaznavids, in short, reflect rather well the unsettled communal boundaries within the caliphate that preceded his generation. His worldview may seem unwieldy to those more accustomed to Roman models, but in contexts where power crossed lines of space, ethnicity, and faith and where communal terminologies themselves were defined

25. For the rise of self-identification as “Arabs” in Arabic writing, see Webb, *Imagining*, pp. 85–88.

by a wide array of concepts, the absence of coherent ethnic groups in the post-Abbasid world seems a natural corollary of their lived reality.

It may be innate for all people to think in terms of “us” and “them,” but how that “us” is constituted, how far “us” is deemed worth extending, and the importance of insisting on “us” as a collective are not givens. The Abbasid world was managed by and then taken over by peoples who had no immersion (or even connection) with the ways in which Rome had conceptualized “us” and other peoples. As difficult as it may be for a Western-trained historian to accept, they did not seek to emulate Roman rule, nor did they seek great influence from the Hellenized Christian communities they contacted and controlled. Their world was their own, they developed it in their image, and the caliphate fragmented along the already fascinatingly fragmentary lines upon which it had been built.

Historicizing Resilience

The Paradox of the Medieval East Roman State— Collapse, Adaptation, and Survival

John Haldon

INTRODUCTION: COLLAPSE AND COMPLEXITY

The present study represents some thoughts about how the Eastern Roman state managed to survive beyond the year 700 and how it managed to overcome what look today like quite overwhelming odds. For in spite of several publications devoted to the history of Eastern Roman state, society, and culture in the seventh and eighth centuries, I believe we still do not fully understand the mechanics of that survival and how it was possible. This chapter summarizes a much longer study that deals with the social, cultural, environmental, and political history of the empire in the seventh and eighth centuries and necessarily curtails much of that discussion.¹ But I hope I can bring out the key points.

Another motive for re-examining the business of Eastern Roman survival has to do with the nature of recent comparative work on imperial systems and empires and especially premodern empires.² A number of books have appeared in recent years taking up issues of imperial collapse or of systems collapse or, to take the words of one well-known author, of “why societies choose to fail.”³ While much of this discussion is sophisticated, it largely depends on stepping back from source-based analysis and the construction of evidence-based arguments

1. See Haldon, *Empire*, which also includes works dealing with the period up to the time of publication. Recent English-language studies dealing with some aspects of the period from different perspectives include Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses* (detailed analysis of the complex sources with a generally political historical orientation); Humphreys, *Law* (survey and analysis of the evolution of Roman law and lawmaking in the seventh and eighth centuries); Booth, *Crisis* (excellent analysis of the theological conflicts of the seventh century and their social and political implications); Sarris, *Empires* (political, social-economic historical survey). The rulers, social elite, and general populace of the eastern half of the Roman Empire continued to refer to themselves as Romans—*Rhomaioi*—and did not differentiate between themselves and the Roman world that had gone before; see Stouraitis, “Roman Identity”; and a review of some recent debates in Haldon, “Res Publica Byzantina?” I employ the term “state” here advisedly. For detailed discussion, see Haldon and Goldstone, “Introduction,” pp. 4–20; Haldon, “Empires”; and esp. Haldon, *State*.
2. See Scheidel, “Studying” and Scheidel, “Introduction,” pp. 3–10 with literature; Preiser-Kapeller, *Jenseits*; Preiser-Kapeller, “Networks”; and, more recently, from the perspective of material culture and the ways in which imperial systems of both political control and exchange may be expressed archaeologically, Smith, “Bounding”; and other essays in Hall and Denmark, eds., *Journal of Globalization Studies*.
3. E.g., Burbank and Cooper, *Empires*; Alcock et al., eds., *Empires*; Sanderson, *Social Transformations*; Sanderson, “World Systems”; Chase-Dunn and Hall, *Rise*; Yoffee and Cowgill, eds., *Collapse*; Tainter, *Collapse*.

to that of broad comparisons between “systems” in order to arrive at generalizable conclusions. This is something to be welcomed by specialist scholars of particular areas or periods because it compels us to look above the parapet of our own disciplines and think about big issues; but there is also a tendency to take the societies examined in this way out of their own sociocultural and material context and to de-historicize them to a degree. This is regrettable because we lose sight of the culturally specific in the process of causation. In this chapter, I want to re-historicize the story but without losing sight of this larger picture and, in particular, to lay stress on the ways in which different forms of identity play a role in determining social praxis and thus historical outcomes.⁴

Human social organization is complex, and societal reaction to change can rarely, if ever, be understood from a monocausal perspective even in the most dramatic and catastrophic circumstances—such as devastating warfare, a total inundation, or the impact of a major pandemic event, for example.⁵ Societal flexibility has often permitted a relatively rapid recovery from such situations, although, of course, the articulation and configuration of social and political structures will have been impacted in a number of ways, with substantial implications for consequent developmental pathways: think of the very different medium-term outcomes of the Black Death in England and France with regard to social-political and economic organization.⁶ A good reason for a historical perspective, therefore, is to determine how different categories of sociopolitical system respond to different levels of stress and to answer the question of how and why some societal systems are more resilient or flexible than others.⁷

Some years ago, natural scientists began to use the term “the Goldilocks Principle” to describe the very specific sets of conditions that make a particular phenomenon possible, a term that has now begun to be used in engineering and economics, as well as psychology and other social sciences. Simply put, this states that something must fall within certain margins, as opposed to reaching extremes, in order to survive or to be effective. When the effects of the principle are observed, it is known as the Goldilocks effect and is based on the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears, in which a little girl happens upon a cottage owned by three bears. Each bear has its own preference for food, beds, and chairs, and so forth. After testing each of the three items, Goldilocks determines that one of them is always too much at one extreme (too hot, too large, etc.), one is too much in the opposite extreme (too cold, too small, etc.), and one is “just right.” Thus, in economics, a Goldilocks economy sustains moderate economic growth and low inflation, and a Goldilocks market is when the price of goods falls between a bear market and a bull market; in medicine, it can refer

4. Further literature and discussion of “identity/ies” follow, especially in chapter 1 and the contributions of Pohl and Webb in this volume.

5. See Rosen, *Civilizing*.

6. Borsch, *Black Death*, pp. 55–66; Herlihy, *Black Death*.

7. Tainter and Crumley, “Climate.”

to the ideal dosage of a medication, for example, and the extremes that might result in the demise of a patient.⁸ So what were the Goldilocks parameters for Byzantine survival? What conditions were necessary for the continued existence of the Eastern Roman state and society, culture, and religion? And what were the mechanisms, the context, and the forms of social and cultural practice that together represented these Goldilocks conditions for Byzantium?

To avoid simplistic or deterministic approaches to such questions, it is important to develop an approach that takes into account the complex interactions and feedback mechanisms within a historical cultural system in combination with the impacts of a range of environmental and climate-related factors and their dynamics. What people did and how they understood their world represent one aspect of the equation, but they should not be dismissed as somehow superficial or irrelevant—on the contrary, they both directly informed and were themselves framed by social praxis. The physical impact of changing environmental circumstances or sudden catastrophes, as well as perceptions of such events, upon the “cultural logic” of a society is therefore a key element; how people understand what happens in their world directly determines how they respond, as individuals as well as in groups. The early medieval East Roman Empire did not collapse, although it was certainly transformed. But its ancient neighbor, the Sasanian Persian kingdom, certainly did collapse.⁹ So what exactly is it that we think collapsed? A political system of power relationships or a fiscal apparatus based on certain forms of income and societal relationships may break down or collapse without in itself leading to societal collapse more generally. For example, the social relations between farmers and consumers of their goods, between peasants and landlords, between urban and rural markets and producers, may not “collapse” in the same way and with the same outcomes as the collapse of a political system. To speak of collapse requires us to differentiate between the degree, intensity, and speed of the changes located in the historical record. The only way to do that is to examine the individual cases both in as much detail and as holistically as the evidence and data permit.¹⁰

APPROACHES TO “COLLAPSE”

Some recent work in the field of ecology and evolution, outlining a unified socio-ecological framework within which to understand, define, and quantify collapse, seems to be of some relevance to historical study.¹¹ Several recent publications

8. Spier, *Big History*, pp. 36–39. For some applications of the Goldilocks Principle and a broader discussion, see Davies, *Goldilocks Enigma*; Tainter, *Collapse*, pp. 36–39. The Goldilocks Principle has entered social consciousness as “the temperate zone around a star where Earth-like planets might exist”: see Spier, *Big History*, pp. 36–39.

9. Pourshariati, *Decline*, pp. 161–281; Kennedy, *Prophet*, pp. 66–68.

10. On collapse, see Haldon et al., “Question.”

11. Cumming and Peterson, “Unifying.”

have grappled with the issue, from different perspectives,¹² but Graeme Cumming and Garry Peterson are the first to set out a series of clear criteria through which collapse can be described and through which it can be recognized. They propose the development of quantitative thresholds to identify collapse, arguing that theories of collapse must connect structure and process and that mechanistic theories relating system identity and structure to function and process are the most efficacious ways of achieving these aims. They describe fourteen different mechanisms or models, grouped into five subsets or classes that describe different forms in which social-ecological collapse can be observed. This listing is, in itself, somewhat random, and one could add to, or recombine, some of these classes. On the whole, historians (unlike archaeologists and anthropologists) seem less comfortable with models, perhaps because they appear to reify sets of social relationships or because their heuristic use is hard to see. But a model is, after all, simply a way of imagining sets of relationships to see how the evidence might best be understood, and there is no doubt that the approach suggested by Cumming and Peterson offers some fruitful ground for discussion, particularly since the authors underline the need for (a) empirical analysis of actual—historical and contemporary—cases, and (b) a more holistic and integrated approach that pulls scientific and social scientific approaches together.

While there is an established tradition of human-environmental science engaging with historical-archaeological themes (in which archaeologists and anthropologists have set the pace), such an approach still remains marginal to historical studies.¹³ Some of the points made in this discussion may seem, certainly to a historian, obvious—that system structure influences the types of collapse that may occur, for example. Some are less so and offer a useful framework for comparing historical as well as contemporary examples of social, economic, or ecological collapse. In particular, the notion of “system identity”¹⁴ offers a good starting point, since it helps define those key structural elements that must be maintained across time and space for any system to be considered the same. Defining such systemic properties is achieved by determining the thresholds beyond which they can be said to have become qualitatively something else, and while this is an approach derived from ecological science, it is not difficult to transfer it to a social science, including a historical, context.¹⁵

For “collapse” thus defined to have taken place, four conditions should apply. First, the identity of the system must be lost (key system components and relationships should disappear; social groups, institutional arrangements,

12. E.g., Johnson, *Why Did Ancient Civilizations Fail?*; Storey and Storey, *Rome*; Middleton, *Understanding*; Cunningham and Driessen, *Crisis*; Faulseit, ed., *Beyond Collapse*.

13. Wiener, “‘Minding the Gap’”; Butzer, “Collapse”; Middleton, “Nothing Lasts Forever”; Manning, “Roman World”; Manning, *Test*.

14. That is to say, the sum of the parts of a set of systemic relationships that endow it with its key characteristics.

15. Cumming and Collier, “Change”; Stauffer, *Introduction*.

economic relationships, etc., must disappear). Second, these changes should happen rapidly (this is, of course, a question of definition, but it is reasonably clear that a long-drawn-out transformation of such components and systemic relationships is more likely to be understood as something other than “collapse”). Third, the consequences of the shifts thus defined as collapse must last longer than the characteristic dynamics of the system, and they should be irreversible. Finally, there must be a substantial loss of system capital;¹⁶ that is to say, certain thresholds in respect of the form and/or operation of a range of sociocultural assets—such as demography, commercial and market exchange circuits, elite composition, cultural production, system of governance, and the transmission of political power, and so forth—must be reached and passed. Moving beyond such identifiable tipping points means that the system as a whole is transforming or has transformed into something qualitatively different from what went before.¹⁷

Again, much of this might seem obvious, but it is important to try to establish some less subjective descriptive and heuristic criteria in order to facilitate interdisciplinarity, and this approach does offer that, facilitating comparisons within and between different historical cultures (as well as between different historiographical perspectives). While it helps to answer the question “Collapse of what, based on whose definition?”¹⁸ it also opens up an issue directly associated with collapse, namely, non-collapse and the related topics of resilience and adaptation. “Resilience of what, to what?” is a question posed by resilience theorists in the field of ecology, but the question is just as relevant for the historian and the archaeologist.¹⁹

A considerable literature exists on this theme, regarding both the history and use of the concept in different debates and its use as a descriptive analytical term that can help us to understand societal change and, in terms of contemporary concerns in environmental and ecological planning, regarding policy design and effectiveness.²⁰ Resilience has, on the face of it, a relatively straightforward range of meanings, to do with flexibility, elasticity, resistance to stress, or, at least, returning to a previous state after experiencing stress. But it has also been deployed with some very specific conceptual values. One of the most influential theories has been C. S. Holling’s notion of the “adaptive cycle,” which posits a basic systemic dynamic of growth, rigidity, release, and restructuring.²¹

16. Abel, Cumming, and Anderies, “Collapse.”

17. Cumming and Peterson, “Unifying,” box 1.

18. See McAnany and Yoffee, *Questioning*; Cumming and Peterson, “Unifying,” pp. 2–4.

19. Carpenter et al., “From Metaphor to Measurement.” For a review of some aspects of this from a historical perspective, see Haldon and Rosen, “Society”; Haldon et al., “Question”; Mordechai et al., “Sustainability.”

20. See the discussion and literature cited in Haldon and Rosen, “Society.”

21. Gunderson and Holling, *Panarchy*; Holling, “Resilience.”

RESILIENCE, ADAPTATION, AND COLLAPSE

Formal “resilience theory,” or the “theory of adaptive change” has as its basic unit the adaptive cycle, in which a system, whether social or ecological or a combination of both—as a social-ecological system (SES)—moves through stages of increasing complexity and conservativeness (“r-phase”) until it reaches a stage in which networks are overconnected (“K-phase”), limiting the system’s ability to respond effectively to exogenous or endogenous points of stress. The resulting “ Ω -phase” constitutes a “release,” opening the system for many possible responses both new and/or traditional. The Ω -phase passes rapidly into an “ α -phase” which is highly resilient and loosely organized. (See figure 6.1.) Adaptive cycles link up in a series of small, fast SES cycles intersecting with larger and slower ones in nested, multiscale systems dubbed “Panarchy.”²² The concept of resilience is generally used by social scientists and ecologists to describe the ways in which social groups and communities deal with economic, political, and environmental shocks. In all these cases, resilience is taken to imply the ability of a “system” to withstand the changes stimulated by stress factors of varying degrees and types and to retain its fundamental shape and defining characteristics. It is important within this framework to differentiate between the notions of adaptability (related to agency and a measure of the capacity of individuals in a system to manage resilience) and transformation (the only unsustainable phase, occurring when external forces, such as climatic or environmental factors or internal social/political stresses or a combination thereof, drive the system to become fundamentally new and different).²³

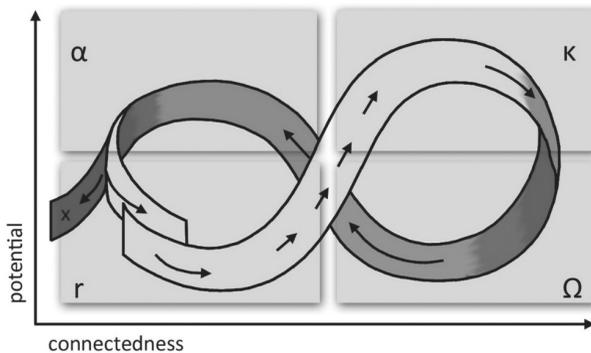


FIGURE 6.1. The ‘Adaptive cycle (Resilience Theory)’ (from Gunderson and Holling, *Panarchy*)

22. Tainter and Crumley, “Climate”; Gunderson and Holling, *Panarchy*; Holling, “Understanding.”

23. See Gunderson and Holling, *Panarchy*; Brand and Jax, “Focusing”; Walker et al., “Resilience”; for a discussion that deploys concepts of adaptation and resilience in relation to late Roman and early Byzantine Anatolia, see Poblome, “Shifting.”

Applying this framework to the history of the medieval Eastern Roman Empire across the period from the sixth to the tenth and eleventh centuries offers a helpful heuristic framework for thinking about the sorts of transformations that we can observe in the empirical data, whether social, ecological, or socio-ecological. At a micro-regional level, the adaptive cycle model has been applied to Cappadocia (central Anatolia), for example, where four principal cycles of demographic growth, decline, and recovery were identified over the Holocene.²⁴ The conservation K-phase of the third cycle potentially corresponds to the late Roman period (c. 400 to c. 650 CE), with the subsequent period of rural decline/abandonment representing a release (Ω) phase (c. 650 to c. 900 CE). The tenth- to twelfth-century recovery and the middle Byzantine “golden age” might then equate to Holling’s reorganizing α -phase. But such a heuristic framework clearly needs to be tested against empirical evidence if it is to be more than a hypothetical statement of possible outcomes and if it is to serve—as any such model is intended—as a means through which complex data can be managed and historical questions asked and answered. This, in turn, requires measurable proxies for rural population, economy, and environmental conditions.

Resilience or “adaptive change” approaches can thus offer an alternative to examining societal arrangements and processes and political-economic systems exclusively at the largest scale. Properly deployed, it can help to avoid conceptualizing large monolithic units of study such as a “state” or an “empire” as a single body that reacts to environmental or other external stresses in a unified manner, with the result that we lose sight of the highly specific elements and interplays below this level of description. More usefully and more informatively, it can also be exploited in taking a multiscale view of such systems, to compare and contrast the subsystems as interlinked adaptive cycles that are resilient or, conversely, suffer from overconnectedness and rigidity over short- or long-term time frames and within a context of climatic and environmental change. In what follows, I will try to pull the different elements operating at various scales and levels together into a coherent explanatory framework, first by outlining developments across a broader chronological context and then by focusing on a particular period of substantial change (the later seventh and early eighth centuries), in which elements of resilience and adaptation can usefully be examined within a context of larger-scale disruption and transformation. Using a “resilience theory” approach offers a helpful interpretative framework, primarily as a means of presenting and organizing historical, environmental, and archaeological material relevant to a particular culture and region so that it can be usefully compared with similar data from other historical and geographical contexts.

24. Allcock, “Long-Term Socio-environmental Dynamics.”

RESILIENCE AND TRANSFORMATION IN THE EASTERN
ROMAN WORLD, FIFTH TO TENTH CENTURIES

Bearing in mind Holling's four phases, therefore, the late Roman period, from the fourth to the middle of the seventh century, would represent the K-phase, a period marked by the creation of a major new city at Constantinople in the early fourth century and the introduction of Christianity as the dominant religion of the Roman Empire. It was a period marked by increasing socioeconomic and administrative complexity and interconnectedness, especially evident in an extensive international and trans-Mediterranean market economy, albeit also with significant regional and subregional exchange networks. A good deal of the long-distance commerce involved sending goods, especially staples such as wheat and barley, by sea to major cities. Significant long-distance flows of goods to the north and south coasts of Anatolia included imports of red-slip pottery from North Africa, olive oil and wine from Palestine, and cereals from Egypt. Other flows are documented from Sinop, the Ephesus-Pergamum area, and Cyprus-Antioch, traceable via ceramics. These flows were not one-directional, and there were also return flows of goods, and while these are not always attested archaeologically, they are sometimes noted in written sources.

In terms of rural settlement, there were several significant changes in the nature of the archaeology of the late Roman period. One was the construction of rural churches, a phenomenon that inserted one or more churches in every village in the Roman Empire. These buildings were large public structures, usually with tiled roofs and east-facing apses and often with specialized fittings (marble revetment and opus sectile, mosaics, glass lamps, column capitals) that are easily visible. While the archaeology is in many areas problematic and lacunose, it is the case that late Roman rural settlements are thus more easily visible in the record than such settlements from earlier and certainly from the following period. The existence by the middle of the fifth century of a huge new market at Constantinople also contributed significantly to the way exchange relations as well as agricultural and pastoral production were configured in western Anatolia, Thrace, and the Aegean, as well as more widely. The city served both as a consumption center and destination for goods in its own right but also as a center for the redistribution of goods from across the Eastern Roman Empire. These included the amphorae manufactured at sites in northern Syria, Cyprus, and Cilicia (referred to by their technical nomenclature as LR1 = Late Roman 1) as well as the LR2 amphorae from the Aegean region, types that were probably transshipped at Constantinople before being transported to garrisons along the Danube. And the establishment of the *quaestura exercitus* in 536, by which Mediterranean provinces were directly assigned to supply troops on the lower Danube, also had an impact on distribution patterns. A third major change was settlement expansion, with the occupation of previously unoccupied or underdeveloped marginal

lands (indicated by the fact that many such sites have late Roman ceramics and churches but no earlier ceramic, epigraphic, or architectural indications of settlement. This is as true of the uplands across the Taurus as it is of many islands off the south coast of Anatolia, for example.²⁵

Pollen data for agrarian production and archaeological evidence indicate a culturally transformed late Roman agrarian landscape in Anatolia west of the Euphrates, which involved a variable combination of animal husbandry, cereals, and tree crops. Climate, terrain, and ecology meant that the balance between these different elements varied regionally. For example, whereas there is evidence that tree crops, such as olives, were cultivated in upland valleys in Roman times, for example, in the territory of Sagalassos,²⁶ large-scale commercial olive groves were restricted to coastal lowlands such as around Lake Iznik in northwest Anatolia and in Palestine.²⁷ Estimates for the upper limits at which olives could be grown in antiquity vary, though they are usually based on modern practices. In the early twenty-first century, the current limit for large plantations is about 800 meters, though smaller groups of trees are found up to around 1,000 meters; as with cereals, olives produced at these altitudes are of a lower quality than olives grown at lower altitudes. The same is true for vines, which are able to tolerate slightly colder temperatures than olives and thus can be grown at up to 1,100–1,200 meters. Cultivation of both olive trees and vines in upland areas was aided by climatic conditions that were overall warmer than the long-term average until 536 CE.²⁸ Cereal cultivation was dependent on precipitation as well as temperature, and farms in the well-watered Cilician lowlands in the Tarsus subprovince of Adana now produce 445 kilograms/decare of wheat and barley, compared to Karaman's 271 kilograms/decare on the Anatolian plateau. Here small variations in rain and snowfall can have a great impact on dry-farmed cereal crop yields, and this must have been especially consequential during the period of dry climate during the fourth and fifth centuries. On the other hand, under conditions of political and economic stability, climatic aridity could be compensated for by investment in irrigation agriculture, as occurred in the Konya plain during the late Roman period, as testified by the peak in settlement density at this time in archaeological survey data.²⁹

The intermediate period, or Ω -phase in Holling's conceptual framework (see above), would be represented by the breakdown of these relationships in the

25. The general picture drawn here is now well established. For summaries of the evidence and further and more detailed discussion, see Wickham, *Framing*; the essays in Bowden, Lavan, and Machado, eds., *Recent Research*, and in Bowden, Gutteridge, and Machado, eds., *Social and Political Life*; on the *quaestura*, see Curta, "Amphorae"; Karagiorgou, "LR2"; for aspects of settlement expansion, see Varinlioğlu, "Living."

26. Vermoere et al., "Modern and Ancient."

27. See the maps in Roberts, "Re-visiting."

28. For discussion of past changes to olive cultivation in Anatolia, see England et al., "Historical Landscape Change"; Roberts, "Human-Induced Landscape Change."

29. Baird, "Settlement Expansion."

middle of the seventh century and afterward. It is possible to overstate the case, and a good deal of recent work has rightly stressed the high levels of regional variation and difference.³⁰ But generalized economic prosperity and political security came to an end with the Persian wars in the period c. 610–626, and more especially the Arab-Islamic wars of the period after the 650s. These transformed much of Anatolia from a relatively secure region to a borderland between the late Roman Empire and the “Saracens” or “Hagarenes,” to use the terms most frequently found in the Eastern Roman sources.³¹ The changes that occurred during the seventh century were dramatic in terms of historical events and the archaeological evidence, as well as in the pollen record, with the ending of the so-called Beyşehir Occupation Phase (BOP).³² Following the loss of Roman control of the Levant and Egypt (between 636 and 642), central Anatolia, and the southern coast were subject to intensive Arab raiding from the 660s into the 740s and more sporadically and with less damaging effects thereafter and well into the ninth century. The unity of the Mediterranean as a single trading zone was broken, and Western ceramic material, though never common before, now appeared only rarely.³³ The flows of goods changed after the seventh century, when the role of major cities as attractors was diminished, with only Constantinople surviving as a major market. Even with the Byzantine reconquest from the tenth century of large parts of Anatolia and northern Syria, cities no longer played the same role in society.³⁴ There is no evidence at all to support the notion that this transformation of the late Roman socioecological system was triggered by drought or other climatic change. Rather, it appears to have been the direct result of largely human factors, in particular the effects of warfare upon an already fragile economy and society affected by the longer-term impact of plague, declining population, important shifts in the relationship between urban centers and their rural hinterlands, and shifting patterns of production and market demand.³⁵

30. See, e.g., Roberts et al., “Not the End of the World?”; Haldon, et al., “Climate.”

31. I use “Arab-Islamic” as a general descriptive term, if only because whether or not all the invaders or raiders were necessarily either Arabs or Muslims, the leadership was certainly Arab and Islamic at this period and until after the Abbasid revolution in the late 740s. See discussion of these and related issues in Webb, chapter 11 in this volume, together with the opening discussion in Kennedy, chapter 2 in this volume.

32. So-called from the type-site where it was initially identified; see Eastwood, Roberts, and Lamb, “Palaeoecological and Archaeological Evidence.” The BOP represents a distinctive Late Holocene period of anthropogenic activity marked by the cultivation of olive and nut trees, cereal growing, and pastoralism—the dominant agricultural pursuit during the Late Bronze Age in the Hellenistic-Roman and early Byzantine world of the Eastern Mediterranean (c. 300 BCE to c. 700/800 CE) that appears to represent, in modified form, a general Eastern Mediterranean phenomenon visible in palynological data from Georgia and Iranian Azerbaijan across to the Balkans and the Levant. Although it began and ended in different places at different times, the BOP extended from the very warm middle-to-later second millennium to the marked cooling of the seventh/eighth century CE. For some methodological considerations in respect of integrating paleoenvironmental with historical and archaeological data, see Haldon et al., “History.”

33. Haldon, “Commerce”; Koder, “Regional Networks.”

34. Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium: History*, pp. 453–572; Haldon, “Commerce.”

35. Roberts et al., “Not the End of the World?”; Jankowiak, “Notitia 1”; Izdebski, *Rural Economy*; Izdebski, “Byzantine Miletus”; Eastwood et al., “Integrating.”

RETHINKING THE SEVENTH AND EIGHTH CENTURIES

Yet in the last twenty years or so, there have been significant advances in our ability to date ceramic material from provincial contexts from the later seventh to ninth centuries, advances that considerably inflect and add nuance to understanding this period and the regional variations that existed. The data suggest a more intense occupation of the countryside than often appears in earlier work or from settlement-architectural evidence alone. At Balboura in Lycia, for example, the reduction in site numbers appears to date only from the end of the eighth century rather than earlier. The Göksu survey was able to identify small amounts of material from the seventh and eighth centuries. At Euchaita in north-central Anatolia, extramural settlement and activity seem to continue and possibly expand in this period. The increasing ability to detect ceramic material from the seventh and eighth centuries suggests a regionally highly differentiated pattern of settlement reduction or retrenchment.³⁶

This intermediate period of rural land abandonment nonetheless saw a major reduction in the intensity of the human “footprint” in Anatolia. Archaeological surveys from south-central and southwest Anatolia show a fall in the number of settlements per generation of more than 80 percent by c. 800 CE, in line with the pollen evidence for the scale of decline in cereal and tree crop production. Pollen data suggest that arboriculture was especially hard hit but that livestock grazing may have continued, albeit at a lower level. The pollen evidence for agrarian decline and “re-wilding” of the rural landscape is especially important in light of deficiencies in other sources of data, such as documentary texts, and the lack of archaeological survey data for many regions. Pollen data suggest that northwest Anatolia was less seriously affected than the other three subregions during this time period. This area was, of course, nearest to Constantinople and farthest from the Arab/Byzantine frontier zone; indeed, Bithynia appears to have maintained a classical type of rural economy until medieval times, although the decline itself is clear enough in the proxy data, as at sites such as Nicaea (Iznik), where there was a real decline in agrarian indicators in this region between c. 650 and c. 800 CE. But this period of decline seems to have been of shorter duration than elsewhere in Anatolia, and the economy recovered afterward.³⁷

The later ninth and more especially the tenth century mark the beginnings of what Holling would refer to as the α -phase, as much of the central zone of Anatolia was restored to Roman/Byzantine control, even though the restored Byzantine state controlled less territory than earlier. From the late eleventh century, there

36. Allcock and Roberts, “Changes”; Armstrong, “Group”; Elton, “Göksu”; Haldon, Elton, and Newhard, “Euchaita”; Vanhaverbeke, Martens, and Waelkens, “Another View”; Vanhaverbeke et al., “What Happened?”

37. See Izdebski, *Rural Economy*; Haldon et al., “Climate”; Haldon, *Empire*, pp. 224–231.

was increasing Turkic settlement throughout Anatolia, attested archaeologically through the frequent appearance of green-glazed tablewares, often fired at high temperatures, as well as other hard-fired wares. In architectural terms, there was frequent reuse of existing buildings, with churches sometimes being remodeled on a smaller scale. In many cases, following a final phase datable by glazed ceramics at the end of the middle Byzantine period (i.e., twelfth century), many sites appear to have been abandoned. Some areas, such as Balboursa, show evidence of reoccupation only from the late eleventh century; others (e.g., in Cappadocia) were taken back under Byzantine agricultural exploitation from the first half of the tenth century onward. Even if chronologically detailed archaeological survey data are lacking for Cappadocia, other archaeological evidence (e.g., for church building) attests to the importance of the mid-Byzantine “golden age” in this area.³⁸ Written sources describe productive and wealthy private or imperial estates that had only recently become safe from hostile attack. A number of Anatolian aristocratic landlords began to invest in expanding their estates around the 960s, coinciding with growth of the Byzantine agrarian economy. This resurgence is also evident in the Nar lake pollen record from Cappadocia, which indicates that the reoccupation and reorganization α -phase may have started as early as 850 CE.³⁹ By the early eleventh century, pollen data imply that cereal production was higher than it had been in late Roman times but that olive and other tree crops were no longer economically significant. This agrarian re-expansion was aided by an ameliorating climate, with higher precipitation that would have led to more reliable yields for rain-fed cereal crops.⁴⁰

This description of the processes of societal and institutional-political adaptation provides a useful heuristic within which to ask questions of the data and through which to make sense of the ensemble of information from all the different types of source material at the historian’s disposal. It reflects, of course, a generic model rather than any historical reality, and, as with all models, its primary function is to help to orient our research questions, to manage our evidence, and to provide a basis for much broader comparative analysis. In the following section, I will zoom in on the particular mechanisms and processes of societal change of the Ω -phase and the transition into an α -phase that permitted a sociopolitical system that was almost destroyed to stabilize and to recover.⁴¹

38. See, e.g., Coulton, *Balboursa Survey*, vol. 2; Jackson, “Medieval Rural Settlement”; Ousterhout, *Byzantine Settlement*; Vanhaverbeke et al., “Another View”; Elton, “Olive Oil.”

39. Eastwood et al., “Integrating”; Haldon, “Cappadocia.”

40. See Xoplaki et al., “Medieval Climate Anomaly,” for a detailed review of this material and the historical context; with Roberts et al., “Not the End of the World?”

41. The following survey and discussion are based on the analysis and presentation of the evidence in Haldon, *Empire*.

MEDIEVAL EAST ROME: TRANSFORMATIVE RESILIENCE?

Let us begin with the situation in about 700 CE. A glance at a map will help. On the one side is the enormous caliphate, stretching from the Atlantic to North India and the central Asian steppe and including the rich provinces of Syria, Iraq, and Egypt. On the other is the little East Roman Empire, after the collapse of Roman power following the Arab attacks and conquests of the years 634–650, reduced to a rump of its former self but still with the wealthy regions of Sicily and North Africa at its disposal. But by the year 700, all its Middle Eastern, North African, and Western Mediterranean provinces apart from Sicily had been lost, with the possible exception of a tenuous Roman presence in the Balearics into the second half of the eighth century and the embattled regions of Italy still under imperial authority. The lands that remained were among the least wealthy of its former provinces, among which Egypt had contributed as the most productive, the main source of grain for Constantinople and a major source of the state's tax income. From figures given by a range of late Roman sources, it has been calculated that in the fifth and sixth centuries, Egypt contributed something more than one-third of the state income (both gold and grain) derived from the prefectures of Oriens and Illyricum together; the provinces of Africa contributed about 35 percent of that of Egypt, at the most, with Sicily providing maybe 5 percent and Italy 6 percent of the total eastern imperial revenues and with the greater Syrian provinces together contributing perhaps 25 percent of the gold revenue of the eastern half of the empire as it had been in the fifth-sixth centuries CE. In the late Roman period, the bulk of the state's income outside of Egypt had been derived from the wealthy provinces of Syria, Mesopotamia, Euphratensis, Osrhoene, Phoenicia, Palestine, and Cilicia, all lost after the 640s (although there was a partial recovery of some northern districts during the tenth century). In any case, with the loss of Egypt and these eastern provinces and with effective control over all but the coastal periphery of much of the southern Balkans lost during the later sixth century and the first half of the seventh century, the overall income of the state collapsed to a fraction of that of the sixth century: before the loss of Africa and after the early 640s, gross revenues may have been reduced to some 1.5 million solidi from a Justinianic maximum calculated at between 5 million and 6 million. With the loss of Africa—finally in 698 but probably effectively some time before that date—this total annual revenue was cut to a mere 1 million, thus something on the order of 20 percent of the income before the Arab-Islamic invasions began.⁴²

While statistical comparisons are both difficult to make and problematic, therefore, it is likely that the Umayyad caliph in Damascus had, in theory at

42. On imperial resources and revenues, see the relevant chapters in Laiou, *Economic History*; Henny, *Studies*; more detailed calculations are in Haldon, *Empire*, pp. 27–30.

least, well more than twenty times more resources available to him than did the Byzantine ruler in Constantinople. Of course, this does not mean that it could all be thrown into war with the Byzantines. On the contrary, warfare in the north-east, in Transoxiana, in North Africa or Spain, along with the costs of maintaining internal peace and political control and the vast expenses entailed in maintaining the diwan, the list of pensions owed to families associated with the Prophet's original campaigns, were a substantial drain on caliphal income; while the devolved nature of both taxation and provincial government meant that the caliphs had a constant struggle on their hands to secure their share of the revenues from more distant provinces.⁴³ Nevertheless, the disparity was massive, and the investment in both large-scale expeditions and constant independent raids and attacks deep into East Roman lands throughout the period c. 660–780 can be shown to have had a dramatic impact on the Anatolian provinces in particular. Both written and, more important, paleoenvironmental evidence can be adduced to demonstrate just how this affected the Byzantine landscape and Byzantine society.

The archaeological and survey evidence shows a shrinkage and fortification of both small and larger urban settlements; it also shows a high degree of localization of exchange and commerce. Documentary evidence shows us that the government at Constantinople undertook the compulsory transplanting of captive populations from the Balkans into devastated regions of Asia Minor, in order to make good on the loss of manpower that had occurred through captivity and death.⁴⁴ By the 660s, the government was beginning to run out of money—a radical reduction in emissions of the bronze coinage and a less radical reduction in the gold content of the *nomisma* took place, while the circulation of coinage became more restricted than hitherto, as coins tended to stay within the mint regions where they were produced. The population of Constantinople itself fell to such a degree that it was only in the middle of the eighth century, with the first signs of a recovery, that the main aqueduct bringing water into the city from outside was repaired and brought back into use, although we should also be aware that the culture of water-management systems had changed from the fifth and sixth centuries and that cisterns played a very much more significant role than had previously been the case.⁴⁵ There is also written and archaeological evidence for the flight of populations as well as the movement of settlements to more defensible locations, especially in the Aegean islands, the object of the attention of maritime raids and attacks from the later seventh into the ninth and tenth centuries. Hagiographical texts of the period make reference to the devastation

43. On caliphal resources, see Haldon and Kennedy, "Regional Identities," pp. 341–352; Simonsen, *Genesis*; and esp. Foss, "Mu'awiya's State"; with Humphreys, "War of Images," pp. 239–241.

44. Ditten, *Ethnische Verschiebungen*, pp. 45–65, with details of the evidence for the movement of refugees in the war-torn regions of both the Balkans and Asia Minor, with the most recent literature on the subject; see also the older work of Charanis, "Transfer."

45. See Haldon, *Byzantium*, pp. 115–117, with literature; Poblome, "Shifting."

caused by such warfare; indeed, in some cases, it seems that parts of Asia Minor that had been first attacked in the seventh century, and regularly thereafter, were still only at the beginning of recovery in the later tenth century. And this is, of course, apart from the narrative evidence of the chronicles and histories of the period.⁴⁶ In one seventh-century account, the population of the beleaguered fortress town of Euchaïta, in north-central Anatolia, consider abandoning their homes in an effort to locate a less hazardous environment (as did indeed happen in one or two documented cases), and the text speaks almost mechanically in terms of “the annual raid of the Saracens.”⁴⁷

This represents just one set of examples to illustrate the general point that the Byzantine economy in the frontier districts and behind was radically affected by this constant warfare; that urbanism declined; that populations shrank; and that the empire was, compared with its Islamic neighbor, deeply impoverished. Of course, and as already indicated, we should not exaggerate. Many towns survived, some types of literature continued to flourish, and the population of the countryside clearly was able to continue producing enough surplus for the government to extract resources.⁴⁸ In many cases, the archaeology now shows that even where extramural settlement was disrupted, it recovered and revived around a restructured urban focus with a more heavily defended central point or refuge settlement nearby.⁴⁹ But how was this survival represented in the workings of Byzantine society, culture, and institutions?

GEOGRAPHY

At the most general level, it must first of all be very clear that the reduced, rump empire of the later seventh and early eighth centuries possessed some important geopolitical advantages. In particular, the Taurus and Anti-Taurus Mountains served as a significant physical barrier, a barrier that offered considerable defensive possibilities. There are relatively few major routes through or across these ranges, and these can be defended or, alternatively, observed, so that hostile

46. See the survey of Ahrweiler, “L’Asie Mineure”; also Haldon, *Byzantium*, pp. 114–117, 143–145. For references to devastation, see, e.g., the *Life* of Philaretos, whose home was in Paphlagonia and whose herds had been driven off by raiders: *Vita Philareti*, ed. Fourmy and Leroy, pp. 115–117, 137; trans. Rydén; for literature, see Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium: Sources*, p. 225; or the *Life* of the tenth-century magnate Michael Maleinos, whose properties in the devastated regions of Charsianon in east-central Anatolia he improved by careful investment: *Vita Mich. Maleini*, ed. Petit, p. 550, lines 20–21. Although many of these *Lives* are full of literary topoi and rhetorical artifice and are not to be taken at face value, they nevertheless reflected a recognizable reality for their listeners or readers, and there is no reason to doubt that the general situations they describe are more or less accurate.

47. See *Vita et Miracula Theodori*, pp. 198–199 (miracles 7, 9); trans. Haldon.

48. For literature, see Haldon, “Dark-Age Literature.”

49. As at Ephesus, for example: Ladstätter, “Ephesos.” See further Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium: History*, pp. 453–771; Koder, “Regional Networks”; Koder, “Urban Character”; and the essays in Henning, ed., *Post-Roman Towns*, vol. 2.

activities can be monitored or ingress denied. There are also a larger number of smaller and less obvious routes, and while these are more difficult to use or impose certain limitations on the size of the forces that can pass along them, they are also more difficult to control and observe. But the mountains themselves proved less of an obstacle than the character of the landscape behind them. Together with the nature of those attacking the Byzantine Empire, this was what proved so effective a barrier to conquest.

It is hardly a coincidence that after an initial period of conflict followed by a short-term abandonment, the landscape and urban centers of the Cilician plain, lying to the south of the Taurus, were readily colonized by Islamic settlers and soon became flourishing centers of economic activity.⁵⁰ Yet no Arab settlements ever succeeded in establishing themselves permanently beyond the mountains, on the plateau. The point of all this is that raiding expeditions across the Taurus, lasting a few days or weeks, were one thing; settling there and dealing with a very different climatic regime, which imposed a very different type of economy and agriculture, were something entirely different, requiring, at least to begin with, extended supply lines, easily disrupted by the opposing side. The type of pastoral economy practiced by the Bedouins and the type of urban economy found in the Levant were impossible on the plateau. Hot, arid summers and harsh, bitterly cold winters demanded a very different type of economy, one that made permanent settlement by the Arab invaders (and, indeed, non-Arab converts from the Middle East who joined them) difficult. The point is reinforced when we compare the relative ease with which Türkmen nomads moved onto and occupied the plateau with their herds of sheep, goats, and horses in the eleventh century, for they came from lands, and practiced a type of economy, characterized by climate and geographical conditions exactly comparable to those they found on the central Anatolian plateau. And it probably did not help that we can now show that the second half of the seventh and the early eighth century were, as a result of wider global cooling and a solar minimum, affected by a larger number of severe winters and, therefore, late springs, than the previous centuries.⁵¹

The early conquerors did try permanent occupation on a number of occasions. In 666/7, for example, an Arab garrison was established in Amorion. It was quickly driven out when the Byzantines attacked in the middle of the following winter. But on the whole, the invaders had little success in taking, occupying, and holding for more than short periods any fortified urban centers. And without such bases, a permanent occupation was not possible. Settlement beyond the Taurus required both effective economic support and constant military backing.

50. See Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, pp. 56–61; Haldon and Kennedy, “Byzantine-Arab Frontier,” pp. 106–110; Kennedy, *Prophet*, pp. 105–107; Métivier, “L’organisation,” pp. 444–445. The best and most useful account of the course and pace of the early Arab invasions and raids into Asia Minor is still Lillie, *Byzantinische Reaktion*. Discussion in Haldon, *Empire*, pp. 63–70.

51. See esp. Manning, “Roman World,” figs. 6–8 and relevant literature; Haldon et al., “Climate” and appendix 1.

The former was only possible if local populations could be induced to provide it, by whatever means, but this would have required primarily the constant application of coercion. The long and the short of it is that Arab armies were able neither to gain a foothold behind the Taurus nor apparently to win over or subjugate any of the indigenous population. Resistance was the norm rather than the exception, in striking contrast to the situation in Syria, Palestine, and Mesopotamia in the 630s or in North Africa after the 660s, where the empire failed to retain the loyalty of the indigenous Romano-African elites.

BELIEF AND IDENTITIES

As well as these geographical advantages, the East Roman state enjoyed certain ideological advantages, and one of the most important yet frequently underrated aspects of societal flexibility or resilience, or lack of it, relates directly to this aspect. A second important point, therefore, bears upon the role of ideas and belief, that is to say, the fact that patterns of belief impact on the causal logic or rationality of a culture and therefore on the way it, or parts of it, react to challenges or stresses. As noted, it is a factor often left out or ignored in work relating to questions of societal resilience, collapse, or transformation, and the result is an overly simplistic account of the causal relationships that are crucial to understanding the societal response to environmental or, indeed, any form of generalized stress.⁵² This is evident in the otherwise useful analyses in the work of Joseph Tainter, for example, in which collapse, transformation, resilience, and survival are described in terms of complex or simple social-institutional and political arrangements: a high degree of complexity tends to have a much more fragile internal balance due to overconnected chains of command, and overcommitted institutions and resources that are slow to respond to external stress, whereas institutionally and organizationally simpler social systems often (if not always) possess a greater degree of flexibility in the face of adversity due to the greater capacity for acceptance of innovation and change. The examples Tainter cites bear this out at a general level, but on closer examination, we find that the “thought-world” of the social-cultural systems he deals with receives little or no attention as part of a complex of causal relationships. There is often a tendency to present developments as though people at the time were conscious of the larger picture—environmental and political—they inhabited, and conscious choices toward simplification were made. Such models are influenced heavily by organization- and systems-theoretical approaches.⁵³ So, while this may have been the case in some respects (which, however, needs to be demonstrated rather than assumed), Tainter’s approach makes much more historical sense—and is heuristically more useful—if

52. Haldon, *Empire*, pp. 12–15.

53. Tainter, “Problem Solving,” pp. 4–10.

we acknowledge that the potential for such processes inhered to different degrees in different cases in the structures of a given sociocultural system. The result is that we have an explanation that goes some, but only some, of the way to helping us understand why—for example—the Eastern Roman state survived the crisis of the seventh and eighth centuries CE or why the Third Dynasty of Ur collapsed in the later third millennium BCE or why the Abbasid state fragmented after the later ninth century.⁵⁴

To begin with, the presence of the Roman Empire in symbolic and ideological terms was ubiquitous, on the coinage as well as in the form of imperial law, however attenuated in its practical application by circumstances. Recent discussions have raised the issue of the evolution of a Roman Christian “patriotism,” for want of a better and less anachronistic term. In fact, there is very little plausible evidence for any mass popular support for the empire or for ordinary people rallying behind the notion of Christian Roman Empire—indeed, when large Arab armies appeared, the local populations generally gave in. On the other hand, the Church hierarchy appears to have been acutely conscious of the situation in the provinces of Asia Minor and legislated through canon law to ensure that the populations were not permitted to drift out of its sights. Of all the factors that contributed to Byzantine survival, one may ask whether the Church as an institution, with its urban clergy and episcopal structures, landed resources, and clergy and their activities, is not the single most neglected and underestimated element in our discussions to date. One reason for this might be that there is a scarcity of concrete evidence for the period in question relating to ecclesiastical activity.

But there are important indications that can help throw a little more light on the situation, and indeed, when one looks for it, the evidence is there; it is simply that historians have not, on the whole, taken it into account. The disciplinary arrangements of the Church as reflected in the canons of the Quinisext Council of 692, for example, suggest that the Church maintained a relatively firm grip over the provincial clergy and was able to ensure that there was some continuity of pastoral activities. The same canons, along with other evidence (some hagiographical and related material, for example), also suggest that few areas escaped ecclesiastical control, and the Church as a body, as represented by its councils, was very insistent that clergy who had fled their provinces on account of barbarian attacks should return immediately, as canon 37 of the Quinisext in 691/2 makes clear. A recent study has shown how this warfare impacted on provincial communities, for the attendance of bishops from many provinces at the Church councils of 680–681 and 691–692 was clearly affected.⁵⁵ Whether the provincial bishops who failed to show up for these meetings in Constantinople in

54. Tainter, “Archaeology”; Tainter, “Problem Solving”; Tainter, *Collapse*; Allen, Tainter, and Hoekstra, “Supply-Side Sustainability.”

55. Jankowiak, “Notitia 1.”

680 and 691 did so because of warfare alone or whether other causes need to be considered remains unclear. The important point here is that the Church knew what was going on and did its utmost to maintain its control and authority in the provinces. In the context of a much reduced imperial territory and the fact that a single archdiocese was now effectively the sole responsible ecclesiastical authority throughout the remaining eastern lands of the empire, it is also the case that keeping an administrative, economic, and moral eye on the provincial estates of the Church as well as the population would have been much simplified.⁵⁶

But an unquestioned assumption of the identity of Christianity with the Roman Empire could be challenged. This identity had already become problematic, as the senior representatives of the Church—the bishops who were intimately involved with local government as well as with the spiritual welfare of their flocks—were seen to step in to fill the breach left by the failures of the secular authority, either by taking the lead in defending the interests of their communities following military defeat or by the hostile occupation of territory or on occasion by encouraging military leaders to take the appropriate action to confront an enemy. The Church could continue to rule and guide without the Roman state, as indeed occurred in Greater Syria and Egypt in the mid-630s and the 640s. It became possible to envisage Christian Roman identity as separate from the imperial state—as had happened, indeed, in the West in the course of the fifth century. As long as the Church was present, it was the bishop and the Church that guaranteed the purity of soul and physical survival of the Christian Roman people. Thus, while the empire depended on Christianity, the Christian Church and people were not necessarily dependent on the empire.

This outlook was reinforced both in theological discourse and at the grassroots level, once the political disasters of the period c. 634 onward could be ascribed to the failures of the secular state and its leaders to defend orthodox belief and practice, as defined and occasionally reinforced in the ecumenical synods of the fifth and sixth centuries. If salvation depended on strict and unwavering adherence to the established forms of orthodox belief and practice, then anything perceived as innovation had to be rejected outright. Such was the position argued by churchmen such as Sophronios of Jerusalem already in the 630s, refined by Maximos Confessor and adopted by the papacy in the 640s in opposition to the compromise formulas (initially successful) developed under the patriarch Sergios, aimed at bridging the divide between miaphysite and dyophysite doctrine. In itself, the question of the divine energy or operation (*energeia*) was not a new issue, having been an aspect of a long-standing discussion within both miaphysite and dyophysite Christology, while the issue of the divine will evolved

56. Haldon, *Byzantium*, pp. 281–323; and esp. Winkelmann, *Die östlichen Kirchen*, pp. 131–135; also Gray, “Legacy.”

out of the imperial effort in the 630s to find a form of language agreeable to all parties who had been involved in the discussion over the single operation.

The emphasis on demarcation, on correct practice as a means of signifying and preserving orthodoxy, thus encouraged an alternative strand of thinking about the relationship between Roman Empire and Christian faith. On this logic, if it was explicit and rigid adherence to the established forms of orthodox piety and practice that would bring salvation, then it was essential that the official Church and the state also adhered to them. As the letter to the emperor Constans from Pope Martin puts it: “(the heretics condemned at the Lateran synod of 649 claimed that Constans had issued) the said impious Typos, enjoining as harmless a slight concession as regards excessive precision. This they have written, in no way heeding the conviction of the holy fathers that in the teaching about God and the divine that which falls slightly short is no slight matter.” A Church or a government that compromised those forms could be justifiably and quite logically condemned, as incurring God’s wrath, while the unity and integrity of the Church and the Christian faith could be understood as resting not upon the compromised and struggling secular empire, nor even upon the vagaries of patriarchal politics, but upon correct observance of the established orthodox tradition, which should be pursued independently of, even in opposition to, the secular state and its interests. Those who most clearly and vociferously represented this perspective—Sophronius of Jerusalem in opposing the doctrine of the single operation, Maximus and Martin in their opposition to the doctrine of the single will—thus came into direct confrontation with the government.⁵⁷

In spite of the political problems caused by this dissension, the political might of the East Roman state came out on top, although at a cost, with the alienation of much of the population of the Western provinces as well as the papacy. Christian, “orthodox” faith and belief went hand in hand with acceptance of, indeed a need for, the empire, with its God-appointed and Christ-loving emperor in Constantinople. We could even say that the Roman state in the East compromised with both the Church hierarchy and the Christian community, so that, in effect, the two ideologically and, to a degree, institutionally blended. Unlike in the later Roman West in the fifth century,⁵⁸ the East Roman state, its law, and its whole ideological apparatus became sacralized. The relationship between emperor and patriarch may have been uneasy and that between emperor and pope even more problematic. But there could be no doubt that in the East, the Christian community and all that it represented and symbolized were headed by the Roman emperor, rather than by the patriarch; and that the Christian community was the Roman Empire, even if much of the former no longer lay within the territory controlled by the latter. Imperial law and canon law held equivalent

57. Booth, *Crisis*, pp. 329–342; Price, Booth, and Cubitt, *Acts*, pp. 1–58.

58. Brown, *Through the Eye*, pp. 528–530.

status and value, and Church and state become in many ways different faces of a single institution. While some of these political concepts must have reached a much wider audience through the medium of the clergy, the limited evidence from theological and hagiographical material suggests that notions of empire and a common Roman identity did not extend very far beyond the literate elite of the empire or the clergy.⁵⁹

How uniform, how “orthodox,” were Byzantine society and Christian orthodox culture in these core territories by the later seventh century? A specifically “East Roman” identity certainly existed, within which the population of the early medieval Eastern Roman Empire could be represented as an “orthodox” and Roman community. But identity is above all a performative concept, depending on situation and context; many subsets of identity existed, some reflecting regional cultural, linguistic, or ethnic traditions and lifeways, some heterodox beliefs, some social status and situation, some a mix of all of these.⁶⁰ The crucial point about any identity is that it differentiates those who self-describe in a particular way from those who do not so describe or who can be described as “other,” as different in some fundamental way. Thus, while the notion of “Christian/Roman” itself was far from a universalizing discourse, it served different sociocultural groups in different ways. On the one hand, it represented above all the self-identity and vested interests of the social elite whose continued loyalty to the status quo was essential to the survival of the state and the whole imperial edifice. On the other, it represented the difference between those who understood themselves as members of the Christian Roman world and those outside it—pagans, barbarians, whatever. In other words, while elements of this particular notion clearly penetrated to the roots of society, both in the metropolitan regions and in the more distant provinces (even if only in the form of coins bearing the emperor’s image),⁶¹ the notion of a Roman identity in the Eastern Roman world needs to be deployed with care, since it had different valences according to social and cultural circumstances. It is likely that “Roman” identity at the level of empire was very different from that at a provincial or local level. There always existed a pluralism of ideological and community identity, and the written sources offer us only a glimpse of some of these and of the contexts within which they could be deployed. This is especially true when we compare the somewhat different ways and forms through which “Roman” identity was deployed and realized in the Carolingian world, as Stefan Esders and Helmut Reimitz show.⁶²

59. For detailed discussion with sources and further literature, see Haldon, *Empire*, pp. 84–100.

60. See the helpful discussion on identity, with further literature, in the introductory section of Webb, chapter 11 in this volume.

61. Although, as Morrisson, “Displaying,” p. 80, points out, people could frequently mistake the ruler’s portrait for Constantine I or another emperor than the one actually represented.

62. See Esders and Reimitz, chapter 9 in this volume; and Haldon, *Empire*, pp. 100–119; Stouraitis, “Roman Identity”; Haldon, *Warfare*, pp. 18–27. The degree to which the more or less universal use of the Greek language in Anatolia and South Italy/Sicily also played a role in the self-image of Eastern Romans is difficult

LAW AND IDENTITY

Yet a key factor in creating a framework within which a Roman identity could be understood was the continuing value and referential authority of Roman law. It was the framework of Roman law, in its Justinianic form, that underpinned Eastern Roman concepts of their state and ideas about the relationship between ruler and society. Roman civil law, on the one hand, and the canon law of the Church, on the other, were the double prism through which the lives of all subjects of the emperor and the emperors themselves were regulated and understood.⁶³ Law was a key element in the way the state functioned; the law and all that was associated with it thus also symbolized the imperial Roman state. While lawmaking was the prerogative of the emperor, it also, and crucially, represented one of the instruments through which the state as the dominant political structure could operate. Indeed, Roman law embodied the empire and imperial rule in the provinces; it was as much an aspect of imperial administration and surveillance as it was a legal system in any modern sense.⁶⁴ Interpreted through a Christian lens, applied casuistically, regionally very variable in its application, and diluted in some cases by the persistence of local custom and tradition, especially where issues of kinship, inheritance, or the punishment of various criminal offenses was concerned, the law nevertheless penetrated to the roots of Byzantine society.⁶⁵

Roman law in the eastern empire was increasingly affected, in terms of both practice and interpretation, by the growing moral authority of the Church. In many respects, the Church and its clergy were probably no less important in daily life than the fiscal administration, although it has to be admitted that we know precious little of the lower clergy in the provinces until toward the end of the empire's life. From the later sixth century, the close relationship between secular and spiritual authority was of particular importance, if only because it was

to assess. Certainly, outsiders could often describe the Eastern Roman Empire as the "Greek" empire from the seventh century on; and "Rumi" or "Roman" for Muslims was usually equivalent to "Greek" as well as Roman from the ninth century CE. This no doubt offered Romans (i.e., "Byzantines") a useful shared identity when outside their own cultural space, but the extent to which it served as an identifier within Roman territory remains unclear. This is especially so in light of the deeply entrenched diglossy that existed between various forms of the vernacular (both in the provinces and at Constantinople) and the culture of the better educated and especially of the court and literary elite. The whole question of how Eastern Romans identified themselves under what contexts and at different times is a topic for current discussion; see, in particular, Kaldellis, *Byzantine Republic*; Kaldellis, "From Rome," with the critical remarks in Stouraitis, "Roman Identity." See Leppin, "Roman Identity," p. 243 and n. 12; Rapp, "Hellenic Identity"; Greatrex, "Roman Identity." For "orthodoxy" as the hallmark of Byzantine culture, see the carefully nuanced discussion in Cameron, *Cost*, pp. 2–24; for a different approach, see Magdalino, "Orthodoxy." More generally on approaches to identity from a sociological/social-anthropological standpoint, see Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, and esp. pp. 194–204; and the literature cited in Webb, chapter 11 in this volume.

63. Humphreys, *Law*, pp. 79–80; Stolte, "Challenge," pp. 192–201.

64. See in detail Haldon, *Byzantium*, pp. 254–264; Humphreys, *Law*, pp. 26–36, 253–261.

65. Stolte, "Is Byzantine Law Roman Law?"; with *Ecloga*, ed. Burgmann, Proem, pp. 36–51.

through the armed might of the state that the orthodoxy of the day could be properly and effectively enforced or defended.⁶⁶ From the middle of the sixth century, canon law had been endowed with the force of the law of the state,⁶⁷ and one of the effects of this was to permit secular authorities to invoke a Christian moral universe in arriving at legal decisions.⁶⁸ The close association between secular and canon law also served to intensify the penetrative authority of the state and at the same time strengthened the role of the imperial Church as a key reinforcing and structuring element in Byzantine notions of empire and imperial rule at the humblest level of village society.⁶⁹ The law therefore established and described a practical and a conceptual framework within which administrative competencies were to be carried out and a set of values and norms that were, in theory if not always in practice, common to all members of the imperial administration.

Law was the instrument through which the imperial administration dealt out justice, and it served as a means both of reinforcing Christian (Roman) identity and of imposing a common set of socially effective norms in respect of property and inheritance.⁷⁰ And its existence reflected the remarkable infrastructural reach of the Eastern Roman state into the lowest levels of society, impacting upon the family; the rights of the head of a household; the ways in which property, both movable and immovable, was to be disposed; the rights of children, male and female; the rights and duties of husbands and wives, of in-laws and parents.⁷¹ The evidence is slender, but there is enough to suggest that justice and the judicial framework, however attenuated by circumstances at times, continued to maintain a provincial existence throughout the history of the empire.⁷² It is likely that the numbers of individuals who actually came into formal contact with the law was very limited, but we should also bear in mind that the presence in Constantinople of ordinary subjects, such as peasant farmers, among many others who had come to seek justice in imperial courts, was not unusual.⁷³ Such a tradition was not readily forgotten; appeal to imperial justice in the capital,

66. Dagron, "L'Église," pp. 212–215.

67. Justinian, *Novellae constitutiones*, ed. Schöll and Kroll, VI. Proem, pp. 35–36; trans. in Barker, *Social and Political Thought*, pp. 75–76.

68. See esp. Simon, *Rechtsfindung*.

69. Belief systems have a material and functional impact on social action in many ways. See Haldon, *State*, pp. 242–251; Haldon, "Mode"; and for early medieval Western Europe, see esp. the valuable discussion of Wood, "Kings"; also Heinzelmann, "Laristocratie."

70. See, in particular, the collection of important contributions in Laiou and Simon, eds., *Law*; and Fögen, "Legislation"; with Fögen, "Gesetz"; Simon, *Rechtsfindung*.

71. See Laiou, "Family Structure."

72. See Burgmann, in *Ecloga*, ed. Burgmann, pp. 2–19; and *Ecloga*, proem, lines 52–109, pp. 164–166. For provincial judges/courts, see, e.g., *Ecloga* IV.4; VIII.1.6; VIII.3; XIV.1; 4; 7; XVII.5. Note also Stolte, "Challenge," pp. 201–203, with evidence in post-conquest Egypt for continuity of legal practice.

73. See Justinian, *Novellae constitutiones* ed. Schöll and Kroll, LXXX.2–3, pp. 391–392.

however difficult of access for most, certainly reinforced ties between metropolis and provinces.⁷⁴

Naturally, this was vitiated by the realities of social ties, patronage, kinship, and so forth, but the framework did exist and was appealed to. But we can see the rules of behavior, modes of negotiation, techniques of resource management, and regulatory patterns through which the imperial administration imposed itself across society, and at all levels, in the surviving archive of official documents from the later ninth century onward (hardly any survive from the period between the seventh and ninth centuries). And even if from somewhat later, it is not insignificant that from the early ninth century on, we see in letters from senior churchmen, complaining about administrative mismanagement or oppression of taxpayers, how the basic institutional values of the system were widely taken for granted. Breaching those codes was perceived as both immoral and fiscally and economically harmful.

THE COURT, THE STATE, AND PROVINCIAL ELITES

This brings us to a third point, concerning one particular group—albeit by no means a monolithic body—that seems very clearly to have maintained a strong Roman/imperial identity. Along with the court upon which it depended for its social existence, the East Roman elite was made up of the people from among whom were recruited the financial, administrative, political, and military leaders and their staffs. The dramatic and rapid reduction in the territory of the empire in the seventh century, the transformations in urban life and culture, and the narrowing of cultural and ideological horizons that the Persian and especially the Arab wars ushered in had many consequences. One is that late Roman civic culture in the provinces, the culture of urbanized elites, and the network of literary and political capital they maintained vanished almost completely, together with much of the cultural capital they carried with them. Many of the developments that led to this transformation were in train long before the seventh-century crisis, but crisis brought things to a head and promoted the development of new structures and responses. The nature of literary culture and the bearers of that culture change considerably, as the relationships of power to land and to office within the ruling elite change. The old senatorial establishment, with much of the literary cultural baggage associated with it, fades away during the seventh century, to be replaced by a service elite of heterogeneous ethnic, social, and cultural origins.⁷⁵

74. For the little that can be said concerning the administration of law and justice in the seventh and early eighth centuries, see Haldon, *Byzantium*, pp. 254–280.

75. Haldon, *Empire*, pp. 159–177; Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium: History*, pp. 575–616; in general on the East Roman elite from the seventh to the twelfth centuries, see Haldon, “Social Elites.” On the earlier situation, see Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, vol. 1, p. 371; Heather, “New Men,” pp. 19–20; Kelly, *Ruling*, pp. 186, 190.

Our sparse evidence suggests that the new elite incorporated many elements of the older establishment, but elite culture underwent radical change. Provincial military and civil officialdom may well have been managed by people of provincial origin, but they had to achieve their positions through Constantinople. They turned to Constantinople, the seat of empire and source of wealth, status, and power, and there they invested their social capital in order to become part of that system. The Church provided an alternative and equivalent career structure, of course, but that also was centered in Constantinople. In either case, the middle-level provincial elites were now drawn into the affairs and the power structures of Constantinople, alongside the high-level elites who had an empire-wide presence in terms of rank, title, and possibly landed wealth. The emperor and the court became, more than ever before, the source of social advancement. Most significantly of all, these changes meant that the imperial government and the emperors themselves had a far greater and far more direct input in deciding who would be appointed to which posts to carry out what duties.

It is important to emphasize, however, that provincial elites were not a homogeneous social and cultural body. There were significant differences in wealth and local status, for example, although we can barely detect these in our written sources; there were undoubtedly regional differences, both in outlook and perception and in local and provincial identities. Again, we can barely detect these, although they become apparent as the range of sources becomes greater, especially from the later eighth and early ninth centuries. As we can see from later evidence—especially in the sources from the later ninth into the later eleventh century—members of regional and provincial elites deployed different strategies to maintain and enhance their position, whether at court or within the imperial system of title and office or locally in respect of their own situation *vis-à-vis* other competing groups, as well as those above and below them in the social hierarchy of wealth and cultural status. The behavior and attitudes of provincial elites in Sicily or South Italy is unlikely to have mirrored that of members of elite families from central Anatolia or the Armenian highlands, for example. The degree to which members of regional elites could maintain a degree of local power and prestige without belonging to the imperial hierarchy, without holding a court title or administrative post, is unclear—this must have been relatively difficult, although probably not impossible, certainly before the later ninth century.⁷⁶

Provincials who had property or wealth in whatever form had to be fully invested in the survival of the system in order to ensure their own survival. That being the case, it also meant that they collaborated more or less 100 percent in the implementation of imperial policy, whether regarding financial management, military commands, or religious politics. Not everyone responded in this

76. For discussion, see literature cited in note 75 above.

way, and there were individuals and groups who viewed constant enemy harassment and the threat of death and destruction as perfectly adequate reasons for abandoning the cause by fleeing, changing sides, or whatever. But we know of only a very few cases of individuals hedging their bets—for example, Saborios, the general of the Armeniakon army in the 660s, and his supporters or in Italy in the 660s and the period from 716 into the 720s, although only when it was thought Constantinople might fall.⁷⁷ And while our sources are poor, it is unlikely, had this been more common, that we would not have them reported to us—indeed, had it been more usual, the empire would not have survived in any case.

Many studies have shown that states, whether far-flung imperial systems or geographically compact polities, must before all else secure the loyalty of their various local elites if they are to retain control over the conquered lands—short of eradicating the former elite and replacing it, there are few alternatives, although there have been many means of achieving this end.⁷⁸ Coercion can work for a time, but in the end, some degree of reciprocity between center and province, between ruling elite and provincial elites, is essential if the system is to survive over any length of time. This holds not only in the case of newly conquered or absorbed territories and their formerly dominant elites but also where old-established aristocracies or dominant social groups are concerned. In the case of the Roman Empire in particular, it has been shown that Roman hegemony was secured by co-opting local elites and by assimilating them both culturally (primarily linguistically) and politically into the Roman governing establishment, with its ability to impose authority through direct physical coercion. The government at Constantinople could not hope to maintain its authority in the provinces and thus extract the fiscal resources it needed, without the collaboration and active support of provincial elites. That implied both ideological consensus and pragmatic politics.

But provincial elites were loyal to a distant government—or indeed to any government—only so long as their own interests were protected by the state and insofar as the state was able effectively to impose sanctions in some form on those who challenged its authority or failed to support it. Disaffection from or hostility to the imperial center was about a slippage in the correspondence between the perceived vested interests of a local elite and those of the state. And elites have been historically remarkably consistent in preserving their interests, whatever the compromises they may have had to make in order to do so. The North African elite, for example, did nothing to defend the interests of the Church and its clergy against the Vandals in the 430s and thereafter, preferring to preserve its own interests. The somewhat precarious ideological loyalty such a response

77. See Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, vol. 1, pp. 348–350; trans. Mango and Scott, pp. 488–490.

78. See also Sijpesteijn, chapter 12 in this volume.

indicates underlines the self-interested nature of elite society, examples of which can be multiplied from widely different periods and societies.⁷⁹

The Eastern Roman state had several means of consolidating its hold over a local elite. Coercion and sanctions represented one approach. In seventh-century Anatolia, in contrast to more distant regions of the empire, the government at Constantinople was in effective striking distance of those who challenged its authority, even if applying sanctions was not always a straightforward matter. This is perhaps most apparent in Constantinopolitan dealings with Armenia and the various local rulers whose policy with regard to the empire was often ambivalent, especially with the constant threat of reprisals or attacks from the caliphate. Yet even this far from the capital, it was generally the case that the fear of imperial military reprisals and/or loss of prestige with the Roman court could secure loyalty to the Roman cause. Admittedly, imperial policy in this region was not especially successful at retaining the loyalty of these regions in the longer term, but the point is that if the imperial arm could reach as far as the Armenian highlands, both militarily and in respect of ecclesiastical politics, even under such very straitened circumstances as prevailed across much of the period from the 640s onward, then how much more effective was it nearer to home? Even with substantial interference from the caliphate, Roman political control over central and eastern Anatolia was rarely in doubt. In spite of the continuous Arab raiding and occasional major offensive operations, Roman forces were ubiquitous, whether dispersed in their local, provincial bases or in more concentrated numbers for particular campaigns. In consequence, it is a reasonable assumption that no member of the provincial elite could afford to abandon the imperial cause without fear of relatively swift reprisals and punishment. The results speak for themselves: once behind the Taurus/Anti-Taurus line, virtually no territory and hardly any significant forts or fortresses were abandoned by the state. That the empire was able so effectively to hold on to its territory in this respect reflects also its ability to ensure, by whatever means were at its disposal, the continued loyalty and commitment to its cause of the provincial elites. There is no space to demonstrate this here, but a study of the prosopography of the elite as well as of the politics of the period illustrates the point very clearly.⁸⁰

INSTITUTIONAL COHESION, RESOURCES, AND ENVIRONMENT

Two other sets of factors also played into the picture of Eastern Roman survival at this time, both of which have been dealt with at length elsewhere and so need simply to be mentioned briefly here. The first is the fact that the East Roman

79. Haldon, *Empire*, pp. 193–204.

80. Haldon, *Empire*, pp. 212–214.

state enjoyed a number of important organizational advantages in terms of logistical infrastructure—roads, administrative arrangements, the collection and distribution of resources through the fiscal system, in both monetized form and in the form of skills, services, goods, and people. In spite of the disastrous loss of state income and the contraction of the empire to a rump of its former self, these features all conferred a distinct advantage on the state and enabled it to meet the economic and military threat to its existence, contain it, and, eventually, push it back. One would be right to think that the government of an empire that had lost three-quarters of its revenues yet still had to maintain, at least initially, armies of roughly the same size as before such losses, and that had retained effectively only its poorest set of provinces, would find itself in a really major crisis. In looking for some of the reasons for the survival of the empire, in a situation that would challenge any organized state system, our attention is inevitably drawn toward organizational factors. An infrastructure, a set of organizational and physical assets, consists not just of arrangements, roads and bridges, or means of collecting revenues. An infrastructure also consists, indeed, is crucially composed of, people. Institutions themselves are the effect of individuals acting according to a specific set of rules, within a particular social and institutional context, and with the aim, at least in principle, of achieving a certain set of results. These results are both personal and social, on the one hand, and institutional, on the other. For the former, the personal and social, this means in turn that the repetition of these particular forms of behavior and actions cements, or at least contributes to the maintenance of, a set of relationships that offers the actor a sense of self and identifies him or her with a particular social-cultural milieu. For the latter, the institutional, it means that certain organizational “needs” are met—the managing of resources, the keeping of records, and so forth. The two are, obviously, so intimately connected that they are hard to separate out except somewhat artificially, since the achievement of the organizational goals contributes toward and reinforces perceptions of personal competence, success, and identity (however we may qualify these terms through the values of the culture in question).

With these remarks in mind, therefore, we may ask, what is it that leads to the breakdown of a set of institutional arrangements and their failure to deliver the goods, so to speak? And by the same token, what sorts of arrangements, under what conditions, manage to survive crises? The answer lies to a degree in the ways in which social and ideological identities generate solidarities or not and how people identify with particular sets of narratives about the way their world works, what is important to them, and how they can act to ensure stability and continuity. When the context within which established modes of social praxis are carried on changes, those “ways of doing” may fail to generate the expected effects, with consequent impacts on both perceptions of the world and reactions to the changes—sometimes with dramatic results for the shape of social institutions or

political structures. Continuity and flexibility are significant elements here and can be seen in what happens to the East Roman administrative and fiscal apparatus in the later seventh and eighth centuries (and to a degree beyond).

Thus, in the course of the seventh century, the taxation of land in the established manner was able to carry on, but its administration was placed under a more direct palatine oversight; the administrative pyramid typical of the empire hitherto was broken down into its constituent parts, because it no longer responded adequately to the exigencies of the times; and the arrangements for supplying grain and producing weapons were radically restructured, and a crisis-management system, entailing, among other measures, the retasking of imperial customs depots and their officials to supply both the armies and Constantinople itself, was set up that better met the needs of the moment. Taxes continued to be collected, gold coins of a surprisingly high degree of purity continued to be minted, and in quantity, roads and bridges continued to be maintained, weapons and military equipment continued to be produced, and soldiers continued to be recruited, trained, and equipped. Other state systems under comparable pressure have failed; the Western Empire itself, indeed, is an obvious example (even if we concede that the difficulties it faced were somewhat different and that its cultural and political situation were also somewhat different).⁸¹

At this point, the second key factor can be brought into the picture. The environmental data show that agricultural production in many areas of Anatolia came, after the middle of the seventh century and in some cases earlier, to focus largely on cereals and the herding of livestock. This appears in most cases to have been independent of any changes in climatic conditions (Anatolia becomes cooler and wetter from the sixth into the middle of the eighth century, before entering a more arid phase).⁸² A simplification of agrarian output and the greater emphasis on cereal production (suggested by the palynological data) would have been very opportune for the East Roman state under the sort of intense pressure that it experienced at this time. The empire suffered a major blow when it lost Egypt and access to the vast quantities of grain required both for Constantinople and for the military. Replacing this source was possible, and from the point of view of cereal production, the slightly cooler and wetter conditions in seventh-century Anatolia were undoubtedly favorable to increased grain production. No doubt, many farmers responded to such a shift. But in view of the loss of access to Egyptian grain, the hazards of relying on Sicilian or North African imports, and the need to develop local and long-term grain resources, it is very likely that the state also increased the fiscal demands from the remaining Anatolian

81. On the nature of East Roman administrative structures, see Haldon, "Verwaltung."

82. For more detailed discussion with literature and sources, see Haldon, *Empire*, pp. 215–231; Haldon et al., "Climate," pp. 121–127; Izdebski, *Rural Economy*; McCormick et al., "Climate Change"; Büntgen et al., "Causes."

territories in this respect—and thus stimulated the process of change. This all took some time, no doubt, but when we have some clearer evidence again, in the ninth century, it seems that the southern Pontic regions, including Paphlagonia and Helenopontus, filled some of the gap. The documentary sources also suggest some interesting changes in technical language to do with the tax system, indicating a restructuring of fiscal arrangements and focusing in particular on the supply and management of grain. The military divisions of the empire came to be based across territories in Anatolia that could provide for their needs—a move that would, however, have substantially increased the local and regional demand for grain and livestock across Anatolia. So we can see a state-directed shift in resource production, specifically toward the things an army needs: grain and livestock. Earlier historical parallels (in fifth-century Italy, for example, or during the Carthaginian wars in Italy during the republican period) show that political authorities were quite able to carry out such policies. The seventh-century changes in question cannot be dated very exactly, but in most cases, the shift to a simpler, grain- and livestock-intensive regime takes place in the later seventh and eighth centuries—so the coincidence between this, with shifting fiscal administration and with a transformation of the way the army was paid and supplied, which we also know was taking place across this period, seems too hard to pass off as coincidence. There is no reason to think that the government at Constantinople was aware of the longer-term, small-scale environmental changes that were occurring. Yet in focusing, through its fiscal apparatus, on the production of grain and livestock, it was unwittingly able to take advantage of an already changing pattern of agricultural production in many parts of Anatolia.⁸³ What we can see behind all this are considered and intelligent attempts to exploit sources of grain for the capital city of the empire, which then led directly to the expansion of the system of *kommerkiarioi* and their storehouses to supply both the capital and the armies.

AND FINALLY . . .

It would, of course, be impossible to make sense of any of this without bringing into the picture also the role played by the politics of the new Arab Islamic empire. Undoubtedly, the first and second *fitna* or civil conflicts of the early 660s and more especially that of the early 680s played a role in Byzantine survival, giving the emperors a breathing space and allowing time to take stock and prepare for the next attacks. We should remember that the Umayyad caliphs did not always see the Byzantine Empire as their most important priority, and even when they did, they were not always able to muster the resources necessary for

83. For detailed analysis and discussion, see Haldon, *Empire*, pp. 249–282.

its eradication—the disasters of the failed attacks of the late 660s and especially of 717–718 came to be deeply etched in Umayyad memory. They also faced simple structural problems of fiscal management and access to resources, across a vastly larger territory than the Eastern Roman Empire, problems that remained intractable from the start and that were eventually to result by the later ninth century in the emasculation of caliphal power and the marginalization of the Abbasid caliphs themselves, except in ideological respects. That the caliphs were able to amass the resources and assemble the armies for major attacks such as those in the 660s and 670s or in 717 against Constantinople shows that the problems were not insurmountable; but it also suggests that the shifts in strategy reflect not just strategic but also social, fiscal, and political factional pressures on the regime in Damascus.

SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSIONS

Political will, elite cultural ambition, and calculation; the sacralization of the state, law, and imperial rule within a single, ideologically coherent bundle; organizational and logistical efficiency and flexibility; an extraordinarily fluctuating political situation at both domestic and international levels; and longer-term changes in the physical environment of the East Roman world—all converge across a period of a few decades. Crucially, the binding of the elites of Anatolia to the imperial cause and, for a while at least, a nearly complete overlap of both sets of vested interests gave the imperial state the political, structural, and institutional cohesion that was required to survive the external pressures it faced. These were, figuratively speaking, the Goldilocks parameters for East Roman survival. The foregoing analysis also demonstrates the crucial importance of burrowing down into the very interstices of a sociocultural system if one is effectively to grasp the mechanisms of resilience and adaptation and if one is to demonstrate the value of larger-scale models that have a comparative analytical value. Their existence meant an absolute check to the greatest series of conquests in the shortest period of time that the world had ever seen.

It is perhaps something of a paradox that the shifting environmental conditions that are generally seen as playing a contributory role in the processes that led to the breakdown and disappearance of Roman imperial power in Central and Western Europe over the longer term were the very changes that made possible the continued survival of the Eastern Roman Empire in its somewhat reduced and medieval form.

I began with the question of how the Eastern Roman Empire managed to survive the onslaught of the first Arab Islamic empire and suggested a cluster of reasons for its success, so that the issue becomes one of disentangling the relationship among the various different elements involved. The empire did survive.

Its systemic identity was never effectively challenged, either in terms of ideology and symbolic universe/*Weltanschauung*, concepts of rulership, and divine support or in respect of administrative, fiscal, and military effectiveness, societal cohesion, and social structure. The latter in particular were modified in a number of ways, but their fundamentally late Roman institutional arrangements survived, modified though they were in several important aspects. The phase of dramatic transformation that begins in the seventh and extends into the later eighth century—the Ω -phase or “release” phase, if we wish to use Holling’s conceptual framework of adaptive change as explained at the beginning of this chapter—did not result in collapse, in any meaningful sense of the term, whether politically or institutionally, although, of course, a dramatic geographical retrenchment is very obvious. And the very fact of imperial survival and its implications had a profound impact on the way the Arab Islamic world looked upon it. As a (probably at origin) early-eighth-century apocalyptic text has it: “The Romans . . . are people of sea and rock, whenever a generation goes, another replaces it. Alas, they are your associates to the end of time . . .”⁸⁴

84. See Ibn Hajar, *Al-Matālib al-Āliya fī Zawā'id al-Masānid al-Thamāniya*, 4.26 (quoting the Musnad of al-Hārith b. Abī Usāma). See Bashear, “Apocalyptic and Other Materials,” p. 191.

Processions, Power, and Community Identity: East and West

Leslie Brubaker and Chris Wickham

THE *Vitas patrum Emeritensium*, the *Lives of the Fathers of Mérida*, written in the seventh century, sets out the deeds of the holy men of one of the major cities of Visigothic Spain.¹ Its account of Bishop Fidelis, who lived in the mid-sixth century, tells of a servant, or *puer*, of the bishop who was locked out of the city one night and had to wait till dawn to get in. As he waited, he saw a fiery globe, *glovus igneus*, going from the extramural church of S. Fausto to that of S. Lucrecia, and a *multitudo sanctorum* following it, with Fidelis in the middle; they crossed the great Guadiana bridge, and the gate opened by divine power to let them into the city, closing again afterward. The servant told the bishop about this when he came into town the following day, and Fidelis warned him to tell no one during the bishop's lifetime, for fear for his life. These were wise words. Another man saw Fidelis process with the saints from the church of S. Eulalia, Mérida's main civic saint, around the other martyrial churches outside the walls (these would presumably have included Fausto and Lucrecia again) but did tell people; the bishop warned him that he would die at once, and he did.²

On one level, it is quite clear what Fidelis was supposed to have been doing, apparently routinely: he was protecting Mérida in secret, with the most powerful set of associated protectors he could possibly work with. Processing around the walls of a city was a standard way of doing this, as we shall see; not many processions had as much massed saintly backup as these, however.³ At least one of the processions also ended with a formal entry into the city, the classic way of expressing power over it; we can guess that the saints ended up in the cathedral afterward, as processions generally did, for when Fidelis was due to die, it was there that they gathered to ensure his death and to take his soul away. The unusual feature of these stories was

1. Leslie Brubaker would like to thank Vasiliki Manolopoulou (whose PhD thesis is cited in note 45 below) for stimulating discussion and Lauren Wainwright for compiling a preliminary list of processions in the *Book of Ceremonies*. Both Brubaker and Chris Wickham thank the rest of the contributors to this book for critiques and ongoing discussions.
2. *Vitas sanctorum patrum Emeritensium*, ed. Maya Sánchez, 4.7–8, pp. 38–41.
3. The named saints' churches would not necessarily have taken Fidelis all around the walls; the first two churches were over the river to the west of the city, and Eulalia lay to the north. Conversely, Eulalia was nearly at the opposite side of town, so if we were to be really literal, nearly half the walls might have been traversed externally. But the account does not encourage a literal reading.

the secrecy they involved, which evidently mattered to this bishop; he was ruthless about its protection.⁴ The secrecy topos is a standard one in hagiographies, of course, but for processions elsewhere, a highly public aspect was the norm. We can suppose that efficacy here mattered more than publicity, and maybe (who knows?) Fidelis was also covering for saints who, being supernatural, preferred anonymity. The *Lives* do not tell us, but their author clearly thought these accounts were significant, for they make up half of what is told about Fidelis's episcopacy. It is this significance that gives the stories particular importance for us. This is the sort of thing that a good bishop should be doing, saints or no saints, and good bishops—and many secular rulers, kings, emperors, and caliphs—did just the same, all across the early Middle Ages, from 500 to 1000, the framing dates for this chapter, and indeed for a long time earlier and later.

Urban processions, that is to say, groups of people moving publicly and formally in an urban space, conveyed protection and power in other periods, too, as a substantial historiography underlines. Military, civic, and religious processions were a hallmark of the ancient and medieval worlds that continued into the Renaissance (and, indeed, continue to this day). Once discussed primarily as models of urban unity and continuity, it has been increasingly recognized that processions were also a powerful tool of civic control and contestation and a way of negotiating power relationships within an urban context.⁵ But their public nature, and their public repetition, also furthered—or potentially furthered—community identity, at least among participants and bystanders, who could, outside Mérida, be very numerous. It is the aim of this chapter to show how this worked, comparatively, in urban societies across Europe and the Mediterranean—for the processional world, which assumed substantial audiences, was normally and above all (even if not exclusively) an urban world. We will look at both the imperial level (and at that of similar rulers East and West) and, where we have enough information, the local level that underpinned that of rulers. We will include any formalized moving body of people, no matter what it is called in our sources (and, as will become clear, the differences in what sources called such processions are often significant); some of these formalized moving groups were repeated regularly, and others were one-offs, but they had internal orderings even then, and when they did not, we will not include them.⁶ We will start with Constantinople, the imperial city par excellence in the early Middle Ages, for

4. *Vitas sanctorum patrum Emeritensium*, ed. Maya Sánchez, 4.9, pp. 41–44. Concerning secrecy, there are two partly parallel stories in Gregory of Tours, *Liber in gloria confessorum*, ed. Krusch, 58, p. 331 (the most similar), and *Liber vitae patrum*, ed. Krusch, 17.4, p. 281–282.

5. See, among very many, Trexler, *Public Life*; Davis, “Sacred” (two of the progenitors of this historiography). For a sample of recent approaches, see Gengnagel, Thiel-Horstmann, and Schwedler, eds., *Prozessionen*. For the late Roman background, the basic account is now Lavan, *Public Space*, chap. 2. We are very grateful to Luke Lavan for letting us have this chapter in advance of publication and for permission to cite it. See further, for Flanders, note 186 below.

6. Empirically, we need to add at the start, every procession we discuss will have a religious element, but so did almost all collective activity in this period. We should also add that we will not include discussions of

both imperial and local came together here, and discuss it in most detail, as a model; we will then look at Western parallels, focusing on the Franks and Rome, and also at the Fāṭimids, whose processions in and around Cairo show up some interesting and useful contrasts.

CONSTANTINOPLE

Byzantine processions have rarely been explored from the point of view of establishing power relationships and community identity.⁷ Though Byzantinists have published on liturgical processions,⁸ military processions,⁹ and processions as part of court and/or urban ritual (imperial and/or ecclesiastical),¹⁰ there has been no synthetic, historicizing, contextualizing, or comparative examination of the Byzantine procession. There has been relatively little study, for example, of the relationship between the “pagan” processions of the ancient world¹¹ and the Christian processions of the East Roman world after 380, when the first recorded religious procession in Constantinople with an explicitly Christian message took place at the instigation of Gregory of Nazianzos.¹² No one has fully evaluated what, if anything, links liturgical, military/imperial, and nonliturgical religious processions in the one Byzantine city where we have sufficient evidence of all three, Constantinople. (See Map 7.1.) We can begin to guess why processions followed certain routes, but few have asked whether the Byzantine procession changed over time—and this despite the fact that it would be important to know, for example, whether regular processions (such as those between the two major shrines of the Virgin, the Blachernai and the Chalkoprateia) changed paths as the neighborhoods they traversed changed composition. There are, in short, a lot of unanswered (and unasked) questions about the Byzantine procession. Not all of them can be fully answered here, but they are important to ask, for several reasons.

First, medieval processions effectively replaced the relatively static public spaces of the Greek and Roman city, such as the agora or the forum, to create new and more fluid avenues of public ritual space. There were ancient processions, certainly, but many of them were informal, or one-offs such as *adventus* (see below)

one-off marriage and funeral processions, which, even if formalized in predictable ways, relate very often to private claims to status rather than to power and community; and we exclude degrading processions of criminals and political losers, despite their intrinsic interest, so as not to overload a very long chapter. For the processions we exclude, at least up to c. 600, see Lavan, *Public Space*, chap. 2.

7. Exceptions are Brubaker, “Topography”; and especially Andrade, “Processions.”

8. See, e.g., the classic Baldovin, *Urban Character*.

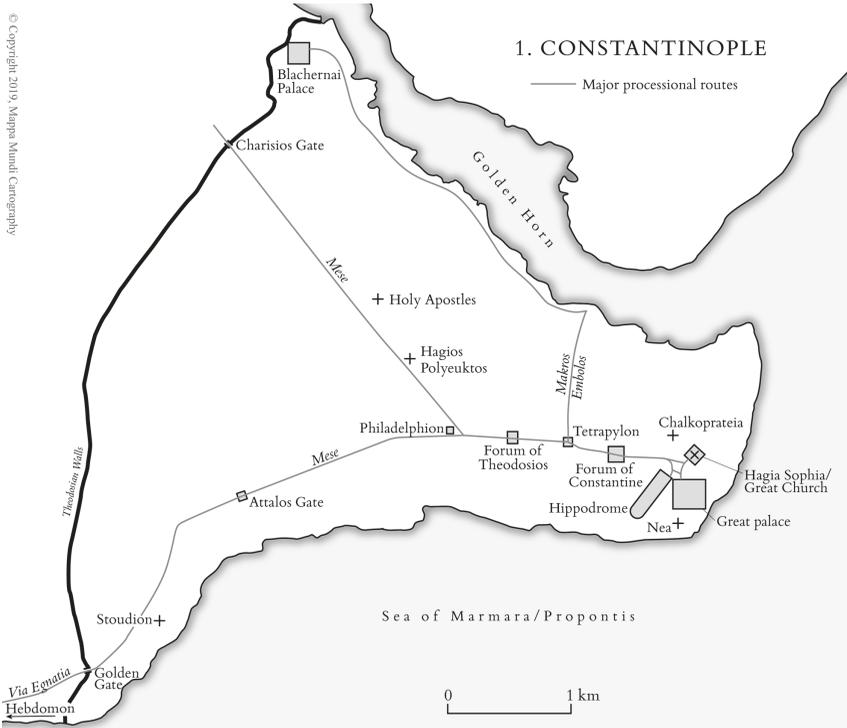
9. See, e.g., the classic McCormick, *Eternal Victory*.

10. In addition to the publications cited earlier, see, e.g., Janin, “Les processions”; Cameron, “Construction”; Ševčenko, “Icons”; Berger, “Imperial and Ecclesiastical Processions”; Bauer, “Urban Space.”

11. See the classic Connor, “Tribes”; and more recently, Östenberg, *Staging*; Favro and Johanson, “Death”; Östenberg, Malmberg, and Bjørnebye, *Moving City*.

12. For the latter, see Brubaker, “Topography,” pp. 37–38. One of the few comparative studies, Lavan, *Public Space*, chap. 2, especially text to nn. 327–344, concludes that there was little relationship between pagan and Christian processions. For a different opinion, see Baldovin, *Urban Character*, pp. 234–238.

or funerals; there were rather more, and many more regular ones, in the Christian world of the fifth century and onward.¹³ That is to say, although the idea that public space could move already existed in the Roman period, it accelerated markedly after the advent of Christianity. Understanding processions is thus critical for understanding how urban space worked and was manipulated in the Middle Ages.



MAP 7.1 Constantinople

Second, processions put into relief what kinds of public behavior (and misbehavior) were acceptable. Looking at processions in Constantinople, their contestations, and their failures (and the manipulations of these failures in texts)¹⁴ with a critically nuanced eye allows us to begin to develop a more sophisticated social and cultural history of (at least) urban Byzantium. In a related vein, processions involve an audience, as well as participants, and a team of people who prepare for the event (e.g., by decorating the streets with metal, textile, and floral embellishments). These people and their activities are virtually invisible in

13. Brubaker, "Topography," p. 43. See in general Lavan, *Public Space*, chap. 2.

14. See especially Buc, *Dangers*.

the historical record, yet they are vital to any understanding of the social and cultural history of the Byzantine capital and how this changed over time.¹⁵

Third, Byzantine processions took resources (in addition to the cost of street decoration, money was distributed on certain occasions) and a considerable amount of time. If the major written sources concerning Byzantine processions—the *Book of Ceremonies* and the *typikon* of the Great Church (Hagia Sophia), both of the tenth century—are to be believed, there were, on average, a minimum of two processions a week in Constantinople, many of which involved the patriarch and often also the emperor.¹⁶ Both of these men had many other responsibilities; this was time that neither would have squandered were processions not believed to be to their advantage. By 750 or so, processions in Rome were, it is true, nearly as frequent, but elsewhere in the West, they seem to have been normally restricted to major feast days; Fāṭimid processions were similarly paced across high points of the year. That processions were significantly more important to the Byzantines than to most of their neighbors, even though in themselves they were often very similar in format, has seldom been noticed.¹⁷

Fourth, a comparative evaluation of Byzantine processions allows us to understand both how the Byzantines were able to operate in a complex global network defined by local contexts (how and why similar practices developed across the medieval Mediterranean and Islamic world and how the Byzantines positioned themselves within this nexus) and, more important, the extent to which the Byzantines remained resolutely Byzantine.¹⁸ For example, the Byzantine procession had three basic formats, which it shared with others but whose combination was specific to it. The first, which it held in common with late antique Jerusalem and medieval Rome,¹⁹ went from one intraurban urban space to another, in a fairly linear mode (e.g., many of the processions that formed part of the stational liturgy, as outlined in the *typikon* of Hagia Sophia and described in the *Book of Ceremonies*). The second, which it shared with Fāṭimid Cairo, the imperial Roman and early medieval Western *adventus*, and also the early modern Western *joyeuses entrées*, generally went from outside the city to a specific location inside it.²⁰ The third, with many medieval Western parallels, as we shall see, went around and enclosed the city protectively (e.g., the procession led by the patriarch Sergios in anticipation of the Avar/Persian siege of Constantinople in 626) in a fashion repeated in Byzantine ceremonies of church dedication from

15. One scholar who has begun to approach these issues is Anthony Kaldellis, in *Byzantine Republic*.

16. For the *Book of Ceremonies*, see most conveniently Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *The Book of Ceremonies*, 2 vols., trans. Moffatt and Tall, which includes the reprinted Greek edition of the *Corpus scriptorum historiae byzantinae*, ed. Reiske. For the *typikon* of Hagia Sophia, see Mateos, *Le typikon*.

17. Baldovin, however, noted that there were more liturgical processions in tenth-century Constantinople than there were in contemporary Rome or Jerusalem; *Urban Character*, p. 211.

18. A preliminary exploration of this issue appeared as Brubaker, "Space."

19. See, e.g., Wickham, *Medieval Rome*, with earlier bibliography.

20. See, e.g., Sanders, *Ritual*; Halm, "Verhüllung"; and for later Syrian processions, see Grehan, "Legend."

at least the eighth century.²¹ We will therefore examine the Byzantine procession within the context of other contemporary expressions in both the Christian West and the Islamic caliphates, particularly in Egypt. One of our goals is simply (but crucially) to analyze what is specifically “Byzantine” about the Byzantine procession alongside an evaluation of, for example, what makes an early medieval Roman procession “Roman” and a Fāṭimid one “Fāṭimid.” Why did both the emperor and the patriarch devote so much more time to the procession—at least in the middle Byzantine period—than did all rulers and most religious leaders in either the Christian West or the Islamic world?

We need to set out and develop several key aspects of the Byzantine procession here. After a brief consideration of the problems with the source material, we will look at how the various types of Byzantine procession—liturgical, military, imperial/court, ecclesiastical/religious—“worked,” how they intersected, and how they operated, across time. We will also evaluate Byzantine processions as expressions of authority and urban control (again, across time) in early and middle Byzantine Constantinople, set against how they are also constitutive of community identity.²² We will develop the comparative discussion later, when we have looked at our other case studies.

The Sources

There are four important types of sources of information on Byzantine processions. First, there are books about ceremonial compiled for the imperial court or its immediate circle. The most famous of these is the mid-tenth-century *Book of Ceremonies*; for the later period, not discussed here, there is the superficially related *Offices and Ceremonies* attributed to Pseudo-Kodinos.²³ Second are service books that detail the rites of the liturgical year, of which the *typikon* of the Great Church (Hagia Sophia) is best known. Like the *Book of Ceremonies*, the *typikon* dates to the tenth century, although it is probably from the earlier part of the century, whereas the *Book of Ceremonies* is a mid-century compilation with additions running into the 970s.²⁴ Third, the anecdotal accounts in Byzantine chronicles, histories, and hagiographies incorporate information on processions as part of their larger narrative.²⁵ The fourth significant source of information is material culture. There are occasional early images of processions—such as

21. See Permjakovs, “‘Make This the Place.’” We are most grateful to Vitalijs Permjakovs for helpful discussion and for allowing us to read his dissertation, which he is currently preparing for publication.

22. This is because, except for isolated examples, e.g., fourth-century Jerusalem and twelfth-century Thebes, it is only the Byzantine capital that provides sufficient information to make such an evaluation until the late Byzantine period.

23. For the *Book of Ceremonies*, see note 16 above; for Pseudo-Kodinos, see Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos*.

24. See note 16 above.

25. There are also the law codes. These have been little studied in the context of processions, but they occasionally incorporate relevant imperial or ecclesiastical legislation; these will be cited below as needed.

that on the Trier ivory²⁶—and numerous middle and late Byzantine images of both liturgical or proto-liturgical processions (predominantly in manuscript illustration) and the great Constantinopolitan Marian processions (mostly in wall painting), as well as “historical” processions such as those found in illustrated chronicles.²⁷

The nature of our source material creates certain methodological problems. Most obviously, it concentrates heavily on Constantinople, and the two systematic accounts of processions both date to the tenth century. Historical accounts of processions span the entire Byzantine period but are clustered in the years before 900. In contrast, images, with the probable exception of the Trier ivory, all date after 900. The purposes of the *Book of Ceremonies*, the *typikon* of the Great Church, histories, and hagiographies are also all very different, and the impact this has on accounts of processions is brought out forcefully if one compares texts about the same procession, as we shall see. Correlating image and text is no more straightforward, as is evident from the decades-long argument about which procession the Trier ivory actually represents (if any).²⁸ Both images and texts are shaped by visual and narrative conventions, so the likelihood of actual reportage from either is remote, though, of course, both communicate what their creators believed to be in the realm of the possible and show us what their audiences accepted as plausible simulacra. With that we must be content.

Types of Processions in Constantinople

There are two broad categories of processions recorded (in words and in images) from late antique and Byzantine Constantinople, and, at least in modern scholarly literature, they are usually kept separate.²⁹ These two categories are the imperial procession and the religious procession, and the purpose of this section is, first, to evaluate them separately and then to question whether the distinction between them responds to modern conceptions or medieval ones. Finally, we will turn to how processions of either variety intersected with civic and state identity and evaluate what they tell us about Byzantine urban culture and society between c. 500 and c. 1000.

26. On its imagery, see Brubaker, “Chalke Gate”; and most recently, Niewöhner, “Historisch-topographische Überlegungen”; Chatterjee, “Iconoclasm’s Legacy.”

27. See, e.g., Ševčenko, “Icons”; Boeck, *Imagining*; Parani, “‘Joy.’”

28. For an overview of the arguments, see the articles cited in note 26 above.

29. See, e.g., McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, who considers only imperial processions, though he notes their increasing “liturgification” (see, e.g., pp. 63, 100–111); Baldovin, *Urban Character*, who considers only liturgical processions; and Bauer, “Urban Space,” pp. 26–61, who considers both, but in separate sections, and who emphasizes the differences between the two; so does Lavan, *Public Space*, chap. 2, for the period up to c. 600.

Imperial Processions

The earliest imperial procession in Constantinople for which we have any textual record—though it is, in fact, an imperial portrait that processes, and the record is later than the event—is attached to the birthday celebrations for the city on May 11, apparently established by Constantine I in 330 or perhaps instituted to commemorate his death in 337.³⁰ According to the eighth-century *Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai*, as a preface to the original celebrations, a statue of Constantine was moved, in the presence of specially clothed dignitaries carrying candles, from the Philadelphion—located at the point where the two branches of the street later to be called the Mese forked, roughly in the center of the Constantinian city, with one fork running southwest and the other northwest—to the Forum of Constantine, which had been sited at the end of the original Mese, just outside the Severan walls (built c. 200).³¹ Here, according to the *Parastaseis*, it was honored with “many hymns” and “revered by all, including the army.” The statue was then, like an emperor raised on a shield as part of his acclamation, “raised on a pillar in the presence of a priest and procession, and everyone crying out ‘Kyrie eleison’ a hundred times.”³² The city was then dedicated, and after forty days of celebrations, “the birthday of the city took place and a great race in the Hippodrome. And the emperor made many gifts there too, instituting these birthday celebrations as an eternal memorial.”³³ The procession, as Franz Alto Bauer noted, was staged (or at least described) as a victory or triumph,³⁴ even though it involved only a fairly short journey from the center of Constantine’s city—marked with his monuments at the Philadelphion (then decorated with the tetrarchic statue now at San Marco’s in Venice) and the Capitolium that he had commissioned³⁵—eastward to the site where the new city had expanded out from the old Severan city, marked by Constantine’s Forum; eventually, it apparently moved yet farther east, into the Hippodrome. During the birthday celebration itself, another statue of Constantine was escorted by soldiers carrying candles into the Hippodrome, where it was to be paraded around the *spina* in a chariot until it reached the *kathisma* (throne) of the reigning emperor, who was meant to bow

30. The fullest account appears in the sixth-century *Chronicle* of John Malalas, where the annual celebrations are said to continue “to the present day”: John Malalas, *Chronicle*, ed. Dindorf, 13.8, pp. 321–322; Jeffreys, Jeffreys, and Scott, *John Malalas, a Translation*, p. 175. According to the tenth-century *Patria*, ed. Berger, 2.87, pp. 110–111, these celebrations were terminated by Theodosius I (379–395), but Malalas makes it more likely that it ended later. For discussion of the route, see Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals*, pp. 41–67; and especially Bauer, “Urban Space,” pp. 32–37, whence the suggestion that the ceremony may be posthumous. For the *adventus* of imperial portraits in general, which seems to begin in the third century, see Lavan, *Public Space*, chap. 2, text to nn. 21–23.

31. *Parastaseis*, ed. Cameron and Herrin, 56, pp. 130–131.

32. The raising on a shield is documented from the fourth century onward; relevant texts are collected and discussed in Walter, “Raising.”

33. *Parastaseis*, ed. Cameron and Herrin, 56, pp. 132–133.

34. Bauer, “Urban Space,” pp. 33–34.

35. For the Philadelphion, see Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon*, pp. 266–267; for the Capitolium, see the cautious remarks of Mango, “Triumphal Way,” p. 177.

to it.³⁶ While this latter event was evidently a fairly straightforward attempt by Constantine or his promoters to ensure the emperor's eternal memory as founder of the city, the account of the first statue is more nuanced. For the purposes of this discussion, the key point is that the ceremony as described in the *Parastaseis* fuses acclamations by the army (with intimations of the traditional raising on the shield) with hymns sung by priests and the populace of Constantinople. The earliest procession recorded in the capital, in short, might be classed in the broad category of an imperial triumph, but the sources we have infuse its enactment with heavy overtones of Christian ritual.

There are no other imperial processions associated with Constantine I, though it is possible that some sort of victory procession marked his defeat of the Goths in 331/2.³⁷ The beginnings of a monumental triumphal pathway through the city were nonetheless soon established, apparently running from the military grounds at Hebdomon, sited, as its name suggests, at the seventh milestone outside the city, through the Golden Gate (although the appearance, and even the precise location, of the Golden Gate under Constantine is not known, it survived across our period and was later called the Attalos Gate when the original name had transferred to the later walls of Theodosius II), to Constantine's Forum and on to the Great Palace.³⁸ A second branch led from the Charisios Gate (now Edirne *kapı*) past Constantine's mausoleum (later joined by the Church of the Holy Apostles) and met up with the main road, as we have already seen, at the Philadelphion. These routes were apparently well established under the Theodosian emperors in the late fourth and fifth centuries, but at least some stretches were already developed under Constantine, as the accounts we have just discussed and, in particular, the siting of his imperial mausoleum make clear.³⁹

After Constantine, there is considerably more evidence and from a broader range of sources.⁴⁰ The material for imperial triumphal processions in Constantinople has been studied in some detail by Michael McCormick, and we will simply review his conclusions here, before supplementing his observations with a few additional ones.⁴¹ McCormick makes three points of particular relevance to this chapter. First, he establishes that imperial triumphal or *adventus* (the Latin term for entry into the city) celebrations had as much to do with the political needs of an individual emperor to display his (or, in 784, her) authority publicly as they had with military victories. Hence, triumphs (or at least records

36. So Malalas, with discussion by Krautheimer and Bauer, all as in n. 29 above.

37. For this and other possibilities, see McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, p. 39.

38. See especially Mango, "Triumphal Way," pp. 173–188; with additional comments from Bauer, "Urban Space," pp. 32–37.

39. See Mango, "Triumphal Way"; Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon*, pp. 269–270.

40. They are discussed in chronological order in McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, pp. 39–79, 131–188.

41. McCormick also, very usefully, provides a detailed and synthetic overview of a Byzantine imperial triumph: *Eternal Victory*, pp. 189–230. See further Lavan, *Public Space*, chap. 2, for *adventus* and imperial triumphs (which are difficult to separate from *adventus*), in the late Roman Empire as a whole.

of triumphs that have come down to us) appear in clusters and tend to collect around the defeat of usurpers or, conversely, the triumph of a usurper over a former emperor. In both of these cases, stability of rule was threatened, and the emperor who won evidently felt the need to broadcast and reinforce his power through civic display of a triumphal nature.⁴² An imperial triumphal procession was not, in other words, a mechanical response to a great military victory but was, rather, choreographed for political mileage. To that degree, imperial processions were opportunistic exercises, and for that reason, flexibility was essential.

Second, McCormick documents an increasing emphasis, from the fifth century onward, on the Hippodrome, both as the site of processions and as the focus of the triumphal celebration, either through the display and humiliation of the defeated or through the races that concluded most triumphs.⁴³ As we shall see, this, significantly, left the urban procession that walked through the streets of Constantinople largely—though not exclusively—the preserve of the Church.

Finally, McCormick charts the increasing role of Christianity in imperial triumphal ceremony, from the inclusion of bishops in Constantius II's celebration in Antioch in 343, to special thanksgiving services ordered by Theodosius I after the defeat of the usurper Eugenius in 394, to the incorporation of Christian churches into the itinerary of an imperial triumphal procession under Justinian I in 559 in Constantinople, to the patriarch's inclusion in the welcoming party during the celebration of Herakleios's triumphal return to the capital from Jerusalem in 628 or 629, and, finally, to the processions celebrating the Virgin's role in imperial victory that also began in seventh-century Constantinople.⁴⁴ And, as McCormick observed, public commemorations of past imperial triumphs appear to have died out in the sixth century (they are last described by Prokopios), and liturgical processions commemorating divine salvation from enemies and natural disasters took their place.⁴⁵ As this latter change demonstrates, drawing a hard and fast distinction between imperial and ecclesiastical ritual is impossible.

The three processes just outlined—the linkage of usurpers with the celebration of imperial triumphs, the importance of the Hippodrome, and the Christianization of imperial triumph—are exemplified already in Sokrates's account of the events of 425 when Theodosius II, on learning that the usurper John had been defeated, is said to have interrupted the Hippodrome games, saying: "Come now, if you please, let us leave these diversions and proceed to the church to offer our thanksgivings to God, whose hand has overthrown the usurper." Sokrates

42. McCormick makes this point repeatedly, but see especially *Eternal Victory*, pp. 60, 80–83, 133–137, 144–152, 159–184. On the triumph celebrated during Eirene's regency, see McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, p. 141. See also Shepard, "Adventus," with a comparison to eleventh-century France.

43. See especially McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, pp. 60, 92–94, 99.

44. McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, pp. 39–41, 45, 63, 67, 71–72, 74–78, 100–111, 132–133.

45. McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, pp. 74–77. On these litanic processions, see most recently Manolopoulou, "Processing."

claims that the “spectacles were immediately forsaken and neglected, the people all walking out of the circus singing praises. . . . And once in the church, they passed the remainder of the day in devotional exercises.”⁴⁶ Whether or not this actually happened is a moot point; it must also be said that the shifts noted by McCormick probably illuminate changes in authorial attitudes as much as they do modifications of civic ceremonial. As Sokrates’s earlier remarks illustrate, he was intent on portraying Theodosius II as an emperor of great piety,⁴⁷ and this is not the first time that he caused the emperor to cancel the races. Earlier in the *Ecclesiastical History*, in the face of inclement weather, Sokrates has the emperor order a herald to proclaim to the Hippodrome crowd: “It is far better and fitter to desist from the show, and unite in common prayer to God, that we may be preserved unhurt from the impending storm,” after which “the people, with greatest joy, began with one accord to offer supplication and sing praises to God . . . and the emperor himself, in unofficial garments, went into the midst of the multitude and commenced the hymns.”⁴⁸ Our point here is that just as emperors were opportunistic in using victory celebrations to shore up their reputations, so, too, did authors use their accounts of the same events to further their own agendas, which, in the case of Sokrates, was to promote the piety of Theodosius II.

Religious Processions

What distinguished “religious” from “imperial” processions was, primarily, whether a member of the ecclesiastical hierarchy or the emperor/empress was the key focus. Both could involve the patriarch; both could involve the imperial family. Religious processions normally ended in a church; imperial processions often—though not invariably—ended in the Hippodrome. We will return, at least briefly, to the distinctions and overlaps between processions focused on thanksgiving and supplication to divine authority and those focused on celebrating imperial power, but first we must sketch the history and format of religious processions in Constantinople.

The earliest specifically Christian processions may have taken place in Jerusalem and were part of various liturgical celebrations described by the pilgrim Egeria in the last quarter of the fourth century.⁴⁹ In Constantinople, as already noted, the earliest-documented Christian procession took place in 380, under the leadership of the then-patriarch Gregory of Nazianzos;⁵⁰ more are

46. McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, pp. 60, 111. The relevant text is Sokrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Hansen, 7.23, pp. 370–372; English trans. from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, trans. Zenos, vol. 2, p. 166. On Sokrates’s response to the usurper John, see further Urbainczyk, *Socrates*, pp. 172–175.

47. See Urbainczyk, *Socrates*, pp. 143–145.

48. Sokrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Hansen, 7.21, pp. 367–368; trans. Zenos, vol. 2, p. 165.

49. Baldovin, *Urban Character*, esp. pp. 58–64. On processions in Egeria, see Bastiaensen, *Observations*, pp. 38–39; Lønstrup Dal Santo, “Rite”; and Frank (whom we thank for discussions on this topic), “Picturing Psalms.”

50. See Brubaker, “Topography,” pp. 31–43, esp. 37.

described across the next twenty-five years, notably by John Chrysostom,⁵¹ and after this, the religious procession becomes so common that it occasions little comment in the sources—unless something goes wrong, or unless the source is specifically dedicated to discussing ritual, as with the tenth-century *Book of Ceremonies* and the *typikon* of the Great Church.⁵²

Religious processions could be either liturgical, forming part of the stationary liturgy that moved from one “stationary” church to another as part of the regular ecclesiastical calendar of the Christian year, or extra-liturgical responses to a particular situation, such as a natural disaster or other calamity or, more happily, the translation of a saintly relic. In Constantinople, particularly, processions that originated as a one-off extra-liturgical event sometimes became incorporated into the regular and repeating cycle of liturgical processions, and there are nearly twenty examples of these noted in the *typikon* of the Great Church.⁵³

The major study of the origins and development of the liturgical urban procession is John Baldwin’s *The Urban Character of Christian Worship*, published in 1987. Here Baldwin demonstrated briefly but conclusively that most features of what he called the “participatory procession”—from the supplication of participants (sometimes barefoot and with their hair unbound) to the custom of walking protective circuits around urban boundaries—migrated from pre-Christian practice into Christian use, as did the carrying of candles, singing, and, at least in Rome, processions to selected religious sites on specific days, an institution that Baldwin believed anticipated the stationary liturgy of the post-Constantinian Church.⁵⁴ Baldwin also characterized the main processional differences between the three cities central to his study as, for Jerusalem, an emphasis on mimetic action, matching ritual to historic sites;⁵⁵ for Rome, a diffusion of processions due both to the scattering of the Christian population across the urban landscape and to the key nodal sites that ringed the city outside the walls;⁵⁶ and, for Constantinople, the importance of imperial presence—with a concomitant emphasis on public urban sites, particularly the Forum of Constantine—and of historical commemorations of events that had affected the city in the past.⁵⁷

Baldwin also noted that in Constantinople, particularly in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, processions were used by different Christian factions as a

51. Brubaker, “Topography,” pp. 31–43, esp. 37; Andrade, “Processions.”

52. See further Bauer, “Urban Space”; Berger, “Imperial and Ecclesiastical Processions”; and Brubaker, “Processions.”

53. They are conveniently listed in Baldwin, *Urban Character*, p. 300: nine commemorate earthquakes; the remainder recall events as various as the city’s birthday (May 11), the exile of John Chrysostom (November 13), various sieges (June 5, June 25, August 7), the great fire (September 1, so also the opening of a new indiction), the hail of cinders (November 6), and the deposition of the Virgin’s robe (July 2).

54. Baldwin, *Urban Character*, pp. 234–238.

55. Baldwin, *Urban Character*, pp. 83–104.

56. Baldwin, *Urban Character*, pp. 143–166.

57. Baldwin, *Urban Character*, pp. 205–236.

means to demarcate their own spheres of authority, a point that has been developed further in later scholarship.⁵⁸ In the rhetoric that accompanied these early processions, which were effectively demonstrations of ecclesiastical power by the opposing Arian and Nicene factions, the participation of the emperor or empress became an important indicator of success, as is clearly evidenced in the sermons of John Chrysostom.⁵⁹ This had two results of significance for our study of the later processions in Constantinople. First, and most obviously, it deliberately commingled the patriarchal and imperial spheres of influence, and this fluid elision of one into the other remained a characteristic of Constantinopolitan processions to the end of the empire, as we shall see. But second, the emperor and empress were not the central focus of the procession, and while they were sometimes (as in the case of these “processional wars”) at least rhetorically of great importance, their celebrity never seems to have blinded participants to the *raison d’être* of the procession. While no one would argue that in normal circumstances, the patriarch exercised any real power over the emperor (in whose gift was the patriarch’s appointment and dismissal),⁶⁰ his symbolic power as head of the Church was such that even in the specifically imperial processions outlined in the tenth-century *Book of Ceremonies*, the imperial family always defers to the patriarch when he is present. The representative of God trumps the representative of Caesar, at least within the realm of symbolic action.

The religious processions of Constantinople were probably not all controlled by the Church and patriarchate. In other cities, guilds ran their own processions, and Nancy Ševčenko has collected the meager evidence for similar groups in Constantinople, from the seventh century onward, when a brotherhood of some sort connected with the Church of John the Baptist is mentioned in one of the miracles of Saint Artemios.⁶¹ There is more evidence (though still not much) for the period after the year 1000, but the main sources for the period covered in this chapter rarely mention guilds or confraternities. Though slightly later than the period covered here, two mid-eleventh-century accounts are nonetheless worth mentioning. The first is a well-known poem by Michael Psellos on the festival of Agathe, a public procession on May 12 organized by what was probably a guild

58. Baldovin, *Urban Character*, pp. 209–214. See further Brubaker, “Topography”; Andrade, “Processions.”

59. Detailed analyses in Brubaker, “Topography”; and Andrade, “Processions.”

60. For an indication of how the appointment process may have unfolded in the tenth century, see Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 2, 2.14, pp. 564–566, which makes the emperor’s complete control of the process crystal clear. It is true that on rare occasions, the patriarch of Constantinople either acted as an imperial surrogate (Sergios, acting for Herakleios during the Avar-Persian attack of 626, when the emperor was away on campaign) or actually managed temporarily to bar the emperor from Hagia Sophia (Nicholas Mystikos in 906/7, until he was deposed by Leo VI; Polyuktos with John Tzimiskes in 969) but these are the exceptions that prove the rule. Patriarch Photios’s attempt to realign patriarchal and imperial power did not succeed; see Dagron, *Emperor*, esp. pp. 106–109 (for Leo VI and Tzimiskes), 223–247.

61. See, e.g., Nesbitt and Wiita, “Confraternity”; Ševčenko, “Servants.”

of female textile workers.⁶² This had many civic and professional elements but incorporated icons, priests, and, apparently, hymn singing in the destination church. A roughly contemporary account in a fragmentary poem by Christopher of Mytilene provides a critique of the annual procession of *notarios* students and their teachers in Constantinople, held on the feast day of their patron saints Markianos and Martyrios (October 25).⁶³ This seems to have had many almost burlesque features, but it, too, involved a procession to a church and so, like the Agathe festival, merged professional and ecclesiastical features. These accounts demonstrate two points of considerable importance. First, despite the silence of most of our sources, women were clearly visible on the streets of Constantinople, and equally clearly, they participated in processions. Second, and again despite the lack of much textual evidence (in most of our sources, raucous and unruly behavior is normally noted only when it disrupts more serious business), it is clear that not all processions were solemn and stately affairs. So the relevance of these two eleventh-century sources is that they indicate that public processions were not always the male-dominated, hieratic operations that one might assume from other sources. In part, this is because many of our sources for processions are ecclesiastical or imperial and thus primarily concerned with processions connected with the stationary liturgy or that centering on the emperor. But even from those we do have, it is clear that processions had multiple functions, often overlapping, and that this was as true for the religious as for the imperial ones.

Most religious processions incorporated elements of supplication, and all were, to some degree, commemorative. Processions that had commemoration as their main focus were usually linear: the participants moved from place to place, within the city, with occasional ventures outside the city walls. In their most basic form, such processions honored the memory of a special occasion (such as the Ascension) or object (such as the True Cross) or disaster (such as an earthquake) or person (such as the Virgin), by formally processing from somewhere else (in Constantinople, this was often the patriarchal church, Hagia Sophia) to a church associated with the event, object, or person being memorialized. Commemorative, linear processions lay at the heart, and were an integral part, of Constantinopolitan Church ritual, as part of the stationary liturgy from the fourth century onward, with a significant increase in their numbers from the seventh or eighth century.⁶⁴

Sometimes these processions were transportational, in that they carried something from one site to another. Early examples are recorded by John Chrysostom, who around the year 400 described a torchlit procession bearing the relics of an

62. Laiou, "Festival."

63. Christopher of Mytilene, *Poems*, 136, ed. and trans. Bernard and Livanos, pp. 286–303. See also Laiou, "Festival," pp. 121–122.

64. For a concise list, in chart form, of processions and the locations where they originated, paused, and ended (based on the *typikon* of the Great Church), see Baldwin, *Urban Character*, pp. 292–300.

unknown martyr from Hagia Sophia to Drypia, 8 miles west of the city on the Via Egnatia. The relics, John tells us, were carried by the empress Eudoxia, and the procession stretched along the coast, “making it a river of fire”; the procession reached the church at dawn, where Chrysostom preached a sermon before returning to Constantinople.⁶⁵ Here people from the city ventured outside the walls and then returned, in a process that was at least potentially intrusive. The Friday-night procession in honor of the Virgin that moved from the Blachernai to the Chalkoprateia and was perhaps initiated by the patriarch Timothy (511–18), which remained within the city walls, involved carrying icons of the Virgin by the middle Byzantine period and may have done so earlier.⁶⁶ And according to the *Book of Ceremonies*, between July 28 and August 13, the True Cross was carried to “sanctify every place and every house . . . but especially the walls themselves, so that both the city and the whole area around it are filled with grace and holiness.”⁶⁷ Details are not provided, but it seems plausible that “the usual procession” or even a candle-carrying one, both described in the same chapter of the *Book of Ceremonies* for August 1, when the True Cross was honored by the senate, accompanied its process around Constantinople, including around its walls.⁶⁸

Whether or not this was the case, protective processions were usually enclosing. That is to say, as with Fidelis in Mérida, the participants walked the boundaries of a city, in order to enclose urban space within a protective wall of sanctity. The Avar-Persian siege of Constantinople in 626, for example, famously prompted a procession around the city walls led by the patriarch Sergios; its success was commemorated annually on the anniversary of the event, August 7,⁶⁹ which fell within the period when the *Book of Ceremonies* tells us the True Cross sanctified the city. Although the *Book of Ceremonies* does not discuss rituals associated with August 7 itself, the coincidence at least suggests that the True Cross was indeed regularly processed around the walls as part of its protective and sanctifying circuit. As noted earlier, protective processions also walked around the walls of a church as part of its dedication process for the same reason: to protect it from harm.⁷⁰

Vigils

There are not many evening vigils required by the *typikon* of the Great Church, and they are not demanded of the emperor in the *Book of Ceremonies*, though

65. John Chrysostom, *Homilia II*, ed. Migne, cols 467–478, quotation at 470. See Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique*, vol. 3, pp. 183–184; see also Baldovin, *Urban Character*, p. 183. For a much later visualization of a similar torchlit procession in the West, see the early-seventeenth-century panel in Siena: Borgia et al., *Le biccherne*, no. 132.

66. Van Esbroeck, “Le culte”; Ševčenko, “Icons,” pp. 51–52.

67. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 2, 2.8, pp. 538–541.

68. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 2, 2.8, p. 539.

69. Van Esbroeck, “Le culte”; Mateos, *Le typikon*, vol. 1, pp. 362–365; cf. Pentcheva, “Supernatural Protector.”

70. See Ruggieri, “Consacrazione”; Permjakovs, “‘Make This the Place.’”

1.27 makes allowances for his participation in the vigil at Blachernai for the feast of the Presentation of the Virgin in the temple (February 2) if he wanted to attend.⁷¹ In the *typikon*, most processions begin early in the morning or immediately following the morning service (*orthros*), but on ten or eleven occasions, a vigil is specified; seven are associated with *litai* celebrating the Virgin.⁷² As we have seen, vigils “spontaneously” occurred at times of stress, when the patriarch led the people in prayers of supplication begging for delivery from the dangers of natural disasters or enemy attacks, but the relative rarity of their appearance in the *typikon* suggests that the exceptional nature of the all-night vigil was recognized and appreciated.

Imperial and Religious Processions in Constantinople: A Reprise

It will be clear by now that there was no clear-cut segregation of the personnel involved in imperial and religious processions: religious processions could and often did involve the imperial family, while imperial processions were not limited to triumphs, and they frequently co-opted the patriarch.⁷³ There are, however, some peculiarities that differentiate the two beyond their primary focus on either the emperor or an ecclesiastic.⁷⁴ First, it must be said that the author(s) of the *Book of Ceremonies* distinguishes between a “religious procession” and a “customary (or usual) procession.” The opening of book 1, chapter 24, for example, reads: “when the usual daily procession takes place in the Sacred Palace (*tēs synēthous kai kathēmerinēs proeleuseōs ginomenēs en tō hierō palatiō*), and everyone goes along in ceremonial dress for the feast days of the twelve days of Christmas . . .”⁷⁵ “Ordinary” processions also appear throughout the *Kletorologion* of Philotheos dating to 899, and both here and in the *Book of Ceremonies*, this indicates that they move about the palace⁷⁶ or, occasionally, from the palace to the Great Church, which was more or less directly accessible from the palace.

71. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, 1.27, pp. 147–148.

72. Night before September 1 (New Year, Symeon Stylites, Theotokos, 481 fire), September 8 (birth of the Virgin), December 18 (*enkainia* of the Chalkoprateia), December 22 or 23 (Christmas), February 2 (Presentation of the Virgin in the temple), March 25 (Annunciation), May 8 (John the Evangelist), June 5 (Avar attack of 617), June 29 (Peter and Paul), August 15 (Koimesis), and possibly All Saints’ Wednesday (see Mateos, *Le typicon*, vol. 2, pp. 146–147).

73. Though the emperor is mentioned only twice in the *typikon* of the Great Church, on February 2 for the feast of the Presentation (and this only in a later copy of the text) and on the Saturday of Holy Week (Mateos, *Le typicon*, vol. 1, p. 223 nn. 1–2; vol. 2, pp. 84–85). Baldwin, *Urban Character*, p. 198, points out that the *Book of Ceremonies* only records the patriarch as officiating at the liturgy in the palace three times, but he is regularly mentioned as participating in various ceremonies that also included the emperor, and the pair dined together on numerous occasions.

74. The distinction is noted by Berger, “Imperial and Ecclesiastical Processions,” pp. 75, 79, but he does not contextualize the differences.

75. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, 1.24, pp. 136–137. The palace routes and rituals associated with the usual daily procession and its Sunday variations are also considered in detail in the first two chapters of book 2, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 2, pp. 518–525.

76. The text appears as Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 2, 2.52–53, pp. 702–791.

These occasions were hardly public and have more to do with the reinforcement of elite identity than any relationship to community; “progress” might, in fact, be a better term for them. The Greek term used is virtually always *proeleusis* or, less commonly, *prokensos*, which also denotes the rarer imperial processions outside the palace and church. The equivalence of the two terms is specified directly at the beginning of the *Book of Ceremonies*, in a general introduction to any imperial procession to Hagia Sophia, which explains that the emperor directs the *praipositoi* (chamberlains) to arrange “the *prokensos*, or procession” (*prokenson etoi proeleusin*).⁷⁷ This may be a relatively self-conscious updating, for *prokenson* (from which *prokensos* presumably derives), itself derived from Latin *processio*, is the term favored in earlier writers such as John Malalas (mid-sixth century) for imperial processions outside the palace (Malalas was not a courtier and so does not deal with palace progresses).⁷⁸ By the early ninth century, Theophanes favored *proeleusis* or (more usually) the related word *proelthein/proel̄thein* for all kinds of imperial processions,⁷⁹ and this is the terminology that is developed in the tenth-century sources.

In contrast, in Malalas, Theophanes, the *Book of Ceremonies*, and the *Kletorologion*, “religious processions” are normally outside the palace, and they are called *litē* or, in the plural, *litai*, just as they are in liturgical protocol. The distinctions between the two modes of procession are not always what we might expect. Malalas tells us that shortly before Theodosius II’s death in 450, he processed to the Church of St. John at Ephesos, and that Anastasius (491–518) processed to the Church of St. Michael at Sosthenion—both religious pilgrimages—but uses *prokensos*,⁸⁰ presumably because they were not primarily liturgical in focus (though the emperor doubtless participated in a liturgical event once he reached the relevant church) and the emperor was the main protagonist of the event described. Theophanes in the early ninth century is even more prescriptive; from him, we learn that in 438, the patriarch Proklos escorted the relics of John Chrysostom from Komana to Constantinople in a public procession (*epi proleuseōs pompeusas*) with the emperor and Pulcheria; in contrast, later that same year (or perhaps the year after),⁸¹ during a severe earthquake, the populace

77. Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, 1.1, p. 6.

78. Compare John Malalas, *Chronicle*, trans. Jeffreys et al., 14.42, pp. 205–206; ed. Dindorf, p. 372 (*litaneuontes*: going on a procession of prayer); 18.77 (*en litais*: procession and supplication after an earthquake); trans. Jeffreys et al., 13.7, p. 282; ed. Dindorf, p. 478; with trans. Jeffreys et al., 11.33, p. 150; ed. Dindorf, p. 282; trans. Jeffreys et al., p. 173; ed. Dindorf, p. 319 (Constantine progresses from Rome to Byzantium); ed. Dindorf, 13.15, p. 325; trans. Jeffreys et al., p. 177 (Constantine II); trans. Jeffreys et al., 13.35, p. 186; ed. Dindorf, p. 343 (Valens); trans. Jeffreys et al., 13.45, p. 189; ed. Dindorf, p. 348 (Theodosius’s death); 14.43, trans. Jeffreys et al., p. 206; ed. Dindorf, p. 372; and trans. Jeffreys et al., 15.2, p. 209; ed. Dindorf, p. 377 (all imperial progresses with no religious implications); *prokensos* is also used, perhaps because the emperor remains the main focus of the event described.

79. See the citations in n. 82 below.

80. John Malalas, *Chronicle*, ed. Dindorf, 14.26 (Theodosius II) and 16.16 (Anastasius), pp. 366, 405; trans. Jeffreys et al., pp. 200–201, 227.

81. See Theophanes Confessor, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, trans. Mango and Scott, p. 145 n. 4.

fled to Hebdomon outside the walls and “spent days in procession (*litaneuontes*) with the bishop in supplication to God.”⁸² For Theophanes, even more than for Malalas, imperial participation seems to require *prokensos/proeleusis/proelthein/proëlthein*, even when the patriarch was present or the emperor or empress was processing to church: in 718, Leo III’s wife Maria processed (*proëlthen*) to the Great Church for the baptism of her son, Constantine V; after Constantine V elevated his sons to the throne in 769, the emperors processed (*proëlthon*) to the Great Church; on Holy Saturday 776, Leo IV processed (*proëlthen*) to the Great Church to change the altar cloth (an annual imperial ritual); the next day, in the presence of the patriarch, Leo IV crowned his infant son Constantine VI in the Hippodrome, and the two emperors processed (*proëlthon*) to the Great Church, presumably with the patriarch in attendance; at Christmas 780, Eirene “went in public imperial procession” (*proelthousa basilikōs dēmosia*) to Hagia Sophia with her son Constantine VI; on Easter Monday 798, Eirene processed (*proëlthen*) from the Church of the Holy Apostles; and the patricians processed (*proëlthon*) to the Great Church to crown the usurper Nikephoros I in 802.⁸³ When describing occasions including the emperor, it is normally only when the patriarch is the chief protagonist that Theophanes used *litē*; for Justinian’s consecration of Hagia Sophia in 537, for example, Theophanes has the procession (*litē*) led by the patriarch Menas in the imperial carriage while the emperor walked with the people;⁸⁴ and at the rededication, the patriarch Eutychios left the church of St. Plato after an all-night vigil and “set out from there with the litany (*meta tēs litēs*)” to Hagia Sophia with the emperor Justinian.⁸⁵ The most notable exception to this rule appears in Theophanes’s account of the emperor Maurice’s introduction of “a litany (*tēn litēn*) at Blachernai in memory of the holy Mother of God, at which laudations of our lady were to be delivered,”⁸⁶ for this reference seems to refer to a church service rather than a procession (though it is likely that a procession was also involved, as one is later recorded in the *typikon* of the Great Church).⁸⁷

The linguistic distinction between imperial and liturgical processions is, by contrast, not rigidly maintained in the *Book of Ceremonies*. Usually, *litai* are led by the patriarch,⁸⁸ but the author of the *Book of Ceremonies* also sometimes

82. Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, ed. De Boor, pp. 92–93; *Chronicle*, trans. Mango and Scott, pp. 144–145. So, too, when the patriarch Menas processed (*diëlthen*) with the relics of Andrew, Luke, and Timothy to the restored Church of the Holy Apostles during the reign of Justinian: Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, p. 227; *Chronicle*, trans. Mango and Scott, p. 331.

83. Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, ed. De Boor, pp. 400, 444, 450 (Eirene arrived separately, also to *proelthein*), 454, 474, 476; *Chronicle*, trans. Mango and Scott, pp. 551, 613, 621, 627, 651, 655.

84. Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, ed. De Boor, p. 217; *Chronicle*, trans. Mango and Scott, p. 316.

85. Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, ed. De Boor, p. 238; *Chronicle*, trans. Mango and Scott, p. 350.

86. Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, ed. De Boor, p. 266; *Chronicle*, trans. Mango and Scott, p. 387; the latter suggest that this refers to the introduction of the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin on August 15 (p. 388 n. 18).

87. Mateos, *Le typikon*, vol. 1, pp. 370–371.

88. E.g., Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, 1.11 (to Blachernai, without the emperor, on Easter Tuesday), 18 (to Pēgē, where he met the emperor, on the feast of the Ascension), 27 (Purification of

attaches them to the emperor, and on occasion—for example, on September 8, the birthday of the Theotokos; in the chapter entitled “What has to take place when a triumph with victory hymns is held in the Forum of Constantine with a religious procession”; and on Easter Monday—we are told that the emperor and the patriarch participated in separate religious processions. On September 8, both *litai* (imperial and patriarchal) moved from Hagia Sophia to the Forum of Constantine, and then the imperial religious procession (*litē*) returned back to the Chalkoprateia (which is close to Hagia Sophia and the palace).⁸⁹ For the triumph with victory hymns, the two separate religious processions (*litai*) once again moved from Hagia Sophia to Constantine’s Forum, after which the emperor returned to the palace and the patriarch returned to the patriarchate on his donkey.⁹⁰ So the emperor led his own *litē* here but in the context of a patriarchal processional ritual, which is doubtless why the word was used. This ceremony is, however, not included in the *typikon* of the Great Church, according to which the patriarch celebrated the early-morning rites at Hagia Sophia, and then, at the second hour, the *litē* moved to the Forum and thence to the Chalkoprateia for the liturgy;⁹¹ the emperor is here not mentioned. On Easter Monday, we see the same pattern: the *Book of Ceremonies* tells us that both the emperor and the patriarch arrived at the Church of the Holy Apostles in separate *litai*;⁹² the *typikon* of the Great Church also locates the celebration at the Holy Apostles but again ignores the role of the emperor.⁹³ According to the *Book of Ceremonies*, the other regular religious procession associated with the emperor occurred on May 21, the commemoration of Constantine and Helena, when the emperor traveled to the Church of the Holy Apostles on horseback, and was received in the mausoleum of Constantine by the patriarch; after this, the emperor left the patriarch and, in his own religious procession (*litē*), moved away from the church to, apparently, the Church of All Saints, where he was once again met by the patriarch.⁹⁴ The *typikon* of the Great Church, unusually, notes here that the emperor and the senate did attend the procession, a deviation that was presumably suggested by the nature of the celebration.⁹⁵ The presence or absence of the emperor is not, in short, normally of great interest to the compiler of the *typikon* of the Great Church (who was, after all, primarily focused on promoting the

the Virgin and Presentation in the temple, February 2, received by the emperor), 28 (the feast of Orthodoxy, received by the emperor), ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, pp. 89, 111, 150, 156, 157–158.

89. Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, 1.1, pp. 28–30.

90. Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 2, 2.19, pp. 607–612.

91. Mateos, *Le typicon*, vol. 1, pp. 18–21.

92. Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, 1.10, pp. 75–76.

The long itinerary included the Forum of Constantine, which is also mentioned in the *typikon* of the Great Church (see reference in the next note).

93. Mateos, *Le typicon*, vol. 2, pp. 96–99.

94. Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 2, 2.6, pp. 532–534.

95. Mateos, *Le typicon*, vol. 1, pp. 296–297.

eternal cycle of the liturgical year), but the legitimizing presence of the patriarch at religious observances is, in contrast, of clear interest to the compiler of the *Book of Ceremonies*, and it is normally in this context that he attaches the word *litē* to an imperial-led procession.

This makes the absence of a patriarchal procession in the final imperial religious procession described in the *Book of Ceremonies* notable. The imperial religious procession was the one-off entry into the city by the newly proclaimed emperor Nikephoros II Phokas on August 16, 963, and it is specifically designated as a *litē*.⁹⁶ The date was surely selected with some care; as McCormick noted long ago, August 16 was the date of the liturgical celebration of the victory over the Arabs during the reign of Leo III in 718.⁹⁷ This is, however, the only instance of an imperial *litē* in the *Book of Ceremonies* where the patriarch is not specified as being in close proximity, and with his own religious procession, even though Nikephoros's *litē* moved from the Forum into Hagia Sophia, where, once inside and having removed his crown, he was met by the patriarch. The omission of the patriarch from the earlier procession is, as we have just seen, unusual and becomes even more curious when we compare the account in the *Book of Ceremonies* with the liturgical protocol in the *typikon* of the Great Church.

According to the *Book of Ceremonies*, Nikephoros arrived in the city by boat and moored near the Golden Gate, where he was met by “the whole city.” He then rode on horseback to the monastery of the Abramites, also known as the Acheiropoietos of the Theotokos, after which (“at the third hour,” that is, mid-morning) he returned to the Golden Gate and was acclaimed by the populace. He next rode up the Mese to the Forum of Constantine, dismounted, and walked in religious procession to Hagia Sophia, where the patriarch met him and, presumably, officiated at the coronation ritual (this section of the text is lost).⁹⁸ The *typikon* for the same day, however, has the patriarch celebrating the morning *orthros* at Hagia Sophia, then processing to the Forum of Constantine, moving on to the Attalos Gate and then through the Golden Gate itself, before entering the nearby sanctuary of the Theotokos “called Jerusalem.”⁹⁹ We can see from these accounts that the two processions—one the annual liturgical commemoration of the Virgin's salvation of the city, the other a one-off celebration of the ascent of Nikephoros II—were in the same general vicinity, and both of the churches cited were, according to Janin, adjacent to the city walls near the Golden Gate as well.¹⁰⁰ It is clear that Nikephoros (or his aides) exploited the

96. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, 1.96, p. 439.

97. McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, p. 169; Mateos, *Le typikon*, vol. 1, pp. 372–373.

98. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, 1.96, pp. 438–440.

99. Mateos, *Typikon*, vol. 1, pp. 372–375. On the Attalos Gate, see Mango, “Triumphal Way,” p. 175.

100. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique*, vol. 3, pp. 5–6, 97 (location of the church of Diomedes, another name for the Theotokos Jerusalem church), pp. 185–186.

liturgical situation, as well as the date, intentionally. This is yet another indication of the meaninglessness of surgically separating the two types of procession. All the same, we conclude that the failure to mention the patriarch's procession in the *Book of Ceremonies* was intentional, for it would have blurred the triumphal connotations of Nikephoros's entry into the city. The new emperor was a usurping general with other notable victories to his name (one of which had occasioned a triumphal procession in the past),¹⁰¹ so this was presumably a strategic decision on the part of the roughly contemporary compiler. The latter was, in effect, having it both ways, making Nikephoros's implicitly triumphal *adventus* appear more normative because more religious, but at the same time cutting out the main focus of a normal religious procession, the patriarch. It is, in other words, evident both that the Byzantines differentiated (though sometimes only loosely) between an imperial progress—even one with strong religious overtones—and a liturgical procession that, in fact, the former could take on many attributes of the latter.

In numerous other respects, liturgical and imperial processions shared common goals. Both promoted group unity, and both, overtly or not, were essentially expressions of the control of urban space by the Church and the secular power. As we have already seen, liturgical and imperial processions also shared (and thus shaped) the same spaces. Numerous monuments recur in both the *Book of Ceremonies* and the *typikon* of the Great Church, most notably the Forum of Constantine (which is cited nearly fifty times in the *typikon*¹⁰² and appears even more frequently in the *Book of Ceremonies*) and Hagia Sophia itself, which, of course, appears regularly in the *typikon* but also is named more than two dozen times in the *Book of Ceremonies*, a confluence that underscores the civic elements of the stationary liturgy as well as the liturgical elements of imperial processions. Perhaps most striking of all, however, is simply how time-consuming these processions must have been, for all the personnel involved, which, in addition to those processing, included those preparing the routes and cleaning up afterward (see the following section). The *typikon* of the Great Church lists nearly seventy stationary processions, and that is also approximately the number of processions referenced in the *Book of Ceremonies*.¹⁰³ There were also the regular Friday-night processions in honor of the Virgin, noted earlier. Some of these, of course, were the same procession (though, as we have also seen, the patriarch and the ruler did not always take the same route), and some may have been less regular than the

101. See McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, pp. 167–168.

102. Baldwin, *Urban Character*, pp. 292–297, lists forty-six instances of the Forum as an intermediate station but omits November 30, when the *typikon* specifies a stop there; Mateos, *Le typikon*, vol. 1, pp. 116–117.

103. For the *typikon*, see the lists in Baldwin, *Urban Character*, pp. 292–297; and Mateos, *Le typikon*, vol. 2, pp. 304–305 (conveniently divided according to when the processions occurred, which means that there is some overlap). Baldwin lists sixty-eight processions, but two of them are problematic (nos. 32 and 61).

sources aim to suggest. Others, however, such as those performed by guilds, are not recorded in our two main sources. But even excluding these, and even if we face the problem of irregularity simply by halving the number suggested by the *Book of Ceremonies*, the *typikon*, and the sources recording the Friday procession in honor of the Virgin, we are left with roughly two processions a week. Many of these covered considerable distances, especially the route from Hagia Sophia to the churches in Hebdomon, well outside the Theodosian walls, which were the terminal stations for liturgical processions on May 8 and June 5;¹⁰⁴ according to the *Kletorologion* of 899, after the liturgy on June 5, all of the senate dined here as well.¹⁰⁵ Clearly, processions were believed to be important in the world of Constantinople; as noted earlier, no emperor or empress and no patriarch would have been prepared to commit so much time and, as we shall see, so many resources to them otherwise. We will return to this issue.

The Participants

Who participated in processions? As far as we can tell, there were no restrictions imposed on liturgical processions, though there was apparently some attempt at crowd control for both liturgical and imperial ceremonial. Theophanes, following the now-fragmentary account in Theodore Lektor (d. post-527), tells us that from around the year 500, the prefect of the city was added to the clergy leading processions as a crowd-control officer, to ensure that order was maintained: the emperor Anastasius (491–518) “decided that the prefect should accompany him at services and at processions of prayer (*en tais litais*), for he was afraid of rebellions among the orthodox. This became customary practice.”¹⁰⁶ Disorderly crowds indeed disrupt processions in many accounts, from Gregory of Nazianzos and John Chrysostom onward.¹⁰⁷ They appear on several occasions in Theophanes. Also during the reign of Anastasius, for example, “the crowds came out in anger on the day of the litany that is celebrated at the Triconch in commemoration of [the fall of] dust” (November 6), and Dioskoros, bishop of Alexandria, “was insulted in public by the orthodox as he made his way in procession”; the “disorderly crowd” ultimately came to blows with Dioskoros and his entourage.¹⁰⁸ That crowds could interfere with the orderly progress of a procession is also hinted at in the *Book of Ceremonies*, where, in the description of the procession on Easter Monday, it is noted that one of the officials was responsible for “directing the crowds of people so they are not mixed up in the

104. Mateos, *Le typikon*, vol. 1, pp. 282–285, 304–309.

105. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 2, 2.52, p. 776.

106. Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, ed. De Boor, p. 150; *Chronicle*, trans. Mango and Scott, p. 230. Theodore Lektor, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Hansen, 469, p. 134. Cf. Baldovin, *Urban Character*, p. 186.

107. See the references in n. 51 above.

108. Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, ed. De Boor, pp. 159, 162–163; *Chronicle*, trans. Mango and Scott, pp. 240, 247.

procession.”¹⁰⁹ Evidently, the author of the *Book of Ceremonies* expected people to attend and sometimes indicates that the emperor stopped to address “the people.”¹¹⁰ So, in addition to the actual people processing, there was also always an audience as the participants passed through the city, so that processions incorporated into their sphere of impact many more people than those who actually walked the route. Christopher of Mytilene’s fragmentary mid-eleventh-century poem, noted above in our discussion of guild processions, provides tantalizing glimpses of how processions could become targets of derision from the crowd; despite its lacunae, it is clear that there were many onlookers and that the audience actively interacted with those processing.¹¹¹ Even nonparticipants who could not see the procession would have been able to hear it: as indicated in the *typikon* of the Great Church, those walking in liturgical processions chanted psalms as they processed, and the *Book of Ceremonies* makes it clear that the imperial progress was constantly halted for acclamations,¹¹² sometimes accompanied by drums or other instruments, a tradition that went back to the late Roman Empire.¹¹³

Aside from noting the presence of the patriarch, the emperor, or the empress, descriptions of Byzantine processions rarely provide details about who participated directly. The *Book of Ceremonies* regularly invokes the activities of the Blue Faction and the Green Faction, frequently notes that “the patricians” formed part of the procession,¹¹⁴ and occasionally cites orphans quite specifically¹¹⁵ but on only rare occasions provides any greater specificity. One notable exception is provided by the chapter on the Palm Sunday procession, which lists the eleven participating bodies—seven charitable organizations (the orphanage and six hospices), two churches (Hagia Sophia and the Blachernai, with the Soros chapel), and the two civic organizations, for the central city and the outskirts (the Peratic demes)—the head of each of which first greets the emperor and empress.¹¹⁶ Accounts provided by foreign visitors are slightly more useful.

109. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, 1.10, p. 82.

110. E.g., at Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, 1.27, p. 155. In this case, he explains the significance of Lent, after which he is cheered by the people.

111. Christopher of Mytilene, *Poems*, 136, ed. and trans. Bernard and Livanos, pp. 286–303; e.g., lines 100, 120, 128, 135–136, 183.

112. For examples, see Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, 1.48 (factions and the people), 1.70 (factions and the people), 1.76–77 (the army), pp. 252–254, 348, 372–373.

113. E.g., Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, 1.70, p. 348 (drums); for other instruments, see below. For late Rome, see Lavan, *Public Space*, chap. 2, text to nn. 56–58.

114. E.g., Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, 1.34, 47, pp. 179, 236–244.

115. E.g., Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, 1.27, p. 151.

116. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, 1.32, pp. 171–177 (the empress’s presence is indicated in the last sentence).

One early-tenth-century description, attributed to the Arab prisoner Hārūn ibn-Yaḥyā, lists “the common people,” plus elders, young men, boys, servants, eunuchs, pages, patricians, and the emperor, all processing on mats strewn with aromatic plants along a route hung with brocade.¹¹⁷ Slightly later, the Italian Liudprand of Cremona noted “a copious multitude of merchants and common people” lining the “sides of the roads forming walls, almost, from the palace of Nikephoros to Hagia Sophia.”¹¹⁸ Foreign observers, that is to say, commented on elements that Byzantine sources themselves took for granted and only mention implicitly and occasionally. The juxtaposition of these two accounts, however, also allows us to conclude something else: that the participation of large numbers of people does not really need to be divided between those processing and those watching. This also fits the procession of the *notarioi*, discussed in Christopher of Mytilene’s satiric poem, as we have seen. Except in the case of processions with no one in them except imperial and/or ecclesiastical figures and except for any processions that had no one watching—if there were any of either—this interaction was sufficiently great that we can group participants and audience together. This is something that clearly distinguishes Constantinople from Rome, as we shall see.

Images of processions add to this by emphasizing the visual significance of candles; virtually all images of processions produced in the period between 500 and 1000 portray the participants carrying large lit candles. There are not many such images, however; the Trier ivory, most recently dated to around the year 800,¹¹⁹ and the so-called *Menologion* of Basil II (c. 1000) are the dominant examples.¹²⁰ The former shows a relic procession, and the images in the latter focus on translations of relics. But both again show substantial groups watching and/or participating in the processions. The Trier ivory visualizes the point about the importance of audience, for the latter is very prominent in the image, even if we cannot say which procession it is; the *Menologion* images of processions, too, nearly all display large crowds, occasionally incorporating women.¹²¹ We may therefore presume from the juxtaposition of textual and visual evidence that

117. Vasiliev, “Harun ibn-Yahia.” Hārūn ibn-Yaḥyā does not mention women (though they were presumably included among “the common people”), perhaps because the caliphal ceremonies with which he was most familiar were differently structured and the active participants seem to have been exclusively male. For the date, see Ostrogorsky, “Zum Reisebericht”; for commentary (on Vasiliev’s translation), see Berger, “Imperial and Ecclesiastical Processions,” pp. 77–79. For a comparison between Hārūn ibn-Yaḥyā’s account and the slightly later description of an imperial procession in Liudprand of Cremona, see Oesterle, *Kalifat*, pp. 86–95.

118. Liudprand of Cremona, *Relatio*, ed. Chiesa, 9, p. 191; trans. Squatriti, p. 244.

119. Niewöhner, “Historisch-topographische Überlegungen,” pp. 261–287. For earlier bibliography, see Brubaker, “Chalke Gate.”

120. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (BAV), Vat. gr. 1613. For the date, Der Nersessian, “Illustration,” remains central. All images are available at http://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.gr.1613. On the casually related images of imperial *adventus* in the middle Byzantine period, see also Walker, *Emperor*, pp. 59–62.

121. E.g., BAV, Vat. gr. 1613, pp. 204 (with a female participant), 341, 350, 353, 355.

processions could indeed involve large numbers of (sometimes unruly) crowds, even if we cannot assume that they always did.¹²²

This is where the processional representation of power intersected with the processional construction of Constantinople as a community. It has often been noted that the crowd of Constantinople was unusually proactive at moments of political crisis by the standards of most medieval capitals. Anthony Kaldellis, for example, has recently provided, via lists of numerous crowd-based political actions between c. 500 and c. 1200, an entire theory of popular legitimacy in Byzantine politics.¹²³ Emperors who got on the wrong side of the urban crowd were both unwise and, often, unlucky; they could fall, or if they otherwise died violently (as with Nikephoros II), they could be unavenged. These crowds in the sources assemble threateningly in the Hippodrome in front of the Great Palace (the most common location), or in Hagia Sophia, or sometimes in the Forum of Constantine; our authors are, however, usually at least in part censorious and thus insufficiently interested to try to construct their roots, so they tend to appear in the sources out of nowhere. We conclude, nonetheless, that a large element in the construction of this popular identity, sufficiently strong to have direct political consequences in some cases, came from collective participation in processions, that is to say, the public world in which power and community met—and which also included and linked all three of these main assembly points. This was, indeed, much of the point of such processions. Emperors and patriarchs, of course, assumed, or at least hoped, that the public representation and legitimation of power was the key element—as with, for example, Nikephoros II's processional entry in 963. Probably, they were usually correct. But both elements gained force in a processional culture. The clearest example of this, shortly after our period ends, is the fall and death of Michael V in 1042, resulting from an uprising of the crowd against his exile of the empress Zoe from the imperial Macedonian family, whose adopted son he was. This immediately succeeded a major imperial procession to celebrate the Sunday after Easter; according to two sources, the fact that this procession went exceptionally well, with impressive crowd participation, was what persuaded Michael that this was the moment to move against Zoe. He was very wrong. But it is also important that, according to John Skylitzes, he sought to test “the opinion of the citizens” (*tēs gnōmēs tōn politōn*) of him through the enthusiasm of their participation in the procession and only made his move having done so. He thought that the procession conveyed and constructed power, but what

122. Although, according to Stephen of Novgorod, who visited Constantinople in 1348 or 1349, even for a weekly procession centered on the Hodegon monastery, “All the people from the city congregate”: Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, p. 36.

123. Kaldellis, *Byzantine Republic*, esp. pp. 118–164.

it equally conveyed and constructed was community solidarity, and this solidarity, reinforced and quite possibly in this case directly activated by the procession, was far more legitimist than he realized.¹²⁴ We will develop this point in what follows.

The Routes

Cyril Mango, Franz Alto Bauer, and Albrecht Berger have published extensive discussions of the imperial processional routes in Constantinople, with maps or schematic diagrams tracking the main routes described in the *Book of Ceremonies*, histories, and chronicles.¹²⁵ From this, it is clear that there were two main routes that were repeatedly, though not exclusively, followed and that these two main routes were already well established before iconoclasm. The urban ceremonial of Constantinople was not, however, fossilized; the preserved sources indicate that both processions centered on the emperor, and liturgical processions were altered over time in response to changing circumstances.¹²⁶

The main lines of processional routes are trackable (see Map 7.1). As we saw earlier, the main route left from the Augustaion beside the Great Palace and followed the “middle road,” the Mese, through the Forum of Constantine and the Forum of Theodosius, veering southwest at the Sigma, and then moved on past the Stoudion monastery to the Golden Gate, which met the Via Egnatia coming into the city and beyond which were the military fields and churches of Hebdomon.¹²⁷ A second route branched north from the Mese at the Capitolium/Philadelphion and led past the churches of Hagios Polyuktos and the Holy Apostles to the Charisios Gate. A coastal route along the Golden Horn was also used: from the bronze tetrapylon on the Mese, between the Forum of Constantine and the Forum of Theodosius, the Makros Embolos (“long portico,” a market street, which still exists as Uzunçarşı, or “long market street”)¹²⁸ headed north until it reached the coast, at which point it turned west and led to the Blachernai complex.

As is clear from our earlier discussion of triumphal entries into Constantinople, not all of the processions recorded in the historical sources were regular, recurring events. Even in the *Book of Ceremonies*, while most of the processional itineraries

124. There are many modern accounts of these events. They all hang on the late-eleventh-century narratives of Skylitzes and Attaleiates: John Skylitzes, *Ioannis Skylitzae Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn, p. 417; and Michael Attaleiates, *The History*, ed. and trans. Kaldellis and Krallis, 4.4–5, pp. 19–20 (the third main source for Michael’s fall, Psellos, does not stress the procession). Attaleiates says the procession was on Easter Sunday; we have used Skylitzes’s dating, but it could be either. As usual, the actual historicity of the events is less important than the highly processional imagery that surrounds them in our two main sources.

125. Mango, “Triumphal Way”; Bauer, “Urban Space”; Berger, “Imperial and Ecclesiastical Processions.”

126. See pp. 147–148 below.

127. The development of this route is well described by Bauer, “Urban Space,” and its articulation in the modern city of Istanbul is beautifully demonstrated by Mango, “Triumphal Way.”

128. Berger, “Streets,” p. 166; Berger, “Regionen.”

purport to describe annual rituals, many accounts relate to one-off or occasional events. In the *Book of Ceremonies*, the former category—of which there are more than forty examples—includes primarily imperial processions linked to feasts of the Church but also the procession that marked the beginning of the Hippodrome racing season, the Vintage Festival at Hieria, and on August 29 a commemoration of the emperor Basil I, who died on this date in 886, in the Church of the Holy Apostles.¹²⁹ In the latter group, with about thirty examples, we find accounts of individual imperial entries into the city, processions associated with appointments to various ranks within the court hierarchy, coronations, ordinations, proclamations, funerals, births, baptisms, and the processional route for the emperor when he wanted to go to the Blachernai to bathe or to the Strategion to inspect the granaries.¹³⁰ It is thus clear that while there was, at least ideally, nearly one major imperial procession a week, many of them tied at least loosely to processions also held by the Church,¹³¹ there were also a considerable number of other occasional processions, many of which had no official connection with the institutional Church at all. This means that the regular cycle of civic events (at least to the extent that it may be understood as regular) was augmented by sporadic parades that sometimes—as in the case of processions associated with promotions that terminated in a meal at the home of the person who had been promoted¹³²—apparently traversed parts of the city less used to public displays of this sort.

When processions focused on the emperor occurred, they were big, flashy events, as we have seen, and would have been hard to miss. But, as noted earlier, it is difficult to determine whether even the events described as annual actually occurred yearly (certainly, when the emperor was away, they would not have taken place), and it is not always clear whether the reportage in the *Book of Ceremonies* recorded past or present practice, though sometimes the author noted differences between the ways things were once done and how they were done in (presumably) his day.¹³³ The routes and events described exist in a sort

129. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, feasts: ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, 1.1, 7–11, 16–20, 22, 27–28, 30, 33–36, 70, pp. 28–30, 53–89, 97–121, 124–128, 147–160, 162–170, 177–187, 340–349; vol. 2, 2.6–7, 9–11, 13, pp. 533–538, 541–550, 557–563. Opening of racing season: 2.68; Vintage Festival: 2.79; commemoration of Basil I: 2.52–53 (= *Kleterologion*), ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 2, pp. 702–791.

130. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, 1.38, 45–48, 50, 52, 55, 60, 91–92, 97, appendix, pp. 191–196, 229–255, 257–262, 263–265, 269–271, 275–276, 410–425, 440–443; vol. 2, 2.12–13, 19, 21–22, 27, 30, 38, 51, pp. 551–556, 557–563, 607–612, 615–620, 627–628, 630–631, 635–636, 699–701.

131. Though sometimes, as on the Sunday after Easter (Antipascha), imperial processions on feast days find no echo in the *typikon* of the Great Church: at 1.16, the *Book of Ceremonies* has the emperor processing to Hagia Sophia, though at 1.64, he is said to process to St. Mokios, while the *Kleterologion*—and a *scholion* at 1.16—has him process to the Holy Apostles (p. 98 and n. 2, p. 284 and n. 4, p. 773). The *typikon* does not catalog a procession on this day: Mateos, *Le typikon*, vol. 2, pp. 108–109.

132. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, 1.47–48, 55, pp. 241, 251, 271.

133. See, e.g., the *scholion* mentioned in note 131 above, which records a shift in the terminal of the procession from St. Mokios to the Holy Apostles; or Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans.

of ideal time and were—as, again, is sometimes noted in the text—subject to ad hoc changes, sometimes depending on weather conditions or, at other times, on human decisions.¹³⁴ The routes established by Mango, Bauer, and Berger are nonetheless repeated consistently enough that we may accept them as familiar to anyone who spent time in Constantinople. But the historical sources also make it clear that these were not the only routes, and that few places in the city—including crowded market areas such as the Makros Embolos—were entirely untouched by processions. The urban community, which, as we have seen, included audiences, would thus have been reached, at least sometimes, even when they did not live close to the regular routes.

As we have already noted, Juan Mateos and John Baldovin listed the sites included in the stational liturgy by the early tenth century in their seminal publications.¹³⁵ The most common route found in the *typikon* of the Great Church led from Hagia Sophia to the Forum of Constantine and back to Hagia Sophia¹³⁶ or on to another church, most often the Holy Apostles,¹³⁷ or the churches dedicated to the Theotokos at Blachernai and Chalkoprateia;¹³⁸ the Nea of Basil I appears twice,¹³⁹ and the remaining churches are recorded only once.

Processions and stations at these sites were ingrained in the liturgical cycle, and—though, again, there were changes over time, and these are occasionally noted in the *typikon*¹⁴⁰—the nature of Church ceremonial suggests that *litai* normally occurred as and when the *typikon* indicates. The layering of new routes

Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, 1.30, p. 169, which remarks on a shift in the emperor's position during the liturgy celebrating the Annunciation.

134. See, e.g., Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, 1.30, p. 169, for changes when the weather was windy.
135. See above, notes 64, 103; Baldovin also listed the stational sites referenced in the *Book of Ceremonies: Urban Character*, p. 303.
136. On the days December 22, March 17, and May 11.
137. On October 18 (St. Luke), November 13 (exile of John Chrysostom), November 30 (St. Andrew), January 22 (Timothy), June 2 (Patriarch Nikephoros), June 14 (Patriarch Methodios), and Easter Monday. The Holy Apostles was also visited without a recorded station at the Forum on May 21 (Constantine and Helena) and July 18 (St. Stephen) and January 27 (relics of John Chrysostom; the intermediate station at St. Thomas Amantion mimics the route of the relic's translation). It is unclear whether the procession on January 25 (Gregory of Nazianzos) stopped at the Holy Apostles or the Anastasia church after the stations at Hagia Sophia and the Forum, an ambiguity that Baldovin suspects was deliberate (*Urban Character*, p. 294 n. 13) and that may indicate either that both churches were visited or, more likely, that the patriarch decided between the two depending on other circumstances.
138. Blachernai on December 26 (Theotokos), February 2 (Hypapante), June 25 (677 Saracen attack); Chalkoprateia on September 1 (Theotokos), February 2 (Hypapante), and March 25 (Annunciation). Chalkoprateia was also visited without a recorded station at the Forum on November 21 (Presentation of the Virgin in the temple), December 18 (*enkainia* of the church), and the first Sunday after Christmas. Blachernai was visited without a recorded station at the Forum on Easter Tuesday; and on July 2, the *litē* in honor of the Virgin's robe moved from St. Laurence to Blachernai. Both churches were also the sites for celebration on August 15 (Koimesis) without a station at Hagia Sophia or the Forum.
139. November 8 (Michael) and July 20 (Elijah).
140. See, e.g., Mateos, *Le typicon*, vol. 2, pp. 66–67, where the *typikon* notes both the old and the new processional routes used on Palm Sunday.

is nonetheless evident in the processions commemorating civic events, which repeated annually processions originally initiated in direct response to natural disasters or attacks, as well as events such as the birthday of the city and the deposition of the Virgin's robe at Blachernai,¹⁴¹ thereby embedding them in urban memory. The stability of other religious processions, for example those organized by guilds, is less certain. And we cannot assume that the *typikon* of the Great Church is necessarily a full record of Church-sponsored processions; as noted earlier, the Friday-night *presbeia*, which moved between the two great shrines of the Virgin, the Chalkoprateia and the Blachernai, is ignored in the *typikon*.¹⁴²

Preparation and Embellishment

If we accept the *Book of Ceremonies* and the *typikon* of the Great Church as faithful guides to what could, in an ideal world, have happened, it is clear that virtually all of the city of Constantinople might be reached by imperially or ecclesiastically sponsored processions. At least sometimes, this must have been so, and we have seen its importance. In actuality, however, as we have also seen, there were evidently a series of favored routes, and while these modulated over time, it is on these key routes that we may probably assume that preparations for the expected street decorations focused.

The *Book of Ceremonies* provides a good deal of information about the street decorations that accompanied emperor-centered processions, and these are confirmed by other written sources. On several occasions in the *Book of Ceremonies*, the author notes that the day before a procession, a banner was hung on a balcony of the palace, presumably to indicate to the people that, for example, the Broumalion was to be celebrated the next day¹⁴³ or that there would be chariot racing following the birth of a *porphyrogenetos*, a male child born in the purple.¹⁴⁴ At the same time, for processions commemorating annual events, the streets were normally cleaned and then strewn with sawdust and sweet-smelling herbs¹⁴⁵ and decorated with garlands as well as, often, draperies.¹⁴⁶ Accounts of individual processions continue these motifs: in the *Military Treatises*, Constantine

141. See note 53 above.

142. As noted by Manolopoulou, "Processing," pp. 66–67. On the *presbeia*, see the references in note 66 above.

143. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 2, 2.18, p. 600.

144. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 2, 2.21, pp. 615–619.

145. See, e.g., the first procession described in Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1 1.1, p. 6; and Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Three Treatises*, ed. and trans. Haldon, pp. 140–141.

146. For draperies, see, e.g., Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 2, 2.15, pp. 573–574; and Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Three Treatises*, ed. and trans. Haldon, pp. 140–141. This, too, was an old tradition; see, e.g., for the coronation of Justin II in 565, Corippus, *In laudem Iustini*, ed. Cameron, esp. 3.62–63, 4.1–223, pp. 62, 73–79.

Porphyrogenetos (or his ghost writer) tells us that when the emperor Theophilos returned to Constantinople in 831, the city was adorned like a bridal canopy and that in 837, he was met by children wearing crowns of flowers.¹⁴⁷ So, too, later in the century, on Basil's return, he was met at Hebdomon by "citizens of every age . . . with crowns made of flowers and roses." His route into the city was hung with banners, flowers, and polycandela; the ground was strewn with flowers; the factions wore garlands.¹⁴⁸

Elsewhere in the *Book of Ceremonies*, reception halls are described as being decorated as for a procession:

Note that, as usual for processions, [the passageways] were trimmed with laurel in the form of little crosses and wreaths which are called "parasols," to the right and the left on the wall beneath railings which are called "little rivers," and those standing vertically which are called "trees." They were also trimmed with the rest of the flowers which the season provided then. Their pavements were liberally strewn with ivy and laurel and the more special ones with myrtle and rosemary.¹⁴⁹

The soundscape of processions was primarily created by human voices chanting and acclaiming,¹⁵⁰ and the sounds of human footfall, sometimes augmented by the noise of a chariot carrying the emperor or patriarch, or the clattering of horses' hooves. These sounds were occasionally supplemented with drums, as noted earlier, and also organs,¹⁵¹ stringed instruments, and cymbals.¹⁵² Here the *Book of Ceremonies* was anticipated by Theophanes, who recorded Eirene and Constantine VI traveling to Thrace with organs and musical instruments in the 780s.¹⁵³

Scent was provided by the herbs strewn on the streets and the floral garlands, complemented by floral bouquets, as when, during the feast of the Ascension, we are told that the emperor was handed "sweet smelling flowers."¹⁵⁴ To this we

147. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Three Treatises*, ed. and trans. Haldon, pp. 146–147, 150–151.

148. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Three Treatises*, ed. and trans. Haldon, pp. 140–141.

149. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 2, 2.15, pp. 573–574. At a second reception described in the same chapter, the "floor was strewn with myrtle and rosemary and roses" (p. 586).

150. Both are repeatedly invoked in the *typikon* of the Great Church (chanting and singing hymns) and in the *Book of Ceremonies* (acclamations but also chanting; see, e.g., ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, 1.1, pp. 12–14).

151. E.g., Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, 1.80, p. 377, though these are normally noted during receptions in the palace, e.g., 2.15 (vol. 2, p. 586).

152. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, 1.82, pp. 379–380.

153. Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, ed. De Boor, p. 457; *Chronicle*, ed. and trans. Mango and Scott, p. 631. There are also a number of occasions in the *Book of Ceremonies* where people (and especially members of the factions) dance, but that is a topic for another time: see Brubaker, "Dancing".

154. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, 1.18, p. 111.

must add the smell of human and occasionally equine bodies and sometimes—as seen in the image on the Trier ivory—incense. Food, too, was occasionally distributed, which brought yet another sensory effect to the processional mélange. In addition to feasts after processions, which are regularly recorded in the *Book of Ceremonies*, sometimes food was distributed during the procession, such as bunches of grapes during the Vintage Festival in Hiereia.¹⁵⁵ And the culmination of the great birthday celebrations in Constantinople involved piles of vegetables and cakes, followed by fish, laid out in the Hippodrome for consumption by the crowds.¹⁵⁶

Who provided these decorations? For palace receptions, the *Book of Ceremonies* tells us that “clothing merchants and silver dealers decorate . . . with silks and other valuable clothes and robes, and adorn [the Tribunal] with all kinds of gold and silver vessels”;¹⁵⁷ John Skylitzes, describing the already-mentioned post-Easter procession staged by Michael V in 1042,¹⁵⁸ says that the people themselves decorated the fronts of their houses, but normally, authors assume a professional team of decorators. The author of the *Military Treatises* says that “the preparation and adornment of the City was prepared by the Eparch.”¹⁵⁹ Michael Attaleiates, too, writing about the same 1042 procession as Skylitzes, tells us that “the superintendents of the marketplace made ready for the imperial procession by covering the road with luxuriously woven silk cloths all the way from the palace itself” to Hagia Sophia; after this, the emperor rode on horseback to the Nea church, “and here they spread out the most luxurious and expensive fabrics while other glittering gold and silver ornaments were affixed along the full length of the route. The entire forum was garlanded . . . and the City resounded everywhere and was exalted with acclamations, thanksgiving, and songs of praise.”¹⁶⁰

The same assumption appears in the *Book of Ceremonies* and, earlier, in Theophanes. In a passage recording the preparations for the elevation of Anastasius after the death of Zeno, the author of the *Book of Ceremonies* tells us that “the makers of the sacred dress, and the painters and the mint masters took the customary actions.”¹⁶¹ Theophanes, talking about the decoration of the Hippodrome during the reign of Phokas, has one of his characters say

155. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, 1.78, pp. 373–375.

156. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, 1.70, pp. 343–345.

157. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, 1.1, p. 12.

158. John Skylitzes, *Ioannis Skylitzae Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. Thurn, p. 417.

159. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Three Treatises*, ed. and trans. Haldon, pp. 144–145.

160. Michael Attaleiates, *History*, ed. and trans. Kaldellis and Krallis, 4.4, p. 19.

161. Unfortunately, the customary actions are not indicated: Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. and trans. Moffatt and Tall, vol. 1, 1.92, p. 422. This section of the text was derived from Peter the Patrician (sixth century).

laconically that “the decorators had done it according to custom.”¹⁶² It would appear, then, that there was a special team of “decorators” who were responsible for embellishing the palace, Hippodrome, and streets of Constantinople for special—though frequent—occasions. The resources needed to pay them and to purchase the materials used and the food consumed are not delineated but surely added a considerable body of workers to the palace staff and added to the mounting cost of the urban procession in medieval Constantinople.

Constantinople: A Summing Up

Processions, of whatever sort, created rivers of public space that crisscrossed and surrounded the city. The ancient and late antique city had processions, but its public world was largely focused on a single major space, the forum (or, in a large city like Rome or Constantinople, several interlinked forums). The medieval city—Christian or Islamic, as we shall see—replaced this single focal point with a moving public space established by processional routes. When we look at urban medieval processions, in other words, we are looking at how repeated ritual created public ownership of municipal space.¹⁶³

Byzantine processions have a number of attributes that distinguish them from other processions in the medieval world, and we will return to this at the end of this chapter. For now, though, it is worth reiterating five key issues.

First, there was tremendous fluidity between imperial and liturgical processions. Imperial processions were, for sure, a moving sign of power, though they sometimes went wrong and backfired. But religious processions, though less flashy, were more regular and therefore arguably more important. In any event, they were seen as important enough by emperors that they muscled in on them when they could. Visible piety clearly had its own aura of power, and that was happily exploited by emperors.

Second, Byzantine processions were about community building as well as displays of power or piety. Participation in the procession itself, and particularly in the liturgical procession, was not limited, and the evidence suggests that audiences interacted with the processors to such an extent that they formed part of the same performance.

Third, processions demonstrate unequivocally how imperial power was negotiated with the urban populace. (The misjudged procession of Michael V, mentioned already, provides an excellent example of how this worked in practice.) This is one reason the expense and the decoration associated with the

162. Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, ed. De Boor, p. 294; *Chronicle*, trans. Mango and Scott, p. 423.

163. A point made earlier by Brubaker, “Topography”; and Andrade, “Processions.”

imperial procession is so important and the emperor was ready to pay for the show both in terms of financial outlay and in terms of time commitment.

Fourth, while there were established processional routes for both imperial and liturgical processions, no place was really immune from potential processing, and even the least accessible corners of the city would have heard the noise of a procession on at least some occasions. The network created by continually walking the city was a cohesive force that bound the community together—and this, too, was something that emperors attempted to exploit.

Fifth and finally, it is worth saying once again that not all processions were solemn and stately; on at least some occasions, people had a lot of fun. Sometimes they were fed, sometimes (often) they were entertained, and sometimes they ridiculed the processors—and in all these cases, the rude good health of the city was on display to all.

What we think is most important about all of this is the sense of collective ownership of the city streets of Constantinople. The emperor and the patriarch between them represented the power of the institutions that characterized the Byzantine Empire on the broader world stage, but the people of Constantinople owned the streets of their city and demonstrated their proprietorship regularly and repeatedly.

When we move outside Constantinople, our evidence is much more heterogeneous; only Rome gives us material that allows a real comparison to be made with the Byzantine capital. A simple typology of urban processions, however, will give some structure to our material. Seen geographically, as we have seen in the Byzantine capital, there are three main types of such processions: into cities; inside them, including going out and coming back in again; and around them.¹⁶⁴ (We will not develop here the short but highly formalized processions, inside a church or immediately around it, that were part of the liturgy everywhere and that became ever more elaborate with time.) We have seen that these conveyed different sorts of meanings in Constantinople. How did these meanings play out in other contexts? That is to say, broadly speaking, the meanings they conveyed elsewhere were very similar to those we have just seen (processions around walls were always, for example, protective), but what was the balance between the different types of procession elsewhere, and what was the significance of that for the establishing and reinforcing of identities? Let us look in turn at Frankish Gaul, Rome, and, finally, Fāṭimid Cairo to see how that balance worked.

164. Logically, there should be a fourth type, too, leaving the city altogether and not returning, but this is not stressed in many early medieval contexts—or, indeed, late Roman ones (see Lavan, *Public Space*, chap. 2, text to nn. 77–78). In processional terms, religious leaders left cities for extramural churches, but they also returned, normally immediately. Rulers might go to war with fanfare, but there is little reference in our sources to this having any particular symbolic weight; in Rome, too, little stress is laid on Frankish emperors leaving to go home after coronation.

GAUL/THE FRANKISH LANDS

Merovingian Gaul

MAP 7.2. Western Europe

Sixth- and seventh-century Frankish narratives, particularly those of Gregory of Tours but in this respect supported by several other accounts from the Merovingian period, mention processions quite regularly (Map 7.2). Some are part of episcopal *adventus* into the city, although most accounts of this are not very detailed.¹⁶⁵ Some are attached to feast days and are a regular part of urban and episcopal religious ceremonial, as the bishop with his clergy and *populus* processed between the churches of the city; some are called *rogationes*, more rarely (following the Greek terminology) *letaniae*, the “minor rogations/litanies” held in the week before Ascension, which were apparently invented by Bishop Mamertus of Vienne in c. 471—their main element was collective prayer, to propitiate God against disasters, but they soon involved processions of various kinds; some are processions around the walls of cities and are rather more ad

165. McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, pp. 330–331 nn. 8–10, gives lists; see, for elsewhere in the later Roman Empire, Lavan, *Public Space*, chap. 2, text to nn. 26–27.

hoc, reacting to danger. These rough divisions nevertheless, as in Constantinople, overlapped, as rogations were regular but also reactive to dangers of different types; and processions between churches generally involved leaving the city temporarily, even indeed making what were effectively wall circuits, as walled cities in Gaul were small, so many major churches were extramural. To give examples of each: for *adventus*, after Bishop Severinus's arrival in Bordeaux (according to Venantius Fortunatus), "the clergy exults, the place rejoices, the *populus* is renewed."¹⁶⁶ For regular processions, Gregory as bishop of Tours regularly processed from the cathedral inside the walls to the basilica of St-Martin less than a mile to the west, the burial place of Tours's most important bishop but also a major cult site for the whole of Gaul—we have explicit mention of Christmas Eve and Epiphany, but he was in St-Martin on other feast days, too, and must have come there formally then as well.¹⁶⁷ For rogations, they were set up to confront urban crises in Vienne (earthquakes, a fire, wild animals living ominously in the forum), and although regularized in Gaul by the Council of Orléans in 511, they had a crisis feel to them at other times, too, as when Quintianus of Clermont was celebrating them during a drought and when the procession approached the city gate, a significantly liminal location, prayed in the road and sang the antiphon himself, after which it immediately rained. Given this context, one-off protective penitential rogations could be instituted at other times of the year as well, as when (in a non-Gregorian example) Nicetius of Lyon staved off a drought in summer with *letaniae*, or when Gallus of Clermont, to protect his city from plague around 543, laid on a very elaborate set of rogations in Lent involving a procession all the way to the Church of St-Julien at Brioude, some thirty miles away—those local rogations being then themselves regularized, for his successor Cautinus was still doing them a decade later.¹⁶⁸

In the case of processions around the walls, the protective imagery that we have already seen implicitly for Fidelis in Mérida, and explicitly for Constantinople in 626, is equally explicit in Gaul. The bishop of Bazas, facing a siege by "Huns" (the name of the king may, however, imply that they were intended to be Vandals), supposedly walked around the walls himself, but what the Hunnic king saw was a crowd of men in white circling the walls and, later, a globe of fire, and he called off

166. Venantius Fortunatus, *Vita Severini episcopi*, ed. Levison, 3, p. 221.

167. Gregory of Tours, *De virtutibus S. Martini episcopi*, ed. Krusch, 2.25, p. 167; cf. *ibid.*, 2.27, p. 169; Gregory of Tours, *Decem libri historiarum*, ed. Krusch and Levison, 5.4, pp. 199–200. For the wide array of feast days at Tours, see Pietri, *La ville de Tours*, pp. 448–484.

168. Vienne: Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistolae*, ed. Anderson, vol. 2, 7.1, pp. 286–291; and Avitus of Vienne, *Homeliae*, ed. Peiper, 6, pp. 108–112. For the complexities of their later history north of the Alps, see Hill, "Litaniae." Quintianus: Gregory of Tours, *Liber vitae patrum*, ed. Krusch, 4.4, pp. 226–227; Nicetius: *Vita Nicetii*, ed. Krusch, 6, p. 522; Gallus and Cautinus: Gregory of Tours, *Liber vitae patrum*, ed. Krusch, 6.6, p. 234; Gregory of Tours, *Decem libri historiarum*, ed. Krusch, 4.5, p. 138; 4.13, pp. 144–145. We could add here the habit of the *populus* of Bordeaux (Gregory of Tours, *Liber in gloria confessorum*, ed. Krusch, 44, p. 325) to go to the extramural funerary church of Bishop Severinus (St-Seurin) to fast and do vigil to ward off all dangers, although this is not called a rogation by Gregory.

the siege. Quintianus of Clermont did the same walk when his city was besieged by the Frankish king Theuderic I, with equal success. When Reims faced plague, the *populus* warded it off by going to the tomb of Bishop Remigius in the cathedral and then processing around the city (*urbs*) and its *vici*, the settlements that had grown up around extramural churches. We can add here the Frankish siege of Zaragoza in 541, in which the inhabitants, in hair shirts for the men, black funerary clothing for the women, and ashes on heads—clearly in penitential mode—marched around the walls with the tunic of their patron saint, Vincent; here Gregory of Tours claims that the Franks thought this was magic (*malefitium*) until a local peasant disabused them, and once more they gave up. These are again all from Gregory, but a century later, when Autun faced military attack, its *populus*, on the advice of Bishop Leudegar, sought to stave it off in a similar way by doing a three-day fast and then processing around the walls of the city with relics, stopping at every gate; this was not quite as effective, however, for the siege happened anyway, Leudegar was mutilated and killed, and the town was sacked.¹⁶⁹

We can clearly see the relationship between processions and protection in these accounts. We have power, too, for bishops are involved in nearly all of these examples—even in those that show the spontaneous actions of an urban *populus*, at Reims and Bordeaux, the first thing they do is go to the tomb of the city's major bishop. The regular liturgical processions from Tours cathedral to St-Martin underpinned power, too, in that Gregory was determined to keep control of this major cult site and indeed to leverage that control into privileges for the city as well, and his constant processional presence at St-Martin was necessary for this. Gregory wrote most of these accounts, of course, and his unceasing defense of local episcopal power and authority is well known, but his stories are matched by others. Conversely, processions also underpinned community, urban, and local identity. The *populus* participated in most of them. It is true that we cannot always be sure that this *populus* is actually the urban population. In Tours, the large gatherings Gregory records were often evidently from the countryside as well, but even when this is the case, a local community was still reinforcing itself. Violence against processions was rare and especially heinous, as when Chramn, son of the Frankish king Chlothar I, attacked the Brioude procession in the early 550s to try to arrest Bishop Cautinus; or when, in 576, a Jew supposedly insulted a Jewish convert in Clermont during an Easter procession as the *populus* entered the town gate, and as a result, a *multitudo* destroyed the synagogue during the procession at Ascension (this example certainly shows how important processions were for collective identity, however unpleasant that identity might be); or when, in 580,

169. Bazas: Gregory of Tours, *Liber in gloria martyrum*, ed. Krusch, 1.12, p. 46; Clermont: Gregory of Tours, *Liber vitae patrum*, ed. Krusch, 4.2, p. 225; Reims: Gregory of Tours, *Liber in gloria confessorum*, ed. Krusch, 78, p. 346; Zaragoza: Gregory of Tours, *Decem libri historiarum*, ed. Krusch, 3.29, p. 125; Autun: *Passio Leudegarii*, ed. Krusch, 22, p. 304, for the procession, 23–26, pp. 304–308, for the siege and sack.

a popular preacher and his followers tried to disrupt the annual rogation procession in Paris and was brought down by the local bishop as a result.¹⁷⁰ Processions indeed can be seen as actually constituting or reconstituting cities that had become fragmented spatially, into small intra-urban communities and *vici* around extramural churches, by linking the settlements together, as at Reims; and all those others that wove around the churches outside the walls were able to underpin that, too.

These examples show clearly how urban identity was constructed and reinforced processionally in Gaul: collectively (through popular participation as much as or, indeed, more than popular audience), ritually, and under the authority of local bishops—and almost never, in our (very ecclesiastical) texts, of local secular authorities. The imagery of these collectivities was powerful, whether or not the events in our stories took place as described or, indeed, took place at all. The processions were sometimes associated with bishops coming into the city but were more usually regular collective ones that went in and out of city gates, linking the walled area with external cult sites; the gates were also often locations for significant events, as we have seen. The alternative processions were around the city walls and were all protective. Popular processions were not divided internally, unlike sometimes in Italy—as with Archbishop Damianus of Ravenna around 700, claimed by Agnellus in the 840s to have choreographed a major penitential procession in sackcloth and ashes after a bloody fight between two urban regions, which was arrayed *segregatim*, first clergy and monks, then laymen, then women, and finally a crowd of the poor, *turma pauperum separatim*, a very clearly liturgically patterned collectivity.¹⁷¹ This again may have been because Gallic urban populations were smaller and could get away with being less organized (one popular gathering, accompanying the body of Bishop Bonitus of Clermont to burial around 705, was likened by his hagiographer to an army or the throng at a fair, a much less structured image), but they were effective all the same.¹⁷²

On the other hand, this picture, fairly evidently, leaves out the Frankish kings, who here represent the other half of the title of this chapter section. It also stops in the early eighth century. How did kings fit into this very localized world, and what happened in the second half of our period? Let us look at these briefly in turn.

170. Gregory of Tours, *Decem libri historiarum*, ed. Krusch, 4.13, pp. 144–145; 5.11, pp. 205–206; 9.6, pp. 418–419.

171. Agnellus Ravennatis, *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, ed. Mauskopf Deliyannis, 129, p. 251. The editor parallels this to Gregory I's 590 septiform procession described in Gregory of Tours, *Decem libri historiarum*, ed. Krusch, 10.1, pp. 480–481; and Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. Bethmann and Waitz, 3.24, p. 105 (which copied the *Decem libri historiarum*); but the Roman procession described there, although certainly divided into social categories as Damianus's was said to be, was differently organized (see below, pp. 167–168.).

172. *Vita Boniti*, ed. Krusch, 40, p. 138.

No one who reads Gregory of Tours can imagine that he thought kings were irrelevant, whether to him, to the polity as a whole, or to the Gallic cities he knew (which were mostly in the center-south of Gaul, even if his accounts go as far north and east as Trier). But it is true that they do not have all that much impact on the processional world we have just been looking at, in any Merovingian text. King Guntram in 588 organizes an urban *populus* to do rogations against a plague, it is true (Gregory does not actually mention a procession but refers to the rest of the penitential ritual), but that is the context for a miracle and for Gregory's hints at Guntram's sanctity in a quasi-episcopal way. It may also be significant that Gregory, normally topographically scrupulous, does not here name the city; he perhaps thought that had he done so, it would have undermined the authority of the local bishop. Kings certainly do ceremonial entries. Clovis does a triumphal, quasi-consular *adventus* from St-Martin into Tours after the battle of Vouillé in 507, showering coins on the *populi*; in more detail, Guntram enters Orléans in 585 and is met by an immense crowd of people with banners and standards, *immensa populi turba cum signis adque vexillis*, singing in Latin, Greek, and Aramaic. But it is interesting how few these scenes, classic by Roman-Byzantine standards, are in our texts, given the constant movements of the Merovingian kings.¹⁷³ The fact is that the relation between Frankish kings and local communities, and between kingdom-wide and local identities, was above all based not on processions but on assemblies, large groupings of people called together, by kings or their officials, to make or ratify decisions, both political and legal. Assembly politics was a very generalized feature of all Western European societies in the early Middle Ages (outside Visigothic Spain, at least) and marked the legitimization of public power at the level of the kingdom and that of the locality alike—indeed, assemblies in themselves delineated public power, in that, at least ideally, the exercise of that power took place in front of them.¹⁷⁴ Assemblies were, however, fixed, and, although we do not need to doubt that a regular assembly place will have had places of greater and lesser power established inside it (in fact, sometimes we know it),¹⁷⁵ we do not find any processional element linking or defining them in any source we have. Royal politics in the Merovingian

173. Gregory of Tours, *Decem libri historiarum*, ed. Krusch, 9.21, pp. 441–442; 2.38, p. 89; 8.1, p. 370. Chilperic, too, entered Paris in 583 for Easter, “with the relics of many saints”: 6.27, p. 295. Note further two examples of non-royal *adventus*: Duke Gundulf into Marseille, 6.11, p. 281, *cum signis et laudibus diversisque honorum vexillis*; Duke Ebrachar into Vannes, 10.9, p. 492; bishops ran each event. See McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, pp. 328–337 (who stresses in Clovis's case the triumphal/victory symbolism of the event, with provincial Roman parallels); Day, *Afterlife*, pp. 161–168; Wiemer, “Rom–Ravenna–Tours,” pp. 192–201. Earlier, Hauck, “Von einer spätantiken Randkultur,” pp. 30–43, is detailed but, like many historians, tends to regard all examples of acclamations of kings as showing a processional entry, which we do not think is sustainable.

174. See, in general, most recently, Wickham, “Consensus.”

175. For example, well outside the Frankish world, Thingvellir in Iceland, the central annual assembly place (Althing) of the island, had a clearly defined topographical hierarchy, made more permanent by its particular landscape; see, e.g., Byock, *Viking Age Iceland*, pp. 174–175.

period, that is to say, and community identity at the level of the kingdom were structured in ways that separated them from the processional world that this chapter focuses on. It was specifically in the cities of Merovingian Francia that the processional world had a role; the community identity that was furthered by processions therefore had to be local. It was not developed in opposition to that of the kingdom, but it was differently organized from that of the kingdom. This has some parallels to the situation in Constantinople, where imperial and clerical processions were partially distinct, but in Gaul, it was rather that clerical power and community were more often expressed processionally than was the power of kings. This also helps to explain the fact that in the Carolingian period, highly documented although it undoubtedly is, processions are actually less well attested than they had been previously.

Carolingian and Post-Carolingian Processions

We do not have much narrative evidence from what was still the most urbanized part of Carolingian Francia, southern Gaul, or indeed from Carolingian Italy. This means that we cannot easily say if processional politics continued there—although this is very likely, for it was certainly present in later centuries, as we shall see. We do have two accounts of a major royal *adventus*, both times after important victories in the south: Charlemagne into Pavia after the conquest of Lombard Italy in 774 and Louis the Pious into Barcelona after the conquest of Catalonia in 801.¹⁷⁶ Each was heavily liturgical, involving a formal procession, *laudes*, and so on; each will have conveyed precisely the same meanings, to Frankish armies and urban inhabitants alike, as the triumphal entries into Constantinople (and imperial Rome before it) did, with the additional message of conquest. These two, into cities that had remained large and politically important since the late empire, do not, however, have more than a few parallels in Francia itself. Louis the Pious entering Orléans with his *proceres* in his succession year of 814, where he was met by the clergy and the *plebs*, singing, and a poem composed for the occasion by Bishop Theodulf, is perhaps the most detailed example.¹⁷⁷ At the same time, the politics of fixed assemblies, regularly called by kings and counts, reached its height in this period, not least in terms of its ritual complexity; the Carolingian obsession with religious legitimacy, which developed quickly toward a culture of individual and collective penance, ensured that.¹⁷⁸ Prayer and other

176. *Annales Laurissenses minores*, ed. Pertz, s.a. 774, p. 117; Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici imperatoris*, ed. Tremp, 13, p. 318. See McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, pp. 371–375 (including citations of royal visits to churches and monasteries; cf. note 183 below). Charlemagne's 774 entry into Rome was the most elaborate of all, but that was a specific feature of Roman processional practice and will be discussed later.

177. Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici imperatoris*, ed. Tremp, 21, p. 346; Theodulf of Orléans, *Carmina*, ed. Dümmler, 37, p. 529. See also Ermoldus Nigellus, *In honorem Hludowici*, ed. Dümmler, II, pp. 30–31, lines 197–230, for a more vaguely described reception of Pope Stephen IV by Louis the Pious at Reims in 816. For papal receptions in Francia, see Hack, *Empfangszeremoniell*, pp. 424–434, 458–464.

178. See especially de Jong, *Penitential State*.

liturgical elements in assemblies, and royal-focused religion in general, became steadily more elaborate; so did the *laudes* for kings; battles, too, were celebrated with liturgies both before and after, fitting the steady development of victory ceremonial under the Carolingians.¹⁷⁹

The identity of the Frankish people as a whole was tied up in these ceremonies by now. But the processional nature of it is seldom clear. It is interesting that even at Aachen, where a large population center developed around Charlemagne's palace (although Aachen was never seen as a city in our period), we know little about any royal routes or popular participation.¹⁸⁰ All we can say is that the urban and non-royal processional imagery of the Merovingian period had not gone away, for all that it is relatively rarely attested. In Angers, for example, there was an elaborate Palm Sunday procession around the churches of the city, with substantial secular participation, recorded in another early-ninth-century poem by Theodulf; this will certainly have maintained the sort of urban identity we have seen for the sixth century. In Reims, the formerly disgraced, now temporarily rehabilitated Archbishop Ebbo was met on his return to the city in 840 by bishops, clerics, and an "infinite multitude of both sexes," with palm branches, candles, and *laudes*. And an example of protective ceremonial is the Viking siege of Paris in 886, when the inhabitants processed around the walls, bearing the relics of St. Germanus, as our long poetic text about the siege says; although this was not, here, more than a minor part of the eventually successful Parisian defense, it was clearly an obvious recourse for the citizens.¹⁸¹

Royal processions return in post-Carolingian sources. In 952, the formal reception of Berengar II of Italy by senior aristocrats of Otto I a mile outside Magdeburg is one indicative instance, although it is an unusual example in our sources for Germany. North of the Alps, kings are more often described as

179. See, among many, Kantorowicz, *Laudes Regiae*, esp. pp. 13–64. For battles, especially the battle of the Dyle in 891, which included a procession on the battlefield, see *Annales Fuldenses*, ed. Kurze, s.a. 891, pp. 120–121. For campaign/victory liturgies, see McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, pp. 347–362.

180. The Carolingian *laudes* about royal *adventus* (often into monasteries) cited by Kantorowicz, *Selected Studies*, pp. 38–41, do not mostly refer to processions; even if the latter occurred, which is quite possible, they were not stressed enough textually for us to be able to say that they had any autonomous significance. Einhard's translated relics had an urban procession in Aachen and also Maastricht, very public ones, but the focus of this was the relics, not any community, royal or local: Einhard, *Translatio et miracula sanctorum Marcellini et Petri*, ed. Waitz, 2.3–6, p. 247; 4.14, pp. 261–262. Some rural monasteries had more elaborate processional celebrations, however. The clearest example is St-Riquier, whose abbot Angilbert describes a three-day rogations ceremonial with a septiform procession around and into the monastic church, thanks to the participation of seven neighboring villages, and a *scola* as part of it (Lot, ed., "Rapport d'Angilbert," pp. 299–302). This procession presumably helped to define the relation of the monastery to its surrounding landscape, but it is too obviously copied from the septiform procession and *scolae* of Rome (see pp. 167–168 and 172 below) for us to take the imagery further here.

181. Theodulf, *Carmina*, ed. Dümmler, 69, pp. 558–559; *Concilium Inglesheimense* (n. 61), ed. Werminghoff, p. 809; Abbo of Saint Germain, *Bella Parisiacae Urbis*, ed. Dass, 2.146–153, pp. 70–73; cf. 308–314, pp. 80–81. Here the obviousness of the recourse is underlined by the casual nature of the reference to it in the text. It was, all the same, Germanus who saved the city, both by prayer and in person: e.g., Abbo, 2.269–285, 349–386, pp. 78–79, 82–84.

involving themselves in religious ritual. Thietmar of Merseburg tells us that Otto I was on feast days accustomed to go to the church—by implication, wherever he was—led by a procession of bishops and clerics with relics; in particular, he did this at Magdeburg on Palm Sunday in 973. In 1002, too, the dead Otto III was taken back to Germany in what looks very like a procession of several hundred miles; it was a tense moment, for who would succeed him was not quite clear, and the candidates tried to make their presence felt by participating in the procession. Also, in his last stop at Cologne before his burial at Aachen, Otto III was supposedly taken around five churches in five days, starting on Palm Sunday—that is to say, in effect absorbing the dead emperor into the Easter celebrations of the powerful archbishop of Cologne, which evidently had a processional element, too.¹⁸²

This might be taken further. Karl Leyser has said of the *Annales Quedlinburgenses* that they represent Henry II's reign (1002–1024) as “one long procession, . . . essentially a sacral procession from holy day to holy day, from one church dedication to another, most of them followed by assemblies.” We do not actually read the *Annales* in that way, however; the structuring of the text seems to us to be different, and the holy days, in different towns and churches, though certainly there, are not connected as tightly as that.¹⁸³ It is undoubtedly true, and well known, that the Ottonians were systematically itinerant in a way that the Carolingians were not, and this would logically lead to plenty of entries and plenty of participations in processional activities, even if seldom as systematically as the funerary procession of Otto III and even if by no means always in an urban context; given that, these citations are fewer than they might be. It is interesting, overall, that the details of Ottonian *adventus* also tend to be relatively unnarrativized in our sources; it happened, but we are not so often told how. More local accounts for Ottonian Germany, indeed, stress the *adventus* of bishops rather than kings.¹⁸⁴ We must remember, however, that the Merovingians

182. Widukind, *Res gestae saxonicae*, ed. Hirsch and Lohmann, 3.10, pp. 109–110; Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon*, ed. Holtzmann, 2.30, 4.50–54 (53 for Cologne), pp. 77, 189–194. For candidates, see also Adalbold, *Vita Heinrici*, ed. Waitz, 3–4, p. 684. See, in general, Oesterle, *Kalifat*, pp. 187–249, 328–334, although she includes as processions events that entirely took place inside churches, notably coronations. She emphasizes the importance of Palm Sunday in Ottonian politico-religious ritual, convincingly, but we resist the next stage in this argument, associated powerfully with Ernst Kantorowicz (e.g. *Selected Studies*, pp. 37–75), that there was a systematic paralleling of kings with Christ that went beyond the obvious association with the biblical Palm Sunday entry into Jerusalem.

183. Leyser, *Rule*, p. 104; *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, ed. Giese. An earlier example of this traversing of a rural landscape is Dagobert's *tournee* around Burgundy in the 630s to dispense justice, which was described as an *adventus* (Fredegar, *Chronicae*, ed. Krusch, 4.58, p. 149)—it was not one by anyone else's standards, and the actual entries into cities are not much stressed in the text, but the choice of words is interesting. For another Merovingian rural procession, from the early 680s, see *Vita Audoini*, ed. Levison, 16–17, pp. 564–566; it crossed the royal political landscape, the *Königslandschaft*, of the Seine and Oise valleys and helped to define it ceremonially.

184. For how the narrativization of Ottonian *adventus* worked, see, above all, Warner, “Ritual,” pp. 263–266, for bishops.

were relatively itinerant, too, and that our city-based narratives did not then lay great stress on royal processional, either.

All the same, it is in this period that more examples of formal royal *adventus* reappear as well, at least outside the German lands. Louis IV of West Francia at his accession in 936 was received “with much adulation (*ambitione*) and allegiance (*obsequio*)” in Laon, a crucial step to wider acceptance, and then in nearby cities, too. And Italy was by now a clear practitioner of it. Liudprand of Cremona tells us, for example, that it was “the custom (*moris*) for the greater citizens to come out of the city to welcome the king arriving in Pavia from other parts”; this is the context for a written-up piece of betrayal by King Hugh in (perhaps) the late 920s, as is typical of Liudprand’s stories, but the detail about the custom remains plausible, for the story depends on it. How long that custom had existed we cannot know, but it could well have been a long time, and it has, as we shall see, parallels in Rome from an early date. Certainly, from here on, *adventus* is tied up with royal legitimacy in texts about Italy. A particularly good example comes from 1004, when Henry II, seeking to take northern Italy from his rival King Arduin, was—our Henrician sources claim—received and acclaimed by the citizens at Verona and crowned; then by the bishop and citizens at Brescia (plus the archbishop of Ravenna); then again at Bergamo (where the archbishop of Milan came, too); then at Pavia, where “a very large multitude of noble Lombards, who were assembled to greet him, received him with deserved applause, with the exultation of the whole city . . . the clergy, the assembly of nobles, the people of both sexes, all with a single voice acclaimed King Henry.” Such entries represented royal power directly, and indeed also, by implication in 1004, the community of the whole kingdom of Italy; but these accounts also show power in dialogue with the urban community and its own ceremonial identity, both episcopal and secular. If we had more narratives for the kingdom of Italy in preceding periods, we might well find earlier examples of this sort of organic mutual legitimizing relationship, which has parallels to that in Constantinople—at least, when kings were properly based in Italy, as with the Lombard kingdom before 774 or under Louis II in the ninth century or under Berengar I and Hugh in the early tenth.¹⁸⁵ But it would not last in this form, for kings became increasingly external to Italy from the early eleventh century onward.

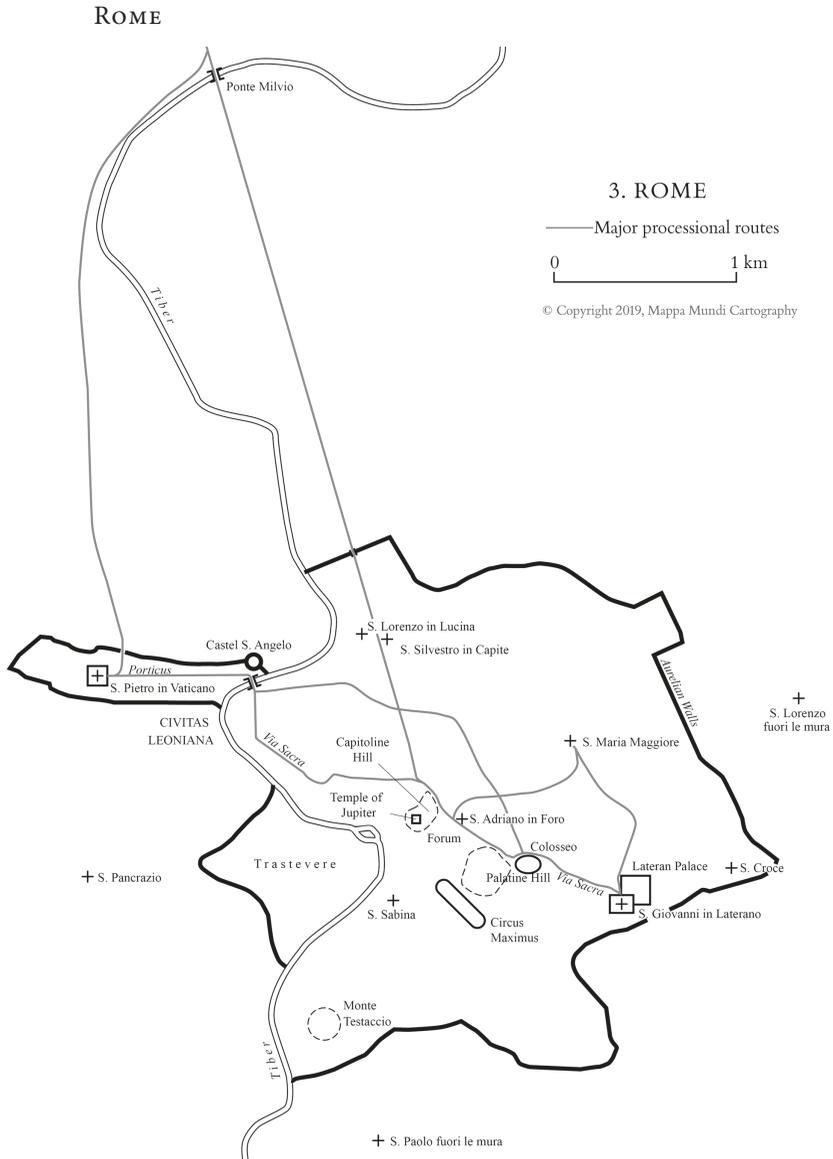
185. Richer of Reims, *Historiae*, ed. Hoffmann, 2.4, pp. 100–101; Liudprand of Cremona, *Antapodosis*, ed. Chiesa, 3.41, pp. 88–89; trans. Squatriti, p. 131; Adalbold, *Vita Heinrici*, ed. Waitz, 36, p. 692 (see also Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon*, ed. Holtzmann, 6.6, p. 280, with less detail—note, however, that the Pavesi revolted immediately afterward). The account in Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. Bethmann and Waitz, 5.33, p. 155, of the whole Lombard political community coming to the frontier of the kingdom to greet the return of the exiled King Perctarit in 672 may be an indication that the custom of meeting the king well outside Pavia was indeed old.

These Western examples extend by the tenth century out of Gaul into (little-urbanized) Germany and (highly urbanized) Italy, and in doing so, they show some changes. They show how the separation between an urban world in sixth-century Gaul, in which processional practices conveyed both power and collective identity, and a royal legitimacy had little processional basis, was mediated by the tenth century. In Germany, at least, that was by now a world where kings did process, to an extent, and where their hegemony in Italy could sometimes be expressed better in processional terms than had been managed by most Frankish kings in Gaul. Outside Italy, however, and after 962, doubtless inside as well, royal *adventus* was always an imposition of an external power on urban societies and also only an occasional one. The future history of *adventus*—as in, for example, the rich historiography on the *joyeuse entrée* of dukes of Burgundy and their successors into Flemish towns after 1400¹⁸⁶—in our view fits with this picture, too. In part, this was simply because the linkage between royal power and urban society was always less tight in the Frankish and post-Frankish world. Conversely, although there were now also processional elements in royal progresses, as we have seen for the Ottonians (we have also seen it in the 630s and 680s for the Merovingians), these were across much larger rural landscapes, and were difficult in practice to sustain except in short bursts.

Even inside cities, we do not, in fact, have much evidence of the regular processional structuring of urban power and collective identity between 750 and 1000. This is, however, in our view simply the result of the problems in our evidence—if Angers did it, larger towns are very likely to have done it too. When Italian cities, in particular, begin to be well documented after that, the processional world that we saw for the sixth century in Gaul rapidly becomes clear again. The relationship between processions (and their subversion) and the contestation of urban politics and identity is particularly visible in mid-eleventh-century Milan, at the time of the internal battles over clerical purity led by the Pataria movement. By now, royal power, although Henry IV did intervene in those battles, was definitely external to the “real” politics of the city.¹⁸⁷ This is after our period, so we do not discuss it here, but in our view, the processional basis of Milanese political action had roots stretching deep into the past. This brings us to the Western city where those roots are most continuously visible: Rome.

186. See, e.g., Arnade, *Realms*, esp. pp. 127–158; Lecuppre-Desjardin, *La ville*, esp. pp. 103–197, 259–302.

187. See, above all, Norrie, “Urban Ritual.”



MAP 7.3. Rome

Rome, of all the cities of the West, was the one that most resembled Constantinople—in size (it was substantially smaller than the Byzantine capital but for long by far the largest city in the West), in imperial memory, and in ceremonial practice (Map 7.3). It had a processional tradition to match this, which was elaborate in different ways in the late empire, in the early Middle Ages

(our sources are particularly clear for the period 590–880, thanks to papal letters and the *Liber Pontificalis*), and then in the twelfth century. Here we will look, of course, above all, at the middle one of these periods, but comparing with earlier and later as necessary. In our period (as later), the processional tradition divided clearly between being attached to the city's numerous feast days and being attached to imperial visits; that is to say, and the point is an important one, ecclesiastical and imperial processions were much more distinct than they were in Constantinople. We will look at each in turn, but to give it a framing, it is useful to begin with a look forward to the twelfth century—necessarily briefly, but building on more detailed work by one of us—by which time the Roman processional map had routes we can track.

Twelfth-Century Patterns

In the twelfth century, there were some three dozen documented processions in Rome every year, marking the main steps of the ritual cycle, and that is a minimum figure. They were all focused on the papacy, and indeed, the pope processed in most of them when he was in the city, but several of them had major popular participation, and all of them had a popular audience. Our sources for them are, above all, normative: processional accounts by three authors of the period, all collected in the *Liber Censuum* of 1192—as with the *Book of Ceremonies*, this is how processions *ought* to be conducted—but they give us a baseline. The most important of them were Christmas, the Purification of the Virgin on February 2, the first Sunday after Carnival, the Easter week processions, the Great Litany on April 25 (a major procession for the Roman clergy, too), the Assumption on August 15, the Birth of the Virgin on September 8, and the Exaltation of the Cross on September 14, but there were plenty of others. In addition, there were any number of *stationes*, stational liturgies, as in the Byzantine capital, in which the pope processed from the Lateran Palace to three dozen churches across the city on given days of the year. Taking all of these together and allowing for exaggeration, the Constantinopolitan figure of around two processions per week is thus nearly matched by Rome. The Lateran lay a little outside the heavily settled parts of Rome in every century from the sixth to the nineteenth; all the same, it was inside the city walls, so processions from it did not constitute an entry into the city. One of the two churches to which the pope processed most frequently was S. Maria Maggiore, the most important of the very many Marian churches inside the city. This was relatively close to the Lateran, and the pope did not need to enter populated areas to get there, but two of the major Marian processions of the year took him first into the Forum in the center of town, to S. Adriano, after which he went back up the hill to S. Maria. The other major processional destination, however, was the huge basilica of S. Pietro in Vaticano, built by Constantine, and this church was outside the city, over the Tiber in an old funerary area, as martyrial churches

tended to be everywhere. When the pope went to S. Pietro, therefore, he left the city and reentered it. (He also did so when he went to S. Paolo and S. Lorenzo fuori le Mura, but he did that less often, and in neither case did he go through populated parts of the city.) The processions to S. Pietro went through the most densely settled regions of Rome on permanent routes: often, but not only, along the via Sacra through the Forum, around the Capitoline Hill to the north, then west to the bridge opposite Castel S. Angelo and along the *porticus* on the other side of the Tiber, to the Vatican. This meant that papal processions to S. Pietro made up a web of routes that connected most of the city together, but from starting and end points that were only partially urban (the Lateran) or specifically extra-urban (the Vatican) and in both cases separate from the Rome where people for the most part lived.¹⁸⁸

This processional system was, in the twelfth century, above all papal in character, unsurprisingly: the pope was the sovereign of Rome and had been since the third quarter of the eighth century, when he took over the remaining authority of the Byzantine emperor. But it did not exclude the *populus* of the city—which, however they were defined, could be a substantial part of the population. Lay Romans did not participate in every procession, but they were part of many of the most important, such as the Purification, the Great Litany, the Assumption, and, above all, the largely lay post-Carnival festival, in which a wide section of the laity, *equites* and *pedites*, went (with the pope) to the games at Monte Testaccio. And they were in the audience for the others, not least the pope's Easter Monday procession back from S. Pietro to the Lateran Palace, which was important for two reasons. First, papal consecrations took place, at least ideally, in S. Pietro, after an election in S. Giovanni in Laterano, and the return of the new pope from extramural S. Pietro to the papal palace was thus his first ceremonial entry into and procession through the city. The Easter Monday return procession explicitly replicated that ceremonial and thus represented, more directly than any other, papal sovereignty in the city—not least because of its annual repetition. Second, although the *populus* was not part of this procession (which was highly articulated, separating out different groups of clergy and papal officials), it was heavily involved in its setup, with ceremonial arches erected by citizens at nearly a hundred named places along the route, closely parallel in that respect to major Constantinopolitan processions, as we have seen, and very large sums of money spent on the laity, in part in payment for the arches, in part through throwings, *iacta*, of money to the audience at five points in the route. The resultant celebrations were collective; papal sovereignty was affirmed, but “the whole city was crowned with him [the pope],” as several narratives say, reflecting,

188. *Le Liber Censuum de l'église romaine*, ed. Fabre and Duchesne, vol. 1, pp. 290–316; vol. 2, pp. 90–174; Wickham, *Medieval Rome*, pp. 321–341.

indeed, imperial Roman imagery.¹⁸⁹ The power of the pope was affirmed with impressive regularity, but so was the cohesion of the Roman people.

Early Medieval Papal Processions

This patterning of the processional geography of Rome took many centuries to develop and, indeed, was in constant change. But already by 900, Rome had as dense a structuring of its papal processional practice as it did in the twelfth century, as we see in the less detailed references to it in the *Liber Pontificalis* and the various *ordines* and sacramentaries of the early Middle Ages. Of course, pre-Christian Rome had, too; it had many festivals, some of them quite processionally organized, such as the Robigalia on April 25, which led north out of the city, over the Milvian Bridge, and then back; or the intramural Lupercalia on February 15, which involved running around the Palatine and lasted until the 490s at least; or the processions preceding games in the Circus Maximus, which began at the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill and led through the Forum, and which may have lasted, partly Christianized, into the sixth century. It took time for fully Christian ones to match these, and then to replace and surpass them; in particular, the pre-Christian (but by now no longer processional) Kalends of January celebrations were still active in the 740s and, indeed, in vestigial form, in the twelfth century.¹⁹⁰ The fifth century seems to have seen the origin of the Great Litany (which replaced the Robigalia on the same day and much of the same route). The stational liturgies probably began in the same period—these developments are not directly documented, but we here accept the deductions made by John Baldovin from other evidence.¹⁹¹ Then, in the late sixth century, our first penitential and processional *letania* is documented, the septiform litany of Gregory the Great in 590 and 603, in which Gregory twice set up—initially to confront a plague, later for more generic sins—a large-scale procession that started at seven churches at once (the list of churches varies slightly across the

189. Wickham, *Medieval Rome*, pp. 327–329 (p. 329 for *tota civitas coronatur cum eo*; pp. 330–331 and Maire Vigueur, *L'autre Rome*, pp. 178–184, for Monte Testaccio). See, in general, Twyman, *Papal Ceremonial*, esp. pp. 175–217. For the imperial Roman image of *coronatio urbis*, see McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, p. 86. For the origins of the *iacta*, in the *sparsiones* of money in imperial Roman consular processions, see Cameron's commentary to Corippus, *In laudem Iustini*, ed. Cameron, p. 195; and Lavan, *Public Space*, chap. 2, text to nn. 89–90.

190. For the Robigalia, see Gianferrari, "Robigalia." For the Lupercalia, see North, "Caesar"; McLynn, "Crying Wolf"; North and McLynn, "Postscript to the Lupercalia." For the circus procession (*pompa circensis*), see, above all, Latham, *Performance*, esp. pp. 183–232. For January 1, see Boniface, *Epistolae*, ed. Tangl, 50–51, pp. 84–85, 90–91; *Liber Censuum*, ed. Fabre and Duchesne vol. 2, pp. 172–173. These are the latest references to the Kalends celebrations, which were widely celebrated, with processions, into the seventh century across the Roman world; see Lavan, *Public Space*, chap. 2, text to nn. 293–326.

191. Baldovin, *Urban Character*, pp. 147–151. Saxer, "L'utilisation," pp. 938–941, cautiously puts it a few decades later, but anyway before c. 500. On pp. 942–950, Saxer lists all the references to *stationes* from the early *ordines* and sacramentaries; by his count, up to c. 900, there were eighty-five in thirty-seven different churches. This long article is a key text for the early medieval liturgy in Rome, together with de Blaauw, *Cultus et decor*.

two events) and that was divided by social category, with priests, monks, nuns, children, laymen, widows, and married women all processing from different churches. The 603 litany also included *pauperes*, the poor, as a separate category, as Damianus was later said to do in Ravenna; here, however, they processed with the children.¹⁹²

This procession did not last; significantly, its inception is narrated in Gregory of Tours, not the *Liber Pontificalis*, and its later imagery was strongest north of the Alps. But as a formal intervention, it must have been powerful at the time, and it was succeeded, particularly in the 150 years after 680, by the institution of many other *letaniae*, which would continue in a more stable fashion into the twelfth century and later, as is related in the *Liber Pontificalis*, by now a largely contemporary source. The first substantial group included the processions from S. Adriano in Foro to S. Maria Maggiore, which Sergius I (687–701) set up for the Marian feasts of the “Ypapant” (from Greek *hypapante*, purification; see above), Annunciation, Dormition (or Assumption), and Birth. The Assumption, which was the major one to use this route in later centuries, is attested in its full later form, with an acheiropoietic icon of Christ and a large popular following, in 752 (almost certainly) and 847. The Purification procession is attested by the 780s. The Easter procession existed by the eighth century, already in a highly articulated form, for we have an *ordo* for it (it was then on Sunday, not yet Monday). By the 750s, under Stephen II, every Saturday saw a *letania*, to S. Maria Maggiore, S. Pietro, and S. Paolo in turn. Around 803, Leo III brought the Gallic tradition of the pre-Ascension “minor litanies” into the city, which were to be from S. Maria Maggiore to S. Giovanni in Laterano, S. Sabina to S. Paolo, and S. Croce to S. Lorenzo—an extension and complication of the normal processional web which sprang from the Lateran Palace. And so on.¹⁹³ By 827, the papal accession processions from the Lateran, where elections were held, to the consecration ceremony at S. Pietro and back were also fully in place, and they are probably

192. Gregory of Tours, *Decem libri historiarum*, ed. Krusch, 10.1, pp. 480–481; Gregory the Great, *Registrum*, ed. Hartmann, 13.2, pp. 365–367; see Latham, “Making.” Latham, “From Literal to Spiritual Soldiers,” pp. 321–324, argues that popes did not develop the processional format until after 550. Latham sees Pelagius I’s *laetania* procession of 556 from S. Pancrazio to S. Pietro as the first; see *Liber Pontificalis* 62.2, ed. Duchesne, vol. 1, p. 303 (vol. 1 covers papal lives to the end of book 97, a. 795; vol. 2 from then up to 886); Saxer, “L’utlisation,” p. 960, agrees. This procession, done in order to prove to the *populus et plebs* that the pope was innocent of causing the death of his predecessor, Vigilius, was, however, very much a one-off.

193. Respectively, *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchesne, vol. 1, 86.14, 94.11, pp. 376, 443 (de Blaauw, *Cultus et decor*, p. 438, thinks Stephen II’s 752 event was during the Purification procession; it does not seem so to us); ed. Duchesne, vol. 2, 105.19, p. 110; ed. Duchesne, vol. 1, 94.13, p. 443; ed. Duchesne, vol. 2, 98.43, p. 12; plus, for Easter, *Ordo I* in *Les ordines Romani*, vol. 2, pp. 69–71. The Assumption is treated in most detail in the tenth-century *Ordo L*, in *Les ordines Romani*, vol. 5, pp. 358–362. Ambrosius Autpert (d. 784) wrote a sermon on the Purification in which he cites a crowd at the procession in Rome: Ambrosius Autpertus, *Sermo in purificatione sanctae Mariae*, ed. Weber, p. 985, a reference we owe to Francesca dell’Acqua. Other new processions: *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchesne, vol. 1, 92.13, p. 420; ed. Duchesne, vol. 2, 105.26, p. 114; see further the lists in Saxer, “L’utlisation,” pp. 1016–1019.

implicit in an earlier account for 769 (in both cases, even though not by the twelfth century, with the participation of a large number of the Roman laity). These dates are *termini ante quem*, for we do not have many detailed accounts of papal elections and consecrations earlier; more fragmentary information, however, hints at similar practices being in place by the 680s.¹⁹⁴

These processions were regular. Those that began as penitential/protective *letaniae* often just became standard parts of the urban liturgy thereafter, as with the “vigils according to the usual custom,” which Stephen II’s litanies had become by c. 819. But, as in Constantinople, ad hoc *letaniae* could be set up, too, in 676 (in a papal vacancy) against a flood, or by Gregory II in 716, against rain at harvest time. All the same, it is striking that when Rome was threatened by a Lombard army in 752, Stephen II simply held the *letania* of the Assumption “as usual” (*solite*), only bolstering it with extra relics and penitential ash on the heads of the people. By now, the world of processions in the papal city was sufficiently powerful that it was not necessary to add to their number—if there was a major one coming up, at least.¹⁹⁵

With these many processions, by now substantially larger in number than in the pre-Christian city, we might expect some of them to be subverted or otherwise changed to make political points, not least given the number of contested elections and unpopular popes (or popes with factions opposed to them) that there were in Rome. The *Liber Pontificalis* is sufficiently a regime text that it glosses over much trouble, however. At most, it stresses enhanced performance of the standard rituals, as with Stephen II in 752, or with Stephen III in 769 after his victory over the rival pope Constantine II (here the procession to S. Pietro was performed not only with *cunctus populus* but barefoot), or with Benedict III, elected in 855 in the teeth of opposition from the Carolingian emperor Louis II who had tried to impose his own candidate, where the text cites an especially large “innumerable multitude” of people with him at his (re-)election and a return from his consecration at S. Pietro “in glory.” Ad hoc reference to these processions, however, tends to come when something significant happens during them, as

194. Respectively, *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchesne, vol. 2, 102.6–8, p. 72; ed. Duchesne, vol. 1, 96.24, p. 477. (The 769 ritual was not, technically, for the papal consecration, which had already taken place, but it was the final element in the establishment of Stephen III’s victory over a rival.) For the origins of the accession ritual, see Twyman, *Papal Ceremonial*, pp. 57–77. By Gregory I’s pontificate, the consecration took place in S. Pietro, so if the election took place at the Lateran, the pope would already have to have crossed town to get to S. Pietro and back. Papal election took place at the Lateran by the 680s: *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchesne, vol. 1, 84.1–2, 85.1–2, 86.2, pp. 366, 368, 371, the first of which, for John V, says that the custom of doing so was ancient (*iuxta priscam consuetudinem*) but recently in disuse. The processional element to this was thus probably as early as the 680s, at least; if it already matched Easter Monday, it was fully developed by the eighth century. Later in the ninth century, these rituals were also “custom”—*Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchesne, vol. 2, 106.5, 108.9–11, pp. 140, 175—and were indeed regularly referred to, as in *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchesne, vol. 2, 104.7, 107.6–7, 108.5, 112.5, pp. 87, 152, 174, 192.

195. Respectively, *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchesne, vol. 2, 100.15, p. 56; vol. 1, 79.5, 91.6, 94.11, pp. 346–347, 399, 443.

when Leo IV in 847 put to flight a death-dealing basilisk during the Assumption procession; that was already a significant ritual, but the importance of both the procession and the basilisk was reinforced by the events. And that is, above all, the case in the most clamorous example of the subversion of a procession, the kidnapping of Leo III by his opponents (senior papal bureaucrats and relatives of his predecessor Hadrian I) in 799. Leo had just started on the Great Litany at S. Lorenzo in Lucina and had reached S. Silvestro, the first major church on the route north and out of the city, when he was seized and imprisoned, with his eyes and tongue cut out twice (although later miraculously restored), in the most public assault on a ruling pope in the whole early medieval period. Interestingly, the *Annales regni Francorum*, when recounting the same episode, says that Leo was riding to S. Lorenzo from the Lateran *before* he met the procession when he was taken, but for the author of the life of Leo in the *Liber Pontificalis*, the fact that this happened while a major procession was actually going on made the scandal far more appalling. So, in the early Middle Ages, at least, regular Roman liturgical processions were not deviated to make points, but they could be *intensified* to make points, and events were magnified if they took place in a processional context. Leo, in particular, had to seek the help of Charlemagne and to face two quasi-judicial hearings, as well as making a very heavily marked ceremonial re-entry into the city, as we shall see, to get back his position.¹⁹⁶

We therefore see that early medieval Rome, as before and after, was constructed ceremonially, far more than any other Western city, by processions. It was, of course, far larger than any of them, too, and its populated areas were also, as at Reims and some other Gallic cities, not fully compact—processions helped greatly to keep them together. Many of these processions were entirely intramural, as usually also in Constantinople, although plenty went to and from extramural churches, binding them into the city as well. Those back from S. Pietro were, at papal accessions and at Easter, particularly important from this standpoint, for they allowed for a ceremonial re-entry into the city that was heavily orchestrated, expensive, and important both for papal authority and for secular Roman collective identity. That form of re-entry matched the ceremonial aspects of more fully fledged *adventus*, although the latter processions had a quite different form and were also more often subverted (according to our sources), as we will see. But one form of procession is entirely absent: going around the walls.

196. See, respectively, *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchesne, vol. 1, 96.24, p. 477; vol. 2, 106.20, 105.18–19, pp. 144, 110; for Leo III, 98.11–12 and cf. 19–22; vol. 2, pp. 4, 6–7; and *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. Kurze, s.a. 799, p. 106—for which see Mohr, “Karl der Grosse.” Other popes could be mutilated and/or killed, but only after imprisonment or deposition: Constantine II, Benedict VI, John XIV, John XVI. Note that after 799, although in what century is unclear, the Great Litany changed course entirely and adapted itself rather more to the standard network of east-west processions through the city center: Dyer, “Roman Processions.”

We have seen that extramural processional circuits were important in both Constantinople and in Gaul, and they were associated with protection, not least but not only from serious military danger. Rome was not short of threats and faced military attack often, but never once was this form of procession used to ward off danger in our period (and indeed not in the next centuries, either).¹⁹⁷ To face a plague which was serious enough to have killed his predecessor, Pelagius II, Gregory I's new septiform procession was entirely intramural, however complex. Stephen II's unchanged Assumption procession is the only one any source cites as reacting to military threat at all. This absence is striking, all the more so because we know that Romans were well aware of the symbolism and public effect of extramural processions: for Leo IV, after he built the walls around S. Pietro in Vaticano and the *porticus* that led to it, to protect them from Arab attacks, at their completion in (probably) 852 led a procession of bishops and clergy around them, barefoot and with penitential ashes, with prayers at each gate and gifts of money to the (presumably watching) laity, "so that this city might stand firm and strengthened for ever." The city in question was not, however, Rome but rather, the *Civitas Leoniana*, the new name for this extramural fortification. (Rome itself was, in fact, generally called an *urbs*.) In 854, Leo did the same with his newly founded city of Leopolis, up the coast above Civitavecchia.¹⁹⁸ It is true that both of these processions were to ward off future threats, not present ones, but they will have been set up in full knowledge of the role of similar ones elsewhere. We must conclude that the Romans did not feel that their own city needed this sort of ritual protection.

Why was this the case? It was not because Rome was never taken by violence: Totila did so in 546 and 549, Arnulf perhaps did so in 896, and plenty of others came close. It was at least the case that relatively few of the populated areas of early medieval Rome were close to the walls, so that they had little immediacy to people except when armies appeared, which may have had an effect on their symbolic role—although the walls were nonetheless physically important and were, as one would expect, systematically repaired when armies threatened.¹⁹⁹ It is also arguable that the very density of the processional world internal to the city's walls and the ever-changing complexity of the city's politics fostered a self-absorption that made defensive measures symbolically irrelevant. Whichever way

197. For the next centuries, see Wickham, *Medieval Rome*, pp. 334–335 (for one possible, but in our view unlikely, early witness to an extramural procession, see p. 335, n. 39). Two extramural processions are described in *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchesne, vol. 1, 62.2, 67.2, pp. 303, 315, but both were highly atypical: Pelagius I, in 556 (see note 192 above), made a *laetania* from S. Pancrazio outside Trastevere to S. Pietro, quite far from the wall line; and Sabinianus's funeral cortège in 606 was "expelled" (*eiectus*) from the city—the text does not say why—and had to go from the Lateran to S. Pietro via the Milvian Bridge, a very long deviation and even further from the walls.

198. *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchesne, vol. 2, 105.72, 103, p. 124, 132.

199. Coates-Stephens, "Le ricostruzioni."

it was, anyway, Roman collective identity did not need a processional boundary, even when danger threatened; that was not the way it worked.

Imperial and Royal Processions

The second main processional element in early medieval Roman political and religious practice was the *adventus*. This, for sure, here as elsewhere, however irregularly, marked political power directly, and it was far more complex here than anything else seen in the West throughout our period and for long after. Its origins lay in imperial entries into Rome, which continued into the fifth century, as Michael McCormick and Luke Lavan have made clear—and see our earlier discussions of Constantinople. That tradition was very elaborate, and its elaboration started some way out of town, with an *occursus*, coming, of urban political leaders to meet the emperor: in the Christian period, from the Milvian bridge for Constantine in 312 (unsurprisingly, for that was where he won his great battle) and also for Constantius II in 357 and Honorius and Stilicho in 404. They then came into the city from the north through porta Flaminia and down the via Lata to the Capitoline Hill (though Constantine soon abandoned the stop at the Temple of Jupiter) and the Forum/Palatine. That was perhaps also the route Theodoric took in 500 when he entered Rome; at any rate, he, too, was met by the *senatus vel populus Romanus* outside the walls.²⁰⁰ And into our period, this reception persisted, with the pope and clergy added. When Constans II came to Rome in 663, the only Roman/Byzantine emperor ever to do so between 476 and the fifteenth century, Pope Vitalian *occurrit*, came to meet him, with his clergy at the sixth mile out of Rome, a little beyond the Milvian bridge; the emperor, however, then came into Rome from the northwest via S. Pietro, that is to say, past the bridge but without crossing it, and this would become the normal entry route from now on. But of course, the pope had to know that someone was coming. When the exarch of Ravenna came to Rome to prevent the election of Sergius I (unsuccessfully) in 687, he did not write in advance, so he did not encounter the “crosses or the banners (*nec signa nec banda*) as the *militia* of the Roman army would have met him with according to custom (*occurrissent ei iuxta consuetudinem*) in the appropriate place, until close to the city of Rome.”²⁰¹

This is the first reference to the standard early medieval elements of Rome’s *adventus* ceremonial, which would be amply followed in the Carolingian period. In general, the *militia*, the Roman army in its ceremonial form, generally divided into *scholae* or *scolae*, would meet incoming kings and emperors with crosses and banners; secular leaders, the clergy, the pope himself, and the *populus*

200. McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, pp. 80–130; Lavan, *Public Space*, chap. 2; for Constantius, see Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae*, ed. Rolfe, vol. 1, 16.10.4–17, pp. 244–253; for Theodoric, see Anonymus Valesianus, *Pars posterior*, ed. Rolfe, vol. 3, 65–67, pp. 549–550.

201. *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchesne, vol. 1, 78.2–3, 86.3, pp. 343, 371–372.

were arranged according to the needs of the occasion; and then the procession would pass the Milvian bridge and go down to S. Pietro. (In this context, the *populus*, however inclusive it was or was not, is clearly not the city's aristocracy, which is called variously *senatus*, *proceres*, or *optimates*, with *exercitus* and *militia*, too, denoting elite membership at a sometimes lesser level; both elites and non-elites thus participated in these receptions, as they also participated in papal elections.)²⁰² The variations in this pattern were significant. In 774, when Charlemagne was still besieging Pavia, he came to Rome for Easter and was met as much as thirty miles out by an *occursus* of senior papal officials, *iudices*, with banners; then, a mile north of S. Pietro, he was met by the *scolae* of the *militia*, aristocrats, and children with branches, all singing praises, "as is the custom for receiving an exarch," a phrase clearly indicating the continuities that the Romans, at least, felt. In 800, Charles was met closer in but still a more than respectable twelve miles out and by the pope himself. Earlier that year, Leo III staged his own *adventus*, his first return to the city after his kidnapping, which the *Liber Pontificalis* marks up with deliberation; he was met at the Milvian bridge (increasingly the default location, as it had been in the fourth century) by the most inclusive—and carefully described—community possible, all the clergy, all the aristocracy, all the *militia*, *universus populus* including women, and the *scolae* of foreigners (the communities of Franks, English, etc., who lived near the Vatican), with banners and *laudes*. The text is so concerned to make this the central point of the narrative that it does not do the same for Charlemagne; his 800 entry is recorded not here but in the Frankish annals.

These patterns continued. In 844, after the election of Pope Sergius II without asking the consent of the Carolingian king Louis II (as had by then become necessary), Louis arrived with an army; according to the *Liber Pontificalis*, he was met nine miles out, in a ceremony that otherwise copies the 774 description directly. Here Louis is represented as not getting quite as much attention as Charlemagne had in 774 but nearly; and the text is clear about the careful nature of the reception, given how tense it was—indeed, it descended into violence after the ceremony at S. Pietro, and Sergius shut Rome's gates against what was by now clearly a hostile army, even though Louis was being anointed at the same time. The next time the *Liber Pontificalis* describes a visit by Louis, at another moment of tension in 855, he did not send to say he was coming, so he was only met, by Leo IV, at S. Pietro. Shortly after this, Leo died, and the Romans elected Benedict III, but this time, Louis wanted a different pope, and when his envoys were met at the Milvian bridge by clergy, aristocracy, and the *universus populus*, the Franks wickedly took their own candidate Anastasius with them to S. Pietro; they got so

202. Cf. Patlagean, "Les armes."

close to imposing him that Benedict had to be re-elected before his consecration, as we have already seen.²⁰³

That is the last Frankish entry the *Liber Pontificalis* describes, but Frankish annals, although they are in general less thorough in their accounts of imperial/royal entries, the exact details of which were more symbolically important for the Romans than for northerners, sometimes tell the same type of story later. So, when Lothar II in 869 made a very unwelcome visit to Rome to try to get Hadrian II to back down over his self-inflicted marriage difficulties, “no cleric went to meet him” at S. Pietro, clearly a very bad sign in the eyes of the *Annales Bertiniani* author Hincmar, who was opposed to Lothar. As for Arnulf in 896, he actually stormed the city to gain his controversial imperial coronation, but after he had done that, according to the *Annales Fuldenses*, he got a formal entry back at the Milvian bridge, with the Roman aristocracy, the *scola* of the Greeks, banners, and *laudes*—even here, clearly, a proper entry was necessary for Arnulf’s legitimacy.²⁰⁴

It is particularly necessary here to stress that these are texts, and by no means committed to accuracy in their reportage. An *adventus* could be tense, especially under Louis II (not to speak of Arnulf); the relationship between papal sovereignty and a more generalized Carolingian, as also later Ottonian/Salian, supremacy (and indeed, that of the exarchs as imperial representatives before them) was negotiable and often renegotiated, and every imperial arrival was a potential challenge to the popes. Our accounts needed to stress both honor and legitimacy or else its absence; honor came from the level of the ceremony (how many people, how many *laudes*, how far out of town it started, as opposed to

203. Respectively, for this paragraph and the previous one, see *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchesne, vol. 1, 97.35–37, pp. 496–497; 98.19 (with *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. Kurze, s.a. 800, p. 110); ed. Duchesne, vol. 2, 104.9–12, 105.110, 106.10–18, pp. 6, 87–89, 134, 141–143; for Leo III, see Twyman, *Papal Ceremonial*, pp. 41–43. See in general, among many, Schieffer, “Karolinger,” pp. 109–115; and the detailed survey in Hack, *Empfangszeremoniell*, pp. 293–358. Note also Stephen II’s visit to Francia in 754, when he was supposedly met a full hundred miles away from Ponthion by King Pippin’s son and then three miles out by Pippin himself (*Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchesne, vol. 1, 94.25, p. 447); this is a very papal image, however, and does not recur in Frankish sources.

204. *Annales Bertiniani*, ed. Waitz, s.a. 869, p. 100; *Annales Fuldenses*, s.a. 896, ed. Kurze, p. 128. For less detailed accounts of, mostly, just an “honorable reception,” see *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. Kurze, s.a. 823, 824, pp. 160–161, 164–165; *Annales Bertiniani*, ed. Waitz, s.a. 850, 864, 872, 875, 880, pp. 38, 67, 120, 127, 151. The last quasi-Carolingian *adventus* for a coronation was Berengar I in 918; the *Gesta Berengarii*, ed. von Winterfeld, 4, p. 398–399, lines 89–208, although mentioning crowds, does not discuss a procession, and the text, when it can be pinned down, seems all to take place in S. Pietro; Liudprand of Cremona’s unreliable account of Hugh of Arles in Rome (*Antapodosis*, ed. Chiesa, 3.45, pp. 91–92; trans. Squatriti, 3.45, p. 134), similarly, has him received honorably by the Romans but then located in Castel S. Angelo outside the walls. Ottonian accounts are less detailed on both the Roman and the Frankish/German side, but Otto II in 967, for example, was met three miles out by a “great multitude of senators” with crosses and so on (*Annalista Saxo*, ed. Pertz, p. 620); anyway, the standard ceremony was still elaborate for Henry V in 1111 (*Annales Romani*, ed. Duchesne, vol. 2, p. 340). Note also John XIII’s formal re-entry after exile in 966, met outside the city by clergy and *populus* with *laudes*: Benedict of Soracte, *Chronicon*, ed. Zucchetti, p. 185. For this and some other, less certain, papal *adventus* before 1000, see Twyman, *Papal Ceremonial*, pp. 43–46 (and add *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchesne, vol. 1, 94.39, p. 451, for Stephen II coming back from Francia, met outside S. Pietro by priests and a large crowd of men and women); Twyman convincingly emphasizes the imperial model for papal entries.

small ceremonies just outside S. Pietro); legitimacy came from it going right, with enthusiasm, and not disintegrating into fighting and bad faith, as 844 and 855 did. So also did 864, an emblematic “bad” *adventus* by Louis II to try to persuade Nicholas I to be more sympathetic to his brother Lothar’s marriage, ignored by the *Liber Pontificalis* but written up in Hincmar’s annals, in which (although the processional entry itself is not referred to) the emperor’s men attacked the clergy and *populus* of Rome at S. Pietro during a *statio* and then engaged in plenty of other destruction. Here, as Philippe Buc has shown, the account of the subversion of a ritual context is far from description but rather polemic against Louis’s defense of his brother.²⁰⁵ All the other accounts we have looked at are similar constructions, whether positive or negative. In that context, it is also worth adding that the violence and other elements of a “bad” *adventus* tended to happen after the emperor/king had reached S. Pietro—so the initial reception, choreographed by the Romans, was posed as having gone right, which helped arguments that the incomers, not the Romans, were to blame. Perhaps only the (non-Roman) account of Arnulf’s siege is different here, for the Romans in that case have to be forced to do it right, once they are defeated. But the imagery works whether the events took place as described or indeed at all; these were what was *supposed* to happen (or not happen). The Romans in their own accounts, which are the majority, could thus show how they dealt with dangerous but powerful people, people worthy of respect—that is to say, how they coped, honorably, with the tension of having to receive people who did not rule them but who thought, in different ways, that they did or should.

And that, finally, is shown clearly in one crucial element of these *adventus* processions: they were to S. Pietro, an extra-urban church, not to Rome. It was there that Western emperors were crowned; it was there that they had a palace, from Louis II’s time onward at the latest, which is where they stayed when they came.²⁰⁶ After the end of Byzantine power, only popes, such as Leo III in 800, had the sovereign right to move on from there into the city. The *Liber Pontificalis* states (claims) that Charlemagne asked permission from the pope to enter Rome in 774, although after that he toured the great urban churches in what seems to be a stational context. Not only did Sergius II bar the gates to prevent Louis II’s army from entering the city, but the account of Louis’s three-week sojourn there locates him only in S. Pietro. Even Arnulf, after taking the city and his coronation in S. Pietro, actually met the Roman *omnis populus* to receive fidelity in S. Paolo,

205. *Annales Bertiniani*, ed. Kurze, s.a. 864, p. 67; Buc, *Dangers*, pp. 70–79. Note that 864 was not the last; nearly every eleventh- and early-twelfth-century imperial coronation apparently saw similar fighting, as, for example, in Thietmar, *Chronicon*, ed. Holtzmann, 7.1 (a. 1004), pp. 397–398; and Wipo, *Gesta Chuonradi*, ed. Bresslau, 16 (a. 1027), pp. 36–37, although not in those cases depicted as making the coronation or the visit illegitimate.

206. Brühl, “Kaiserpfalz.”

another extramural church—and it is indeed worth wondering whether he actually besieged Rome at all, rather than the Civitas Leoniana, for it was S. Pietro in particular that the *Annales Fuldenses* says was held against him by supporters of his imperial rival Lambert.²⁰⁷ So, in a sense, setting aside the papal entries of Leo III or John XIII, these *adventus* were not “real” *adventus*, for, precisely, they were not into the city.²⁰⁸ They did not convey political authority, only power—and respect and, doubtless, fear—as well as, in their correct performance, the reinforcement of the collective identity of the Romans themselves. Possibly, this went with the lack of ritual stress on Rome’s walls, too, since these were not—at least in theory—going to be symbolically breached by an outside authority in any legitimate way.

Rome was clearly very like Constantinople, and far less like other Western cities, in the great density of its processional world. It was differently structured, however, because in the Byzantine capital, the emperor ruled, and in the papal capital, he did not. In Constantinople, the overlap between imperial and patriarchal ceremonial was considerable, but in Rome, almost all internal processions showcased ecclesiastical and, above all, papal hegemony and legitimacy, and after 750, secular rulers were, in theory, at least, confined to the extramural Vatican. This, in fact, makes Rome the type example and to an extent the model for the cities of Gaul with their highly localized and bishop-centered politics; kings could and did enter them but were substantially external to their concerns. Rome was a very large city by Western standards, but it was a local society, too; the lands ruled by the pope were not that large, and popes and other Romans rarely went there anyway. The Romans looked inward (hardly as far as their own walls), in a way that the citizens of Constantinople, the center of an empire, did not—or, if they did, it was with that belief, characteristic of the inhabitants of capital cities even now, that what they did was of importance far beyond their own city boundaries. And the very great size of Rome by Western standards needs to be set against the fact that Constantinople in our period was maybe five times as large; the Byzantine comparison puts Rome more in perspective. We will come back to this point in the conclusion.

207. *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchesne, vol. 1, 97.39–40, pp. 497–498; ed. Duchesne, vol. 2, 104.12–17, p. 88–90; *Annales Fuldenses*, ed. Kurze, s.a. 896, p. 128. Note that *Annales Bertiniani*, ed. Waitz, s.a. 869, 872, pp. 100, 120, has Lothar II and then Louis II at the Lateran, the latter after a solemn procession; if these really happened, we might suppose that they were specifically invited in by Hadrian II—both rulers were in weak positions at the time and are unlikely to have forced an entry.

208. This sharpness broke down to an extent after 962; Otto I certainly did not keep to S. Pietro (see, e.g., Liudprand of Cremona, *Historia Ottonis*, ed. Chiesa, 22, p. 183; trans. Squatriti, p. 236), and Otto III sought to rule Rome directly (see Görich, *Otto III*, pp. 187–267). But the latter was forced out by revolts, and even the most imperially minded Roman sources did not propose that these (and their successors in the context of the wars of the Investiture Dispute) were anything other than temporary intrusions: see citations in Wickham, *Medieval Rome*, pp. 378–379.

CAIRO

Finally, let us turn more briefly to Cairo in the early Fāṭimid period, from 969/73 to the 1020s, to put these Christian processions into a wider context and to point up some significant parallels and absences.²⁰⁹ One absence can be set out instantly: an easily available caliphal tradition for the Fāṭimids to use. Abbasid caliphs did not systematically process in a formal way; people processed to them. There are several accounts of a Byzantine embassy to Baghdad in 917, all of which depict the ambassadors moving through the city in front of crowds and into the palace, with the caliph receiving them there; similarly, the eleventh-century etiquette book by Hilāl al-Ṣābiʿ, when discussing what caliphs wear during processions, *mawākib*, makes it clear that what the caliph will actually *do* during processions is sit stably on his throne. Their viziers processed sometimes, but caliphal ceremonial was firmly located inside the palace.²¹⁰ This account does have to be nuanced. For a start, caliphs had traditionally led the hajj to Mecca, which meant a highly public participation in this central religious event, although it has closer parallels with the rural processions of the West, not urban ones, and anyway, after 804, it fell out of use (Hārūn al-Rashīd was the last caliph to lead the hajj). Second, we do find casual mention of caliphal participation in public religious ceremonies, such as the Friday and post-Ramadan prayer processions in Sāmarrāʾ, which led to the assassination of Caliph al-Mutawakkil in 861, which makes us conclude that caliphs by no means always avoided the public world.²¹¹ But the word “casual” is significant here; more normally, even if such processions took place, they were not narrativized, which implies that, in the

209. This focus on the period up to the 1020s (after which Fāṭimid processional documentation is weak for a century), to make the period comparable to what we have discussed for other places, means that we will therefore not rely on the closest parallel to the *Book of Ceremonies* for tenth-century Constantinople and the *Liber Censuum* for twelfth-century Rome; that is to say, the normative descriptions of processions in fifteenth-century compilations that include twelfth-century accounts of Fāṭimid ceremonial, in particular al-Maqrīzī's citations in his *Kitāb al-mawā'iz wa-al-i'tibār fi dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa al-āthār* (henceforth *Khiṭaṭ*) (we have used where possible the partial translation by Casanova, vols. 3 and 4.1) of Ibn al-Ma'mūn al-Baṭā'īlī and Ibn al-Ṭuwayr. These latter are indeed parallel to our Constantinopolitan and Roman sources (see Canard, “Le cérémonial fatimite,” pp. 396–408, for processions; cf. Brubaker, “Space,” pp. 223–229, which represents an earlier version of some of our arguments here), but the twelfth century in Cairo was too different from the decades around 1000—it was, in particular, for the most part no longer directly ruled by the caliph but rather by his vizier and was also much more military in political complexion—and so can be read back less easily into earlier centuries than can the later ground rules for processions in Rome. Here we are lucky to have Paula Sanders's *Ritual* to guide us.

210. See Hilāl al-Ṣābiʿ, *Rusūm dār al-khilāfa*, trans. Salem, p. 73, for caliphal clothing; pp. 16–18, for the Byzantines in 917—for which see also, among others, *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, trans. al-Hijjāwī al-Qaddūmi, pp. 161–164. See Oesterle, *Kalifat*, pp. 98, 269–270; El Sheikh, “Institutionalisation.”

211. McMillan, *Meaning of Mecca*, for the hajj; al-Ṭabari, *The History*, trans. Kramer, vol. 34, pp. 172–173, for 861. Cf. Canard, “Le cérémonial fatimite,” p. 419, for going to the mosque on Friday. There are a few other similar casual mentions of Abbasid processions; more work needs to be done here. We are grateful to several members of the collective of this book, especially Petra Sijpesteijn, for advice on this.

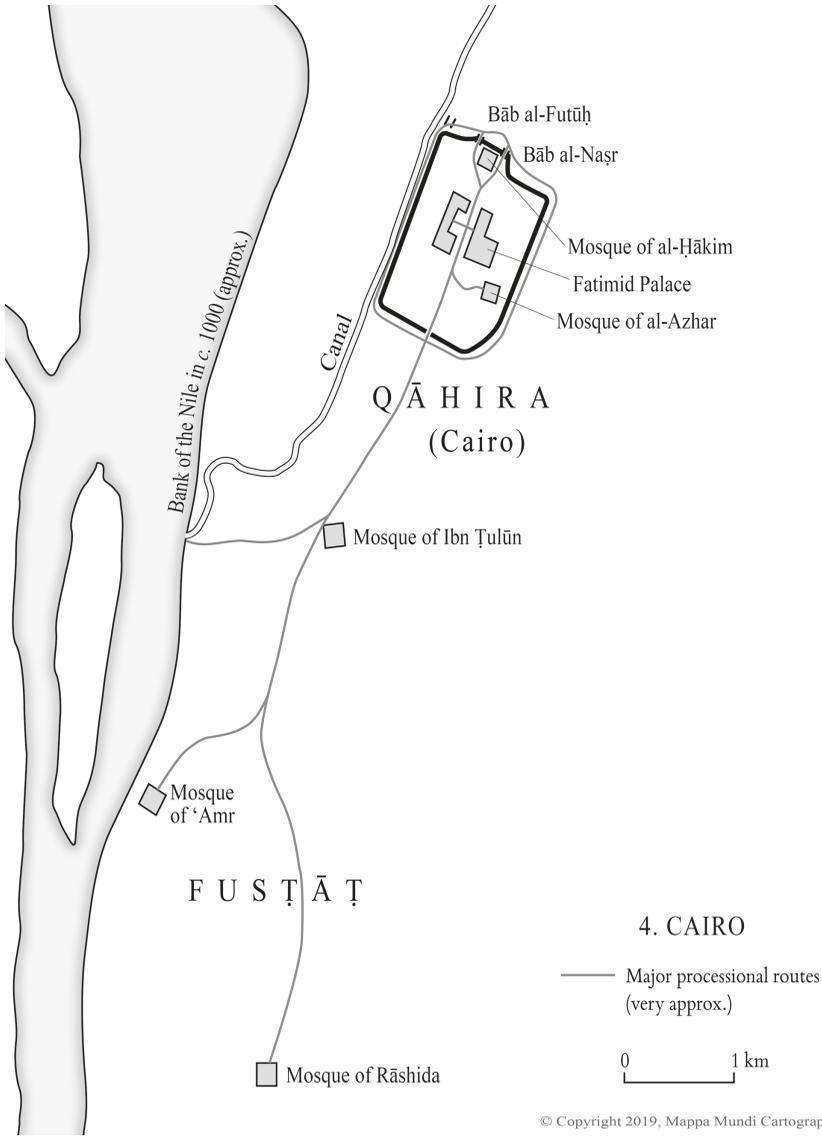
eyes of writers, they did not do enough to convey caliphal authority. The Abbasid caliphate was not, that is to say, a processional state to any significant extent—as with the Carolingians, assembly points (here palaces and mosque courtyards) were more important—and its legitimations were differently located. This choice is important here because it means that the Fāṭimid choice to engage in public processions in their capital of Cairo, founded in 969 just after the conquest of Egypt by the Fāṭimid general Jawhar, was new for a caliphal power. Their models were those of governors, not caliphs, and also those of Mediterranean, not Iraqi, rulers: in Ifrīqiya, roughly modern Tunisia, where the Fāṭimids had ruled for half a century, their predecessors the Aghlābid *amīrs* had in the late ninth century regularly and publicly processed from their political center of al-‘Abbāsiyya to the nearby regional capital of Kairouan during Ramadan; and the funeral cortège of the autonomous governor of Egypt, Ibn Ṭūlūn, at his death in 884, involved a procession divided by category—soldiers, bureaucrats, women, religious experts, and the poor—a division that recalls those of Rome.²¹²

Their processional choice in Egypt was, however, immediate. The first entry of Caliph al-Mu‘izz into Cairo in 973 was at the end of a rural procession that had moved, slowly, all the way from his former capital in Tunisia and entered Cairo formally with the coffins of his ancestors at the beginning of Ramadan, in a close parallel (in its explicit claim to power and potentially risky reception) to a Western *adventus*.²¹³ In the same year, al-Mu‘izz also processed northward outside the walls of the city at *‘īd al-fīṭr* at the end of Ramadan, one of the two great feasts of Islam, possibly with some popular audience, and this became regular thereafter; the other great feast, the sacrificial *‘īd al-naḥr* or *al-aḍḥa*, some two months later, was processed to the al-Azhar mosque inside the city by 975 at the latest; Ramadan Friday processions began in 990 under al-‘Azīz, both to the al-Azhar and to the al-Ḥākim mosque (as it was later named), which was then just outside the city to the north (See map 7.4). The “ritual city,” as Paula Sanders has called it, was created and held together by processions of this type. They were later added to and held together further by the processional celebration of the Muslim New Year, which delimited the city by going around the walls from the Bāb (gate) al-Naṣr to the next-door Bāb al-Futūḥ, one hundred yards away (either the long way, around virtually the whole wall circuit, or the short way, from gate to gate), although this is not attested until after 1100.²¹⁴

212. Talbi, *Lēmirat aghlabide*, pp. 254–255; al-Balawī, *Strat Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn*, ed. Kurd ‘Alī, pp. 344–346.

213. Oesterle, *Kalifat*, pp. 100–104.

214. Sanders, *Ritual*, pp. 42–50, 83–98; Oesterle, *Kalifat*, pp. 104–109, 111–128 (and see, in general, pp. 95–182, 306–311).



MAP 7.4. Cairo

What were the Fāṭimids doing here? Some context is needed before we can understand. First, Cairo, Qāhira, was not the main population center of the area; Fustāṭ was, just over a mile to its south. Fustāṭ was very large, far larger than Rome and probably even Constantinople; it was the seat of Egypt's government and the home of its administrators, and was also a center for an intense artisanal and commercial activity, which was unmatched anywhere else in the late tenth-century

Mediterranean. It was inhabited by Sunni Muslims, Christians, and Jews. The Fāṭimids were none of these: they were Ismāʿīlī Shīʿites, holding views about political legitimacy (including the view that they, not the rulers of Baghdad, should be caliphs) that Sunnis, had they had a Christian mindset and church hierarchy, would have called heretical. Ismāʿīlī Shīʿism was, in fact, not even the whole of the Shīʿa movement, and it featured an esoteric theology that others thought strange. The fact that the Fāṭimids founded their own capital beside Fuṣṭāṭ, to house the caliphal palace and also the army (but not the main administrative offices, which stayed in Fuṣṭāṭ until the twelfth century), was not in itself unusual—Muslim rulers routinely did this and had done so since the eighth century. It was less typical to found it so close to the old capital, but this was in itself an Egyptian (and also Tunisian) tradition; north of Fuṣṭāṭ, between it and Cairo, had been two other such political-military capitals, set up by governors in the eighth and ninth centuries, which were by now partly incorporated into Fuṣṭāṭ and partly ruined.²¹⁵ But the Fāṭimids therefore had a political center that was in walking distance from the main city of Egypt and was inhabited by people whose religions were different from the inhabitants of that city. They needed not to be absorbed by Fuṣṭāṭ, and they therefore began by constructing Cairo ritually, to make it distinct—and visibly so, for these ceremonies and processions were largely held outside the palace, in public spaces.

The audience of such processions was probably quite often just the (initially all Shīʿite) army that largely made them up. This was a group it was important to impress and involve, since army leaders in Muslim states could easily enough (although not for another century in Fāṭimid Egypt) grab the reins of real power. Another audience was local nonmilitary Shīʿites, who were a minority but numerous enough to celebrate the very Shīʿa festival of *ʿid al-ghadir* by as early as 973; this was not yet absorbed into caliphal (and Sunni) processional ritual, although it would be by the early twelfth century. But anyone could come into the city of Cairo (it was only the palace in its center that was closed off), and Fuṣṭāṭ was not far away; non-Shīʿites would be able, if and when they came, to see that Cairo was being constructed as special, and that would be an effective result, too. This public representation of ritual distinctiveness was at least as important as the other reason for the initial Fāṭimid choice to be far more processionally minded than any contemporary Muslim power, that is to say, the esoteric elements of their theology; everything in Fāṭimid imagery had a hidden as well as an open meaning, and processions were no exception here.²¹⁶

Once Cairo was established as ritually distinct, however, another danger became evident: that Fāṭimid power would be seen as too separate from Egyptian politics and society, too religiously marginal, and therefore potentially not legitimate. That the Fāṭimid caliphs disliked, and occasionally sought to prevent, the main Christian

215. See especially Sayyid, *La capitale de l'Égypte*, pp. 28–67.

216. Sanders, *Ritual*, pp. 124–129. For the army, see Oesterle, *Kalifat*, pp. 116–121; for the interrelation of political self-presentation and theology, see Oesterle, *Kalifat*, pp. 175–178.

religious festivals of the Fustāṭīs themselves (including an elaborate procession for the Baptism of Christ and another for Easter), which in some cases (Baptism, New Year) Sunni Muslims celebrated, too, did not help.²¹⁷ Now that Cairo had a clear ritual identity, the caliphs apparently decided that it would be only sensible to try to incorporate Fustāṭ into Cairo's own liturgical processional ritual, whenever possible. Caliph al-Ḥākim (996–1021) is said to have done this first; in 1002–1005, he built another major mosque, to join al-Azhar in Cairo and the al-Ḥākim mosque, which he completed, at Rāshida on the southern edge of Fustāṭ, which he would therefore have to cross when going to Friday prayers there during Ramadan; and in 1012, he began to go to the mosque of 'Amr, Fustāṭ's oldest major mosque and focus of the government quarter, as well.

Al-Ḥākim was a Shi'ite extremist, capable of destroying or defacing churches, synagogues, and (Sunni) mosques and being highly oppressive to the huge non-Shi'ite majority—sometimes, at least, for he blew hot and cold. But this does not take away from his apparent awareness that Fustāṭ and Cairo needed to be brought together, however much this was done through an imposition of Ismā'īlī religious hegemony, as Jenny Oesterle stresses. Anyway, it worked; by the twelfth century, and probably in this case earlier, the populations of both Cairo and Fustāṭ are described as decorating the streets for the caliphal procession in Ramadan to the mosque of 'Amr, in a ceremonial practice that recalls—to cite only examples from the same rough period—Skylitzes's description of Michael V's post-Easter procession in Constantinople and the description in the *Liber Censuum* of the Easter Monday procession in Rome, and which must have conveyed the same mixture of power and collective identity.²¹⁸ And that was also reinforced by the main nonliturgical procession of the year, one that had probably long existed but was again immediately adopted by al-Mu'izz, from his first year in 973, and by all Fāṭimid caliphs after him: out from Cairo to the ritual opening of the canal that ran eastward from the Nile and was only passable when the river was in its annual flood—which meant that the ceremony of cutting the breakwater that opened the canal was part of the collective celebration of Egypt's hoped-for continued fertility. There was a crush of people from the start, and doubtless always thereafter; these were from both cities, but they must have been above all Fustāṭīs, for the mouth of the canal was closer to Fustāṭ than to Cairo.²¹⁹

217. Al-Maqrīzi, *Khiṭaṭ*, trans. Casanova, vol. 3, pp. 38–54, for the festivals and occasional Fāṭimid prohibitions (he does not cite the processions, but he is writing four hundred years later, when what remained of Fustāṭ was long absorbed into Cairo). For the processions at Baptism and Easter (again temporarily prohibited, by al-Ḥākim), see a contemporary text, Yaḥyā al-Anṭakī, *Tārīkh*, trans. Pirone, 12.126–129, 15.18, pp. 251, 320. See further, for the Christian (and Persian) New Year and the carnivalesque processions that took place in Fustāṭ then, Shoshan, *Popular Culture*, pp. 42–50.

218. Sanders, *Ritual*, pp. 52–63, 72–74, for decorating streets; Oesterle, *Kalīfat*, pp. 132–150, 306–311. On al-Ḥākim, see most recently Walker, *Caliph*, containing a useful selection of translated texts.

219. Sanders, *Ritual*, pp. 100–104. The acceptance of the processional imagery of the Fāṭimid court by others is also well shown by a roughly contemporary account of the installation of Patriarch Kirilluṣ of Alexandria in 1078, which involved a formal visit to Cairo by boat and a procession from the Nile to the palace of the caliph (and then to that of the vizier Badr al-Jamālī, by now the real power in Egypt), before proceeding

Descriptions of these processions are fairly numerous in our sources. Many are from much later, but some are contemporary, as with al-Musabbiḥī's chronicle of the years 1024–1025, or not long after, in 1047, with the travelogue of the Persian pilgrim Nāṣer-e Khosraw, who was very impressed by the canal-cutting ceremony. They stress the large scale of the processions, including officials of all types—and ten thousand soldiers, according to Nāṣer-e Khosraw, which, however implausible, is on a scale supported by later sources—plus giraffes and elephants and (in some accounts) a large popular audience. They also stress the dramatically high quality of the clothing worn by everyone from the caliph downward, silk and brocade, plus gold and jewels on swords, belts, horse collars, and saddles. This distinguishes Fāṭimid ceremonial from that of the Franks or the Romans, where wealth as displayed in clothing is rather less stressed; the quality of the clothing doubtless had its own esoteric symbolism, but the Fāṭimids were also at least as rich as the Byzantine emperors (whose clothing was also impressive), which did not hurt.²²⁰ The sources are sufficiently detailed that one can sometimes do a Kremlinology on particular processions, that is to say, identify the presence or absence of particular people and its political significance.²²¹ It would add too much weight to this chapter to develop that point, but it is certainly significant that sources mention it; it illustrates again the degree to which the detail, not just the fact, of power was meant here to be conveyed visibly in processional form.

CONCLUSIONS

Fāṭimid processional politics was different from those we have seen up to now in some crucial respects. In Constantinople and in papal Rome, there was no spatial separation between ruler and city, so it was easier there than in Fuṣṭāṭ, at least, to link city identity with imperial/papal (though not imperial Frankish) identity. But Egypt was not more similar to the Frankish West. In the West, imperial/royal

to Fuṣṭāṭ for a second consecration: *History of the Patriarchs*, ed. 'Abd al-Māsiḥ and Burmeister, vol. 2.3, pp. 325–326.

220. Sanders, *Ritual*, passim, but especially pp. 29–30, 49, 64, 103, and cf. 151 (from al-Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, citing Ibn al-Ma'mūn, for the amazingly high expenditures for 1122–1123 on clothing). Al-Musabbiḥī's accounts of the Ramadan processions of November–December 1024 (*Akhbār Miṣr*, ed. Sayyid and Bianquis, 1, pp. 62–66, 80–81) are translated in Walker, *Orations*, pp. 30–35. See Nāṣer-e Khosraw, *Book of Travels*, trans. Thackston, pp. 48–51, for the canal cutting, which does indeed stress the large popular audience; compare Ibn al-Ṭuwayr a century later, cited in al-Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ* (trans. Casanova, *Description*, vol. 4.1, pp. 113–114), who says that some thirteen thousand soldiers standardly paraded for the 'īd al-ghadir procession. For popular participation, see also, for example, the account of throngs surrounding al-Ḥākim during one of his Ramadan Friday processions in 1014, described in al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz* (who plausibly took it from the lost sections of al-Musabbiḥī) and translated in Walker, *Caliph*, p. 87. In Constantinople, clothing is stressed in the *Book of Ceremonies*, although not the *typikon* of the Great Church; it showed a similar display of wealth to that in Cairo.
221. Sanders, *Ritual*, pp. 64–66, commenting on the very detailed surviving portion of al-Musabbiḥī, *Akhbār Miṣr*.

power was in general external to city society as a whole, so that local ceremonial underpinned local community and hierarchy above all, and rulers came in from outside, welcome or unwelcome, in *adventus*; but in Cairo, the ritual focus of the Fāṭimids was a city that was wholly theirs, so *adventus* was not needed, at least after 973. The Fāṭimids were certainly in many ways, especially in these first decades of their rule, very external indeed to Egyptians and especially Fuṣṭāṭīs, but they responded by processionalizing their own special city, making it ritually important, and then, later, joining it to Fuṣṭāṭ. Significantly, we also do not have records of any caliphal entry into Fuṣṭāṭ that really resembled an *adventus* (al-Mu‘izz in 973 is specifically said not to have done an entry here);²²² the initial processional linking Cairo and Fuṣṭāṭ may have been coercive in some ways—it was, after all, the work of al-Ḥākīm—but it was more organic than any formal entry in the Frankish lands.

These are useful contrasts, which illuminate the underlying structures of all of our main examples here. They also show that the considerable cultural and religious differences between Egypt and either Byzantium or the West around 1000 do not have to deter comparison. The fact is that processions in all the areas we have looked at can be usefully paralleled, however dissimilar the detailed patterning of each set of rituals was. There has not been all that much comparison in the field of this chapter, but it is illuminating, as long as one is careful about comparing like with like. Michael McCormick and Jenny Oesterle have already shown us this;²²³ but the comparisons can be developed further—and well beyond the cases studied in this chapter.

One set of comparisons and contrasts concerns religion. Oesterle stresses that, despite considerable similarities between Ottonian and Fāṭimid uses of the processional world to represent power—uses that indeed, at least in part, went back in each case to the Roman Empire—one basic difference between them was that the caliph was a religious leader as well, and the German king was not. Ottonian kings had to enter the religious world of bishops, whereas the caliph, in a religion with no church, actually personified that world, all the more forcefully because of the highly numinous role caliphs had in Ismā‘īlī theology.²²⁴ This might put the Fāṭimid caliph together with the pope on one side of a religious divide, the Byzantine emperor and Frankish kings on the other. Even then, however, there are distinctions to be made. The Fāṭimid caliph, in this respect very unlike the pope, had to present his power to an audience that for the most part did not

222. See, e.g., Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil fi al-tarikh*, trans. Fagnan, p. 372; al-Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, trans. Casanova, vol. 4.1, p. 20. Both are late texts.

223. McCormick, *Eternal Victory*; Oesterle, *Kalifat*; see also Canard, “Le cérémonial fatimite,” who cautiously proposes (undocumented and perhaps unlikely) Byzantine influence on the ceremonial of Cairo; and Shepard, “*Adventus*,” focused more on the eleventh century.

224. Oesterle, *Kalifat*, esp. pp. 360–366, for Ottonians and caliphs; for the Roman inheritance, see, e.g., Brubaker, “Space,” pp. 226–229, who makes slightly different comparative points from those set out here.

share his religion, or his version of Islam, which made his presentation of power more external, less collective, and potentially more contestable—although, conversely, the caliph had more flexibility than the pope had; it would have been hard, in particular, for any pope to develop as military an imagery as the Fāṭimids managed very rapidly. On the other side of that divide, the Byzantine emperor had much more transactional power in the Eastern Church than any Western ruler had, except possibly in the high Carolingian period, and we have seen his processions overlap with those of the patriarch of Constantinople, in a way that even the most liturgically minded Ottonian king would not have been able to contemplate—although, conversely, the Church was still distinct in Byzantium, and it had its own parallel rituals, which were also less hierarchical than imperial (and also caliphal) rituals were often depicted as being. These are real differences; they are nonetheless nuances regarding the forms of political representation, for all these figures were using religious ritual and processional imagery to set out their legitimacy, in as regular a form as possible.

When we compare in the context of the main concern of this volume, however, that is to say, the relationship between empires (and their analogues) and communities, we have a variety of parameters we can use. One is movement, which respects the fluidity that processions represented in all our examples. Rulers sought publicly to present power everywhere, and, as we have seen, they did it processionally in most places—here the main exceptions were the Frankish kings in their secular environment, reliant on assembly politics as they were for their main legitimation, and Abbasid caliphs, outside our area of study, more identified with palaces and mosques, whose commitment to processional self-representation was at best occasional. But the different types of processional routes had different significances.

First, entering cities conveyed power and claims to legitimacy everywhere, for bishops, kings, popes, emperors, and caliphs—even if the Fāṭimids only did it once, at their arrival in Cairo. The fact that the Frankish and German kings coming to Rome were met with remarkably elaborate ceremony but did not, with rare exceptions, actually enter the city, marked both the real respect (and menace) that their military power already conveyed and their lack of political legitimacy as rulers in Rome itself. Inside their own kingdoms, on the other hand, the fact that their processional activity was, above all, one of *adventus* underscores the degree to which kings and their analogues were in a real sense external to urban societies. Indeed, *adventus* ceremonies, although they certainly conveyed power, did not convey the sort of daily hegemonic authority, constructing power, and identity that a regular procession did.

Second, encircling the city represented protection everywhere, but as a processional act, it was restricted to religious leaders (which included caliphs), and our different societies placed different levels of reliance on it. In Gaul, especially

before 700 but afterward as well, it was a very common activity; in Constantinople and Cairo, it was regular but less central; and in Rome, it was ignored. This points up Roman self-absorption but also, we think, the greater sense of danger that cities felt they had in Gaul, relatively small demographically and spatially as they were, and also exposed to external political threats, which the three great cities we have otherwise looked at normally weathered more easily. It should be added that one-off propitiatory processions were much more common in Gaul than elsewhere: they were almost unknown in Rome and increasingly rare in Constantinople, though *litai* continued to commemorate earlier supplicatory processions, as we have seen (Islam works differently here as a religion, so we should not expect an equivalent in Cairo); this may well reflect a similar sense of danger.

Third, moving processionally inside the city, or sometimes in and out of its walls to include external cult sites, was the work of powerful religious leaders and also Byzantine emperors. This did more than the other two to represent, and indeed to construct, an organic relationship between political power and urban society. Rulers in every one of our examples, including bishops in the more localized societies of Gaul, promoted this. It unified geographically. In Gaul, internal processions promoted the construction of a single community out of sometimes quite scattered areas of urban settlement; the dense web of processional routes had a similar effect in Rome; even in Constantinople, where the main routes were fewer, side routes brought almost all the city into the processional space at least sometimes. Here the Fāṭimids focused above all on Cairo, but once they had established their “ritual city” there, they extended a similar processional network in a fairly organic manner to link it with the far larger and more religiously diverse Fuṣṭāṭ as well.

Moving processionally inside and close to the city, regularly and repetitively (the more regular the better), preferably with large numbers of people involved, was, however, where the representation and the hoped-for legitimization of power intersected most tightly with the construction of community. Actual popular participation in processions was apparently standard only in Constantinople and Gaul (where urban populations were small) and in some of the major ceremonies in Rome, but popular *audiences* were, as far as we can see, normal and often substantial. Here the Byzantines stand out, for the frequency of processions, the scale of popular participation, and the apparent scale of audiences, to the extent that it may sometimes have been hard to tell who was processing and who was watching. In this case, the processional creation of community was very clear, and it had its practical political counterpart in the fact that Constantinople was the city, more than any other in our period, in which the urban crowd was most autonomously part of politics. This is partially because it was a very large city at the center of a large empire, and is the only one we are looking at where this was the

case—apart, obviously, from Fuṣṭāṭ-Cairo, although there the minority Ismāʿīlī imagery for official processions made them operate less effectively to construct wider collectivities. But it is also worth stressing that the Byzantine ruling elites accepted this and furthered it. The extensive practice of decorating streets was an act that brought the urban community directly into the project of creating, not just observing, processional space. The study of Byzantine processions, and of their great cost in time and money to both emperor and patriarch, makes it clearer just how much the Byzantine state recognized the legitimacy of urban collective practice and sought not to crush it but rather to negotiate with it and hopefully also to harness and control it—as well as making it clearer, by comparison, just how rare this was elsewhere. The popes in Rome did this, too, spending similar amounts of time and almost as much money; but popular involvement in processions and their decoration, although very great by Western standards, was not quite as great as in Constantinople, and crowd politics, although it certainly existed, was for the most part less autonomous, at least in our period. In Fuṣṭāṭ, once caliphal processional interest included it, streets were sometimes similarly decorated, although here this nod to a need for a community buy-in, which it must indeed have been, did not extend further; Cairo remained ritually more important. That is to say, in Constantinople, the set of meanings and negotiations conveyed by processions was uniquely multilevel. They were much less complex elsewhere, except in Rome—but simpler even in Rome.

Finally, it is worth considering which power was being represented by processions. In Gaul, it was bishops, in the very localized communities we looked at, particularly in the sixth century but later as well. Kings appeared as external figures for the most part and were not rivals for regular processional space, which was the sphere of the bishop, in his own relationship to local communities. This was, above all, true for Rome as well, where kings/emperors were not even theoretically sovereign, except for brief and contested periods. To Romans, the elaborate ceremonies of reception for the latter did not at all convey subjection, although, as we have seen, it is entirely possible that kings themselves thought differently. In Fuṣṭāṭ-Cairo, it was, of course, the caliph whose legitimate power was being expressed processionally. Constantinople was, however, again more complex. The processional world was a very ecclesiastical one even here, and there was a typological difference between imperial and patriarchal processions. But these were often simultaneous, and the terminology for religious processions intercut fluidly with that of more secular ones. We tried to show earlier how the separation between the two was both permanent and constantly lessened by imperial protagonism. We do not see any real tension here (or not much, at least); everyone knew that the emperor was the real power in the city. But even he recognized that the processional world was partly an autonomous ecclesiastical space. The delicate way in which this was negotiated is all the clearer when set

against the relatively straightforward way in which power was represented elsewhere. And the need to do this undoubtedly added to the concern for expense to which the *Book of Ceremonies*, in particular, is witness.

All these processions conveyed both power, internal and/or external by turns, and collective identity, of both processors and audience. That identity was important, or else the popular element in processions would have faded away, and also rulers would not have spent so much money on them. Sometimes, indeed, we can see that processional identity move directly into subsequent action, as with the destruction of the Clermont synagogue in 576 or the fall of Michael V in Constantinople in 1042.²²⁵ Public processions were here, as a practice, part of the symbolic construction of community explored, for example, by Anthony Cohen;²²⁶ in cities, at least, they contributed to the whole framework of how people conceived of themselves as a community, however hierarchical, of Constantinopolitans or Tourangeaux or Romans or Fuṣṭāṭīs, in themselves and with respect to others. How people constructed the processional world collectively also influenced how they played with it later and, sometimes, how they could contest it. And the existence of the processional world, although not universal in the early Middle Ages, was significantly widely spread across different societies; notwithstanding differences, it had common patterns, which are illuminating in their differences precisely because they were held in common.

225. See above, pp. 145–146 and 156. Such examples of post-processional action would become much more common in the sources everywhere after the mid-eleventh century and across the rest of the Middle Ages, but we would argue that this is because sources increase in their number and density, not because anything changed in the way processions worked.

226. Cohen, *Symbolic Construction*.

Death of a Patriarch

The Murder of Yūḥannā ibn Jamī (d. 966) and the Question of “Melkite” Identity in Early Islamic Palestine

Daniel Reynolds

THERE was in Jerusalem (Bayt al-Maqdis) a governor named Muḥammad ibn ʿIsmāʿil al-Ṣinajī who was the cause of much harassment to Yūḥannā ibn Jamī, patriarch of Jerusalem, always demanding many more gifts from him than the established custom. The patriarch had, until then, given him everything every time he demanded, but the harassment against him increased and became exorbitant, so he went in person to Egypt where he went directly to Kāfūr asking for help from the Christian kuttāb and filed a complaint against al-Ṣinajī and the others, about what he was forced to undergo.

Kāfūr then wrote to al-Ḥasan ibn ʿUbayd Allāh ibn Tughj, his successor in Syria, ordering him to ensure that al-Ṣinajī would cease, once and for all, his harassment of the patriarch and that he (al-Ṣinajī) stop demanding from the patriarch that which he was not required to give him, and to let him know that the patriarch could count on his full support. He wrote one letter after another to ibn ʿUbayd in this regard and, in turn, wrote to al-Ṣinajī to inform him of what these letters contained. Al-Ṣinajī, however, did not cease from his actions.

It was close to the feast of Pentecost. Al-Ṣinajī sent to ask from the patriarch more than was customary for him to send on the occasion of this feast. He did it with such insistence that the patriarch went down to Ramla to make ibn ʿUbayd Allāh aware of the fact, and because he knew that the letters had not been of any use. ʿUbayd Allāh sent to him his commander, named Takīn, with orders to protect the Christians and their children and not to allow Al-Ṣinajī, or anyone else, to harass them or commit abuses against them.

Al-Ṣinajī despised the protections the patriarch had used against him and he sent to ask him again for what he had claimed. The patriarch then sought protection against him from the commander Takīn without giving him that which he had asked for. Al-Ṣinajī could not tolerate this anymore and, gathering his kin, his supporters and other individuals of unclear

origins and families, he sent his messenger to the patriarch to summon him. The patriarch had already heard about the rabble which surrounded him and, fearing for his life, stood reluctantly, telling the messenger, “Has he not been ordered more than once to cease harassing me and to stop expecting from me that which I do not owe him? Muḥammad ibn ‘Ubayd Allāh has sent me those that he relies upon to defend me and protect me from him. At this time it is not possible for me to go to him.” He was so kind to the messenger until he departed and passed on his answer to al-Ṣinajī. The patriarch then ordered for the doors of the Church of the Resurrection to be bolted and the church fortified.

Yaḥya ibn Sa‘īd, *Kitāb al-Dhayl*, 101–103, pp. 799–801, English translation by the author.¹

When Yūḥannā ibn Jamī (John VII), the thirty-fifth orthodox patriarch of Jerusalem, barricaded himself in the Church of the Anastasis from the May 28 to May 30, 966, in the week before Pentecost, he was not to know that he had only a few hours left to live.² But the following day, after the arrest of Yūḥannā’s protector, the commander Takīn, and repeated assaults against the church doors, the

1. This chapter was completed during my research as a British Academy postdoctoral fellow at the Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies, University of Birmingham. I thank the British Academy for its generous support and also am grateful for the support of the School of History and Cultures, University of Birmingham, where this research was undertaken. In addition, I would like to thank all of my fellow participants at the “Empires and Communities” roundtable in Vienna for their insightful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter. Leslie Brubaker and Chris Wickham deserve special mention for reading and commenting upon the many manifestations of this chapter. I would also like to thank Rebecca Darley, who read the first version and discussed many of the ideas with me. In addition, I would like to thank my colleagues at the University of Birmingham: Andrew Bayliss, Philip Burton, Hannah Cornwell, Claus Jurman, Ruth Macrides (deceased), Gideon Nisbett, Lucy Ryzova, Gareth Sears, and Mantha Zamourkoupi, who offered feedback and comments as part of the faculty reading group. All faults are naturally my own, but I have benefited enormously from their comments and critique. I would also like to thank Matilde Grimaldi for her assistance in drawing the map and to John Lamoreaux and Labib Azzouz for their help at various stages with this chapter. Names and the transliteration of names are invariably a problem in discussions that involve figures and sources drawn from several linguistic and cultural traditions. Throughout this chapter, I have attempted to avoid the anglicization of Arabic, Greek, and Latin names where possible and have given them in their original form (thus, Yūḥannā VII rather than John VII). However, in the interests of clarity, names of well-known historical figures have been reproduced in their anglicized forms (thus, Charlemagne rather than Karolus Magnus).
2. This is the date provided by Yaḥya ibn Sa‘īd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 102–103, pp. 801–802. A useful Italian translation of this edition appears in Yaḥya ibn Sa‘īd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, trans. Pirone. For the sake of consistency, all dates in this chapter are given for the Common Era. Throughout, I will refer to the Church of the Anastasis, Golgotha, and the Martyrion as separate entities, although all three spaces are commonly grouped together under the modern English term “Church of the Holy Sepulchre.” Use of the modern term would not reflect the fact that prior to the eleventh century, they were treated as separate liturgical spaces by the Melkite Church; the Church of the Anastasis referring to the structure housing the *aedicula* and the tomb of Christ, Golgotha being the separate liturgical space encasing the site of the Crucifixion, and the Martyrion referring to the basilica constructed by Emperor Constantine c. 335. The Sinai Georgian Menaion, a translation of an earlier Arabic manuscript preserved in Sinai, Georgian MS 34, lists them as separate destinations in the Melkite stationary liturgy: Garitte, *Le calendrier*. The feasts observed in the Anastasis are listed on January 24; March 1 and 30; April 21; May 4, 13, and 20; June 12, 20, 26, 28, and 29; July 16 and 30; September 20, 26, and 30; October 21 and 28. November 6, 11, 13, 18, 22, and 30; December 4 and 8. Those of Golgotha are on May 7, September 19 October 12, and December 6. On the Martyrion, see the entry for September 14.

barricade gave way, and a mob, incited by Muḥammad ibn ʿIsmaʿil al-Şinajī, and made up of his family and followers, entered the church and proceeded to ransack and set fire to the building. In the ensuing conflagration, the central dome over the tomb of Christ collapsed, apparently destroying much of the building that had stood on the site since the fourth century.³ The Church of Holy Sion was also attacked in the resultant confusion.⁴ Yūḥannā was later found hiding in a cistern and was murdered by the assembled crowd. His body was dragged into the atrium of the Constantinian Martyrion Church, which opened onto the main thoroughfare of the city; he was then tied to a column and publicly burned.⁵

Although not the first documented instance of violence perpetrated against the Church of the Anastasis and its most senior clerical figure, the brutality of the events of 966 described by Yaḥya ibn Saʿīd is unique among accounts of anti-Christian violence in the Jund Filasṭīn (Palestine) in the early Islamic period.⁶ The resulting trauma reverberated widely. Within less than a century, the account of the murder had become enshrined within the collective historical memory of the various Melkite communities that inhabited the Jund Filasṭīn and Jund Mişr (Egypt), often by writers who were not directly connected to the Church in Jerusalem. Yaḥya ibn Saʿīd's description of the murder, compiled around 1034, is the most detailed of these attempts at memorializing the persecution and death of the patriarch. News of the event is also to be found in sources originating from beyond the caliphate. According to the *Life* of Athanasios the Athonite, it was due to reports of the destruction of the "holy church" received by the monk in Cyprus that discouraged him from journeying to Jerusalem with his companion Antony.⁷

Even John Skylitzes, a writer who rarely describes events in the Jund Filasṭīn, notes the murder within the *Synopsis Historion*, and, unlike the later attack against the church in 1009 during the reign of al-Ḥākim, Yūḥannā's murder is described in all known copies of Skylitzes' work (see figure 8.1).⁸

3. Yaḥya ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 103, p. 801; trans. Pirone, p. 114.

4. Yaḥya ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 103, p. 801; trans. Pirone, p. 114.

5. Yaḥya ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 103, p. 801; trans. Pirone, p. 114.

6. We may note, for example, that the attack against the Church of the Anastasis and the Martyrion of Constantine in 936 occurred on Palm Sunday Saʿīd ibn Batṭīq, *Kitāb Nazm al-Jawhar*, ed. Cheikho, Carra de Vaux, and Zayyat, pp. 287–288; trans. Pirone, p. 436.

7. *Vitae Duae Antiquae Sancti Athanasii Athonitae*, ed. Noret, vita A, 95, pp. 45, 20–23; vita B, 31–32, pp. 161–163.

8. John Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historion*, ed. Thurn, pp. 278–279; trans. Wortley, 14.21, p. 267. Bogdanovic, "Rhetoric," esp. pp. 4–5 n. 27; Tsamakda, *Illustrated Chronicle*; Boeck, *Imagining*. The Madrid Skylitzes does depict the burning of the Anastasis and the murder of Patriarch Yūḥannā VII in 966; see Tsamakda, *Illustrated Chronicle*, p. 196, fig. 394 (miniature 404, fol. 156v); whereas the report of the attack in 1009 is missing.

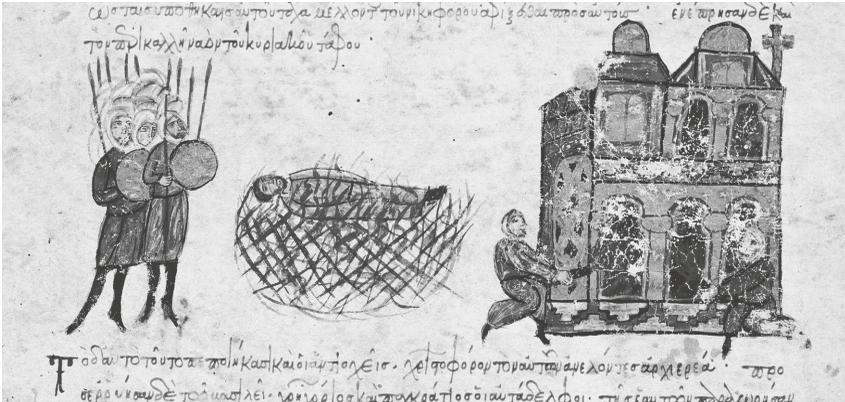


FIGURE 8.1. Patriarch Yūḥannā is burnt on a pyre before an armed mob; two figures simultaneously set fire to the Church of the Anastasis and the Martyrion of Constantine with torches. From the so-called Madrid Skylitzes (Madrid, Bibliotheca Nacional, MS Graecus Vitr. 26–2, fol. 156v)]

It is probably due to the violent and public nature of Yūḥannā’s murder that this single episode has become something of a trope in recent treatment of Melkite life in early Islamic Jerusalem and often used to reinforce broader perceptions of Christian identity within the Jund Filasṭīn by the mid-tenth century as one bound to their status as a political and social minority.⁹ The purpose of this chapter is to reject this essentialist premise. Instead, the following discussion offers two contentions. First is that a deeper reading of the context of Yūḥannā’s murder reveals a far more complex dynamic between the Melkites and Islamic authorities than previously recognized. Whereas the story of Yūḥannā has generally been enlisted in past studies as a further example of Muslim violence against the Christian population of the Jund Filasṭīn, this study seeks to overturn this reading by exploring the more complex and often overlapping identities and negotiations of power embodied by the patriarch and his antagonists. Indeed, a more contextual approach to the episode suggests that the murder of Yūḥannā was provoked by the recognition of the power wielded by the patriarch, as an individual (and office) who commanded popular support from one of the Jund Filasṭīn’s largest and most visible non-Muslim demographics in the closing decades of Abbasid rule.

Second, this study offers a general caution that the story of Yūḥannā’s final days and violent demise cannot be examined in isolation from the role performed by Yaḥya ibn Sa’īd as an eleventh-century writer engaged in the crafting of a memory of an event that had occurred almost seventy years earlier. As the only surviving text to describe the events of 966 in any detail, the world and final hours

9. Gil, *History*, pp. 324–326; Linder, “Christian Communities.” A more contextual reading of the murder, although brief, is offered in Ikononopoulos, “Byzantium,” pp. 20–21.

of Yūḥannā ibn Jamī, exist only as a construct crafted and defined by Yaḥya. That this may be used to understand Yūḥannā ibn Jamī as a historical figure of the tenth-century is an approach that warrants considerable caution. In this respect, the intent of this chapter is not to verify whether Yūḥannā's final hours unfolded in the way that Yaḥya describes but to examine how Yaḥya's use of particular themes and motifs draws upon a common set of symbols from which we might better understand the construction of Melkite identity for his audience. As this chapter will demonstrate, in drawing upon the memory of 966 and situating it within a specific temporal and spatial context, Yaḥya inadvertently informs us of much about his own conception of Melkite identity by the 1030s and the expectations of his audience. In turn, what we might infer about the broader context of Yūḥannā's life and murder through other sources serves to reflect the fluidity of Palestinian "Melkite" identity in its response to the ever-changing currents of political and social power in the Jund Filasṭin between the tenth and eleventh centuries.

VIOLENCE AND IDENTITY

I want to briefly pause, however, to reflect upon the significance that a discussion dedicated to Melkite life and identity should begin with a violent action. In many respects, the focus of this chapter upon a single, violent death falsely draws the event into a microcosm in which the act may be examined independently of its wider social context. But as with every human action, episodes of violence never occur within a vacuum and frequently reflect the culmination of a series of events and choices that give rise to the conditions in which one party, whether individual or collective, is propelled to take the life of another. Some of these factors are individual and are directly guided by the power of the human protagonist with whom the decision to enact violence ultimately lies. Fleeting though that choice may be, the act of causing harm to another involves a single moment when the collective weight of events, present or past, are heeded and granted agency in directing the decision of the aggressor (or galvanizing group aggression) at a common target. Yet violence is not a biological phenomenon but a social one, and its perpetrators and victims are not born but created.¹⁰ Acts of aggression and conflict might occur in nature, but what classifies a particular action as "violent" is a category agreed on by social consensus within the framework of an established behavioral (and sometimes moral) code.¹¹ In turn, the factors that cultivate the conditions in which individuals may become the agents, or victims, of violence are repeatedly shaped by more subtle structural forces that cultivate the specific temporal, social, and

10. See Drake, ed., *Violence*; Halsall, ed., *Violence*; Matic and Jensen, eds., *Archaeologies*; Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, eds., *Violence*; Lange, "Where on Earth?"; Hawting, "Case"; Lev, "From Revolutionary Violence," pp. 67–86; Blume, "Social Perspectives"; Sen, *Identity*; Fearon and Laitin, "Violence"; Crenshaw, "Mapping"; Baviskar, "Between Violence and Desire"; Elcheroth and Reicher, *Identity*.

11. See the important comments in Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, "Introduction."

spatial contexts that give rise to dynamics of antagonism, conflict, or persecution. What leads to a deliberate death, at a specific place, at a certain time, and at the hands of a particular individual is shaped by a wider series of social forces that determine the world and worldview of its enactors.¹²

These factors, both structural and individual, are intimately bound to one another, in much the same way that the statuses of aggressor and victim are connected and interpersonal. One cannot exist without the other. Both, however, are often bound to the issue of modes of “identity” and their role in shaping relationships of connection or opposition between individuals or “groups” in their response to each other.¹³ These oppositions may be provoked by a variety of factors, whether sex or gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religious confession, or political affiliation, whether or not these are identities genuinely held by the victim or simply perceived by the aggressor.¹⁴ They may also be fundamentally (and fatally) reductive. Although individual humans may cultivate and maintain multiple, simultaneous modes of identity across their life span, they can be persecuted and killed because of the potency that a single facet of a human identity presents to another individual. Indeed, such traits often contribute to defining relationships of hostility between individuals or the collective social organizations (“groups”) that they periodically form through mutual agreement with one, or many, of these identities.

Often, episodes of violence transgress the merely personal relationship inherent between perpetrator and victim and function as symbolic attacks against the broader identities and social organizations that the victim, however momentarily, is believed to embody. The highly publicized assassination of the British Labour MP Jo Cox, a vocal supporter of the “Remain” campaign in the lead-up to the United Kingdom’s 2016 European Union membership referendum, serves as a stark reminder that the act of killing an individual is often undertaken in recognition of the symbolic power that the act and the victim wield over other holders and opponents of those identities or ideals.¹⁵

It is with these thoughts in mind that we return to the murder of Patriarch Yūḥannā ibn Jamī and the subsequent desecration of his body in the atrium of the Martyrion Church. As noted in the opening discussion, our understanding of the death of Yūḥannā needs to set aside the question of “what happened” and instead focus upon the ways in which the story of his final hours and violent demise were invoked by writers such as Yaḥya ibn Sa’id as part of a historical memory within the Melkite community a century later. Yaḥya’s own description

12. Nirenberg, *Communities*.

13. For a discussion of the problems with groups as categories of analysis, see Brubaker and Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity’”; Brubaker, *Ethnicity*, pp. 7–27.

14. Elcheroth and Reicher, *Identity*, pp. 73–97.

15. Cobain, “Jo Cox Killed”; Booth et al., “Jo Cox Murder Suspect”; Jester, “On Jo Cox”; Bhambra, “Locating Brexit,” p. 91; Galpin, *Euro Crisis*, pp. 199–205.

of these events is orchestrated to foreground the identities and actions of the major powerbrokers involved in the dispute, who are carefully arranged within the temporal and spatial backdrop of Jerusalem in the later tenth century.

Within the account, Yūḥannā and Muḥammad's conflict is seen to emerge over disagreement relating to Muḥammad's increasing requests for gifts and Yūḥannā's refusal to bestow them. The subsequent dispute is thus played out in the narrative through the attempts of Muḥammad, as the local governor, to exert his authority over the patriarch and Yūḥannā's attempt to subvert that authority through recourse to centralized power in Ramla and Fustāt. Beyond their respective statuses as governor and Christian leader, points of theological and confessional conflict are entirely absent within the encounter and were evidently not part of the historical identities that Yaḥya invokes. Instead, the dynamic between the two figures plays out between the two men, through their recourse to localized family networks and central systems of power.

Much of this narrative shows signs of a later imaginative reworking. Certainly, the procedure by which Yūḥannā raised his objections to the *kuttāb* in Fustāt echoes practices more common in Fāṭimid protocol of the eleventh century than what is known of the practices of the Ikhshidids who governed Egypt from the 930s.¹⁶ Nevertheless, as with all components of storytelling, Yaḥya's account draws upon a wider series of cultural symbols, invoking space, time, and individual people, which provides insights into how he and his audience sought to situate themselves in the Fāṭimid milieu of the early eleventh century through reference to a commonly shared past.¹⁷ Rather than reflecting a pre-given tenth-century identity, our reading of this text must proceed in full awareness of the fact that the memory of Yūḥannā's violent demise preserved in the *Kitāb al-dhayl* was, in itself, a cog in a machine actively engaged by Yaḥya in fashioning a history of his community. It is important that, although the modern tendency has been to view Yūḥannā's murder within a broader teleological history of Christian-Muslim confrontation, Yaḥya ibn Sa'īd's account offers no indication that the event was interpreted by subsequent generations in this manner.¹⁸ What Yaḥya presents instead is a series of developments that were provoked by the specific dynamics maintained between two individuals in the context of Jerusalem in the mid-tenth century.

From the short description composed by Yaḥya, we learn that Yūḥannā's self-imprisonment and murder took place between May 28 and 30, which Yaḥya states also coincided with the week before the feast of Pentecost, in the year 966.¹⁹

16. On the *kuttāb* in the Fāṭimid period and also instances of petitioning, see Rustow, *Heresy*, pp. 120–125, 316–322; and earlier treatment in Cohen and Somekh, "In the Court."

17. On the broader role of storytelling and autobiography as a component of identity fashioning, see Lawler, *Identity*, pp. 10–30.

18. Yaḥya ibn Sa'īd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 103, p. 801; trans. Pirone, p. 114.

19. Yaḥya ibn Sa'īd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 103, p. 801; trans. Pirone, p. 114.

Tensions erupted in Jerusalem and focused specifically on the churches of the Anastasis and Holy Sion, within the city. As Yaḥya's description makes clear, the tensions that culminated in the death of Yūḥannā emerged as a personal dispute between the patriarch and the governor of the city, Muḥammad ibn 'Isma'il al-Ṣinajī, over payment of a tribute that Muḥammad appears to have levied excessively upon the Church and the patriarch. Growing tired of Yūḥannā's repeated refusal to attend an audience at his palace and his attempt to solicit the assistance of governors outside of Jerusalem, Muḥammad directed his followers to launch an attack against the patriarch and the Church of the Anastasis. Even if Yaḥya's description does not fully convey the complexity of the situation that culminated in Yūḥannā's murder, these three essential themes—temporal, spatial, and personal—are intrinsic to the narrative strategy adopted by the passage, in presenting to the reader the human and structural tensions that presaged the attack. Over the course of this chapter, I want to use these three separate themes of time, space, and "the individual," which have appeared throughout the other contributions in this volume, to explore the notion of Melkite identity in the early Islamic world and the value of this particular episode in revealing the complexity of Melkite experience beyond the *dhimma* in the final century of Abbasid rule in Jerusalem. First, however, I want to begin with a brief discussion of the complexity of the term "identity" and the difficulty we face as modern readers when approaching Yaḥya's account through modern understanding of the term.

WHAT IS MELKITE IDENTITY?

The murder of Patriarch Yūḥannā ibn Jamī at the hands of a mob incited by Muḥammad al-Ṣinajī evidently responded to a particular set of identities held by both men that were brought into conflict in the final weeks of the *Pentekostation*. Exactly what these individual tensions were in 966 is impossible to know from the description of events by Yaḥya ibn Sa'īd, who, from what was undoubtedly a complicated political and social situation, involving two complex individuals, crafts a singular narrative that juxtaposes the identity of the Christian patriarch with that of the Muslim governor. Above all, it is Yūḥannā's identity as a Melkite Christian and patriarch that is brought to the fore. But what did this identity engender, and what meaning did it carry to its contemporaries? Here we must acknowledge the difficulty of approaching this question from an intellectual standpoint that is framed by our own collective notions of what identity is and how it operates as a component of human social interaction. We must also recognize how the terminology we use as medievalists in the twenty-first century both circumscribes and frames debates about identity in the early medieval period and imposes lines of questioning upon sources that writers such as Yaḥya may not have recognized. As an anglophone scholar writing in twenty-first-century

Britain, my adoption of the concept of “Melkite identity” in the early Islamic period, whether as an ascribed or lived characteristic, is faced with the essential problem that the combined concept is both anachronistic and reductive.

To begin, “identity,” as a conceptual framework that we might apply to a reading of an eleventh-century Melkite source, is a slippery concept to handle and fraught with anachronism.²⁰ Deriving from the Middle French *identité*, “identity” first entered the English language around 1600, and, like its Latin stem *idem*, originally denoted “sameness”—a definition still formally applied in modern dictionaries but one that is increasingly less common in terms of everyday conversation.²¹ To some extent, then, contemporary notions of identity rest on perceptions of similitude and shared characteristics—as human beings but, within that, as holders of more circumscribed traits, say, as “men” or “women,” “European” or “American,” “Londoners” or “Brummies.” This brings us slightly closer to the kind of characteristics that Melkite writers themselves describe, often as means of distinguishing themselves as a unique community within the broader expanse of the caliphate’s population. Yet as a self-reflexive concept, linked to ideas of perception and cognitive individuality—“what is *my* or *his/her* identity?”—its origins are far more recent, first appearing around 1950 in the works of the Freudian psychoanalyst Erik Erikson, better known for his coining of the term “identity crisis.”²²

For twenty-first-century readers, it is difficult to fully appreciate the permeation of Freudian and Eriksonian concepts within our understanding of individuality and identity formation during the stages of the human life course. The basic concept of “identity” as a product of internalized human psychological and social development is now so embedded in our perceptions of the world, and our place within it, that it has become virtually impossible to conceptualize a dialogue about identity stripped of its associations with the individual—a problem encapsulated by the difficulty contemporary English speakers often face in distinguishing the question “*What* am I?” from “*Who* am I?” The legacies of European and North American colonialism, trailed by their traditions of scientific and artistic discourse, have also ensured the projection of this mode of thinking to every area of the globe. Modern Arabic is no exception to this process. The Arabic equivalent to the English “identity,” هوية (*hūwīyya*), a conceptual borrowing from the Freudian “id,” bears all the hallmarks of a post-Freudian linguistic framework.²³

20. Fearon, *What Is Identity?*; Lawler, *Identity*, pp. 1–9; Burke and Stets, *Identity Theory*.

21. Onions, *Oxford Dictionary*, pp. 459–460.

22. Erikson, *Childhood*; Erikson, *Identity*; Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle*.

23. The term *hūwīyya* originally signified “substance,” “essence,” or “existence.” In the nineteenth century, these were the standard definitions given to English speakers; see Steingass, *Student’s Arabic-English Dictionary*, p. 1188. By 1960, however, “identity” was also offered as an acceptable translation: Wehr and Cowan, *Dictionary*, p. 1037. I also thank my friend Nermeen al-Nafra for discussions about this etymology and use of the word هوية.

Originally meaning “essence,” its association with the concept of “identity” is a twentieth-century innovation that was not common before the 1960s.²⁴ In comparison, the Arabic vernacular used in the daily and intellectual life of the Melkites by the eleventh century lacked a definition of “identity” synonymous with our own complex and introspective use of the term.

This is to argue not that Melkite sources predating 1100 cannot reveal information about individuals or communities that we would consider as markers of “an identity” but that the use of identity as a line of questioning applied to Melkite sources must recognize that it is a tool borrowed from our own world, loaded, as it is, with all the vestiges of post-medieval imperialism and harnessed to the legacies of the industrial and cultural revolution of the past century. In the context of a volume dedicated to empires and communities, these points are pertinent, for while our sources may enable us to identify a series of commonly held characteristics that we might view as signifiers of “a Melkite identity,” we have little idea about how they were perceived and interpreted by individuals within that broader group.

“Melkite” as a term of use is no less complex or abstruse. Although a convenient epithet generally used to describe Christians in the caliphate who remained in conciliar communion with the patriarchal sees of Constantinople and Rome, use of the term was infrequent before the twelfth century and often employed as a pejorative slur by other Christian writers opposed to the Dyothelite teachings of the Council of Chalcedon (451), reaffirmed in the Sixth Ecumenical Council of 680/1.²⁵ Writers active before 1100, who today are casually assigned the epithet “Melkite,” never used the term self-referentially.²⁶ Recent studies devoted to “Melkite” identity are thus encased within a system of nomenclature established by external (sometimes hostile) observers and often casually projected onto groups and individuals who would not have recognized such a label or criterion of social organization. Use of the term also imposes a degree of homogeneity upon a confessional identity that may not have denoted to contemporaries any great internal coherency. When Melkite writers did attempt to self-identify,

24. On the introduction of psychoanalysis to the Arabic-speaking world, see El Shakry, “Arabic Freud”; El Shakry, *Arabic Freud*.

25. On the assumption that the Melkites represented a homogeneous theological or political community, see the important qualifications in Griffith, “‘Melkites,’” with additional comments in Griffith, *Bible*, p. 12 n. 15. An early example of the use of the term “Melkite” appears in the *Kitāb al-Tanbīh wa l-ishrāf* of al-Mas’ūdi, who was aware of the work of Sa’id ibn al-Batriq; see Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī al-Mas’ūdi, *Kitāb al-Tanbīh wa l-ishrāf*, ed. de Goeje, p. 154. Another early use of the term “Melkite” appears in the anti-Trinitarian polemic of Abū ‘Isā Muḥammad ibn Hārūn ibn Muḥammad al-Warrāq, *Anti-Christian Polemic the Trinity*, ed. Thomas, pp. 86–87. The recognition of the Sixth Ecumenical Council as a distinguishing feature of the Melkites appears in the writings of Ṭawūdūrus Abū Qurrah, *Mayamir*, ed. al-Basha, B171; trans. Lamoreaux, p. 74.

26. Use of the term “Melkite” as a self-designated label does not appear until the eighteenth century, when it was adopted by arabophone Christians who broke away from Orthodox communion and joined Rome; see Lindgren Hjälmer, *Christian Arabic Versions*, p. 6; Trieger, “Arabic Tradition,” pp. 92–93.

it was usually by the term “orthodox,” an epithet also (unsurprisingly) claimed by writers of rival Jacobite, Nestorian, and Coptic populations of the Abbasid caliphate, which maintained distinct Christological beliefs. The term “Melkite,” problematic as it may be, is the only term available by which we might distinguish this group of Christians who continued to uphold the teachings of the Sixth Ecumenical Council and retain a belief in its connection to the Churches of Rome and Constantinople.

I will continue to use the term in this chapter, with the caveat that it tells us very little about the various Melkite groups that existed within the wider superstructure of the Abbasid caliphate and associated emirates. Nevertheless, at least prior to the twelfth century, “Melkite” was not used as signifier of the ethno-linguistic identity that it subsequently came to signify in the early modern period and, unlike the case of the Badu or the Yemeni, “Melkite” carried no overt connections to a particular ethnic group, social custom, or living pattern that readily distinguished their way of life from those of their non-Melkite contemporaries in the caliphate.²⁷ Unlike contemporary Jewish groups, who venerated and conversed in Hebrew, or other Christian groups of the caliphate who often maintained their own liturgical vernaculars, the Melkites of the Jund Filasṭīn did not possess a language that readily distinguished their practices from those of their contemporaries who also used Arabic in daily transactions. Greek, a linguistic legacy from the period of Byzantine rule, is the nearest example of a language that may have been restricted to Melkite communities in the Abbasid period, although the extent of its use by the late tenth century is difficult to gauge.²⁸ The production of Greek manuscripts attested in the region in the 860s and again in 996/7 indicates that its use never disappeared from the region entirely, but such a limited amount of evidence leads us to conclude that its use was increasingly restricted to senior clergy and those individuals whose origins lay beyond the region, rather than as a hallmark of the Melkite confession.²⁹ Melkite intellectual and liturgical identity instead remained closely bound to Arabic throughout this period. Indeed, the Melkites’ adoption of Arabic and the rapid translation of their literary and liturgical canon in the eighth and ninth centuries was, as Sidney Griffith has observed, one of their most defining communal characteristics.³⁰ Nevertheless, by the late tenth century, this was a linguistic identity that they shared with most of the population of the Fāṭimid caliphate, especially those that sought office in the ranks of the bureaucratic *kuttāb*.

27. See Webb, chapter 11 in this volume.

28. Mango, “Greek Culture.” Sidney Griffith is more reserved about the disappearance of Greek in this period; see Griffith, “From Aramaic to Arabic.”

29. Parpulov, “Psalms,” especially pp. 100–103; and Parpulov, *Toward a History*, pp. 78–81. The earliest dated tenth-century manuscript written in Greek is Mount Sinai, Arabic MS 116; see Ševčenko, “Manuscript Production.”

30. Griffith “Gospel”; Griffith, “Ninth Century Summa”; Griffith, “Anthony David”; Griffith, *Church*.

This ambiguity often caused great concern among Melkite writers, keen to maintain their communal distinctiveness from the influence of external customs. Part of this apprehension stemmed from the fact that as a confessional identity—rather than an ethnic, linguistic, or regional one—Melkite status was impermanent and changeable. Whereas an individual could be born to Melkite parents and baptized within the Church, conversion (even reversion) to Islam, Judaism, or another Christian confession could alter or dissolve this bond between an individual and their remaining community. Evidently, for many Melkite Christians, the boundaries of their religious belief and praxis could be highly fluid. Tawudūrus (Theodore) Abū Qurrah's treatise in defense of the veneration of icons opens with a statement that explicitly addresses the tendency of some Christians in his diocese to abandon the veneration of holy images in the face of mounting critique from their Muslim contemporaries.³¹ The anonymous treatise compiled by the monk Istifān (Stephen) ibn Ḥakm from Ramla in 877 at the monastery of Mar Chariton echoes similar objections to the assimilatory tendencies of Christians who rejected the principal doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation:³²

There are hypocrites (*munāfiqīn*) among us, marked with our mark, standing in our congregations, contradicting our faith, forfeiters of themselves (*al-khāsirīn*), who are Christians (*Naṣārā*) in name only. They disbelieve in their Lord and God, Jesus Christ, the son of Mary; due to the disparagement of strangers they are ashamed to describe for them any of the Lord's actions in the flesh.³³

If you ask them about Christ our Lord, they maintain that he is a *messenger like one of the messengers*;³⁴ they do not favour him in any way of them, save in the pardon he brought and in the taking of precedence. They are not concerned to go to church, nor do they do any of the things which Christians do in their churches. Openly declaring themselves to be in opposition to the Trinity of the oneness of God and His incarnation, they disparage the messengers, the fathers, and the teachers of the New Testament. They say, "What compels us to say "Father," "Son" and "Spirit," and to maintain that the Messiah is God? We are content with that with which the Israelites were content, God is one.³⁵ We have no need for hypostases, nor for what mere human beings deem impermissible.³⁶

31. A translation appears in Griffith, *Theodore Abu Qurrah*, pp. 28–30.

32. Griffith, "Stephen."

33. London, British Library, MS Oriental 4950, fol. 5v. The translation of this passage is produced in Griffith, *Church*, p. 58.

34. Qurʾān 5:75; see Griffith, *Church*, p. 58 n. 41.

35. Deuteronomy 6:4.

36. London, British Library, MS Oriental 4950, fol. 7v; see Griffith, *Church*, pp. 58–59.

Such suspicions toward the syncretic practices among the wider population were not, however, a Melkite preserve. Occasional stories of dress codes and other distinguishing markers (*ghiyār*) imposed upon Christian groups by the caliphal authorities or often general complaints about the laxness of Muslim practice in the Jund Filasṭīn identify similar, through often abstract, concerns from some Muslim writers about the blurriness of these communal boundaries and the need to demarcate Christian identity from that of the Muslim.³⁷

LOCATING MELKITE IDENTITY

When Yūḥannā ascended the patriarchal throne of Jerusalem around 964, ecclesiastical communities who identified themselves as “Chalcedonian orthodox” were present throughout the territories of the Abbasid caliphate and its proxy emirates and, in all likelihood, reflected all the variations that such a broad geographical and territorial space encompassed. This was a feature of Melkite identity that clerical writers such as Sulaymān al-Ghazzī, active in the early eleventh century, readily projected. The opening poem of Sulaymān’s poetic corpus (*diwan*) opens with a declaration that celebrated the ecumenism of the Chalcedonian creed:

Over them, God has favoured a church
 Whose stones are gathered from all corners and climes.
 Truth has built her edifice
 Rising to heaven on pillars and columns,
 Fashioned from chrysolite.
 Precious stones, sapphires and pearls
 Her foundation is the rock of faith
 Rooted deep with pillars and walls
 All bodily creatures are pleased to see it
 When it appears in races and colours
 Byzantines, Russian and Franks
 Joined with Indians, Khuzestanis, Abkhaz, and Alans
 Armenians and Pechenegs in agreement
 With the people of the Jazira, namely Harran.
 And Copts too, in the Lower Egypt gather together
 From Upper Egypt to Aswan.
 People of Shiraz and Ahwaz in harmony
 With Iraq, unto the furthest Khorasan.
 From the place of the sunrise to the place of its setting,

37. Whether these codes were ever enforced remains debated. A slightly more optimistic assessment of the enforcement of the *ghiyār* appears in Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims*, pp. 88–98. More reserved are the assessments of Rustow, *Heresy*, pp. 119–120; echoing the earlier cautions of Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, vol. 2, p. 286; and Lev, “Persecutions,” p. 77 n. 20.

To the Euphrates, to Sihon and Gihon
White, blond, and brown in their churches
Praise God with the yellow and the black.
All of them have to come to the religion of Christ
And are guided, gaining profit from loss.³⁸

Yet, despite Sulaymān's grandiose claims to ecumenical unity, Melkites within the Abbasid political sphere frequently displayed little internal cohesion in political and economic terms—a variation visible within the various factional disputes that often preceded the elections of patriarchs such as Theodoros of Jerusalem (r. c. 740s–c. 770) and Sa'īd ibn Batrīq (Eutychios of Alexandria) (r. 933–940), whose close ties to the caliphal authorities provoked sharp criticism from their contemporaries.³⁹

The Melkite presence within the Abbasid caliphate could also be highly regionalized and varying in intensity. Whereas the Jund Filastīn appears to have been one of few regions of the tenth-century caliphate where the Melkites retained a sizeable demographic, in other regions, notably Syria and Egypt, the distribution of Melkite communities was more complex and often limited to cities or specific areas. Disagreements over property management could also spark internal disunity, with loyalties frequently transcending confessional identity boundaries in favor of an array of alternative alliances. The recently surfaced corpus of letters attributed to one Dāwūd, metropolitan bishop of Damascus (d. c. 884), offers a particularly enticing example. At some point in the mid- or late ninth century, Dāwūd appears to have initiated litigation proceedings against the patriarch Sim'ān (Antioch), following a dispute over the control of the city's principal bakeries which had been formerly administered by Muslim proprietors.⁴⁰ Dāwūd's role in bringing the bakeries back beneath the ownership of the Melkite Church appears to have attracted criticism from a number of Muslim and Christian notables in the city, whose cause was taken up by the patriarch, Sim'ān. Dāwūd's response, initiated by a spate of epistolary exchange, was to form an alliance with the patriarchs Ilyās of Jerusalem (r. 877–907) and Mikhā'il of Alexandria (r. 870–903), against the Antiochene patriarch and his lay supporters. Within this environment, the confessional identities of Dāwūd and Sim'ān as Antiochene Melkites were clearly suppressed in favor of others of greater political expediency.

38. Trans. in Trieger, "Sulayman al-Ghazzi" no. 1, pp. 163–164.

39. On the election of Patriarch Theodoros, see Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen*, ed. and trans. Lamoreaux, 33.1–5, pp. 51–52. On Sa'īd ibn Batrīq's accession, see Yaḥya ibn Sa'īd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 15–18, pp. 713–716; trans. Pirone, pp. 33–36.

40. The letters of Dāwūd are unedited. Those concerning his dispute with the patriarch Sim'ān (Antioch), are preserved in Milan, Bibliotheca Ambrosiana, MS X 201 supp., fol. 94r–137v. An edition is currently under preparation by John Lamoreaux and Abdul-Masih Saadi. For a brief introduction, see Lamoreaux, "David of Damascus."

These more complex dynamics within Melkite communal organization are often difficult to identify and have meant that modern lines of inquiry have popularly converged upon the theological and confessional aspects of Melkite identity viewed from the perspective of writers such as Tāwudūrus Abū Qurrah engaged in defining their beliefs in opposition to the practices of their non-Chalcedonian and Muslim contemporaries.⁴¹ To some extent, this is because Melkite writers often expressed concerns that their sense of identity as an individual community was so intellectualized that it was difficult for laypeople to comprehend. As Abū Qurrah acknowledges in his treatise on the Church councils and the orthodoxy of the Melkite creed:

Some time ago, we, with the help of the Holy Spirit, demonstrated this in a scholarly manner for intellectuals able to fathom abstruse matters, such as are impenetrable to the common folk. This scholarly approach, however, is not persuasive to the common folk, whether merchants or farmers, or others like them.⁴²

Abū Qurrah's conception of Melkite identity hinged on a recognition of the shared veneration of the Old Testament and the gospel with other Christian groups, alongside an open acknowledgment of the fundamental disagreement between them over their interpretation of the nature of Christ. For Abū Qurrah, it was the recognition of the teachings of the six ecumenical councils (325–681) and their apostolic link with the Church of Rome that distinguished them as the true orthodox Christian community, against other churches that had rejected its teachings.⁴³ Within this intellectual framework, reference to the Roman imperial past was crucial as a marker of distinction. In his explanation of the Church councils, Abū Qurrah invokes the legacy of the six emperors who presided over the ecumenical councils to place his own community firmly within a historic lineage reaching back to the fourth century.⁴⁴ Writing around a century later, Sa'īd ibn Baṭrīq also aimed to situate the history of events in his lifetime within a lineage that could be traced back to the emperor Constantine.⁴⁵

Although not explicitly described in his treatise, Abū Qurrah's arguments were articulated within a wider Melkite milieu that saw annual liturgical observations dedicated to the memory of past Roman emperors and their

41. For studies focused on Palestine or that have direct application to developments in the region, see Bertaina, "Development"; Blau, "Melkite Arabic"; Griffith, "Ammar al-Basri's 'Kitab al-Burhan'"; Griffith, "Eutychius"; Griffith, "Stephen," pp. 23–45; Griffith, "Greek into Arabic"; Griffith, "Ninth Century Summa," pp. 123–141; Roggema, "Hikāyāt Amthāl Wa Asmār"; Roggema, "Biblical Exegesis"; Swanson, "Beyond Proofextending"; Swanson, "Beyond Proofextending (2)"; Swanson, "Apologetics."

42. Tāwudūrus Abū Qurrah, *Mayamir*, ed. al-Basha, B155; trans. Lamoreaux, p. 61.

43. Tāwudūrus Abū Qurrah, *Mayamir*, ed. al-Basha, B154–B179, p. 190; trans. Lamoreaux, pp. 61–81.

44. Tāwudūrus Abū Qurrah, *Mayamir*, ed. al-Basha, B171; trans. Lamoreaux, p. 74.

45. Michel Breydy, in Sa'īd ibn Baṭrīq, *Annalenwerk*, ed. Breydy, pp. 55–61.

role in founding many of the region's most prominent (and still surviving) churches.⁴⁶ Tenth-century copies of the Melkite liturgical calendars produced at Sinai also indicate that these celebrations were observed as part of a processional liturgy that moved between churches in the region. Nevertheless, a focus on writers such as Abū Qurrah has cultivated a perception of Melkites' identity grounded in their theological position and status as a political minority, within which they are often granted little historical identity beyond the circumscribed and highly decontextualized roles assigned to them in the formal systems of Islamic jurisprudence. Consequently, what emerges is an impression of Melkite identity as one characterized by stasis, unceasing doctrinal debate, and insularity against a far broader range of social transactions that occurred within the contemporary caliphates of the ninth to eleventh centuries. It also fundamentally relies upon a conception of Melkite identity as defined by a narrow group of intellectuals operating from a handful of powerful and often interconnected ecclesiastical foundations. While we may identify how such writers attempted to formulate and define identity through reference to the Roman past, we cannot know how such narratives were received among the broader population of the Jund Filastīn.

The difficulty faced in breaking through this prism reflects the general skew of the sources as they survive, most of which relate to apologetic treatises, or translations of earlier patristic writings, compiled by clergy active at the main monastic centers of Mar Chariton, Mar Sabas, and Mount Sinai.⁴⁷ By their very nature, the general tenor of such works, aimed at presenting a unified and coherent theological front against external critique, generally minimize instances of variation and heterogeneity among the Chalcedonian communities within Abbasid society. Sources external to the community offer little remedy. From the perspective of Muslim writers, Melkites occupy an ethereal presence among the communities and groups that populate their writings, irrespective of the demographic realities of many parts of the caliphate by the tenth century (and often much later).⁴⁸ Moreover, as Christians, Melkites often lay beyond the concern of writers whose principal aim was to recall the confessional history of the Muslim ummah and the actions of their own leaders, rather than acknowledge the more

46. Among these were celebrations dedication to Constantine and Helena (May 21–22), Eudokia (September 10–11 and October 19), and Theodosios (January 19, May 31). In addition, liturgical celebrations were held in honor of the foundation of the Anastasis (September 13), the Nea Church by Justinian (September 13), and the building over the tomb of the Theotokos attributed to Maurice (October 23). On the stationary feasts observed in these churches, see Garitte, *Le calendrier*, pp. 43–113.

47. On scribal production at these particular foundations, see Griffith, "Greek into Arabic," pp. 117–138; Swanson, "Solomon"; Ševčenko, "Manuscript Production," pp. 233–257; Thomson, "Georgian, Caucasian, Albanian and Armenian Manuscripts."

48. Population ratios for any community in the early Islamic period are difficult to estimate. However, at least in contemporary eyes, Jerusalem and many parts of the Jund Filastīn were notable for the size of their Christian population; see Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Muqadassī, *Aḥsan al-Tāqāsīm*, ed. de Goeje, pp. 167, 183; trans. Collins, pp. 152, 166.

complex social transactions that often took place at a local level between various confessional groups.⁴⁹ Where they do appear in sources, Muslim interest in “Melkites” as a distinct component of the population in the caliphate rarely extends beyond their custodianship of holy sites linked to mutually recognized prophets, although individual writers such as Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq were evidently aware of the complexities of Christological debate between the various Christian groups of the caliphate in their own time.⁵⁰ For reasons unknown, the Melkites of the Jund Filāṣṭīn have also left few surviving historical writings that compare with the breadth and detail of the *tawārīkh* compiled by their Muslim contemporaries after the ninth century. Only two substantial works survive that relate, albeit indirectly, the history of the Jund Filāṣṭīn beyond 900: the universal history spanning from the Creation to the year 938 by Saʿīd ibn Batriq, patriarch of Alexandria, and its continuation by the redactor Yaḥya ibn Saʿīd, whose narrative covers the later period 937–1034, including the description of the murder of the patriarch Yūḥannā.⁵¹ The contours of pre-Crusader Melkite identity in the Jund Filāṣṭīn that are visible to us through historical writing are thus effectively those as defined by Saʿīd and Yaḥya.

Yet in much the same way that *tawārīkh* and other literary genres functioned to cultivate a sense of Muslim identity and historical past, liturgy also placed Melkite Christians within a historical lineage of holy persons, places, and stories that linked their contemporary experience to a historical line reaching back to the Creation. Hagiographies of the earliest Christian martyrs, translated into Arabic from earlier Syriac or Greek works and read out on liturgical feast days, also served as a perpetual reminder to clergy and congregations of the history of their community, in much the same way that Muslim writers such as Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī recounted the triumphs and struggles of the early ummah before and after the life of Muhammad.⁵² This also remained the case in the ninth and tenth centuries, as martyr passions of figures executed by the Muslim authorities were also formalized and integrated within the Melkite liturgical calendars.⁵³ Nevertheless, such identities, as we may observe them, are still bound to the rhythms of the “Melkite” Church of Jerusalem as an institution, and inevitably, our inheritance from this region is a projection of Melkite identity that is

49. See the important qualifications of Bray, “Family,” esp. p. 132.

50. Thomas, *Anti-Christian Polemic*, pp. 66–113.

51. Yaḥya ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 102, pp. 801–802. The later years of Yaḥya’s chronicle, postdating 970, appear in Yaḥya ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 103, p. 801; trans. Pirone, p. 114. See Saʿīd ibn Batriq, *Kitāb Nazm al-Jawhar*, ed. Cheikho, Carra de Vaux, and Zayyat, pp. 287–288. Important studies of these works include Simonsohn, “Biblical Narrative”; Breydy, *Études*; and Forsyth, “Byzantine-Arab Chronicle.”

52. Leeming, “Adoption”; and the important unpublished study in Leeming, “Byzantine Hagiographies.”

53. Dick, “La passion Arabie”; Griffith, “Christians”; Harrack, “Piecing Together”; Peeters, “S. Antoine”; Peeters, “La passion”; Swanson, “Martyrdom.”

predominantly elite, exclusively male, and primarily clerical—hardly a unique series of obstacles in broader discussions of identity in the medieval world but important ones nonetheless.

In relation to the Melkite communities that inhabited the Jund Filasṭīn by the tenth century, this is a particularly pertinent issue. Unlike the better-documented communities of Egypt, Palestine lacks a sizable corpus of papyri or genizah material, through which a more complex series of identities and social transactions could be identified and surveyed.⁵⁴ Only occasionally can we observe individual Melkite protagonists within a far broader range of social and economic identities in the Jund Filasṭīn. One such instance emerges in the example of the Melkite bishop Sulaymān al-Ghazzī, whose writings occasionally betray details of his life beyond his clerical duties. Among the ninety-seven poems attributed to him, today known by the broad term *diwan* (poems), Sulaymān describes, for example, in harrowing detail his grief at the loss of his wife, son, and only grandson, ʿIbrāhīm, and his final days spent in repentance in a monastery.⁵⁵ He had once been wealthy but in old age found his circumstances irreversibly reduced. In his youth, Sulaymān had been dedicated to a monastery, after his mother left his father, but he left shortly after to marry and pursue a worldly life, probably as a *kathib* in the Fāṭimid *diwan*, before he returned to the Church to resume life as a monk and bishop. As a child of a single parent, a father, a husband, a bishop, and a proprietor, Sulaymān is unique as a Palestinian Melkite figure whose life and complex identity are possible to observe beyond the power structures and intellectual concerns of the institutional Melkite church. Through his poems, we see a life firmly embedded in the ebbs and flows of daily life in the Jund Filasṭīn of the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. Crucially, we also see the continuity of local and personal concerns, which must surely have defined the lives of most Christians in the region, in spite of the terrible and sensational but also highly contingent urban, and elite interactions that surrounded events like the death of Patriarch Yūḥannā. Evidently, the murder of the patriarch, around the time of Sulaymān's birth, casts no visible shadow over the picture of life presented in the *diwan*. This, of course, is to suggest not that the murder did not matter but that it was an expression of a particular set of relationships between identity, time, and place, which were not homogeneously “Melkite” and which had their own unique narrative.

54. See, e.g., Sijpesteijn, *Shaping*; Ackerman-Lieberman, *Business*; Rustow, *Heresy*; and the earlier, still influential studies of Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, vol. 1, vol. 2, vol. 3, and vol. 5.

55. Further discussions of Sulaymān and his biography appear in Suermann, “Sulayman al-Gazzi”; Khalifé, “Notice”; Dick, “Samonas de Gaza.” See also the recent critical edition in La Spisa, *I trattati teologici*.

YŪḤANNĀ'S JERUSALEM

Let us now return to Yūḥannā's own story and reflect upon the temporal and spatial elements that are unique to Yaḥya ibn Sa'īd's account of his murder. Yaḥya's description of Yūḥannā's final days is structured around his movements between three principal centers: Jerusalem, Ramla, and Fustāt, which also remained the most prominent urban settlements in the Jund Filasṭīn by the early eleventh century. Of these three centers, only Jerusalem is described by Yaḥya in any detail and is structured in such a way that juxtaposes the symbolic center of the Church of the Anastasis and the patriarchal residence with the palace of Muḥammad ibn 'Ismā'il al-Ṣinajī.

By the year 966, Jerusalem had been firmly within the political orbit of various Islamicate powers for more than three centuries and following c. 935 had formed part of the territories governed from Egypt by the Ikhshīdīd walīs who remained, though perhaps nominally, under the jurisdiction of the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad.⁵⁶ For the Church of Jerusalem, however, tangible power resided in Fustāt, the center of the Ikhshīdīd court and related diwan, and more locally at Ramla, the governing center of the Jund Filasṭīn.⁵⁷ Jerusalem's status as a component of this political system, however, was more complex. Although the recentring of fiscal and legislative power to Fustāt had brought the city back into the interests of many governing families, marked by renewed renovations to the Ḥaram al-Sharīf (912/3) and the burials of prominent Ikhshīdīd governors, Jerusalem remained, even to contemporary eyes, a distinctly un-Islamic city and a space in which the political and religious ceremonial of the Muslim administration jostled with the competing forces of the city's sizable Christian and Jewish populations.⁵⁸ Al-Muqadassī's complaint about the predominance of Christians within the city and its hinterlands is perhaps the most well-known of these descriptions, although one that sat within an earlier tradition of geographical writings that stressed the visibility of Christian populations and customs across the Jund Filasṭīn.⁵⁹

56. Brett, *Rise*, pp. 269–271; Lev, *State*, pp. 15–22. See Bianquis, "Autonomous Egypt," esp. pp. 113–114; and for treatment of the earlier decades, see Kennedy, "Egypt"; Kennedy, *Prophet*, pp. 273–282, 300–329.

57. Avni, *Byzantine-Islamic Transition*, pp. 159–190; Shmueli and Goldfus, "Early Islamic City"; Avni, "Continuity."

58. Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Muqadassī, *Aḥsan al-Tāqāsīm*, ed. de Goeje, p. 167; trans. Collins, p. 141. One of these is the mother of the caliph al-Muqtadir, who commissioned work on the Dome of the Rock in c. 913/4; see Kessler, "Above the Ceiling."

59. Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Muqadassī, *Aḥsan al-Tāqāsīm*, ed. de Goeje, p. 155; trans. Collins, p. 132. Earlier observations include those of al-Mas'ūdī, who was aware of the work of Sa'īd ibn al-Batriq; see Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī al-Mas'ūdī, *Kitāb al-Tanbih wa l-ishrāf*, ed. de Goeje.

Changes in regional settlement patterns under Abbasid rule had also seen urban centers such as Jerusalem and Ramla gain increasing political and economic prominence after 900, as the networks of late antique urban *poleis* that had been characteristic of the region until the eighth century steadily contracted into a few centers situated in the Jund Filasṭīn and the Jund al-Urdunn.⁶⁰ Only Ṭabariyyā, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, appears to have rivaled Jerusalem and Ramla in its size and complexity.⁶¹ The related abandonment of churches and monasteries across the region after 800 had also served to consolidate Christian activity within Jerusalem and a limited number of surviving urban and monastic centers.⁶² Among the Melkites, this shift appears to have provoked growing emphasis on the custodianship of sites linked to biblical *memoria* and other prominent cults, which became focal points of their collective communal organization and identity. The crowning jewel of this network was the Church of the Anastasis in Jerusalem, which lay at the heart of Melkite ceremonial life in the Jund Filasṭīn. As is clear from the *Kitāb al-Burhān*, written by the bishop Buṭrus (Peter) of Bayt Rā's around 820, the continued ability of the Chalcedonians to monopolize sites associated with the key events of Christ's ministry and the tombs of the Old Testament prophets was an important component of how the Melkite Church continued to reassure itself of its superiority over other confessional groups.⁶³ This self-perception was likely transmitted by the circulation of such works among the Melkites' most active intellectual centers and families. We know from the colophon of Sinai MS 75 (preserved on folio 222v), for example, that a copy of the *Kitāb al-Burhān* belonged to the family of the Bishop Sulaymān of Mount Sinai around the time of Yūḥannā VII's reign, before being bequeathed to the Sinaitic community in 1001/2.⁶⁴

By the tenth century, such intellectual attempts at fortifying a communal identity around a liturgical and physical space were played out at a tangible level in the landscapes and urban spaces of the caliphate. As chapter 7 by Brubaker and Wickham in this volume addresses, comparable processions

60. Wickham, *Framing*, pp. 613–626.

61. Cytryn-Silverman, "Umayyad Mosque"; Hirschfeld, *Excavations*; Stacey, *Excavations*; Avni, "Byzantine-Islamic Transition," pp. 71–88.

62. Reynolds, "Monasticism," pp. 284–297.

63. Buṭrus of Bayt Ra's, *Kitāb al-Burhan*, ed. Cachia and Watt, pp. 310–361 [164–207, 134–154]. This was misidentified by Georg Graf as the work of the patriarch Sa'īd ibn Batriq. Subsequent scholarship has made a convincing case that this work is to be linked to the Melkite bishop Buṭrus of Bayt Ra's and was probably composed in the mid-ninth century; see Samir, "La littérature Melkite." Further treatment of this work, still lacking a major study, is offered in Griffith, "View"; and Swanson, "Ibn Taymiyya."

64. Swanson "Solomon," pp. 95–98. The colophon, which appears on fol. 222v, dated to 1002, states that the work once belonged to his father and grandfather.

by the caliphal court do not appear until a century later (and then mostly in Cairo) and would have resulted in a number of cities across the late Abbasid Jund Filasṭīn that were effectively dominated by Christian public procession. Jerusalem, at least, remained a city still topographically defined by the Christian foundations surviving from late antiquity which continued to exert their presence on the city's main thoroughfares and at its principal gateways (see map 8.1). At least seven of these large foundations were still active in Yūḥannā's lifetime, all under the jurisdiction of the Melkite patriarchate of Jerusalem. Inside the city walls was the ecclesiastical complex made up of the churches of the Anastasis and the Martyrion basilica, which flanked the main route leading from the north gate and were possibly still attended by the monks of the Spoudeon monastery located somewhere in its vicinity.⁶⁵ At the opposite end of the former Byzantine north-south *cardo*, at the highest point of the walled city, stood the Church of the Holy Sion, the most important site in Jerusalem after the Anastasis.⁶⁶ It is also probable that the Church of the Probatica, dedicated to Mary and located by the city's eastern gate, also remained in use into the tenth century.⁶⁷ Just beyond the city walls lay the tomb of the Theotokos and the Gethsemane church in the Kidron valley and the Church of the Ascension at the summit of the Mount of Olives.⁶⁸ Despite centuries of institutional Muslim rule, the Islamic monumental presence in the city by 966 had actually expanded little beyond the boundaries set down by the Umayyads and remained focused upon the earlier structures of the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa mosque, established on the Temple Mount in the period c. 691–705.⁶⁹ This resulted in an urban environment in which both Christian and Muslim topographies coexisted and competed well into the lifetime of Patriarch Yūḥannā.

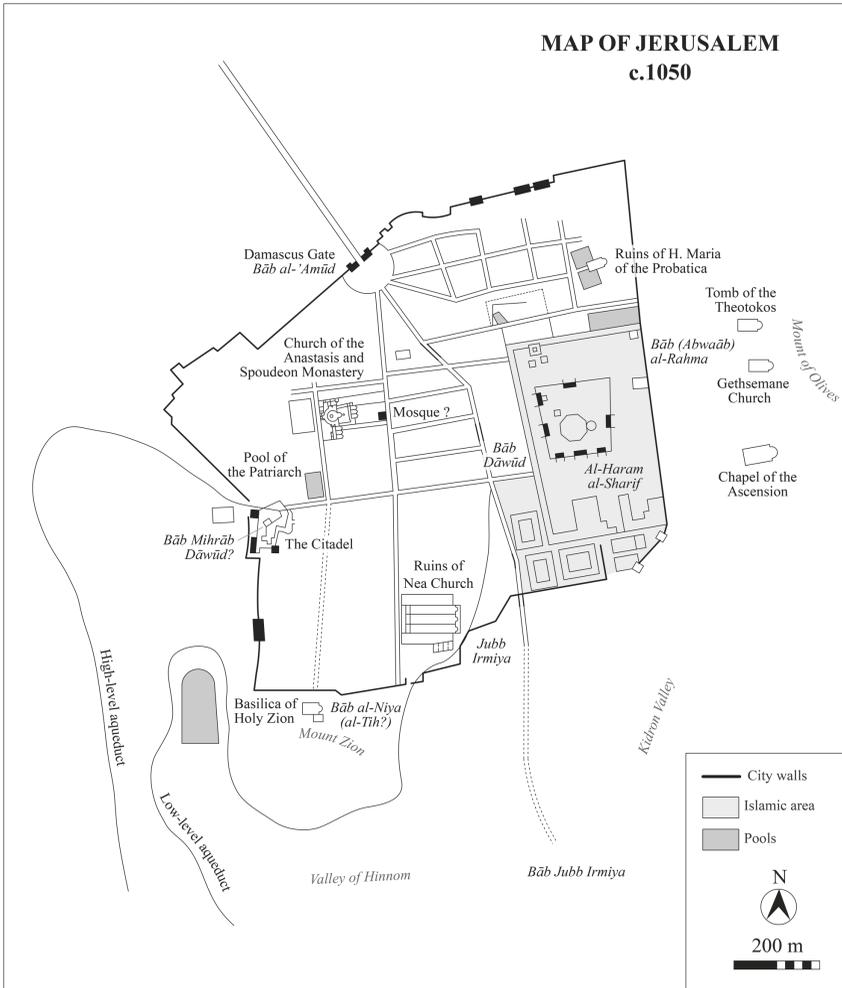
65. A monastic community and scribal workshop were still active in Jerusalem as late as 1031, according to the testament of Mount Sinai, Georgian MS 58, which was given to the monk Ioane of Golgotha, a disciple of Patriarch Sophronios; see Garitte, *Catalogue*, pp. 225–234.

66. Holy Sion evidently survived to the reign of al-Zāhir, when it was threatened with destruction: Yaḥya ibn Sa'īd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 166–167, pp. 534–533; trans. Pirone, p. 373. On the reconstruction of the Church of the Anastasis in the early eleventh century, see Biddle, Avni, and Seligman, *Church*, pp. 40–51; Biddle, *Tomb*, pp. 74–88.

67. On the stational feasts observed in these churches, see Garitte, *Le calendrier*, pp. 29–31. On the Probatica Church, see the collected studies in Bouwen, ed., *La piscine probatique*.

68. The tomb of the Theotokos and the church on the Mount of Olives are noted in the description of Jerusalem by Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Muqadassī, *Aḥsan al-Tāqāsīm*, ed. de Goeje, p. 156; trans. Collins, pp. 171–172. The Gethsemane church is attested as late as 1044, in a copy of the Parakletike produced there by the scribe Petre (Sinai, Georgian MS New Finds 14); see Alek'size et al., eds., *Catalogue*, pp. 387–388.

69. Grabar, *Dome*; Kessler, "Abd al-Malik's Inscription"; Avni, "Byzantine-Islamic Transition," pp. 114–137.



MAP 8.1. Urban plan of Jerusalem c.1050.

The visibility of the Melkites as a community within the urban fabric of Jerusalem was reinforced by the ceremonial activity and private devotions that continued to imbue these buildings with relevance among the city’s resident population. According to the Georgian redaction of the Melkite Menaion, copied at Mount Sinai around 970, many of the churches listed above continued to form important stations of the Melkite processional liturgy carried out in Jerusalem and other areas of the Jund Filasṭīn throughout the calendar year.⁷⁰ Little is known about the logistics and nature of these processional liturgies, although a later

70. Garitte, *Le calendrier*, pp. 30–31. For studies of Melkite liturgy before the Crusades, see Galadza, “Greek Liturgy,” esp. pp. 422–425; Galadza, “Sources.”

description of the Palm Sunday procession from Bethany to Jerusalem by Yaḥya ibn Sa'īd reveals an expectation that such festivals would be attended by large crowds and led by the region's most prominent clergy.⁷¹

For the Melkites of the Jund Filasṭīn, the focal points of much of this activity were the churches of the Anastasis and Holy Sion, which are listed as destinations for more than thirty separate feasts in the calendar, sometimes in isolation but often linked as part of a single liturgical observance that moved between churches located in the city and its extramural hinterland. The pinnacle of this activity was the festival of Easter and the forty-day period on either side of Holy Week spanning Lent and Pentecost, for which the Melkite Menaion and the Jerusalem Lectionary, copied in the late tenth century, list almost daily stationary liturgies across the city, incorporating the churches of the Anastasis (including the Martyrion, Golgotha, and the Katholikon), Holy Sion, the Probatika, Bethany, and Bethlehem, and gatherings (*synaxes*) of the regional clergy.⁷² For the period spanning from the first day of Lent until Pentecost, the Jerusalem Lectionary lists twelve separate observances in the Church of the Anastasis and twenty-one in Holy Sion alone, which were accompanied by additional stationary liturgies in honor of fixed feasts.⁷³ Upon ascending the patriarchal throne around 964, Yūḥannā thus inherited an episcopal see in which the churches and Christian ceremonial of Jerusalem continued to form an important component of public life in the city.

Even contemporary observers such as al-Muqadassī, a figure who rarely describes customs among the *dhimma* in the Dar al-Islam, noted the significance of the Easter festivities as the most important religious festival of the Jund Filasṭīn, matched only by the feasts dedicated to Epiphany and another observed in late April in al-Lūd (previously Diospolis), which presumably related to the feast of Saint George.⁷⁴ By the tenth century, the celebration of these feasts also coincided with a number of regional trade fairs.⁷⁵

Much of the focus on the festival of Easter in contemporary sources centered on the miracle of the holy fire, which took place on Holy Saturday in the Church of the Anastasis at the tomb of Christ. In the imaginations of many Muslim writers, the church occupied a somewhat uncomfortable space in their descriptions of Jerusalem, in view of its associations with Christ's crucifixion and resurrection

71. Yaḥya ibn Sa'īd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 254–255, p. 462.

72. Tarchnišvili, *Grand Lectionnaire*, vol. 1, 331–897, pp. 47–138; Tarchnišvili, *Grand Lectionnaire*, vol. 2.

73. Tarchnišvili, *Grand Lectionnaire*, vol. 1, 331–897, pp. 47–138.

74. The feast of Saint Barbara is also mentioned as a major feast: Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Muqadassī, *Aḥsan al-Tāqāsīm*, ed. de Goeje, pp. 182–183, trans. Collins, p. 166. The Sinai Georgian Menaion (Mount Sinai, Georgian MS 34) dates the feast of Saint George to April 23: Garitte, *Le calendrier*, p. 62. An earlier example of Muslim engagement with the feast of George, probably dating to c. 780, is noted by Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem*, p. 66.

75. Binggeli, "Annual Fairs."

(both highly contentious episodes in Islamic critiques of Christianity) and suspicions that the miracle of the holy fire itself was a fraudulent ruse engineered by Melkite clergy.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, contemporary accounts, both Christian and Muslim, could not easily disregard the importance of the miracle as one of the main public spectacles of the city, which was attended by the clergy and lay devotees of the Melkites and other Christian groups but also by the *mu'addin* and amir of the city, who apparently observed the ritual from an upper gallery in the church overlooking the tomb.⁷⁷ The account of the *faqih* Ibn al-Qāṣṣ, penned around 940, even goes so far as to suggest that senior Muslim figures may have actively participated in the ritual, by opening and closing the tomb door before the descent of the holy light.⁷⁸ Even if this was not the case, the report is nonetheless suggestive that both the Church of the Anastasis and its central miracle were perceived by contemporaries, even if uncomfortably, as bound up with the public authority exercised by the city's most senior Muslim figures.

Precisely this symbiosis could foster tensions between the Melkites and the governing authorities. The copy of the letter attributed to the cleric Niketas, dated to 947, offers one example in which the proceedings of the rite were forcibly halted by the amir of the city, until a ransom of seven thousand gold coins was paid.⁷⁹ Although a poorly understood document, it does complement other contemporary accounts, where Melkite festivals and rites were often subject to the harassment of the authorities and jeering crowds, attempting to interrupt their proceedings.⁸⁰ The rites of Jerusalem appear to have provoked particular criticism, partly due to the suspicions surrounding the authenticity of the miraculous holy fire but also because of the broader appeal of many of its holy sites across a wide spectrum of the Christian oikumene, which regularly attracted visitors

76. Qur'an 4:157.

77. The most well-known example of Muslim participation in a Christian festival is the miracle of the holy fire: Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, ed. de Meynard and de Courteille, vol. 3, 56, p. 405; trans. in Le Strange, *Palestine*, pp. 202–203.

78. The text is preserved in five manuscripts. Cairo, Egyptian National Library, MS Ahmad Taymur 103 (dated to 1389); Cairo, Egyptian National Library, MS Miqat 1201; Istanbul, Beyazit Library, MS Veliyuddin 2453; Madrid, Collection Gayangos, MS XXXIV; London, British Library, MS Oriental 13315 (dated 1705). Safa, "Les manuscrits"; Sezgin, "Kitāb Dalā'il al-qibla" ed. Sezgin. An English translation of the passage, with parallel text, appears in Skarlakidis, *Holy Fire*, pp. 60–64.

79. Niketas Basilikos, *Letter to Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos*, ed. Riant, pp. 375–382; see also Skarlakidis, *Holy Fire*, pp. 65–69.

80. One such example is the report of the Melkite scribe Ṣāliḥ Ibn Sa'īd al-Masiḥī, who describes interruptions to festivals observed by the Melkites. Ṣāliḥ inscribed a number of autobiographical notes in the marginalia of the manuscript collections at Mount Sinai. These notes form the basis of our knowledge of Ṣāliḥ's life and movements. Ṣāliḥ's autobiographical marginal comments have been identified and deciphered in seven Arabic works dated to the ninth and tenth centuries: Mount Sinai, St. Catherine's Monastery, Arabic MS 1, fol. 148v; Arabic MS 2, fol. 246v; Arabic MS 309, fols. 217v–218r, 263v–238r; Arabic MS 436, fols. 384r–v; Arabic MS 589, fol. 68r–v; Arabic MS New Finds 1, fols. 0v–1v; Birmingham, University Library, Mingana Collection, MS Christian Arabic Add. 142 (Mingana Collection 244), fols. 1v–2r. The full number is not yet known, but the most recent handlist, with a synopsis of each entry, appears in Trieger, "Ṣāliḥ Ibn Sa'īd al-Masiḥī," p. 646.

drawn from beyond the Jund Filasṭīn, thereby increasing suspicion of outside influence and subversion.

Christian “pilgrimage” from within caliphal territories probably accounted for most of this traffic by the reign of Patriarch Yūḥannā, as it had done in previous centuries. Yet the growing stability of land and sea routes between Western Europe and the southern Levant by the mid-tenth century had also begun to draw a steady flow of visitors to Jerusalem from beyond caliphal territories.⁸¹ The earliest of these journeys, attested in 947, relates to the journey of the cleric Niketas of Constantinople, who was sent to the church by the emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos.⁸² Athanasios, mentioned earlier, had also intended to make the journey to Jerusalem in 966.⁸³ Later, in 970, the countess Hidda, mother of Thietmar of Meissen, also journeyed to the city and reportedly died there.⁸⁴ Shortly afterward, Judith, duchess of Bavaria, visited the city before returning home in 973. In the decades that followed, further pilgrimages by clerical and lay figures from Italy, Normandy, and Francia, accompanied by their entourages, added an additional veneer of complexity to Jerusalem’s existing Christian demographic.⁸⁵

Many of these journeys were accompanied by substantial gifts intended for the Church of the Anastasis and its attendant clergy. Niketas’s journey in 947 had included a donation to the church sent by the Byzantine imperial family, and the later journeys undertaken by Duke Richard II of Normandy (d. 1026) and Ulric, bishop of Orléans (c. 1020) also apparently included donations.⁸⁶ A generation later, according to the separate accounts of Rudolfus Glaber and the *Life* of Symeon of Trier, the Melkites themselves were actively engaged in sending envoys to the courts of Rouen and Trier in order to solicit funds for their churches.⁸⁷ A more substantial donation, dating to the 1060s, records the foundation of a hospice in Jerusalem by Pantaleon of Salerno.⁸⁸ This augmented the revenue that the Melkites generated locally from within the Jund Filasṭīn through private donations granted by the local Christian population but also revenue drawn from properties that the Church appears to have held as a corporate body. At least three foundations—the Church of the Anastasis, the monastery of the Theotokos

81. The most complete account is France, “Destruction.”

82. Niketas Basilikos, *Letter to Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos*, ed. Riant, pp. 375–382.

83. *Vitae Duae Antiquae Sancti Athanasii Athonitae*, ed. Noret, vita A, 95, p. 45, 20–23; vita B, 31–32, pp. 161–163.

84. On Hidda’s journey, see *Annalista Saxo*, ed. Nass, 970.11–19, p. 216; and Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon*, ed. Mentzel-Reuters and Schmitz, 2.25, pp. 69–70; trans. Warner, p. 110. Hidda’s marriage to Christian of Thuringia is recorded in the later *Chronicon Montis Sereni*, ed. Ehrenfeuchter, 1171.41–43, p. 153.

85. France, “Destruction,” pp. 1–17.

86. Rodulfus Glaber, *Historiarum libri quinque*, ed. France, I.21, IV.19–20, pp. 36–37, 201–202.

87. Eberwin, *De sancto Symeone*, cols 0089A–0101E. Wolff, “How the News Was Brought”; Haverkamp, “Der heilige Simeon.”

88. Amatus of Montecassino, *Historia Normannorum*, ed. De Bartholomaeis, VIII.3, pp. 341–342; trans. Dunbar and Loud, pp. 188–189.

on Sinai, and Hagios Georgios of al-Lūd—held property by the close of the tenth century, some of which was recognized as charitable (and probably nontaxable) *awqāf*.⁸⁹

The extent and value of the property held by the Jerusalem patriarchate at any given period is difficult to assess, but it was evidently sufficient in the later ninth century and again in the early eleventh to have met the fiscal demands placed collectively upon the community by the diwan. In one of his many autobiographical notes, the Sinaitic monk Ṣāliḥ ibn Saʿīd al-Masiḥī describes the sale of Melkite land on the Mount of Olives to meet the demands of the *kharāj*, after which the land fell into the hands of the city's resident Jewish community.⁹⁰ An earlier, although still poorly understood document, purporting to be a letter sent to the Frankish emperor Charles III “the Fat” by the patriarch Ilyās III, reports a similar attempt at levying loans on Church property (mostly vineyards) to meet the costs of taxation.⁹¹

Cases of enforced requisition of property and *awqāf* belonging to individual Melkite churches, as occurred in the reign of al-Ḥākim, also allude to a scale of property holding that was clearly significant enough to pique the fiscal interest of centralized government in certain periods. Much of this property, it appears, was parceled out to al-Ḥākim supporters in the Jund Filastīn before it was restored at the appeal of Patriarch Nikephoros around 1020.⁹² By the late eleventh century, this situation had again shifted, as endowments granted to the Church of the Anastasis by Western nobles enabled the Jerusalem patriarchate to extend its properties beyond caliphal territories and into the Christian-governed regions of central France. Endowment charters from Moissaic and Villeneuve d'Ayeron identify two foundations from which the Melkite Church expected to extract annual revenue, which was claimed through the agency of envoys sent by the patriarch.⁹³ Another, dated to 1079, concerns Pope Gregory VII's confirmation of patriarchal proprietorship over a church dedicated to the sepulcher in Le Marche in the Pyrenees.⁹⁴ This activity was certainly under way by the 1080s,

89. They certainly held these by the early eleventh century, when they were confiscated by al-Ḥākim and subsequently returned. It is less clear, however, where these properties were located: Yaḥya ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 64–65, 68–69, pp. 432–433, 436–437; trans. Pirone, pp. 305–306.

90. As preserved in Sinai Arabic MS 309; see Trieger, “Ṣāliḥ Ibn Saʿīd al-Masiḥī,” p. 646.

91. The letter was first published by Luc d'Achéry in 1723 from a now-unknown manuscript; see d'Achéry, *Spicilegium*, vol. 3, pp. 363–364. As yet, there has been no systematic study of the manuscript tradition of this letter, although use of the source has remained widespread in recent discussions of Carolingian communication with Jerusalem; see Gabriele, *An Empire*, p. 37; McCormick, *Charlemagne's Survey*, p. 87. Again, the use of external aid to meet the pressures of taxation echoes practices among Jewish contemporaries; see Cohen, *Poverty*, pp. 137–139, with further references.

92. Yaḥya ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 64–65, 68–69, pp. 432–433, 436–437; trans. Pirone, pp. 305–306.

93. Péquignot, “L'église”; Bousquet, “La fondation.”

94. *Gregorii Regestum VII*, ed. Caspar, 40, pp. 457–458; Riley-Smith, *First Crusaders*, pp. 32–33. The church is described in the document as a *censualis*.

when envoy Sergios of Jerusalem was sent to Moissac at the orders of Patriarch Euthymios to collect the revenues that were due to the church on the patriarch's behalf.⁹⁵ Reports of further taxes levied upon Western visitors to the Church of the Anastasis, for which Pope Victor III appears to have attempted to reprimand Byzantine Augusta Anna Dalassene, provide further indications of Melkite revenue streams drawn from sources beyond Muslim-held territories.⁹⁶

This bestowed upon the Melkite Church of Jerusalem a particularly unique status as an institution and a community able to draw upon streams of economic support and revenue that lay beyond the control of caliphal (and later Seljuk) fiscal systems yet also legally conserve its property within the established system of *waqf*. Combined, these two features resulted in a situation in which the Melkite Church probably emerged as a relatively wealthy and influential institution in the context of the Jund Filastīn and one that had the potential to disrupt the ability of the governing authorities to maintain full fiscal control over a key strategic region. Rather than an impoverished institution that struggled for its survival, the Melkite Church of the tenth century was, at least locally speaking, a significant counterweight to the authority of the governor of Jerusalem and exceptional among the various Christian groups situated in this region.

THE MELKITE PATRIARCH

At the center of this network of patronage and communication sat the patriarch of Jerusalem, as the head of the Melkite community spanning the Jund Filastīn and Jund al-Urdunn but also the custodian of Christ's tomb. By the tenth century, the Jerusalem patriarchate still formed one-fifth of the Chalcedonian Pentarchy, which had been formally recognized in the Quinisext Council (Trullo) of 692.⁹⁷

At least symbolically, this placed the patriarch of Jerusalem within a system of Church governance that connected his office to the cities of Alexandria and Antioch within the caliphate and those of Constantinople and Rome that lay

95. This report survives in Paris, Bibliothèque National de France, MS Doat. 128, fols. 216v–217v. The text has never been edited, and thus its authenticity is difficult to assess at present. The text of the agreement was reproduced in Gieysztor, "Genesis" (1948); and Gieysztor, "Genesis" (1950), p. 25 n. 102; and it is also discussed in Cowdrey, "Cluny," esp. p. 297. Euthymios II's negotiations with the Clunian foundation were also known to Gilo of Paris, where a letter from Euthymios II appears in the *Historia Vie Hierosolimitane* (c. 1119) as the inspiration for Godfrey of Bouillon's launching of the First Crusade; see Gilo of Paris, *Historia*, ed. Grocock and Siberry, 65–80, pp. 6–7. There is no evidence to suggest that Euthymios II appealed directly to Godfrey, but evidently Euthymios's attempts to solicit aid from the Western churches were known by the early twelfth century.

96. Victor III, *Epistola ad imperatricem*, ed. Migne, col. 961B–C; Runciman, "Byzantine Protectorate," considered the letter an exchange between Empress Theodora and Pope Victorius II and dated to 1056. This is refuted by Cowdrey, "Papacy," especially pp. 43–48, who argues that the context of the letter better fits with the reigns of Pope Victorius III and Anna Dalassene and the negotiations between Byzantium and the papacy following the Great Schism of 1056. See also Cowdrey, *Age of Abbot Desiderius*, pp. 108–176, 207–210.

97. *Concilium Constantinopolitanum a. 691/2 in trullo habitum*, ed. Ohme, Canon 36, p. 39.

beyond Abbasid and Fāṭimid territories.⁹⁸ Although the loss of Jerusalem after the early seventh century complicated the ease of communication between Jerusalem and the West, attempts to include representatives of the Eastern patriarchs in the formal conciliar gatherings of the Church are known to have continued until the formation of the Latin patriarchate in 1099.⁹⁹ The dispute surrounding the ascension and deposition of the Constantinopolitan patriarch Photios, in particular, saw intense activity between the three patriarchal sees, as representatives of the patriarchs Theodosios and Ilyās III journeyed to Rome and Constantinople to ratify the decisions of the Fourth Council of 879/880.¹⁰⁰ By the reign of Patriarch Yūḥannā in 966, contacts between Jerusalem and other Chalcedonian communities across the Mediterranean had been occurring intermittently for more than a century, but in the past, they had included periods of intense exchange with the Frankish courts of Charlemagne, Charles III “the Fat,” and possibly the Saxon kingdom of Alfred of Wessex and a number of popes.¹⁰¹

The office of the Melkite patriarch of Jerusalem consequently possessed something of a liminal identity, as an entrenched component of the political and social landscape of the Jund Filastīn and yet an office indirectly aligned to the shifting contours of power and communication in Byzantium and Western Europe before the twelfth century. This was a role and a status that do not appear to have been extended to senior clergy of other Christian denominations within the caliphate and, to some extent, exceptionalized the Palestinian Melkites in the extent of their dealings with non-Muslim leaders and their role in mediating contact between both political spheres. It was also, at the same time, a status to which most of the regimes that governed Jerusalem prior to 1100 were highly sensitive,

98. On the Pentarchy, see Herrin, *Margins*, pp. 239–266.

99. See note 98 above and also the important discussion on the communication between Jerusalem and Rome in Jankowiak, “Travelling.”

100. Grumel and Darrouzès, *Les actes*, no. 549, p. 145. These are Thomas, metropolitan of Tyre, and Elias, priest and *synkellos*; see Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, vol. 16, pp. 315–318; vol. 17, pp. 373–374, 387–388. The interests of the Melkites in both meetings were represented by the patriarchal *synkellos* and legate Elias, who is probably not to be identified with the man who later ascended to the patriarchal throne as Ilyās III, given that Elias the *synkellos* was also able to represent Jerusalem at the 879/880 meeting, in the same months that Elias III ascended to the patriarchal throne.

101. *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. Kurze, a. 799–800, pp. 107–110; trans. Scholz and Rogers, pp. 78–79. We are also informed of a later embassy that took place in 807, which included two monks from the Mount of Olives sent by the newly appointed patriarch Tummiya (Thomas); *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. Kurze, a. 807, pp. 123–124, trans. Scholtz and Rogers, pp. 86–87; Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, ed. Holder-Egger, 28, pp. 31–32; trans. Ganz, p. 37. On the contacts with Charles III, see d’Achéry, *Spicilegium*, vol. 3, pp. 363–364. The contact between Ilyās III and Alfred is suggested by mention of the patriarch in a medicinal recipe recorded in *Bald’s Leechbook (Medicinale Anglicum)*, which is recorded as having been sent to Alfred by the patriarch. The work is believed to have been compiled around the mid-ninth century and now survives in London, British Library, Royal MS 12 D XVII, dated to the mid-tenth century. The relevant note is reproduced in *Bald’s Leechbook*, II.64, in Cockayne, *Leechdoms Wortcunning*, pp. 288–289. Further studies in Meaney, “Variant Versions”; Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, pp. 3, 6, 10–12, 15, 16, 20–22, 30, 35, 42–46, 60, 71–74, 77, 82, 83, 88, 89, 91, 129, 133, 169–75; Nokes, “Several Compilers.” Epistolary exchange between Ilyās and Alfred is also noted in Asser, *Vita Ælfredi*, ed. Winchester, 91; trans. Keynes and Lapidge, 91, p. 101 n. 220.

as evidenced by the active involvement of many caliphs and regional governors in the election of a suitable candidate for patriarchal office. For Jerusalem, at least four patriarchs—Theodoros (745–70), Christodoulos I (937–950), Orestes (983–1005), and Nikephoros (1020–c. 1034)—had been elected under the supervision of the Muslim authorities, mirroring a protocol also common in the selection of candidates for the Melkite thrones of Antioch and Alexandria and the patriarchs of other non-Chalcedonian communities.¹⁰² The interconnected nature of caliphal and Melkite power structures was to culminate some twenty years after the death of Patriarch Yūḥannā in the selection of a patriarch drawn directly from the family of the Fāṭimid caliph al-ʿAzīz in the figure of Orestes, brother of ʿAzīz’s consort al-Sayyida al-ʿAzīziyya.¹⁰³

The symbolic authority commanded by the patriarchs of Jerusalem also made them particularly suitable candidates for diplomatic negotiations with the West on behalf of the caliph. Orestes himself is reported to have led a delegation to the court of Basil II in Constantinople, which successfully negotiated a ten-year peace treaty between Byzantium and the Fāṭimids.¹⁰⁴ Two of Orestes’s successors, Nikephoros and Euthymios, are also documented as having brokered diplomatic agreements in the West during their reigns: Nikephoros serving to reinstate the peace between Constantinople and Cairo that had been disrupted during the reign of al-Ḥākim, and Euthymios acting on behalf of the emperor Alexios I in securing a peace treaty with Bohemond following the Norman assault on the city of Larissa.¹⁰⁵ But this was as precarious a position as it was a powerful one. One of the effects of this dynamic was that Melkites were frequently accused of harboring ulterior allegiances to non-Muslim powers, and periods that witnessed heightened military tensions on the Byzantine-caliphal frontier were often followed by attacks on Melkite properties in major cities or important naval ports.¹⁰⁶ The actions and choices of individual patriarchs could have implications for the stability and effectiveness of caliphal governance, especially within a

102. Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen*, ed. and trans. Lamoignon, 33.1–5, pp. 51–52; Yaḥya ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 254, p. 462; 207, pp. 432–433, 436–437; trans. Pirone, pp. 115, 225–226, 303–305.

103. On this shadowy figure, see Yaḥya ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 207, p. 415; trans. Pirone, p. 190; Walker, *Caliph of Cairo*, pp. 18–20; Calderini and Cortese, *Women*, pp. 18–20.

104. Yaḥya reports that Orestes accompanied a Byzantine envoy who had visited the court of al-Ḥākim. Orestes is said to have negotiated a *hunda* (truce) as part of these negotiations. Yaḥya ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 254–255, p. 462; trans. Pirone, pp. 225–226.

105. Yaḥya ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 100, pp. 468–469; trans. Pirone, pp. 305–306; Gregory Pakourianos, *Typikon*, ed. Gautier, p. 131; trans. Jordan, p. 557. A useful summary of the broader events appears in Theotokis, *Norman Campaigns*, pp. 171–175.

106. The account of the destruction of the churches of Kosmas and Kyriakos in Ramla and possibly in Asqalan and Qaysariya only survives in the Antiochene recension of Saʿīd ibn Baṭṭīq’s *Nazm al-Jawhar*, as the entries that post-date 820 no longer survive in the Alexandrine version edited by Michel Breydy in Saʿīd ibn Baṭṭīq, *Annalenwerk*. On the entry, see Saʿīd ibn Baṭṭīq, *Kitāb Nazm al-Jawhar*, ed. Cheikh, Carra de Vaux, and Zayyat, pp. 257–258; trans. Pirone, p. 431. For Asqalan, see Yaḥya ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 21, p. 719; trans. Pirone, p. 37.

region like the Jund Filasṭīn that had proven difficult to secure throughout the tenth century.¹⁰⁷ Within this environment, control of Jerusalem appears to have been key.

Although part of Jerusalem's significance stemmed from its ideological potency in both orthodox Christian and Muslim belief, Jerusalem also occupied a key strategic position within the Jund Filasṭīn as one its most extensive and fortified urban centers.¹⁰⁸ Whereas periodic rebellions against caliphal authority in the tenth century had seen heavy attacks and looting of the key administrative centers of Ramla and Ṭabariyyā, which erupted again to damaging effect in the 1020s, Jerusalem held out against such aggression until the arrival of the Seljuks in 1073, the first time the city had been occupied by force (rather than surrendered) since the Herakleion conquest in 628. By the 960s, this control was also uncertain, and Yūḥannā's tenure as patriarch certainly coincided with a period of intense confrontation between the Ḥamdānid forces and the Byzantines on their western frontiers, which saw the loss of Crete and Aleppo in 961 and 962, respectively, followed by the successful Byzantine recapture of Cyprus in 964 and the annexation of Cilicia in 965/6. The consolidation of Byzantine control over Cyprus in 965, still a major staging post for journeys between Jerusalem and the Aegean, thus brought the holy city sharply into focus.¹⁰⁹

Yet the complex demographic of the city itself, in which Christian and Jewish populations represented a large portion of the citizen body, resulted in a somewhat complex role for the city and concerns over its loyalty to the caliph. Within this environment, the patriarchs appear to have been subject to particular scrutiny. According to John Skylitzes, Yūḥannā VII's own demise had been provoked by his repeated attempts to encourage the Byzantine emperor Nikephoros Phokas to launch an offensive against the city—a significant detail missing from Yaḥya's recollection of the events almost a century later.¹¹⁰

The swiftness of Byzantine military success in the 960s, accompanied by a series of polemical poems (supposedly) commissioned by Nikephoros Phokas and sent to the Caliph al-Muṭī' in 966, also stoked existing tensions between the two rulers and provoked sharp rebukes from a number of contemporary writers within the caliphate.¹¹¹ An anticipated assault on Jerusalem and further threats to

107. Further discussion in Brett, "Fāḥimid Revolution"; Bacharach, "Career"; Bianquis, "Autonomous Egypt"; Brett, *Rise*, pp. 158–162; Kennedy, *Prophet*, pp. 84–100.

108. The walls of the city await systematic study. A useful preliminary survey appears in Weksler-Bdolah, "Early Islamic and Medieval City Walls."

109. The Byzantine assaults of the 960s by Nikephoros Phokas are described in Yaḥya ibn Sa'īd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 84–100, pp. 784–798; trans. Pirone, pp. 108–113. It is also alluded to in John Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historion*, ed. Thurn, p. 271; trans. Wortley, 14.16, p. 260.

110. John Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historion*, ed. Thurn, pp. 278–279; trans. Wortley, 14.21, p. 267.

111. Only the response to this poem survives. This is the *Radd al-Muṭī' 'alā risāla malik al-Rūm*, composed by al-Qaffāl al-Shāshī. A discussion of this poem, along with text and German translation, is in Grunebaum, "Eine poetische Polemik," pp. 50–53; see El Cheikh, "Tenth Century Byzantine Revival," pp. 154–157. A further response is also known from the Andalusian writer Ibn Ḥazm.

extend Byzantine control over Baghdad and Mecca appear to have formed part of the original content of the poem.¹¹² Later (if somewhat fictitious) reports of an attempt by John Tzimiskes to recapture Jerusalem in 975 identify the prevalent sense of anxiety in the sources over the allegiances of the city and its patriarch in the decade that followed.¹¹³ Although the actions of individual patriarchs like Yūḥannā are difficult to observe in these affairs, such concerns about their ability to disrupt local political stability were not always entirely unfounded. The Jarrahid rebellion launched against al-Ḥākim in 1012, for example, partially secured its initial success by consolidating its support among the Melkites of Jerusalem through a number of pro-Christian gestures.¹¹⁴ One of the initial acts of the newly crowned pretender caliph, Mufarrij ibn Dagħfal ibn al-Jarrāh at-Ṭaʿī, was to elect a new patriarch after a seven-year vacancy following the death of Orestes in 1005, accompanied by reassurances for the reconstruction of the Church of the Anastasis which had been demolished in 1009.¹¹⁵ The role fell upon Theophilos, former bishop of Hibal, who remained in the city throughout the period of Jarrahid occupation and eagerly set about reconstructing the Anastasis.¹¹⁶

These actions, all described in later sections of Yaḥya's *Kitāb al-dhayl*, highlight the author's own understanding of the dynamic between the patriarch and the caliph as one that was dependent upon a mutual recognition of authority: Theophilos's status was tied to the election being formally recognized by Mufarrij at his crowning, and the rule of Mufarrij was legitimized by the popular consent bestowed by Theophilos and the local population, who appear to have readily acquiesced to the Jarrahid control of the city.

The interconnected nature of this relationship, however, often meant that the authority and agency of the patriarch of Jerusalem were closely bound to fluctuations in the fortunes of local governors and caliphs. Thus, when the Jarrahid rebellion faltered and was ousted by the Fāṭimid expeditionary force in 1013, Theophilos, fearing for his life, fled the city.¹¹⁷ Although on this occasion he was warmly received by the Fāṭimid envoy, several of his predecessors had been less fortunate. Only two years previously, Arsenios, the patriarch of Alexandria, had been murdered by agents of al-Ḥākim while he was engaged in plans to fortify his estates in a period of anti-Melkite persecution.¹¹⁸ A similar

112. Grunebaum "Eine poetische Polemik," pp. 49, 58.

113. Walker, "Crusade."

114. Yaḥya ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 295–297; trans. Pirone, pp. 258–259.

115. Yaḥya ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 295–297; trans. Pirone, pp. 258–259.

116. Yaḥya ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 295–297; trans. Pirone, pp. 258–259.

117. Yaḥya ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 312, p. 520; trans. Pirone, p. 269.

118. Yaḥya ibn Saʿīd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 288, p. 496; trans. Pirone, pp. 249–250.

fate befell Yūḥannā's contemporary in Antioch in 967, Christophoros, following accusations of Melkite complicity in the Byzantine conquest of Aleppo.¹¹⁹

Taken in isolation, such episodes contribute little to understanding the individual relationships maintained by the patriarch with specific rulers or authorities. Yet, appraised broadly, what they offer is a sense of Melkite identity and political agency that were, at all times, responsive to changing attitudes of individual rulers, in often highly specific geographical and temporal contexts. More benevolent rulers could certainly enable individual Melkite patriarchs and other clergy to exercise a greater degree of autonomy and power within a regional context like the Jund Filasṭīn, but so, too, could weaker ones in periods that saw a loosening of central control in outlying territories. Personal dynamics could also play a considerable role in shaping the control that Melkites could exercise within areas like the Jund Filasṭīn where they retained sizable demographic majorities, especially in cases where patriarchs were closely related to figures of authority, through family or networks of political patronage. Nevertheless, such relations were often finite and susceptible to shifts in power. The murder of the Alexandrine patriarch Arsenios, the brother of the consort of the former Fāṭimid caliph al-ʿAzīz, in the reign of al-Ḥākim, is a particularly striking reminder of the vulnerability of Melkite status to sudden changes of the political breeze.¹²⁰ Thus, we return to Yaḥya's description the murder of Patriarch Yūḥannā VII.

DEATH OF A PATRIARCH

Against the tense military confrontations of the Byzantine frontier, and into a position of great political and social sensitivity, Patriarch Yūḥannā ascended to the throne in 964 and reigned for two years. Little is known of his earlier life or indeed his origins. Unlike his Antiochene contemporary, Christophoros, there are few indications that Yūḥannā inspired the creation of a work to commemorate his life, an absence that may allude to his controversial status in later decades. It is certainly interesting that the account of his final weeks recorded by Yaḥya draws few direct links between the wider situation and the difficult circumstances that had arisen between the patriarch and the Muslim governor by the year 966. Instead, the dispute is reduced to a highly personal one, which stemmed from the antagonistic dynamic maintained between the two leaders. According to Yaḥya, the quarrel occurred over a series of demands made by Muḥammad for a tribute that Yūḥannā subsequently refused to pay. The cause of conflict was hardly a new one. Cases of forced tribute and property confiscation had been a feature

119. Zayyat, "La vie."

120. Yaḥya ibn Sa'īd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 288, p. 496; trans. Pirone, pp. 249–250.

of Christian life in the caliphate in earlier periods and often arose in times of heightened tensions between the caliphate and the Christian powers of the West.

The most striking feature of the relationship as described by Yaḥya is the choice that Yūḥannā made to try to curtail these pressures, which took the form of a direct envoy to Fustāt for an audience with the de facto Ikhshīdīd governor Abū al-Misk Kāfūr. This is presented insouciantly in Yaḥya's account and recollects a situation in which the patriarch expected to present petitions directly to the central authorities. In this example, an audience was granted, thanks to the intercession of the Christian *kuttāb* of Fustāt, and the petition upheld in the patriarch's favor. According to Yaḥya's description, Kāfūr ordered the immediate cessation of Muḥammad's harassment of the patriarch and offered assurances to extend his protection to the wider Melkite population of Jerusalem.¹²¹ Here, Yaḥya ibn Sa'īd betrays his own position as an eleventh-century writer attempting to interpret a pre-Fāṭimid system of petitioning and conflict resolution. Although it is possible that similar systems existed in the 960s, the protocols of letter writing and envoys in which Yaḥya has Yūḥannā engaged better reflect the etiquettes that were known to writers like Yaḥya by the 1030s.¹²² What the passage does, however, is provide a historical testament to the legality of Yūḥannā's actions and the recognition of his petition by the Ikhshīdīd amir. In effect, it serves to vindicate the patriarch of any wrongdoing and affirm his allegiance to caliphal authority in Fustāt. As the text makes clear, distractions on the frontier with Syria and the arrest of the Ikhshīdīd representative Takīn upon his arrival in Jerusalem weakened the effectiveness of these protections and the ability of the central authorities to impose full control over the local governors. Faced with no relief from Syria or Fustāt, Patriarch Yūḥannā found himself outmaneuvered by Muḥammad and unable to mount an effective appeal. As swiftly as Yaḥya vindicates Yūḥannā, he also dispels any criticism that could be levied against Fustāt.

The general sentiment of Yaḥya's description suggests that these disputes unfolded over several weeks, although the only chronology offered in the account is the dates May 28–29, a week before Pentecost, when Yūḥannā, fearing for his life, barricaded himself in the Church of the Anastasis. As the opening lines of this discussion noted, on the evening of the May 28, the mob, incited by Muḥammad, broke into the church, set the building on fire, and followed with a further attack on the Church of the Holy Sion. When Patriarch Yūḥannā was discovered hiding in a cistern, he was killed by the assembled mob and dragged into the atrium of the Martyrion church, where his body was burned before the gathered crowds. If the date and location given by Yaḥya are correct, Yūḥannā's

121. Yaḥya ibn Sa'īd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 101, p. 799; trans. Pirone, pp. 113–114.

122. On the petition system, see Stern, "Three Petitions"; Khan, "Historical Development"; Rustow, "Petition"; Goitein, "Petitions."

murder occurred at a date of heightened ceremonial activity in Jerusalem, which was probably known to Yahya in the 1030s from his own experiences and knowledge of the Melkite liturgical calendar.¹²³ By the tenth century, according to the surviving calendars, the weeks leading up to Pentecost saw the use of both churches as weekly destinations for the stationary liturgy during the celebrations of Easter and Lent, which intensified during and immediately after Holy Week.

In 966, Pentecost also coincided with a number of fixed feasts listed in the Melkite Lectionaries that were also marked by stationary observances and *synaxes*. Two of the most important of these, in the week preceding Yūḥannā's death, on May 17 and 20, commemorated the Sasanian capture and destruction of the city in 614, and may have included a *synaxis* in the Church of the Anastasis.¹²⁴ Central to these feasts were celebrations of the restitution of Byzantine control of the city under Herakleios, accompanied by additional observations commemorating the return of the true cross and the role of the patriarch Modestos in the restoration of Byzantine rule of the Christian city.¹²⁵ The chronology of events offered by Yahya would also have resulted in the feast of the Ascension falling within the period of dispute between Yūḥannā and Muḥammad.¹²⁶

Set against the context of the 960s, after a period of substantial territorial loss to the Byzantines, such liturgies, if indeed they were performed, might have been perceived as antagonistic in an urban context anticipating further Byzantine assaults on Abbasid territory.

The loss of Cyprus in 965, in particular, must have excited anxieties, in view of the island's strategic value as a naval staging post to the Levant and the existing connections that the Melkites are known to have maintained with monasteries on the island in the same decades.¹²⁷ A further feast listed in the Melkite Lectionary, a day before Yūḥannā's apparent self-imprisonment within the Anastasis (May 27), also records a stationary liturgy in the church, which likely involved a gathering of the regional clergy in anticipation of Pentecost.¹²⁸ The drama surrounding Yūḥannā's final days thus unfolded at a highly public level: an attack

123. Easter fell on April 15 in 966 and Pentecost on June 3, which makes the chronology of Yahya's account broadly correct. Grumel, *La chronologie*, p. 310.

124. Garitte, *Le calendrier*, pp. 66, 226, 229; Tarchnišvili, *Grand Lectionnaire*, vol. 2, 979–984, p. 11. On the earlier history of the *synaxis*, see Verhelst, "Liturgy," especially p. 423.

125. Garitte, *Le calendrier*, pp. 66, 226, 229; Tarchnišvili, *Grand Lectionnaire*, vol. 2, 979–984, p. 11; Verhelst, "Liturgy," esp. p. 423. It is important to note that the Georgian recensions of Strategios's *Capture of Jerusalem* also contain a marginal note reading May 20, implying some link between this text and the liturgical feast observed in Jerusalem; see Strategios, *La prise de Jérusalem* ed. Garitte.

126. Garitte, *Le calendrier*, p. 118.

127. The capture of Cyprus in 965 is noted by John Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historion*, ed. Thurn, p. 270; trans. Wortley, 14.15, p. 259. This is confirmed by the exchange of manuscripts between Sinai and Cyprus by 980, which is mentioned in Sinai, Georgian MS New Finds 19; see Alek'size et al., eds., *Catalogue*, pp. 391–393. Contacts are also alluded to in the *Life of Athanasios the Athonite*, *Vitae Duae Antiquae Sancti Athanasii Athonitae*, ed. Noret, vita A, 95, p. 45, lines 20–23; vita B, 31–32, pp. 161–163.

128. Tarchnišvili, *Grand Lectionnaire*, vol. 2, 997, p. 12.

on the Melkite leader, in the Church of the Anastasis, days before one of its most prominent feasts and after a month of heightened public celebration. In this context, the desecration of Yūḥannā's body by fire at the entrance to the destroyed Martyrion church may be regarded as another powerful visual spectacle and one that, above all, may have been intended to publicly destroy the reputation of the patriarch before the assembled crowd.

The symbolic power of this action was unlikely to have been lost on Yaḥya or his contemporaries within a social context where conceptions of eschatological punishment and state-sanctioned justice by the eleventh century were routinely expressed through rituals of public shaming and the open exposure of wrongdoing.¹²⁹ Public and often processional humiliation (*tasshīr*), which could include flogging, execution, and burning, was commonly employed in the treatment of criminals, including those accused of treason or "heresy," and served to emphasize their symbolic exile from the wider community.¹³⁰ That this was enacted upon Yūḥannā against a backdrop of suspicion regarding his loyalty to the caliph cannot be coincidental, for the manner of his death and the subsequent treatment of his body conform to the kinds of punishments commonly reserved for traitors and apostates.¹³¹ In the case of Yūḥannā, these actions gained further potency from the unfolding of the murder in the Church of the Anastasis and the purposeful removal of his body to the church atrium. What could have ended as a violent death in the seclusion of the church interior was escalated into a fully fledged exposure in the most public space of the church atrium.¹³² Yūḥannā was brought before the public, was exposed like a criminal, and had his body desecrated in a manner that would have destroyed his reputation in the eyes of his contemporaries.

What the immediate consequences of this violent death and attack were upon the governor Muḥammad and his supporters is unknown to us, for Yaḥya mentions nothing further about them. Perhaps most significantly, there is no indication that attempts were made by later authors to construe the events of Yūḥannā's death into a martyrdom. Unlike his Antiochene contemporary Christophoros, no *Life of Yūḥannā* appears to have been written, nor were there any attempts to enshrine his memory within an established liturgical cult. From Yaḥya's perspective, Muḥammad's historical agency and role as part of the collective of the Melkite story were bound up in the death of his victim. All that are known are the identities of Yūḥannā's successors, Christodoulos (966–969) and Tūmiyā (Thomas) (969–978), who are credited with the initial attempts to restore

129. See Lange, "Where on Earth?" pp. 160–162.

130. Rowson, "Reveal"; additional treatment in Hawting, "Case," pp. 160–165.

131. Kraemer, "Apostates," esp. pp. 44–45; Marsham, "Public Execution," esp. pp. 123–124.

132. This mirrors contemporary Islamic literary set pieces where judgment is often meted out in the courtyard of the Friday mosque; see Rowson "Reveal," pp. 165–166 n. 65.

the Church of the Anastasis and its central dome.¹³³ The scar of the unroofed Martyrion church, however, apparently remained visible in the city until its completion in 1005. That these restorations were initiated so quickly after the death of Yūḥannā and at the agency of powerful members of the diwan and associates of the commander Alptakīn alludes to a concerted effort to prevent further disturbances in the city in the aftermath of the murder and highlights again the precarious but powerful position of the church and its community in the political and social life of Jerusalem. Although the building could be burned down and its chief cleric executed, the symbolic power wielded by the Church of the Anastasis in the political and social life of the city was not so easily supplanted. Nor was Yūḥannā's death indicative of what was to follow. In the decades after Yūḥannā's death, pilgrimages from the medieval West continued to rise in number and augment the established rituals of the Melkite Church, and in 1009, just five years after the damage of 966 was finally repaired, the building was once again attacked in an attempt to subdue its appeal and its popular power.¹³⁴

MELKITE IDENTITY IN THE JUND FILAṢṬĪN

It is not without some irony that a discussion based around Melkite identity should focus upon a figure about whom we know so very little. No contemporary set out to document the details of the life and actions of Yūḥannā, the thirty-fifth orthodox patriarch of Jerusalem. Unlike Sulaymān al-Ghazzī or Ṣāliḥ ibn Sa'īd al-Masiḥī, Yūḥannā VII has left no record of his life in his own words. As a result, we know nothing of his family, his origins, or indeed his reign.

From a historian's perspective, the events and complexities of his life have been consumed by the drama of his death. Nevertheless, his demise, as described by Yaḥya, offers a useful corrective to popular generalizations of the nature of Melkite identity in the Jund Filasṭīn in the final century of Muslim rule as marginal and discrete. But it also requires handling with caution. As Yaḥya penned his account of Yūḥannā's death around 1034, he did so having lived through a period of intense persecution of his community under the caliph al-Ḥākīm that had seen the requisition and destruction of several Melkites properties, including the Church of the Anastasis and the Church of

133. This is if we accept the chronology established by Yaḥya, who notes that the first wave of reconstruction began with the patriarch Christodoulos (r. 966–969) and ended shortly before the destruction of the church by al-Ḥākīm c. 1008/9. Yaḥya ibn Sa'īd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 101–104, pp. 799–803; trans. Pirone, pp. 114–116. Rodulfus Glaber, *Historiarum libri quinque*, ed. France, III.24, pp. 133–137.

134. Yaḥya ibn Sa'īd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 283–284, pp. 491–492; trans. Pirone, pp. 249–250. Skylitzes succinctly notes that the razing of the church was ordered at the command of “Azizos,” whom he confuses with al-Ḥākīm, and coincided with the banishment of monks within the region “to the ends of the earth.” John Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historion*, ed. Thurn, 14 [501–503], 382.14; trans. Wortley, 16.33, p. 329.

Holy Sion.¹³⁵ Although the church was eventually restored and reconstructed with caliphal agreement, some of which was still being negotiated as late as the 1030s, Yaḥya was also active in a period that saw a renewal of hostilities between Byzantine and caliphal forces. Byzantine offensives in Aleppo and Edessa that echoed the earlier assaults of the 960s resulted in renewed tensions between the Fāṭimid caliphate and Constantinople and accompanied threats to have the Church of Holy Sion demolished to provide materials for the fortification of Jerusalem.¹³⁶ Within this context, the story of Yūḥannā, as an essentially loyal subject, protected by decree from Fuṣṭāt and a victim of local circumstance rather than political machination, must have resonated within a social context that presented parallels with the events of seventy years earlier. In a context of growing hostility, Yūḥannā's memory was resurrected to become part of a historical memory that stressed Melkites' allegiance to the caliphate, rather than their detachment from it.

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of Yaḥya's narrative is the absence of an attempt to delineate the boundaries of identity between his historical actors—the figures he presents to us are characterized within the narrative by their similitude rather than their alterity. Even if confessional tensions had underlain the conflict between Muḥammad and Yūḥannā, the description of the days leading up to the patriarch's death and the spectacle of his murder involves no entrenched theological debate or confrontation between the two figures, based on their respective identities as a Muslim or a Melkite, but rather appeals to centralized authority, family connections, and, ultimately, an urban mob. The tensions between the two thus played out in Yaḥya's narrative through the dynamic between centralized and local power systems, through legislation and its failures, and through the popular appeal and familial support commanded by both men. In the context of the Jund Filasṭīn, these offer an opportunity to understand the complexity of Melkite identity and experience in the Muslim world beyond the confessional boundaries within which they have been commonly analyzed and an image of community that was, in many respects, no different from any other group that populated that region before 1100. This does not necessarily mean that Yūḥannā's identity as a Melkite Christian was an irrelevant factor in shaping his social experience. No Melkite, as far as we are aware, served as a regional governor of the Jund Filasṭīn (certainly never as caliph) and Melkites' status as part of the *dhimmah* often did entail real limitations to their power and periods of hostility directed against them.

135. Yaḥya ibn Sa'īd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 101–104, pp. 799–803; trans. Pirone, pp. 114–116.

136. Yaḥya ibn Sa'īd, *Kitāb al-dhayl*, ed. and trans. Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev, 101–104, pp. 799–803; trans. Pirone, pp. 114–116.

Nevertheless, I have sought to demonstrate the various means by which Melkites of the Jund Filasṭīn, as Chalcedonians, as custodians of the tomb of Christ, and as Jerusalemites, could cultivate additional identities that reflected the uniqueness of their geographical situation and the periods in which they lived. But those identities were also temporal and metamorphic. If we are to believe Yaḥya's account, the tensions that presaged the murder of Yūḥannā belonged to a specific calendar alignment and coinciding of several events in 966, which made his identity as Melkite patriarch of Jerusalem both pertinent and antagonistic to his contemporaries in that year. The turn of the year 967 brought with it new circumstances and new responses to those identities, as the new patriarch, Christodoulos, set about restoring the Church of the Anastasis with caliphal permission in a different political and social context from the one his predecessor had faced. These are no less important or less reflective of "Melkite identity" but are simply not part of the historical narrative that Yaḥya sought to construct of his community seven decades later. The specter of Yūḥannā loomed large in Yaḥya's recollections of the tenth century because it was exceptional, in ways that the figures of his successors were not. Perhaps for this reason, the ghost of Yūḥannā as a reflection of normative Melkite experience or identity should finally be laid to rest.

What we replace him with is less certain. Regrettably, we cannot detail the shifting contours of political power or social agency for any single Melkite in this region before 1100, and in writing this chapter, I have drawn heavily upon a range of examples spanning decades and subregions. The evidence does not equip us to reconstruct, even partially, the lived identity of a single historical "Melkite" or to understand the texture of Melkite experience within the context of an individual century. What it does permit is a reflection of the sensitivity of Melkites, as individuals and as a population, to the shifting currents of political and social change in the Levant across the broader span of the early Islamic period. What emerges is an impression of a community whose connections, worldview, and actions were molded by and responsive to the changing world of its members' lifetimes. Even this view, however, foregrounds aspects of collective political and institutional experience that, through observations of writers like Yaḥya, reveal the questions that we, in the twenty-first century, find relevant and important in defining a group or identity. It does not necessarily reflect what such individuals would have said about themselves. When the poet Sulaymān al-Ghazzī, as an eighty-year-old man, contemplated the events of his own life, it was not to institutions and political intrigue that he returned. The chronology of his life, which had seen the rise and collapse of Fāṭimid power, the persecutions of al-Ḥākīm, and the destruction and rebuilding of the Church of the Anastasis, placed him in the midst of a period of tremendous change as a member of the Melkite population. Yet, despite the fascination that such large-scale political and social changes hold for us, the most haunting memory for Sulaymān of his own

life was not of being a bishop or a monk or a survivor of far-reaching religious and political change but of the experience of being a bereaved father of a son who had died in youth:

I raised a son, who I thought would inherit from me after death,
 But my son died before me.
 Night overtook him.
 Leaving a father sorrowful and distraught.
 In his youth his body bent like a willow bough,
 Or like basil-branches.
 I buried a twenty-year-old son, and here I am
 An old man having reached the age of eighty.
 If I could redeem him, I would not be so afflicted by his death,
 But how can I redeem the one who should redeem me?
 I am averse to those friendly to me.
 I weep for him, and none of them can console me.¹³⁷

Within these lines, Sulaymān offers us a glimpse into an identity as lived and interpreted through his own eyes. Most compellingly, this reflects an identity divested of the institutional and the confessional, centered on the domestic and, above all, the human. As the debates surrounding “medieval identity” continue to gather pace, it is perhaps worth pausing to reflect that the intuitions and systems through which we seek to answer these questions were once populated by people and the choices they once made.

137. Trans. in Trieger, “Sulayman al-Ghazzi,” no. 59, p. 169.

Diversity and Convergence

The Accommodation of Ethnic and Legal Pluralism in the Carolingian Empire

Stefan Esders and Helmut Reimitz

AROUND the year 820, almost two decades after the renovation of the Roman Empire under Charlemagne and some years after Charlemagne's son Louis the Pious had taken over the rule of the young empire, Louis received a letter from the archbishop of Lyon, Agobard. In this long letter, the archbishop complained about the "great diversity of laws" that he had observed "not only in different regions and cities, but even in many homes." According to the bishop, it occurred quite often that "five people are walking or sitting together and not one of them shares the same law with another (*nullus eorum communem legem cum alterum habeat*)."¹ For Agobard, this was not the correct constitution for a Christian empire. Quoting from Paul's letter to the Colossians, he emphasized that the Christian vision of community had erased older distinctions between diverse peoples. Christ had inspired a community where there was "neither Gentile nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, Barbarian nor Scythian, slave nor free" (Col. 3:9–11). This was still true for the Carolingian Empire, where there should also be no distinction between the different communities and peoples that had come to live under Carolingian rule ("neither Aquitanian nor Lombard, Burgundian nor Alaman").² After a few more quotations from Paul, mostly from his letters to the Corinthians, Agobard comes back to the issue of legal pluralism and asks the emperor whether the great diversity of laws in the Carolingian Empire was not something that would stand in the way of the great divine work of unity.³ The emperor should finally establish just one law for the whole of the Christian community in his empire.

1. Agobard of Lyon, *Adversus legem Gundobadi*, ed. van Acker, 4, pp. 19–28, here p. 21: *ubi non est gentilis et Iudeus, circumcisio et preputium, barbarus et Scitha, Aquitanus et Langobardus, Burgundio et Almannus, servus et liber, sed omnia, et in omnibus Christus*. For a recent excellent discussion of the passage, see Ubl, "Entwurf"; for Agobard's approach to legal and ethnic plurality, see also Savigni, "Agobardo", and Esders, *Agobard*, suggesting 819 (or somewhat later) as a date for Agobard's letter. On Agobard, see Boshof, *Erzbischof Agobard*; Airlie, "I, Agobard."
2. Agobard of Lyon, *Adversus legem Gundobadi*, ed. van Acker, 3, p. 20.
3. Agobard of Lyon, *Adversus legem Gundobadi*, ed. van Acker, 4, p. 21.

The fundamental arguments of Agobard, however, had a very specific context. The letter did, in fact, respond to laws that the new emperor Louis had issued shortly before, in 816 and in 818/819. Like most of the legislation of the Carolingian emperors, the decree was sent out as a capitulary, a list of royal directives organized in *capitula* (chapters).⁴ Louis's capitularies of 816 and 818/819 were actually relatively long collections of chapters that were issued as additional capitula to the different laws of the Carolingian Empire—as *capitula quae nobis addere placuit*.⁵

These different laws present a highly diverse evidence of legislation and legal traditions. Most of them had grown out of the quite different milieux of the late Roman world and present various mixtures of Roman and non-Roman legal norms and practices.⁶ After the dissolution of a centralized Roman government in the Western Empire, which had included some of these laws within an imperial framework, these laws' relationship to one another had to be defined in new ways. In order to adapt to the absence of an imperial legal structure, the different successor states of the Western Roman Empire introduced new laws and new forms of legislation, next to older laws and law codes (including the norms, traditions, and practices of Roman law).

The accommodation of this legal plurality was a particularly important issue in the history of the Frankish kingdom and its rise to becoming the most important successor state of the Roman Empire long before the Carolingians came to rule large territories of the European continent.⁷ Their predecessors as rulers of the Frankish kingdoms, the Merovingian dynasty, had established themselves as rulers of the territory of modern France roughly around 500. After the conquest of most of the former Gallic provinces of the Western Roman Empire, they came to rule a territory that consisted of preexisting power blocs such as the one along the Rhône governed by Burgundian kings or the Visigothic kingdom south of the Loire in which barbarian and Roman generals in cooperation with the local and regional Roman elites had organized their own new “little Romes.”⁸ The new rulers of these territories had begun to govern the regions legitimated by mandates they had formerly received from the Roman Empire. Over time, consent and cooperation with the local and regional Roman elites replaced

4. For an edition of these capitularies, see the two-volume *Capitularia regum Francorum*, ed. Boretius and Krause, with a new edition in preparation; for further bibliography and reports on the ongoing work, see *Capitularia: Edition of the Frankish Capitularies*, <http://capitularia.uni-koeln.de/en/>.

5. *Capitula legi addita*, ed. Boretius, no. 134, pp. 267–269, and no. 139, pp. 281–285.

6. For recent overviews, see Liebs, “Roman Law”; Charles-Edwards, “Law”; the essays in Rouche and Dumézil, eds., *Le bréviaire d'Alaric*; Liebs, “Geltung”; Wormald, “Leges Barbarorum”; Esders, *Römische Rechtstradition*. For the late and post-Roman history of Roman law and its adaptations, see Liebs, *Römische Jurisprudenz in Gallien*; Liebs, *Römische Jurisprudenz in Africa*; Liebs, *Jurisprudenz*.

7. Esders, *Römische Rechtstradition*; see also Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*; Ewig, *Merowinger*.

8. Brown, *Rise*, pp. xxvi–xxvii; Brown, *Through the Eye*, pp. 385–407; Eisenberg, “Building”; for recent overviews of the process, see Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations*; Pohl, *Völkerwanderung*; Kulikowski, “Western Kingdoms.”

imperial legitimation of their rule. The promulgation of laws in these kingdoms was certainly an important manifestation of this cooperation and consent. In the Burgundian state, for instance, the barbarian governors of the region issued two new laws, one that provided a law for the non-Roman citizens of the region and defined their status, rights, and also their relationship to the people living under Roman law, and another one that updated and complemented this for the Roman part of the population.⁹

The establishment of the Merovingians' rule over most of Gaul has a different history. When their first Christian king, Clovis, managed to extend his rule over most of modern France, he did not build his legitimation primarily on a mandate from the Roman Empire. He established himself as the ruler of most of the former provinces mainly through negotiations with the elites of the power blocs that had already grown out of the Roman Empire while granting concessions of far-reaching autonomy and privileges for the various populations in exchange for their submission to his rule.¹⁰ In the highly militarized regions of northern Gaul, this enabled him to accumulate considerable military resources and power. The basic principle, however, was also observed in the establishment of Merovingian rule over the significantly less militarized "little Romes" of the south, from Bordeaux to the Côte d'Azur and the Provence. The laws and rights of the inhabitants of the regions and cities remained valid, and in many cases, administrative structures and offices were continued under Merovingian rule as well.

As a result, the Merovingian Frankish kings not only came to rule a socially and ethnically highly diverse kingdom, but they also reinforced or even multiplied this diversity by granting different legal communities their rights and ceding regional elites some autonomy in the kingdom. In doing so, the Merovingian kings placed themselves equidistant from all the various groups within their kingdom at the center of a power balance that was difficult to conceptualize without them.¹¹ It might well be that the promulgation of the oldest extant Frankish law, the *Lex Salica*, took place as a result of such negotiations in the context of the expansion of Clovis's reign.¹² The recognition of the customs, privileges, and laws for different groups in the quickly growing kingdom of Clovis may have motivated some of his Frankish followers to have their own laws, legal traditions, and status confirmed as well. That could explain why this law appears to be codified differently from all the other law codes issued at the time, with barely any signs of efforts in its earliest version to assimilate or integrate its customs with legal traditions of the Roman world.¹³ It was more important to establish it as one

9. See Liebs, "Lex Romana Burgundionum"; Schott, "Lex Burgundionum"; Dubreucq, "La vigne"; Wood, "Legislation"; Liebs, "Geltung," Esders, *Römische Rechtstradition*.

10. Esders, "Nordwestgallien"; Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations*, pp. 269–272; Shaw, "War," pp. 147–152.

11. For a longer discussion with further references, see Reimitz, *History*, pp. 96–103.

12. For the *Lex Salica*, see Ubl, *Sinnstiftungen*.

13. See Ubl, *Sinnstiftungen*, pp. 67–98.

distinctive source of law and normative discourse among the legally pluralistic constellation of the Merovingian kingdom.

The accommodation of this legal plurality was in itself a centuries-long learning process for the rulers of the Frankish kingdom as well as the communities they came to rule.¹⁴ It resulted in a legal landscape that was shaped by the coexistence, interaction, and interdependence of a variety of legal orders and traditions. These various laws and customs were not only copied and rearranged in various contexts but also further developed in revisions and new legal codifications of communities that had come to be defined as legal communities only after the end of the Roman Empire, such as the laws of the Alamans or Bavarians or Ribuarians.

The archbishop of Lyon, Agobard, whose episcopal library housed many of these codices along with other important collections, codifications, and manuscripts of Roman law, thought that the recently established imperial framework should have allowed for a more coherent or unified legal order.¹⁵ In this regard, the archbishop has found many modern historians who agreed with him and saw in Agobard an advocate for a European Christian unity. Many of them regarded the renovation of the Roman Empire under the Carolingians as a missed opportunity to anchor and stabilize a Catholic spiritual unity in a more integrated political system.¹⁶ However, the longing for a European unity in late ancient and medieval history has always been more romantic than historical. As we shall see, the legislative initiatives of Charlemagne that went hand in hand with the renovation of the Roman Empire around the year 800 demonstrate that Charlemagne and his political advisers had a very different vision for the recreation of an imperial framework. When each and every inhabitant of the renewed empire had to swear the oath of loyalty on the new title of the emperor—the *nomen caesaris*—in 802, they received the promise from Charlemagne that their different customs and laws would be respected and preserved.¹⁷

The imperial accommodation of a legal diversity proved to be decisive. This is not only documented in *capitula* added to the different laws such as the capitularies issued by Charlemagne's son Louis the Pious.¹⁸ Particularly from the ninth century onward, we have a rich transmission of manuscripts that gather together selections and adaptations of late Roman law, local customary laws, various laws for late Roman and post-Roman communities, and Christian and ecclesiastical laws.¹⁹ One particularly interesting example is a ninth-century manuscript today

14. For some observations on this learning process in different contexts, see the articles of Esders, "Nordwestgallien"; Esders, "Spätantike und frühmittelalterliche Dukate"; Esders, "Late Roman Military Law"; Esders and Reinle, *Rechtsveränderung*; Hoppenbrouwers, "Leges Nationum"; Faulkner, *Law*, pp. 29–45.

15. See note 6 above.

16. See Brown, *Rise*, pp. 3–5.

17. See Esders, *Sacramentum fidelitatis*, pp. 306–431; and below, pp. 245–6.

18. See above, p. 228 with n. 5.

19. For a recent overview, see Faulkner, *Law*; and the database *Bibliotheca Legum*, <http://www.leges.uni-koeln.de>.

kept in the monastery of St Paul in Carinthia.²⁰ The compilers of this manuscript brought together into one codex different post-Roman laws, such as the Frankish laws of the Salians and Ribuarians, the laws of the Alamans, of the Burgundians, an epitome of Roman law (*Epitome Aegidii*), and Carolingian capitularies. At the end of the manuscript, we find a page with a list of people who swore the oath of loyalty (*Indiculus eorum qui sacramentum fidelitatis iuraverunt*), probably new troops the Italian king and Emperor Louis II (d. 875) needed for the campaigns against the Saracens.²¹

If we compare the Carolingian (re)creation of the Roman Empire with the other Roman empire of the time, the Byzantine Empire, characterized by the resilience of late Roman imperial structures and ideologies, the Carolingian imperial project appears to have departed quite significantly from the common model of the ancient Roman Empire. The Byzantine Empire, of course, did not remain unchanged since the dissolution of the Western Roman Empire at the end of the fifth century. On the contrary, the capacity of the “empire that wouldn’t die” (John Haldon) to withstand severe crises and shocks largely depended on the flexibility of adapting to fundamentally changed circumstances, above all the loss of large and important imperial territories and their resources to the Arab armies and the establishment of a Muslim empire.²² However, as Haldon has shown, the orientation to older models of Roman imperial rule, a shared Roman-Christian identity, and not least the idea of a common Roman law still played an important role for the social and political cohesion of the Byzantine Empire.²³

The differences between the Byzantine Empire and the structures of the Carolingian Empire must have been quite obvious to contemporaries. We also have evidence for conversations and negotiations of Carolingian politicians with Byzantium and the papacy in Rome about the renovation of a Western Roman Empire before and after 800.²⁴ In the decades around the imperial renovation, we can also observe intensified efforts to study the resources and models of old and new Rome.²⁵ This was, however, not just a work aimed at an *imitatio imperii*. The study of the histories of the Roman Empire, past and present, allowed Carolingian intellectuals and politicians to reflect on the coexistence of two Roman empires and also helped them to develop other and new imperial views of the world.²⁶

20. St. Paul im Lavanttal, Stiftsarchiv, MS 4/1; for a description, see Mordek, *Bibliotheca*, pp. 685–695; for a comprehensive discussion of the manuscript, its compilation, and its transmission, see Esders, Bassetti, and Haubrichs, *Verwaltete Treue*; for context, see also Gantner, “Our Common Enemy?”; Gantner, “Kaiser Ludwig II.”

21. St. Paul im Lavanttal, Stiftsarchiv, MS 4/1, fol. 184r; see Esders, Bassetti, and Haubrichs, *Verwaltete Treue*.

22. Haldon, *Empire*; and see Haldon, chapter 6 in this volume.

23. Haldon, *Empire*, esp. pp. 122–132.

24. Schieffer, *Neues*; Schieffer, “Karl der Große”; Nelson, “Why Are There So Many?”; Ertl, “Byzantinischer Bilderstreit,” with an overview of the vast literature on the coronation; see also Davis, *Charlemagne’s Practice*, pp. 362–364.

25. See the contributions in Gantner, McKitterick, and Meeder, eds., *Resources*.

26. Nelson, “Why Are There So Many?”; Ertl, “Byzantinischer Bilderstreit.”

Agobard's letter to the emperor Louis seems to have been part of such reflections and even debates about these different views.²⁷

Another prominent voice in such debates was that of Charlemagne's biographer Einhard. He regarded legal reform and the unification of law as a much less pressing matter. In his biography of the great Emperor Charles, on which Einhard most likely still worked in the decade after Agobard wrote his letter,²⁸ he briefly discussed legal reforms that the emperor had started right after his imperial coronation.²⁹ According to Einhard's report, abandoning plurality was not an issue at all. Charlemagne tried to reconcile some of the contradictions and improve outdated regulations mostly for the two different Frankish laws (the *Lex Salica* and the *Lex Ribuaria*). But even here, the emperor did not get very far with his project and just added some chapters (*capitula*).³⁰ In writing his biography, Einhard oriented himself toward the model of Suetonius's life of Augustus, and in comparing his legal reforms with those of the first Augustus, Einhard's portrayal of Charlemagne's lame efforts or at least Einhard's laconic comments convey indeed a striking departure from older Roman imperial models.

As has been well studied, Einhard's relatively short life of Charlemagne is a very well-crafted text with deliberate silences, allusions, conscious generic choices, and their creative adaptation for the new Augustus in the North.³¹ The difference between the two Augusti might thus help us to understand the Carolingian renovation of the Roman Empire as the moment when the Latin West finally stepped out from the long shadow of the later Roman Empire. This empire had based its legitimacy on the superiority of Roman civilization and politics, whose ability to absorb other peoples and ethnic identities into the social texture of the empire proved the superiority of Roman politics, culture, and society.³² The Carolingian Empire was instead, from the beginning, an empire that consisted of a complex patchwork of different political, ethnic, and legal communities. After the conquest of half of Europe in the second half of the eighth century, the challenge was, above all, to find a way to accommodate the variety of social, political, and religious experiments that had evolved in the post-Roman West since the end of the Western Roman Empire. Some of these projects and experiments were even developed as conscious efforts to emancipate these societies from their Roman

27. For Agobard's letter as an intervention into a larger debate about the legal constitution of the Carolingian Empire, see Ubl, "Entwurf"

28. For the debate about the date of the composition of the *Vita Karoli*, see McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 7–20; Patzold, "Einhard's erste Leser"; Tischler, *Einhard's Vita Karoli*; Ganz, "Einhard." It is quite possible that a precise dating is difficult because Einhard worked on it for some time and it belonged to conversations and debates about Charlemagne's reign that took place over many years after the emperor's death.

29. See note 108 below.

30. Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, ed. Holder-Egger, 29, p. 33.

31. See, above, note 24; and also Fried, "Papst Leo III."

32. See, e.g., Dench, *Romulus' Asylum*; Ando, *Imperial Ideology*; Woolf, *Becoming Roman*; see also Dolganov, "Reichsrecht"; Dolganov, "Imperialism"; Dolganov, "Empire of Law."

imperial past, while others provided alternative models to the ones of the Roman empire of the present, the Byzantine Empire. The Carolingian *renovatio imperii* played an important role in efforts to bring all these post-Roman experiments together and accommodate their differences in a Christian-imperial framework. But the merging of post-Roman experimentation and experiences with imperial models never resulted in their absorption into one imperial vision. What we observe is rather the reconfiguration and reinforcement of these post-imperial social and political experiments within an imperial framework.

If we regard this process not as a departure from an idealized unity of the Latin West or Carolingian Europe but as one of the characteristic features of the Carolingian Empire, the question is not so much why Carolingian politics failed to establish a unified imperial identity that could have replaced or absorbed other differences. The question is, rather, why the imperial framework acquired such an important function in accommodating and balancing different legal and ethnic communities in the Carolingian Empire. In order to find answers to this question, we need to look back to the pre-imperial past of the Carolingians in the eighth century, in particular their strategies to legitimate the usurpation of the Frankish throne in the century before Charlemagne's imperial coronation.

THE POLITICIZATION OF IDENTITIES UNDER THE EARLY CAROLINGIAN KINGS

One of the most important strategies to justify the Carolingian takeover of Merovingian rule in the middle of the eighth century was the instrumentalization and mobilization of Frankish identity. In their efforts to present themselves as the legitimate rulers of the *regnum Francorum*, the Carolingian politicians and historians brought together different and sometimes competing conceptions of Frankish identity into one common vision of a Frankish community.³³ The oldest extant account of Pippin's usurpation of 750/751 was probably written soon after the event, and it was Pippin's own uncle Childebrand who identified himself together with his son Nibelung as the author of the history right after his report of Pippin's elevation.³⁴ The two Carolingians embedded their account in a chronicle that has been labeled in its modern edition as the continuation of the seventh-century *Chronicle* of Fredegar. As Roger Collins has convincingly shown, however, the two authors did much more than just continue the Merovingian chronicle,³⁵ whose older redaction probably took place in the cultural and political centers of the seventh-century ancestors of the Carolingians, the Pippinid family.³⁶ The later

33. See Reimitz, *History*, pp. 295–334, with a longer discussion of some of the points summarized in the next paragraphs.

34. *Continuationes Chronicarum Fredegarii*, ed. Krusch, 34, p. 182.

35. Collins, *Fredegar-Chroniken*.

36. Wood, "Fredegar's Fables"; Fischer, "Rewriting History"; Fischer, *Die Fredegar-Chronik*.

Carolingian historians Childebrand and Nibelung rearranged and reworked the older parts to compile a new *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, designed to legitimize the Carolingian rise to royal power under Pippin in a history from the beginning of the world to their own times.

The Merovingian chroniclers had offered Pippin's relatives excellent foundations for their agenda. The older chronicle had already highlighted the important role of the Carolingian ancestors, above all, bishop Arnulf of Metz and the mayor of the palace, Pippin, for the well-being and stability of the Frankish kingdom. At the same time, the chronicle had developed a perspective on the community of the Franks that provided a focus for political integration in the Merovingian kingdoms that was an alternative to that of the Merovingian kings.³⁷ Members of the Frankish elites were presented as taking responsibility for the common cause and the greater good in the kingdom. When the Merovingian kings were not able to resolve their conflicts alone, for instance, a *iudicium Francorum* was needed to find a solution.³⁸

The two Carolingian authors did not only build on this Merovingian chronicle. In their continuation of the history that ended its account in the 640s, they also used parts of another history—the *Liber historiae Francorum*. This book on the history of the Franks was written in the 720s, when the father of the future king Pippin, Charles Martel, largely controlled Merovingian politics. But the *Liber* was written not for Charles or the Carolingians but above all for the Western Frankish elites who feared to lose their central position in the new political constellation. The author wanted to remind his or her readers, including the Carolingian *princeps*, of the important role of these Frankish elites for the stability and future of the kingdom.³⁹ The combination of these texts, their rearrangement, and their continuation in the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, however, did not just widen the geographical horizons for a shared Frankish past. It also extended the political horizons of Frankish solidarity. It also combined the political definition of Frankish identity of the Fredegar *Chronicle* with the providential mission for the Frankish community in the *Liber historiae Francorum*.⁴⁰

With this integration of different conceptions of Frankish identity, the text of the Carolingian historians presents a conglomerate of political, Christian, and ethnic identity that played an important role for the Carolingians in legitimating themselves as *reges Francorum*. As has been argued elsewhere at greater length, the politicization of ethnic identity on a Christian foundation under the early Carolingians was a crucial factor for the history and salience of ethnicity in the

37. Reimitz, *History*, pp. 231–236.

38. E.g., *Chronicae Fredegarii*, ed. Krusch, IV.37, 40, pp. 138–140; see Bougard, “Du ‘jugement des Francs’”; and for the specific interpretation in the Fredegar chronicle, see Reimitz, “Franken.”

39. Coumert, *Origines*, pp. 322–332; Gerberding, *Rise*, pp. 146–172.

40. On the *Liber's* providential perspective and its integration of biblical and Frankish epic, see Reimitz, “History”; see also Dörler, “Liber Historiae Francorum.”

Carolingian period.⁴¹ Neither the Carolingian politicians nor their historians, however, were missionaries of ethnicity. Their main agenda was the integration of different conceptions of Frankish identity and views on Frankish history, which should, above all, demonstrate the ability of members of the Carolingian family to integrate various Frankish histories of the Merovingian past into a common future under the new Carolingian kings.

In this regard, the report of Pippin's relatives about Pippin's accession to the Frankish throne is the climax in Childebrand's new *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*. It is a powerful orchestration of the consent and community of the Franks with their future king. It was an unanimous decision of the Franks (*una cum consilio et consensu omnium Francorum*) and the election of all the Franks (*electione totius Francorum*) that allowed Pippin to become king.⁴² The emphasis on the community of the Franks with their newly elected Carolingian kings was also maintained in the continuation of the narrative to 768.⁴³

Such historiography of consensus was further developed by the authors of the *Royal Frankish Annals*, a text that was written either at the court or by people with close connection to the Carolingian court.⁴⁴ It is above all in the first part of the narrative, the reports of the deeds of Pippin's son Charlemagne from 768/771 to 788, that we see this affirmative rhetoric at work. Again and again, the reports of the annalists celebrate not only the great king (*Carolus rex*) but also his joint activity with the Franks (*una cum Francis*) and the consent and the community of the Franks at the same time. Charles repeatedly gathered *omnes Franci*, went forth with them, and triumphed *una cum Francis*.⁴⁵

THE "REDIRECTION" OF LOYALTIES

The invocation of the community and unity of the Franks with their Carolingian king in Carolingian histories of the eighth century was not just mere political rhetoric. It was part of a political theory through which the Carolingians reinterpreted the oaths of loyalty that the population of the Merovingian kingdoms had to swear to their kings. The great importance and meaning of these oaths of loyalty in the Merovingian and Carolingian kingdoms has been studied in the last three decades. Matthias Becher has shown that the question was a pressing issue in the early decades of Carolingian rule. As he convincingly demonstrated in his study on *Eid und Herrschaft*, it was one of the main objectives of the authors

41. Reimitz, *History*, pp. 444–455.

42. *Continuationes Chronicarum Fredegarii*, ed. Krusch, 33, p. 182; see the contributions in Becher and Jarnut, eds., *Dynastiewechsel*; Semmler, *Dynastiewechsel*; McKitterick, "Anfänge."

43. On this part, see Collins, *Fredegar-Chroniken*, pp. 82–95.

44. See McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 31–56; Nelson, "Why Are There So Many?" p. 12; on the part of the *Annals* until 788, see still Becher, *Eid*.

45. See Reimitz, *History*, pp. 342–345.

of the *Royal Frankish Annals* who compiled the text until 788 to prove the legitimation of the Carolingian rulers to demand this oath of loyalty as Frankish rulers.⁴⁶ Further studies on the post-Roman successor states have provided an explanation of why the *sacramentum fidelitatis* was such an important issue to the Carolingian kings. It had, in fact, a long history before the Carolingian take-over as one of the main foundations of the legitimation of post-Roman kings as successors to Roman rule and its *imperium* establishing them as the main military and judicial authority in their kingdoms.⁴⁷

The oath was an adaptation of the oath of loyalty in the Roman army, where not only the regular soldiers but also allied troops had to swear an oath that subjected them to the command of a Roman officer.⁴⁸ This seems to have provided an opportunity to negotiate certain conditions, rights, and privileges for these troops.⁴⁹ The post-Roman kings, most of whom started their careers as military officers or governors of the Roman Empire, transformed the oath into a means by which the entire population committed to the new ruler and acknowledged him as the highest military and legal authority.

This was also true for the establishment of Merovingian rule over most of Gaul under Clovis I (d. 511). When Clovis died, he controlled most of the former Gallic provinces and had successfully established himself as the ruler of mostly highly militarized power blocs, especially in the northern half of Gaul.⁵⁰ Conquest certainly contributed to this process, but negotiations and agreements among rulers, generals, and elites in these highly militarized regions performed an equally important, if not more important, role in their integration into a common political framework.⁵¹ Clovis managed to establish himself as the leader of a military monarchy through the contractual recognition of a degree of autonomy for the different political spheres and administrative units of his kingdom.⁵² These successful politics of integration were important for the accumulation of military resources and thus helped lay the foundation for the conquest of the southern regions of Gaul, first the Visigothic kingdom in 507 and later the Burgundian kingdom by Clovis's sons. They might also have played a role in managing public relations between Clovis and the elites of other post-Roman kingdoms, not least the Visigothic kingdom in the South.⁵³

46. Becher, *Eid*, pp. 74–77.

47. Esders, "Rechtliche Grundlagen"; Esders, "Faithful Believers"; Esders, *Sacramentum fidelitatis*.

48. Esders, "Implications."

49. Esders, "Rechtliche Grundlagen," pp. 423–427.

50. Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations*, pp. 303–310; Becher, *Chlodwig*, pp. 149–158; Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 41–50; Ewig, *Merowinger*, p. 20.

51. Esders, "Nordwestgallien."

52. Esders, "Nordwestgallien," p. 351.

53. Jussen, "Chlodwig"; Scholz, *Merowinger*, pp. 55–58 (on the letter to the bishops); Wood, "Arians".

Unfortunately, evidence for the oath of loyalty under Clovis has not come down to us, but its continuing importance is well documented in later sources, such as the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours written at the end of the sixth century. When tax collectors of King Childebert II (d. 596) came to the city of Tours, Gregory reminded them of the tax exemption of Chlothar I and the promise of Chlothar's successors that the city would not be subjected to new demands that they had received in exchange for their *sacramenta* to the kings.⁵⁴ The royal perspective on the oath has come down to us in two formulas from a Merovingian formulary collection compiled at the end of the seventh century. The first one is most likely from the time after Chlothar II had established himself as the sole ruler of the Merovingian kingdoms in 613. It is a formula for the appointment of a *comes*, *dux*, or *patricius* that highlights the responsibility of the future official to keep the complete fidelity of the people in his administrative district. Whether these people were Franks, Romans, or Burgundians or belonged to any other nation (*omnis populos ibidem commanentes, tam Franci, Romani, Burgundionis vel reliquas nationis*), they should live and be governed according to their custom and law (*secundum lege et consuetudine eorum*).⁵⁵ While the inclusion of Burgundians suggests that this formula may have been based on a document that was used for the Burgundian region, the second extant formula was most likely drawn up on the occasion of the establishment of a subkingdom in Austrasia, either for Chlothar's son Dagobert in 623 or for Dagobert's son Sigibert III in 633/4. Summoned by a local count who made use of the royal ban, the people were congregated in the cities, villages, and castles and swore fidelity and military support (*fidelitatem et leudesamio*) to the king and his son in the presence of a *missus*, who accepted the oath on behalf of the king. The formula makes clear that fidelity was regarded as an overriding principle that applied to all people regardless of their ethnic identity.⁵⁶

While the ancestors of the first Carolingian king, Pippin, Pippin II, and Charles Martel managed to increasingly control the politics of the Merovingian kingdom and monopolize access to the Merovingian court from the end of the seventh century onward, the oath was still sworn to the Merovingian kings.⁵⁷ It is very likely that the Carolingians as royal officials had sworn the oaths themselves, including the first Carolingian king, Pippin, who appears to have been absolved from his oath.⁵⁸ Only eight years before his own accession to the throne, Pippin

54. E.g., Gregory of Tours, *Decem libri historiarum*, ed. Krusch and Levison, IX.30, pp. 448–449; for this and a comprehensive discussion of the Merovingian period, see Esders, *Sacramentum fidelitatis*, pp. 226–305.

55. *Carta de ducato et patriciatu et comitatu*; see Marculf, *Formulae*, ed. Zeumer, I, 8, pp. 47–48.

56. Marculf, *Formulae*, ed. Zeumer, I, 40, p. 68.

57. For recent discussions of the rise of the Carolingians, see Fouracre, *Age*; Fischer, *Karl Martell*.

58. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. De Boor, I, p. 403; trans. Turtledove, p. 95, who wrongly dates this to the year 724, while depending on this source, Anastasius Bibliothecarius, in his Latin account attributed this erroneously to AM 6234, that is, 734 CE: Anastasius Bibliothecarius, *Chronographia tripartita*, ed. Bekker, p. 222.

and his brother Carloman had installed a Merovingian king in 743 after an interregnum of seven years.⁵⁹ In their efforts to present themselves as legitimate successors to the Merovingians, the Carolingians thus worked towards a reinterpretation of the oath. The loyalty that the subjects of the Merovingian kingdoms owed to their Merovingian *reges Francorum* was increasingly interpreted as being owed not only to the kings but also to the community they represented—the Franks. A unified vision of a Frankish community and the consent of all its members provided, therefore, not only the legitimation for the Carolingians to replace the Merovingian kings but also—as the new *reges Francorum*—to redirect to themselves the oaths of loyalty that were once sworn to the Merovingian kings.

We do not only find the promotion of this political theory in historiographical texts written after 751. The Carolingians had carefully developed and tested out this strategy in the years before their takeover. In their official documents as mayors of the Frankish kingdom and of the Merovingian kings, for instance, the sons of Charles Martel presented themselves as *principes* and *duces* following the model of their father. But unlike Charles Martel, they also combined the title with the name of the Franks, styling themselves as *principes* and *dux Francorum*.⁶⁰ The innovation was registered surprisingly fast by scribes of private charters in the kingdom. In the same year for which we have the earliest evidence for the use of this title by the Carolingian mayors, the scribes dated their documents to the years of the reign of the *principes* and *dux Francorum*.⁶¹

What the notaries registered and accepted as a seemingly inconspicuous addition of the name of the Franks was, in fact, a fundamental reinterpretation of the title.⁶² In the previous centuries, *dux* was rather a functional title for the leaders of an army in the Frankish kingdom without an ethnic denominator, and if it was combined with an ethnic name, it was understood as a royal office and/or a Frankish governor of a *ducatus* such as the Bavarian, Ribuarian, or Alemannian *ducatus*. The combination of the *dux* title with the name of the Franks was thus anticipating strategies of legitimation as they were later elaborated by the Carolingian historians. It conveyed Carolingian claims to be in charge of the Frankish kingdom and to represent the interests of its population, just as the *reges Francorum* did (or should have done).⁶³ Parallel to this, the sworn loyalty of the subjects to the Merovingian *reges Francorum* was interpreted as owed to the Franks and their respective rulers—the more so as the Carolingian *duces*

59. Semmler, *Dynastiewechsel*, p. 23.

60. Wolfram, *Intitulatio I*, pp. 141–155.

61. *in primo (!) anno post obitum Carlo maioro regnante domno Carlomanno duce Francorum: Traditiones Wizenburgenses*, ed. Doll and Glöckner, no. 235, p. 466, December 1, 741); *anno secundo principatu Carlomanno et Pippino ducibus Francorum: (Traditiones Wizenburgenses*, ed. Doll and Glöckner, no. 24, p. 176, January 18, 743).

62. Wolfram, *Intitulatio I*, pp. 148–151.

63. Cf. above pp. 234–5.

Francorum had taken up the responsibility of their preservation and renewal of these oaths in the decades before they had become kings.

When the Carolingian relatives compiled the new *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* a decade after the oldest extant document with the title *dux et princeps Francorum*, they did not only promote a unified vision of a Frankish community for such a redirection or channeling of loyalties. They also provided its emplotment in their accounts of broken and restored oaths and agreements. Before Pippin became king, he had to raise an army, because the Saxons had broken the oath they had sworn to Pippin's brother Carloman. After their defeat, they submitted to Frankish law in the ancient manner (*iure Francorum sese, ut antiquitus mos fuerat*). They also promised henceforth to keep their loyalty and to pay the full tribute that they had once paid to the Merovingian king Chlothar II.⁶⁴

The conflicts with the Saxons are also taken up later in the narrative, immediately after Pippin's elevation in 751. The Saxons revolted again, and the newly elected king marched out against the Saxons, as they had again broken their *fides* that they had once promised to the *praefatus rex*. This clearly refers back to the chapter on the first Saxon revolt, when Pippin forced the Saxons to submit to his rule and pay the tributes they had once owed to Chlothar II and had promised to pay again to Pippin in the time before he became king. With the phrase *praefatus rex*, without mentioning a name, the authors merged the roles of the two kings into the one role of the newly elected *praefatus rex Pippin* collecting the demands for tribute and loyalty to Frankish rule once established by Chlothar II. But it was, of course, only the newly elected *praefatus rex* who could move against the Saxons with the whole army of the Franks (*commoto omni exercitu Francorum*). After their defeat, the Saxons asked Pippin for peace and swore oaths (*sacramenta*) to keep the peace, to maintain their loyalty, and to pay even more tribute, as they had once promised.⁶⁵

The same emphasis on the newly elected king as defender of Frankish rights and demands can be found in Pippin's campaign against the Lombards in the following year, 754. After the pope had asked the king and the Franks (*tam ipsi regi quam et Francis*) for support, Pippin convened *omnes Franci sicut mos Francorum* and started the campaign against the Lombards and their king, Aistulf.⁶⁶ After his defeat, Aistulf asked through the magnates of the Franks (*per optimates Francorum*) for peace. He swore oaths (*sacramenta*) to preserve the peace and promised to respect from now on the legitimate rule of the Franks (*ut nunquam a Francorum ditone se abstraheret*). He also promised that he would never again revolt against Pippin, the king, and the *proceres Francorum* and that

64. *Continuationes Chronicarum Fredegarii*, ed. Krusch, 31, p. 181. The Saxon tributes to Chlothar were mentioned in earlier parts of the chronicle (*Chronicon Fredegarii*, ed. Krusch, IV.74, p. 158), in the part of the narrative that was rearranged and continued by the authors of the new *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*.

65. *Continuationes Chronicarum Fredegarii*, ed. Krusch, 34, p. 182.

66. *Continuationes Chronicarum Fredegarii*, ed. Krusch, 36, p. 183.

he would never wage war against the apostolic see again.⁶⁷ Like the Saxons before him, however, Aistulf broke the promises and oaths he had sworn again, and Pippin had to march out with the whole army of the Franks. Once more, the Frankish army was too strong, and Aistulf now turned again to the Frankish nobles, the *episcopi et proceres Francorum*, for intercession. The author repeatedly refers here to the “judgment of the Franks and the bishops” (*per iudicium Francorum vel sacerdotum*) and the renewal of the oaths (*sacramenta*).⁶⁸ As in the case of the Saxons, the narrative duplicates the ritual of submission. And also as in the case of the Saxons, the report becomes part of a chain of references that link the submission to Frankish rule (*ditio Francorum*) under Pippin in several steps back to the Merovingian past. *Iure Francorum sese, ut antiquitus mos fuerat, subdiderunt*:⁶⁹ the old oaths the Saxons (and others) owed to the Franks had now to be sworn to the Carolingian kings.⁷⁰

As the continuation of Childebrand’s narrative after 751 demonstrates, it was an ongoing project to persuade the elites and groups of the Frankish kingdom to accept the new political constellation and its legitimation. This is also confirmed by the text that continues the historiographical legitimation of Carolingian rule after the end of the *Historia vel Gesta* in the year 768: the *Royal Frankish Annals*. As their portrayal of the political events until 788 demonstrates, the legitimation of Carolingian rule was still a pressing issue after Pippin’s death in 768 and during the first decades of the reign of his successor, Charlemagne. As briefly mentioned, the authors of this text were working in close connection to the Carolingian court. A number of breaks, however, show that the text was redacted in multiple stages.⁷¹ The breaks and changes to the text can thus be examined as traces of different redactors’ efforts to adapt the historiographical formulation of social and political consensus to the changing conditions and possibilities in the Carolingian kingdom and later empire. The first obvious break of the narrative comes in 788/9 with the reports of the deposition of the powerful Bavarian duke Tassilo.⁷² The narrative up to this point was clearly designed to legitimate Carolingian rule along the lines of the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*. The deposition of Tassilo with which this part of the *Annals* ends is an elaborate orchestration of the success and power of the Carolingians as the legitimate leaders of the

67. *Continuationes Chronicarum Fredegarii*, ed. Krusch, 37, pp. 183–184.

68. *Continuationes Chronicarum Fredegarii*, ed. Krusch, 38, p. 185.

69. Cf. note 64 above with the report of the first Saxon revolt against Pippin: *Continuationes Chronicarum Fredegarii*, ed. Krusch, 31, p. 181.

70. The same ritual seems to have been applied to the Saxon groups in 775; see *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. Kurze, a. 775, pp. 40, 42: *Ibi omnes Austreleudi Saxones venientes . . . et dederunt obsides . . . et iuraverunt sacramenta, se fideles esse partibus supradicti domni Caroli regis. Similiter . . . venerunt Angrarii . . . et dederunt ibi obsides sicut Austrasii.*

71. See the detailed discussion of the breaks in McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 31–56, with further references to the vast literature on the composition of the *Annals*.

72. *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. Kurze, aa. 788, 789, pp. 80–86.

Frankish kingdom. Charlemagne deposed the duke after he had been accused of having broken the oath of loyalty that he had sworn to the Frankish kings, Pippin and Charlemagne, their sons, and the Franks.⁷³

THE PROVOCATION OF ALTERNATIVES: POLITICAL
OPPOSITION AND LEGAL TRADITIONS IN THE
CAROLINGIAN KINGDOMS

It is actually difficult to sound out debates or opposition to which the Carolingian historians reacted. It seems that the Carolingians managed for some time to successfully establish a historiographical monopoly to promote their version of a common past and future.⁷⁴ It might be possible, however, to find some traces of how some groups responded to the political theory of Carolingian legitimacy in the compilation of law codes in the eastern periphery of the Frankish kingdoms. The redaction of two law codes, the Bavarian and the Alemannic laws, seem to fall precisely in the period when the Carolingians started to legitimate their kinglike position with the help of a unified vision of a Frankish community. It is conspicuous how much stress the two redactions put on alternative resources of legitimation to those employed by the Carolingians.

Both of the law codes are only extant in manuscripts from the Carolingian period and later, but in both texts, earlier layers shine through.⁷⁵ Even though the exact layering of the texts is beyond reconstruction, there are good reasons to assume that the laws go back to legislative initiatives of the Merovingian kings in the seventh century. The extant redaction of these laws, however, both seem to respond to the rise of the Carolingians in the eighth century. Most of the extant manuscript of the *Lex Alamannorum* highlights that the law had been updated by the Alaman *dux* Lantfrid, who died in the year 730, and some of them refer to the times of the Merovingian king Chlothar II, in which this *Lex gentis Alamannorum* had been issued.⁷⁶ Some of the oldest manuscripts of the Alaman law in the version redacted under Lantfrid indicate that the code came about through an assembly of nobles from the Alamannic people with their *dux*.⁷⁷

73. Becher, *Eid*; Wolfram, *Salzburg*, pp. 337–344; McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, pp. 118–127; Airlie, “Narratives”; see also Diesenberger, “Dissidente Stimmen.”

74. Airlie, “Cunning”; Reimitz, “Nomen Francorum obscuratum”; see also now: Kramer, Reimitz, Ward, eds., *Historiography and Identity*. For the reconstruction of oppositional groups, see Brunner, *Oppositionelle Gruppen*; Brunner, “Auf den Spuren”; and more recently, Diesenberger, “Dissidente Stimmen”; see also Broome, “Pagans,” who provides an excellent discussion of some of the dynamics described in this chapter as represented in hagiographical sources.

75. Siems, “Lex Baiuvariorum”; Siems, “Herrschaft”; Esders, “Spät römisches Militärrecht”; Esders, “Spätantike und frühmittelalterliche Dukate.”

76. *Lex Alemannorum*, ed. Eckhardt, p. 62.

77. *Lex Alemannorum*, ed. Eckhardt, p. 62: *Convenit enim maioribus nato populo Alamannorum una cum ducorum Lanfrido vel ceterorum populo adunato.*

The *Lex Baiuvariorum* even starts in most extant manuscripts with a prologue that includes the remark that it was decreed by the Merovingian king Dagobert I together with four *viri inlustri*, Claudius, Chadoindus, Magnus, and Agilulf.⁷⁸ The emphasis on the Merovingian rulers as lawgivers, as well as the nod to Merovingian magnates and their titles, could well be understood as a statement made in opposition to the Carolingian strategies of legitimation. The prologue of the Bavarian law links its history with a much more comprehensive history of law. It opens with a quotation from Isidore of Seville's etymologies on the history of legislation from its beginning, starting with the first "legislator" in human history, Moses.⁷⁹ It goes on with a long overview of the history of legislation in ancient Greece, Egypt, and Rome, up to the compilation of the Theodosian code and the Christianization of law. Before the authors of this prologue continued their history of legislation into the Merovingian period, they inserted a more general observation on law and legislation in the transformation of the Roman world that cannot be found in Isidore. They added a sentence explaining that the next phase in the history of law was characterized by "each people developing their own laws from their customs" (*deinde unaquaque gens propriam sibi ex consuetudine elegit legem*). The authors then move on to Merovingian legislation, beginning with Clovis's son Theuderic I, who ordered the laws of the Franks, Alamans, and Bavarians to be written down (*iussit conscribere legem Francorum et Alamannorum et Baioariorum*), "for each people that was under his rule according to their respective customs" (*Baioariorum unicuique genti qui in eius potestate erat, secundum consuetudinem suam*).⁸⁰

As Harald Siems has shown recently, it is impossible to reconstruct and date the different layers or stages of the composition of the *Lex Baiuvariorum* from the later seventh century onwards.⁸¹ The various compilers of the law seem to have always reworked the whole text from the earliest stages onward. This is equally true for the prologue and the question of when it was attached to the text of the *lex*. It might even have originally been composed to introduce more laws than just the Bavarian code or laws that were issued for wider areas than just the Bavarian *ducatu*s.⁸² Although the prologue is often transmitted with the *Lex Baiuvariorum*, it is also transmitted in manuscripts where it is put before or after other laws such as the *Lex Salica* and the *Lex Alamannorum*, *Leges Visigothorum* or an abbreviated compilation of Roman laws (*Epitome Aegidii*).⁸³

78. *Lex Baiuvariorum*, ed. von Schwind, Prologue, pp. 197–203.

79. Cf. Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, ed. Lindsay, V.1; with *Lex Baiuvariorum*, ed. von Schwind, Prologue, pp. 198–199.

80. *Lex Baiuvariorum*, ed. von Schwind, Prologue, pp. 201–202.

81. Siems, "Herrschaft"; Siems, "Lex Baiuvariorum."

82. Esders, "Spät Römisches Militärrecht."

83. See the introduction to the edition of *Lex Baiuvariorum* by von Schwind, pp. 187–188, on the manuscript with the *Epitome Aegidii* see the forthcoming dissertation of Dominik Trumpf; and the comments in Liebs, "Vier Arten."

In any case, the combination of the prologue's emphasis on royal legislation with the Bavarian law would have made a strong statement precisely at the time when the Carolingian mayors intensified their efforts to legitimate themselves as the actual rulers of the Frankish kingdoms. In asserting their old rights as they had been issued by the Merovingian kings, the compilers of the extant version of the Bavarian law code might well have anticipated the Carolingian usurpation of royal power.

Once the Carolingians had established themselves as kings, however, they did not only respond to such challenges by bringing different histories together. They also built on old and venerable legal traditions, in particular the *Lex Salica*. The Salic law had probably been confirmed by the first Christian king, Clovis, to one of the Frankish groups in northern Gaul at the beginning of the sixth century. In the context of the establishment of Clovis's rule over most of the Gallic provinces, with its variety of legal orders and communities, the people who required the confirmation might have found it necessary to receive the promise to have their status and *consuetudines* respected and preserved in their region in the North.⁸⁴ Some of its parts must have looked fairly archaic already to Clovis's contemporaries.⁸⁵ But it seems that in the course of the sixth century, the law acquired an increasingly important role in Frankish strategies of distinction of a Frankish group or Frankish groups and came to be regarded as preserving distinctive Frankish traditions and models. In his book on the *Lex Salica*, Karl Ubl even speaks of a "monument of alterity."⁸⁶ It developed its symbolical function as a token of alterity in a predominantly late Roman environment. Its function in the Merovingian period seems to have been more as a point of reference for distinctive and alternative traditions and models.

Soon after his elevation to the Frankish throne around the middle of the eighth century, the new king, Pippin, clearly built on the prestige of the law as venerable Frankish tradition as well and produced his own version of the *Lex Salica*. The redactors reorganized the text that was already circulating in different versions into one hundred titles instead of sixty-five, but it does not seem that they were really trying to update the laws. The extant manuscript of the so-called *recensio Pippina* of the *Lex Salica* does not show any effort to make sense of passages that they obviously could not understand anymore.⁸⁷ There are numerous passages of line slips, missing words, copy mistakes, and other errors in the extant manuscripts of this version.

The indifference toward the meaning of the text is an indication that the symbolical meaning of the text was more important to the king's redactors than its

84. Originally, this was most likely restricted to territories in the north of Gaul; see the discussion in Renard, "Pactus legis Salicae"; and Ubl, "L'origine."

85. Ubl, "Im Bann."

86. Ubl, *Sinnstiftungen*, p. 67.

87. Ubl, *Sinnstiftungen*, pp. 151–154.

actual content at this time. This becomes even more obvious through the new framing of the text with a new prologue celebrating the *gens inclita Francorum*—the illustrious people of the Franks—as the new chosen people: “The illustrious Frankish people, established by the power of God, strong in arms, firm in peace, profound in council, of noble body, intact purity, distinguished in form, brave, swift, and austere, converted to the catholic faith, free from heresy, seeking, while still following barbarian cult, through the inspiration of God, the key to wisdom and according to their customs, desiring justice, keeping the faith.”⁸⁸ The new prologue also included a passage from the older Merovingian prologue of the *Lex Salica*, which presents the legislation as based on the consensus of a group of the Franks.⁸⁹ Then the prologue continues with its glorification of the Franks in prayer form.⁹⁰ The emphasis placed on the Franks’ Catholicism and their freedom of any heresy suggests that the religious framing of Frankish identity acquired a new dimension in the aftermath of the religious legislation inaugurated by Charles Martel and his sons in the early 740s.⁹¹ At the end of the new code, the redactors also included the older epilogue that sketched out the history of legislation in the Frankish kingdoms under the Merovingian kings from an unnamed first king of the Franks to the Merovingian kings Chlothar and Childebert but further continued it with a catalogue of Frankish kings that concluded with the first Carolingian king, Pippin.⁹²

The whole compilation looks like an answer to the prologue of the *Lex Baiuvariorum*, and it might well have been one. As Ubl suggested, its publication could have taken place at an assembly in 761 which Pippin held at Düren for the well-being of the fatherland and the benefit of the Franks—*pro salute patriae et utilitate Francorum*.⁹³ After the Carolingians had eliminated most of the *duces* of the former Merovingian kingdom as foci for political opposition and integration, Waifar and Tassilo were the last remaining dukes in the Carolingian kingdoms.⁹⁴ Waifar died in 768, when, parallel to reintegration into the Frankish kingdom, we find King Pippin stating in a capitulary that in Aquitaine, “all men (*homines*), Romans as well as Saliens, should have their own laws (*eorum leges habeant*). If somebody moves in (*advenerit*) from another province he should live according to the law of his birthplace (*secundum legem ipsius patriae*).”⁹⁵ Pippin’s successor, Charlemagne, did not appoint another duke in Aquitaine but appointed his

88. *Lex Salica*, ed. Eckhardt, Prologue, 1, pp. 3–4. For discussion and the translation of the text, see Garrison, “Franks,” pp. 129–134, who regards the biblical stylization of the Franks as less important; but see the more differentiated and, to our mind, more convincing view of Heydemann, “People of God.”

89. Cf. *Pactus legis Salicae*, ed. Eckhardt, 1–2, pp. 2–3; with *Lex Salica*, ed. Eckhardt, p. 5.

90. *Lex Salica*, ed. Eckhardt, Prologue, 4, pp. 6–7.

91. Innes, “Immune.”

92. *Lex Salica*, ed. Eckhardt, Epilogue, pp. 188–194; see Ewig, “Die fränkischen Königskataloge.”

93. *Continuaciones Fredegarii*, 42, ed. Krusch, p. 186, and see Ubl, *Sinnstiftungen*, pp. 160–163.

94. Schieffer, *Karolinger*, pp. 85–86.

95. *Pippini capitulare Aquitanicum*, ed. Boretius, no. 18, a. 768, 10, p. 43.

young son Louis as king of Aquitaine in 781.⁹⁶ At the same time, Charlemagne intensified his efforts to depose of the last duke standing, his cousin Tassilo in Bavaria.⁹⁷ But it took him seven more years to depose the Bavarian duke. As the careful orchestration of the case against Tassilo in the *Royal Frankish Annals* shows, the deposition was a highly delicate and sensitive matter in the late 780s.⁹⁸

However, the main problem was not so much that Tassilo did not want to swear the oath of loyalty to the Carolingian rulers. The main problem was that Tassilo seems to have insisted on taking the oath of loyalty in his dukedom himself—as representative of the Carolingian kings.⁹⁹ At Freising, it was emphasized even after 800 in a charter that Bishop Arbeo (d. 783) had been “more faithful” (*fideliior*) to Charlemagne than to Tassilo.¹⁰⁰ Enforcing the bond of fidelity, however, was exactly the strategy with which the Carolingians had legitimated their usurpation of the Frankish throne. And just as the Carolingians had done before their accession to the throne, Tassilo had also used the title *dux et princeps* in his charters and documents.¹⁰¹ Against this background, the case of Tassilo does not look like the triumphal showcase it is often presented as by Carolingian historians and modern scholars alike. It looks much more like the ultimate test case for the assertion of Carolingian-Frankish authority.

THE ACCOMMODATION OF LEGAL PLURALISM IN THE CAROLINGIAN EMPIRE

The removal of the last duke in the Carolingian kingdom, however, did not lead to the victory of Frankishness. It was, in fact, in the year following the deposition of Tassilo that we observe the beginning of a fundamental reform of Carolingian politics of identity.¹⁰² The new policy might have already been registered by the authors of the *Royal Frankish Annals* in their accounts of the aftermath of Tassilo's deposition. Although Tassilo had been accused of having broken the oath that he had sworn to the Carolingian kings, their sons, and the Franks and their kings, the judgment was issued by Franks, Bavarians, Lombards, and Saxons.¹⁰³ And right after the deposition of Tassilo, we see multiethnic armies marching out against the Lombard duchy of Benevento and the eastern enemy, the Avar

96. De Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 14–19, with further references.

97. See note 73 above.

98. See note 72 above.

99. Wolfram, *Salzburg*, pp. 342–344.

100. *Traditionen Freising*, ed. Bitterauf, no. 193b (a. 804), p. 183.

101. Wolfram, *Intitulatio I*, pp. 173–185; for a comparison with the strategies of the Aquitanian *dux* Waifar, see Depreux, “Auf der Suche.”

102. On the reforms of the 790s, see the introduction to *Admonitio generalis*, ed. Mordek, Zechiel-Eckes, and Glatthaar, pp. 13–17; Ubl, “Erste Leges-Reform”; Patzold, “Veränderung”; Davis, *Charlemagne's Practice*, pp. 350–364.

103. *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. Kurze, a. 788, p. 80.

Empire. At the same time, we also have evidence for a new policy in legal sources. In the year 789, Charlemagne issued a royal order that all free men had to swear the oath of loyalty to the Carolingian king.¹⁰⁴ They were supposed to swear “without fraud and evil intent”—but also without any reference to the name of the Franks.¹⁰⁵ The royal *missi* were asked to explain the meaning and implications of the oath and also to investigate complaints about the neglect of the laws of the peoples by the central authorities (*quod multi se conplangunt legem non habere conservatam*). Charlemagne explicitly stated his will that each man’s law should be preserved (*ut unusquisque homo suam legem pleniter habeat conservata*) and that the *missi* should also inquire into what law each single man had by birth (*per singulos inquirant, quale habeant legem ex natione*).¹⁰⁶ This happened only one year after the redaction of the *Lex Salica* and Charlemagne’s confirmation of the *Lex Romana Visigothorum*.¹⁰⁷

This was not only continued after Charlemagne’s imperial coronation, but it was actually reinforced in the efforts to establish the imperial framework. In 802, another royal decree ordered the whole population again to swear the oath of loyalty to the new title of Charlemagne—the *nomen caesaris*. At the same time, a comprehensive reform of the different laws took place as well.¹⁰⁸ This *leges*-reform, however, did not involve a comprehensive reworking and overhaul of the old laws of the Alamans, Bavarians, and Burgundians and “Gothic” or Roman law. Much more important was their rearrangement as compatible legal traditions that could coexist on equal footing. Another redaction of the *Lex Salica* was made as well, this time with much greater effort to provide a law book that made sense.¹⁰⁹ But the redactors also took out the long prologue with its emphasis on the preeminence of the Franks that had been added only four decades before. And new laws were written down, since Carolingian politicians and lawyers seem to have followed Isidore of Seville in defining a *lex* as only those laws that were written down.¹¹⁰ Such *leges* were compiled for the Thuringians,¹¹¹ Saxons,¹¹² and Frisians.¹¹³ A particularly peculiar code has come down to us from a group of

104. *Capitulare missorum*, ed. Boretius, no. 26, a. 792 vel. 786, pp. 66–67; for the date of the capitulary with 789, see Becher, *Eid*, pp. 79–86; Esders, *Sacramentum fidelitatis*, pp. 310–317.

105. See also the oath formula of 789 preserved in the *Duplex capitulare missorum*, ed. Boretius, no. 23, a. 789, 18, p. 63: *De sacramentis fidelitatis causa, quod nobis et filiis nostris iurare debent, quod his verbis contestari debet: “Sic promitto ego ille partibus domini mei Caroli regis et filiorum eius, quia fidelis sum et ero diebus vitae meae sine fraude et malo ingenio.”*

106. *Capitulare missorum*, ed. Boretius, no. 26, 1, a. 792 vel. 786, p. 66.

107. See Esders, *Sacramentum fidelitatis*, pp. 306–321.

108. Patzold, “Veränderung.”

109. Ubl, *Sinnstiftungen*, pp. 174–181.

110. Cf. above, p. XXX, with note XXX.

111. Landau, “Lex Thuringorum.”

112. Lück, “Wilde Osten”; Faulkner, *Law*, pp. 46–83. On the history of Saxon identity, see the excellent and concise study of Flierman, *Saxon Identities*, pp. 106–119, with further references.

113. Siems, *Studien*. On the history of Frisian identity in the Carolingian period, see Broome, ‘Pagans’; who is also preparing a monograph on Frisian identity in the early Middle Ages.

Franks living in the northeastern periphery of the Carolingian Empire along the river Amor, which is most likely the region of modern-day central Netherlands.¹¹⁴

This law has been edited as *Lex Francorum Chamavorum* because of the location of the people for which it was written in the Hamaland and its identification with the land of the Chamavi.¹¹⁵ The manuscripts, however, transmit the title as *notitia vel commemoratio de illa ewa quae se ad Amorem habet*,¹¹⁶ and it seems more likely that the region of people living along the Amor was actually southwest of the Hamaland.¹¹⁷ The legal community clearly identified itself as Frankish. The law repeatedly refers to rules that the other Franks have as well. Now in the context of the imperial reorganization of the kingdom and the relations of different legal and ethnic communities to one another, these Franks living in the northeastern periphery of the Carolingian Empire in regions populated by Frisians and Saxons wanted their status as a superior group confirmed. Regarding the royal ban and the Church, these Franks wanted to have the law just as the other Franks had it. But in regard to their status taxonomy as reflected in their *wergild*—the compensation that had to be paid in case someone got killed—they claimed to be worth three times more than any other free man of their region. The new imperial order clearly triggered concerns of this group about their status relative to other groups in the Carolingian Empire, and particularly to those groups who had only recently received their legal status, such as the Frisians and Saxons.

It seems that the inhabitants of the new empire were in a state of uncertainty in Bavaria and Alamannia, too. As we can see from some extant charters from the regions, the notaries and scribes appear to have been reluctant to employ the clear-cut distinction between regnal years and imperial years of Charlemagne that the chancery of the new emperor had introduced.¹¹⁸ Charters that record judicial assemblies held by Carolingian court officials—*missi*—clearly introduced the scribes in the region to the imperial title of Charlemagne soon after the imperial coronation. In 802, one of the notaries of one of the most prominent *missi* in Bavaria, Archbishop Arn of Salzburg, dated his charter to the thirty-third year of Charlemagne's reign as king and the second year of his rule as Augustus (*anno xxxiii et secundo regnante et imperante domno nostro Carolo gloriosissimo Augusto*).¹¹⁹ Another example from 802 mentions the oath of loyalty that the population swore in that year to the *domnus imperator Karolus*.¹²⁰ But in charters that did not record judicial assemblies of *missi* but only normal transactions, it seems

114. Hoppenbrouwers, "Leges Nationum"; Faulkner, *Law*, pp. 29–45; Ubl, *Sinnstiftungen*.

115. See Lück, "Lex Francorum Chamavorum," col. 885; Hoppenbrouwers, "Leges Nationum," pp. 258–262; Esders, "Lex Francorum Chamavorum"; Costambeys, "Aristocratic Community."

116. *Lex Francorum Chamavorum*, ed. Sohm, p. 271.

117. See Esders, "Lex Francorum Chamavorum."

118. See Brown, "Idea"; Fichtenau, "Politische' Datierungen."

119. *Traditionen Freising*, ed. Bitterauf, 183 (a. 802), p. 174.

120. *Traditionen Freising*, ed. Bitterauf, 186 (a. 802), p. 178.

that Bavarian scribes decided to build on the ambiguity of the term *regnum*, using it for both empire and kingdom but also for the former Bavarian duchy or a new Bavarian *regnum* under the rule of one of the Carolingian emperor's sons in the time of Charles's successor, Louis the Pious.¹²¹

Not far from Bavaria, we can observe a comparable phenomenon also for Raetia. As early as the early 770s,¹²² Charlemagne guaranteed to the rector and the people of Raetia their *lex et consuetudo* on the condition that they would be his *fideles* and stay under his special protection (*mundeburdum vel defensio*).¹²³ His confirmation of the validity of *lex et consuetudo* for a region that was formerly organized as a duchy referred in particular, as becomes clear from the sources extant from this region, to the *Lex Romana Curiensis*¹²⁴ and the *Capitula Remedii* (the latter written around 800).¹²⁵ In Raetia, "law and custom," in fact, often meant Roman law that to some extent had come under the influence of Frankish law.¹²⁶

The most prominent example, illuminating further aspects of how Carolingian imperial rule reinforced regional legal traditions, comes from the southeastern periphery of the Carolingian Empire, the Istrian peninsula. The region had formerly belonged to the Byzantine Empire and came under Charlemagne's rule shortly before the campaign against the Avar Empire that was started in 791.¹²⁷ Soon after the renovation of the Roman Empire and the end of the Avar wars, we have an exceptional document of an assembly that was held in Istria, probably in 804, the placitum of Riziano/Rižana, close to modern Koper.¹²⁸ At the placitum, the local population complained about the *dux* John, who was obviously responsible for the military organization of the region under the new Carolingian rulers. In this function, he had subjected the Istrian population to all kinds of duties and payments in the context of the Carolingian campaign against the Avars, which were quite common in the Frankish world in such a context. The population of Istria, however, protested against the practices and appealed to Charlemagne, who sent three *missi*, the priest Izzo and the two counts Cadolah and Aio, to hear the complaints of 172 representatives of the Istrian population in the presence of the *dux* and the patriarch of Grado, Fortunatus, and to resolve the conflict. The list of the representatives' complaints was long:

In ancient times, when we were under the rule of the empire of the Greeks, our ancestors had the custom of having to put the office in the hands of

121. Brown, "Idea," esp. pp. 46–52.

122. Kaiser, "Autonomie," pp. 14–15, 24–25.

123. *Chartae Latinae antiquiores*, ed. Bruckner, vol. 1, no. 3, p. 7.

124. Siems, "Zur *Lex Romana Curiensis*."

125. Siems, "Recht."

126. Kaiser, *Churrätien*, pp. 15–39.

127. See Pohl, *Avars*, pp. 372–399.

128. On the placitum, see Krahwinkler, *Friaul*, pp. 29–66; Esders, "Regionale Selbstbehauptung."

a tribune as well as to have people in his service, vice-tribune and deputies to support this, and they would walk to take the holy communion according to their rank, and each one would sit in assembly according to his rank. . . . But now our *dux* John appointed for us *centarchi*, divided the population between his sons, daughters and sons-in-law, and they built up palaces for themselves using these same poor people. . . . We have never given forage, we have never worked in the *curtis*, we have never attended to the vineyards, we have never fired lime, we have never built hamlets, never made roofs, never trained dogs, never made so many collections as we do now: we (used to) give one *modium* for each ox, and we have never done collections of sheep, as we do now—we give sheep and lambs each year. . . . Our *dux* John keeps all this for himself, which the *magister militum* of the Greeks never did. . . . We had to subject ourselves to these serf labours, and to the impositions which we have mentioned, which our ancestors never did, whence we all fell into poverty, and all our neighbours in *Venetia* and *Dalmatia*, and even the Greeks under whose rule we were once, deride our ancestors. If the lord emperor Charles helps us, we can escape; otherwise, it is better for us to die than to live.¹²⁹

The representatives of the Istrian population had also brought with them their tax lists which went back to the times of Byzantine rule.¹³⁰ They were still paying it, but apparently the *dux* had not sent the money to the imperial centers but was using it for himself and his own estates. He had also replaced older political structures, exacted new taxes, subjected the population to all kinds of services, and even forced the Istrians to accommodate (pagan) Slavs in their houses, mercenaries whom he also paid from ecclesiastical tithes.¹³¹ Now the Istrians asked their new Roman emperor to reinstate the *consuetudines* they once had under the Byzantine Roman emperor.

As we know from the end of the document, the Istrian population received the confirmation of their rights by Charles and his representatives, which was most likely part of a larger plan for the region. The *Royal Frankish Annals* mention that Charlemagne issued an ordinance for Dalmatia and Venetia soon after the placitum of Riziano/Rižana, in 806.¹³²

Unfortunately, these orders have not come down to us. The placitum might give us at least an idea of the claims and problems to which they responded. Both the placitum and the lost ordinances for Dalmatia and Venetia would have been splendid opportunities for a Roman imperial self-orchestration of the newly

129. Krahwinkler, *In loco qui dicitur Riziano*, pp. 74–79, our English translation (H. Reimitz and S. Esders).

130. For this practice as a marker for *consuetudines* very different from what was common in the Frankish kingdom, see Esders, “Regionale Selbstbehauptung,” pp. 64–65.

131. Esders, “Regionale Selbstbehauptung,” pp. 58–59.

132. *Annales regni Francorum*, ed. Kurze, a. 806, pp. 120–122.

crowned emperor and his imperial court. However, we have no evidence for this. Instead, the claims of former subjects of the empire such as those made by the representatives of the Istrian population were dealt with in a thoroughly post-Roman way—as privileges of local or regional communities granted in exchange for loyalty. And this proved to be decisive. After Louis the Pious succeeded his father in 814, the Istrian population asked the new emperor for the confirmation of their rights. Louis's charter refers explicitly to the placitum of Riziano/Rižana guaranteeing the judgement of his father based on the inquisition of Izo, Cadolah, and Aio (*iudicatum quod legati domini et genitoris nostri Izo presbiter et Cadolah atque Aio comites per iussionem eiusdem domini et genitoris nostri inter vos constituerunt*).¹³³

CONCLUSION

In comparison with the Byzantine Empire, this Carolingian way of granting privileges of former imperial rights and laws, as documented in the placitum of Riziano/Rižana, looks much less imperial than feudal. It became, however, the norm in the Carolingian Empire and was passed on to the societies and kingdoms of post-Carolingian Europe. The origins of this Carolingian imperial constitution, however, can be traced back to the early Merovingian kingdoms and the techniques to establish Merovingian rule over diverse territories and populations through the granting of sometimes far-reaching autonomies and privileges. This created a Merovingian equilibrium with the kings in the center of a politics of consensus that seems to have worked quite well for most of the time. It was still the basic constitutional framework when the Carolingians started to control Merovingian politics and eventually usurped the Frankish throne.

In order to legitimize their new role as kings, the Carolingians instrumentalized Frankish identity as a new common focus for the politics of consensus. However, the increasing politicization of ethnic traditions and communities also worked against the political integration of Carolingian rule once they managed to establish themselves as kings over the whole of the regions and territories of the former Merovingian kingdoms. The elites of these regions used the same strategy as the Carolingians had developed. They established themselves as communities that employed alternative ethnic and legal traditions and laws such as Bavarian, Alamannic, Thuringian, or Aquitanian customs. Carolingian politics reacted to this development in the context of the reforms from the 790s onward, which also was a time when Carolingian politicians and intellectuals intensified their reflections about imperial models and resources.¹³⁴ The ensuing creation of an

133. Louis the Pious, *Diplomata*, ed. Kölzer, no. 82, pp. 200–202; Esders, “Regionale Selbstbehauptung,” pp. 110–111.

134. See Davis, *Charlemagne's Practice*, pp. 350–364; Nelson, “Why Were There So Many?” See also Pohl, “Creating.”

imperial framework provided a frame for the accommodation of all these different claims along with various Frankish ones such as those articulated by the Franks living along the Amor. Within the imperial framework, the Carolingians could concentrate and strengthen their dynastic legitimacy, political authority, and military capacity with the help of the general oath of fidelity on the condition that they promised to maintain and respect various legal traditions of regions and groups.

This is also echoed in the oath formulas, where the clause *sicut per dicitum debet esse homo domino suo* (as a man should be faithful to his lord according to law) can be read as a reservation: Fidelity is only owed within the limits of existing law.¹³⁵ The example, however, also illustrates at the same time why Carolingian attempts to unify law and to set more general legal standards were so limited in scope. The insertion of the “eight cases of the royal ban” (*octo banni*)—including the protection of churches, widows, orphans, and poor; prohibition of abduction of women (*raptus*), looting, and plunder, decree of a general peace; and the obligation to participate in the host—is a good example. First formulated shortly before the imperial coronation in the *Capitulare Saxonicum*¹³⁶ and so-called *Summula de bannis*, it established a fine of sixty *solidi* for any violation.¹³⁷ These eight chapters were ordered also to be inserted in standardized form in the compilations of Frankish, Lombard, Bavarian, Burgundian, and Roman law, which actually happened in some cases.¹³⁸ The above-discussed *Lex Francorum Chamavorum* (or *Ewa ad Amorem*) seems to refer to this: *De banno dominico similiter habemus, sicut alii Franci habent*.¹³⁹ It seems clear that the insertion of these chapters, which intended to enshrine certain royal prerogatives within the local law, was reinforced by the general oath of fidelity of 802, which placed so much emphasis on the *nomen caesaris*.¹⁴⁰ But apart from these measures taken shortly before and after 800, attempts to unify law and to introduce legal standards appear to have been fairly limited, as all legislation of this kind required a high degree of legitimation through the consensus of local nobles.

This does not mean that universal claims did not matter after the imperial coronation of 800. In fact, Charlemagne’s survey of the Holy Land in 807 clearly shows that after 800, Carolingian claims of authority could extend into the regions of the former East Roman Empire.¹⁴¹ Claiming responsibility for Christians

135. Esders, “Fidelität.”

136. *Capitulare Saxonicum*, ed. Boretius, no. 27, a. 797, 1, p. 71.

137. *Summula de bannis* (transmitted in an early-ninth-century manuscript of *leges* from northern France), ed. Boretius, no. 110, p. 224. On the date and manuscript, see Mordek, *Bibliotheca*, pp. 17–18.

138. *Capitulare Italicum*, ed. Boretius, no. 98, a. 801, 2, p. 205; *Capitula in legem Baiwariorum addita*, ed. Boretius, no. 68, a. 801–813, 1–3, pp. 157–158; *Capitulare Aquisgranense*, ed. Boretius, no. 77, a. 801–813, 2, p. 171; see also *Capitula Francica*. c. 6, ed. Boretius, no. 104, p. 214, l. 20–24.

139. *Lex Francorum Chamavorum*, ed. Sohm, p. 271.

140. *Capitulare missorum generale*, ed. Boretius, no. 33, a. 802, 5, 7, 40, pp. 93, 98.

141. See McCormick, *Charlemagne’s Survey*.

far beyond the territories under Charlemagne's rule was clearly an imperial gesture that can be traced back to the first Christian emperor, Constantine. However, such claims should not obfuscate that the internal organization of the Carolingian Empire maintained a fundamentally post-imperial and pre-Carolingian structure. The accommodation of post-Roman legal claims and social structures in the Carolingian Empire did not result in their absorption into one system but rather transformed and reinforced a social and political stratification that came to be structured by the coexistence of diverse social, legal, political, and ethnic communities. In comparison with the other Roman empire of the time, the Byzantine Empire, this constitutional patchwork might appear rather un-imperial. But it was one of the most important legacies of the Carolingian Empire. It created a pattern for political integration and organization on local and supralocal levels that later Carolingian and post-Carolingian societies developed further for many centuries to come.

Franks, Romans, and Countrymen

Imperial Interests, Local Identities, and the Carolingian Conquest of Aquitaine

Rutger Kramer

AROUND the turn of the eighth century, Abbot Benedict of the monastery of Aniane, in the south of Francia near present-day Montpellier, made his way to the imperial palace of Charlemagne.¹ He had a score to settle. In his home region of Septimania—his *patria*—his reputation had been growing steadily, attracting the attention of an increasing number of monks and establishing himself as a “holy man” in his own right ever since his conversion in the mid-770s. As his fame spread, however, so did rumors about his behavior and intentions. Spurred on by the Devil, that “old enemy of the honesty of the pious,” Benedict’s detractors had slandered his good name, jealous of or apprehensive about his influence at court. Consequently, his good name in the South was counterbalanced by his bad reputation at the center of the empire.² Seeking to redress the situation, Benedict resolved to travel to Charlemagne for a meeting. He stated that if this intervention would lead to his exile, he would at least have the moral high ground, and “he would be able to serve God with a more steadfast mind”; the decrease in political influence would mean that he could get closer to the monastic ideal of total seclusion from the world. It never came to that. “But when he appeared in the emperor’s presence, heavenly loving kindness inclined Charles’s mind to such great peace that, as soon as he saw Benedict, he embraced him and with his own hand extended a cup to him. And he, whom envious men had claimed would be an exile from his own soil, returned to it with great honour.”³ The emperor had recognized Benedict.⁴ Now, even the courtiers who had refused to acknowledge him as one of their own gradually accepted him as Benedict’s reputation grew. He went about his work with renewed vigor and eventually became one of the key

1. The research for this article was made possible by the SFB Visions of Community (FWF F4202). Many thanks to the other authors in this volume as well as to Cullen Chandler for reading earlier drafts of this chapter.
2. Ardo, *Vita Sancti Benedicti*, ed. and trans. Kettemann, 29.2, pp. 188–189; trans. Cabaniss, p. 89.
3. Ardo, *Vita Sancti Benedicti*, ed. and trans. Kettemann, 29.4, p. 189; trans. Cabaniss, p. 90.
4. On the dynamics between monastic thought and imperial ideal, see Noble, “Monastic Ideal”; Semmler, “Benediktinische Reform”; Kramer, *Rethinking*, pp. 174–185.

players in the monastic reform movement that characterized the first years of the reign of Charlemagne's heir, Louis the Pious.⁵

We owe this story to the monk Ardo, a pupil of Benedict. He wrote the *Vita Benedicti Anianensis* shortly after the death of the abbot, in 822. In this hagiography, the author combined the topical humility characteristic of the genre with the self-confidence of somebody asserting his own authority as well as that of his protagonist and especially the community he represented in his text.⁶ To that end, the *Vita Benedicti Anianensis* was composed around two main narrative strands, in an attempt to speak to both a monastic and a courtly audience. First, Ardo drew parallels between the saint's upbringing and the history of Western monasticism. Like the monks of early Christianity, Ardo's Benedict went from the severe asceticism of the early desert communities to the more lenient and pragmatic lifestyle exemplified by the sixth-century *Rule of Benedict* that was sponsored by the Frankish rulers in the early ninth century.⁷ While doing so, Benedict also developed the mental fortitude to retain his monastic lifestyle while also becoming one of the chief advisers at the court of Louis the Pious in Aachen.⁸ Interwoven between these two main arcs are miracle stories, reflections on the architecture of Aniane, and a list of changes proposed by Benedict to the liturgy and the monastic curriculum. Tying all these parts together is a recurring concern with the integration of Benedict into the political system at the Carolingian court and, parallel to that, the integration of the southern reaches of Gaul into the Carolingian Empire.

Interspersed throughout the narrative are reminders that Benedict's *patria* was not Frankish. In the opening sentence of the work, Benedict's family is linked to the Visigothic elites who had held sway over the southern reaches of Gaul when the saint is characterized as "sprung from the *gens* of the Goths in the area of Gothia."⁹ This is immediately qualified, however, with the reassurance that his father "with all his might was utterly loyal to the *gens* of the Franks" and that Benedict had received his education at the court of the first queen of the Franks, Bertrada, and her husband, Pippin III (r. 741–768).¹⁰ When Aniane is described as the "head of all monasteries," Ardo explains that this does pertain not only to those in *Gotia* but also to all the others that followed its example.¹¹ In fact,

5. Among the vast literature on this topic, see Semmler, "Benedictus II"; Geuenich, "Kritische Anmerkungen." Specifically on the role of Benedict, see Claussen, "Benedict"; Gaillard, "De l'interaction."

6. Kramer, *Rethinking*, pp. 169–174.

7. See Diem, "Inventing."

8. Kramer, *Rethinking*, pp. 198–213.

9. Ardo, *Vita Sancti Benedicti*, ed. and trans. Kettemann, 1, p. 144; trans. Cabaniss, p. 65, *ex getarum genere partibus Gotiae oriundus fuit*.

10. For an idea of the palace school in the late eighth century—or at least an approximation of the image an early-ninth-century intellectual may have had of this institution—see Brunhölzl, "Bildungsauftrag." On the importance of Bertrada in the Frankish political system at the time, see Nelson, "Bertrada."

11. On this turn of phrase, which occurs in Ardo, *Vita Sancti Benedicti*, trans. Cabaniss, 18.1, p. 79, see Kettemann, "Subsidia Anianensia," pp. 123–129.

Benedict's reforming activities never stray beyond the confines of the authority of Louis the Pious, the Carolingian ruler of Benedict's native region, who became king of Aquitaine in the year 781. Early on, Ardo clarifies that Benedict's activities remained restricted to the southern corner of the Frankish realm.¹²

This was a double-edged sword in itself. The anecdote that started this chapter began with a reminder that Louis the Pious was "at the time still king of Aquitaine, but now emperor Augustus of the whole Church in Europe," and it signals the end of a story arc in which Aniane was elevated by Charlemagne from a *cella* to a *monasterium*.¹³ The implication is that this event, a momentous occasion for the community, occurred around the same time that Aquitaine was made a sub-kingdom in 781. Throughout the *Vita Benedicti Anianensis*, Ardo employed this narrative strategy of connecting Carolingian policy to the fate of Aniane to make three points simultaneously: first, that the south of Gaul remained notionally different from the rest of the Frankish realm; second, that the kingdom of Aquitaine was a Carolingian creation that encompassed a wildly diverse set of identities and histories; and third, that the entire region was nonetheless an inalienable part of the Carolingian Empire and the Church it represented (and which Benedict would help improve).¹⁴

Here was an elegant solution to an idiosyncratic problem. Ardo's intended audience consisted of local monks and regional aristocrats, on the one hand, and courtly elites in the circle around the imperial throne, on the other. Given that his stated goal was to elevate Benedict to the status of a cult figure and to make his monastery a regional (or even imperial) "powerhouse of prayer," Ardo needed to deal with the expectations of his audiences, and the modes of identification they represented, in such a way as to alienate nobody.¹⁵ Since he was writing about events that transpired within living memory of that intended audience, Ardo appeared to meet this challenge head-on, creating a narrative in which his home region would be subsumed into the empire, while its people retained their own identity.

Ardo was neither the first nor the only early medieval author to acknowledge the special status of the southwest of the empire.¹⁶ The Carolingian sub-kingdom of Aquitaine, bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the west, the Loire River to the north and east, and the Pyrenees to the south, was built out of

12. Ardo, *Vita Sancti Benedicti*, ed. and trans. Kettemann, 19.2, p. 177; trans. Cabaniss, p. 82.

13. Ardo, *Vita Sancti Benedicti*, ed. and trans. Kettemann, 29.1, p. 188; trans. Cabaniss, p. 89: *Gloriosissimus autem Ludoicus rex Aquitaniorum tunc, nunc autem divina providente gratia totius aeclesiae Europa degentis imperator augustus.*

14. Generally, the Carolingian acknowledgment that unity and diversity should go hand in hand was already recognized by Kottje, "Einheit"

15. A term borrowed from de Jong, "Carolingian Monasticism." Ardo's stated intent may be read in Ardo, *Vita Sancti Benedicti*, ed. and trans. Kettemann, Praefatio, pp. 140–143; trans. Cabaniss, pp. 61–64.

16. Generally, see Bellarbre, "Composer avec le passé"; Bellarbre, "Aquitania."

various smaller polities and cultural regions such as Septimania and the Basque country. Even the areas under Carolingian control south of the Pyrenees were de facto part of the subkingdom.¹⁷ The main purpose behind its creation in 781 was for Charlemagne to manage his fledgling empire by breaking it up into smaller entities. As such, the subkingdom, based on the administrative provinces of Aquitania Prima and Secunda first instituted under the Roman emperor Diocletian (r. 284–305), was not meant to reflect the notion of an “Aquitainian identity” along ethnic or even preexisting political lines. Nonetheless, in the early 840s, the imperial biographer known as the Astronomer (Astronomus) felt he should mention Charlemagne’s worries that his youngest son, Louis the Pious, would be influenced too much by the people in the south when he was made king of Aquitaine at the tender age of three. Even so, his worries did not preclude him from enjoying the display of his son “dressed in Basque garb” during one of the child’s rare visits to his father as a spectacle as well as a calculated political move. The Astronomer emphasized that it was in Aquitaine that Louis the Pious was groomed to inherit the empire. The (possibly Aquitanian) court poet Ermoldus Nigellus stressed the importance of the region for the development of the empire and the education of Louis even more clearly. In a panegyric composed in the late 820s, Ermoldus highlighted Aquitaine’s status as a buffer region between the Franks and their Umayyad rivals to the south. As much as his preoccupation was to idealize the court (and mollify the emperor in the process), his narrative makes it clear that the local nobility, working together with the Frankish allies and mindful of the wishes of their young king, deserved credit for keeping the empire safe from their incursions.

The main object of this chapter is to gauge the extent to which “Aquitania” and its inhabitants played a role in the self-perception of the Carolingian rulers and the narrators of their history.¹⁸ To that end, I will briefly highlight various ways the Carolingians in the later eighth and early ninth centuries dealt with the long history and conflicting identities in the region, its Roman past, and its roots in early Christianity—especially in the southern part of the larger kingdom.¹⁹ Moreover, I will look at how more recent historiography of the new kingdom presented it as a stronghold for Basque and Visigothic identities and a buffer against the

17. A brief overview of the development of the region is given in Beech, “Aquitaine.” See also below.

18. As such, the chapter will be a step towards a renewed attempt at writing the longer history of Carolingian Aquitaine, a topic in need of an update. Until that time, the overview by Auzias, *LAquitaine carolingienne*, still is the only work attempting such a synthesis. Among the many others dealing with the early medieval history of the region, Rouche, *LAquitaine*, stands out, even if the Visigothic past of southern Gaul is in need of a reappraisal, too. Other enlightening analyses are Ewig, “LAquitaine”; Poulin, *L'idéal*; Wolff, “LAquitaine”; Bellarbre, “La ‘nation’ aquitaine.”

19. For an overview of the transfer from “Roman” to “post-Roman” Gaul, see Kulikowski, “Sundered Aristocracies”; more generally, see Wickham, *Inheritance*, pp. 21–129, 170–202.

“Saracen” threat to the south.²⁰ Building on the localized, “Septimanian” view presented by Ardo of Aniane, I will present three short case studies in reverse chronological order, before returning to Aniane in the conclusion. First, we will look at the way the imperial court managed the so-called *aprisiones*, land grants to Visigothic refugees from Umayyad-occupied Spain. Then the depiction of the conquest of the region in the *Continuations* of the *Chronicle* of Fredegar, composed in the late 780s, will be scrutinized. Finally, I will reflect on a curious legal provision in the *Capitulare Aquitanicum*, issued in 768 as an official end to the hostilities between the leaders of Aquitaine and Francia.

Presenting these cases in this order will allow us to understand how “Aquitaine” became part of a Carolingian imperial consciousness, representing the “fuzzy” status of the region in a more nuanced way than if it were treated as a relatively straightforward matter of conquest and integration.²¹ As will be shown, the Carolingians were all too aware that the conquest of the region entailed integration of their past as well as their present state and that this was something altogether different from the creation of Aquitaine as a kingdom in its own right. As the remembrance of the region’s diverse history in the *Vita Benedicti Anianensis* shows, on the other hand, the past was even harnessed to make Aquitaine a part of the Carolingian future. Thus, these case studies are not pivotal points in the history of the kingdom but instead represent various attempts to deal with the perceived pasts of the people living there. This chapter will thus avoid using a predetermined definition of the region but instead reflect the unclear understanding of Aquitaine, Gascony, and their surrounding regions that is visible in the primary source material. “Aquitania,” for the purposes of this argument, is the (re)constructed kingdom ruled by Louis the Pious, encompassing a multitude of potential (non-Frankish) identities in itself but seen to be part of the larger—Latin-speaking—empire all the same.²² Taken together, these cases will help us reach a better understanding of how the Carolingians exerted authority over their realm. Moreover, this shows how they balanced local and imperial interests in the area referred to as Aquitania, while at the same time showing how regional identities could be (self-)imposed and strengthened by referring to the past as much as to the present. In order to do this, however, it is necessary to embark on a brief excursion on the history of “Aquitania” as a concept.

20. Bachrach, *Charlemagne’s Early Campaigns*, p. 630. Interestingly, the Visigoths do not seem to have left a mark on the archaeology of the region, raising the question to what extent their persistence is a Frankish creation in itself. Young, “Has Anyone Seen?”

21. This approach is based on the observations by Noble, “Louis the Pious.”

22. Pohl, “Telling,” pp. 25–26.

A (SHORT) HISTORY OF A CONCEPT

Among the best-known early expressions of the idea that the Aquitanians were different from their neighbors we find Julius Caesar, who, in his *De Bello Gallico*, singled them out as the weakest of the Gallic tribes.²³ Later, the Greek historian Strabo characterized them as “small and lacking in repute” in his *Geographika*. He also noted that they mostly resemble the Iberians south of the Pyrenees because they “differ from the Galatic (i.e. Celts or Gauls) race in the build of their bodies as well as in their speech.”²⁴ While both authors were probably commenting on the Basque people in the region, the name evidently stuck.²⁵ The typically Roman inclination to order the tribes and peoples they encountered in such a way as to show the multitude of ethnicities within the empire had given the Aquitanians a place in history, even if their representation tended to be negative and indicative of ethnic stereotyping along both biological and geographical lines.²⁶

Nevertheless, Roman ideas that there was something peculiar about these people form the bedrock under the notion that Aquitaine was a distinctive region. This may indeed have led to the decision to retain that name for a great swath of lands in the south of Gaul during the administrative reorganization of the empire under Diocletian around the turn of the fourth century. This division, in Novempopulana and Aquitania I and II, ensured that *Aquitania* retained the contours it more or less holds to this day.²⁷ In the process, it turned the name given in the *De Bello Gallico* to the tribes in the southwest of Gaul into an umbrella term for a larger region. Not all local inhabitants were happy with this administrative measure: a third-century inscription tells of a chieftain called Verus who traveled to Rome to petition that the “Nine Peoples” should “become separated from the Gauls.” Verus may well have represented Caesar’s “original” *Aquitani*, who apparently felt uncomfortable with this rather bureaucratic application of “their” ethnonym.²⁸ The petition appears to have been successful: in the wake of Diocletian’s sweeping reforms of the empire, the provinces of *Novempopulana* and *Aquitania* were maintained.

23. G. Julius Caesar, *Commentarii de Bello Gallico*, trans. McDevitte and Bohn, 1.1, pp. 1–2.

24. Strabo, *Geographika*, ed. Meineke, IV.2.1, p. 258: “ἀπλῶς γὰρ εἰπεῖν, οἱ Ἀκλιτανοὶ διαφέρουσι τοῦ Γαλατικοῦ φύλου κατὰ τε τὰς τῶν σωμάτων κατασκευὰς καὶ κατὰ τὴν γλῶτταν, εἰκόσι δὲ μᾶλλον Ἴβηρσιν. . . ἔστι δὲ ἔθνη τῶν Ἀκλιτανῶν πλείω μὲν τῶν εἴκοσι, μικρὰ δὲ καὶ ἄδοξα τὰ πολλὰ.”

25. As already noted by Holmes, *Caesar’s Conquest*, p. 302. See also Woolf, *Tales*, pp. 53–55.

26. Commenting on the Roman stereotypes of the “Celts,” Woolf, *Tales*, p. 23, describes this process by stating that “the familiar was edited out of ethnography because it failed to distinguish them.” On pp. 105–111, Woolf shows that this paradigm persisted at least until the writings of the fourth-century historian Ammianus Marcellinus.

27. Glas and Hartmann, “Provinzverwaltung,” pp. 646–647, esp. also n. 22, where the complexity of the sources giving information on this particular division is further explained.

28. The inscription is edited and translated in Wierschowski, *Fremde*, p. 263.

All these regional designations thus appear as Roman creations, or at least the result of Roman attempts at consolidating their administrative empire through the re-application of native geographical or ethnic names. This may explain why the description of the region given in the first century BCE has manifested a certain resilience over the centuries, presenting its inhabitants with another way to identify themselves without losing sight of the Roman political constellation of which they had become part.²⁹ The establishment of the post-Roman kingdom of Toulouse, initially a province run by Visigothic *foederati* in the fifth century, could not erase the memory of Aquitania.³⁰ It persisted in the sources as a reminder of the tension between the geographic and ethnic identities that lingered.³¹ Moreover, religion was a factor in these tensions as well. To the influential sixth-century Frankish historiographer and bishop Gregory of Tours, the fact that the Visigoths were Arian rather than Roman Christians caused him to describe them in generally negative terms—further exacerbating the idea that the southern reaches of the Frankish sphere of influence were different, until the bishops and former Roman senatorial elites, together with the “catholic” Franks, brought the region under control. In his *Ten Books of History*, the main struggle was one in which the Frankish and Visigothic *gentes* would fight over the Roman inheritance.³² In the end, the Merovingian dynasty—Frankish, catholic, friendly to the episcopacy, and generally successful—prevailed and, in doing so, provided Gregory with an attractive (although by no means the only) model for Frankish ruler identity that his successors were eager to adopt and adapt.³³

As the Visigothic kingdom lost its holdings in Gaul following the Battle of Vouillé in 507, the Frankish takeover signaled a revival of sorts for Roman interest, identity, and nomenclature in the region.³⁴ Moreover, the relative political stability provided by Frankish overlordship gave the many regional identities an opportunity to coalesce around the idea of “Aquitania” or, rather, of “Aquitinians.” However, the tension between the Roman designation of Aquitania as an administrative region and the association with the identity of the people actually living there remained a challenge to anyone figuring out how to deal with the narrative, administrative, social, and political history of the region. The Carolingian

29. Cameron, *Mediterranean World*, p. 210.

30. Mathisen and Sivan, “Forging”; Kulikowski, “Visigothic Settlement.”

31. For instance, Hydatius, one of the main chroniclers of the political turmoil in late antique Gaul, describes the settlement of the Goths as being in *Aquitania a Tolosa usque ad Oceanum*: Hydatius, *Chronicon*, ed. and trans. Kötter and Scardino, pp. 108–109. On the context within which Hydatius wrote, see Wieser, “Chronicle.” See also Gillett, “Mirror,” pp. 394–395.

32. James, “Gregory of Tours”; Moorhead, “Gregory of Tours.” See also Dailey, *Queens*, pp. 26–28, who draws attention to the fact that gender was another factor in the shaping of Gregory’s enmity toward the Visigoths.

33. See Neville, “History,” pp. 111–112. Cf. Bouchard, *Rewriting*, pp. 91–92; Raaijmakers and van Renswoude, “Ruler.”

34. Arnold, “Battle”; Mathisen, “Clovis.”

dynasty experienced this firsthand when they usurped the Frankish throne from the Merovingians in the mid-eighth century.³⁵ Whenever Carolingian and Aquitanian interests intersected, the representation of history and perception of the present situation in the area lurked in the background: Charles Martel and Pippin III conquered a people; Charlemagne administered a peripheral region; Louis the Pious ruled a *regnum*.³⁶ Aquitania posed fresh challenges to each subsequent Carolingian ruler, and they all developed different strategies of integration and ways to make their imperial interests coincide with the realities of a burgeoning Aquitanian identity.

For instance, in the *Divisio Regnorum* of 806, a distinction is made between “Aquitania” and “Vasconia,” and it is also made clear that these are different still from “Provincia” and “Septimania”—even if the latter appears to be the same as “Gothia.”³⁷ Nevertheless, this entire region, which was to be Louis the Pious’s inheritance, would become the kingdom of “Aquitania” or “the Aquitanians” in subsequent narratives, such as the *Royal Frankish Annals* or the Astronomer’s *Life of Louis the Pious*.³⁸ In Angilbert of Saint-Riquier’s early-ninth-century *Libellus de ecclesia Centulensi*, the relic collection is described as being from “Italy, Germany, Aquitaine, Burgundy, and Gaul,” showing how the region as a whole was seen to exist alongside other distinct parts of the realm in the eyes of this diplomat and friend of Charlemagne.³⁹ However, due to the problems connected with the dating of this text, it is difficult to say with certainty if these designations were already part of the ninth-century original or if they were interpolations by the twelfth-century abbot Hariulf, through whose *Chronicon Centulense* Angilbert’s text is still extant.⁴⁰ In that sense, this seemingly innocuous remark reflects similar differences between the designation of Louis the Pious as *rex Aquitanorum* (“king of the people of Aquitaine”) in two of his earliest charters but as *rex Aquitaniae* in a twelfth-century forgery of a donation to the monastery of Gellone.⁴¹ It was a confusion that persisted. Also in the twelfth century, the charters and letters of Eleanor of Aquitaine still alternate between the titles of “Queen of the Franks and duchess of the Aquitanians” in 1139 and “Queen of England, duchess of

35. On the Carolingian takeover of the Merovingian throne (and how this was represented in subsequent narratives), see Semmler, “Zeitgeschichtsschreibung”; McKitterick, “Illusion”; Goosmann, “Memorable Crises,” pp. 159–204.

36. Costambeys, Innes, and MacLean, *Carolingian World*, pp. 44–65; Davis, *Charlemagne’s Practice*, pp. 90–164; Werner, “*Hludovicus Augustus*,” esp. pp. 16–27.

37. *Divisio Regnorum*, ed. Boretius, pp. 126–130; trans. King, pp. 251–255; see Kaschke, “Tradition.”

38. For instance, *Annales Regni Francorum*, ed. Kurze, a. 760, p. 18, shows how the subversive activities of Waifar, *dux Aquitanorum*, prompted Pippin to “conduct a campaign in Aquitania.” Aquitania as a geopolitical entity occurs throughout Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici Imperatoris*, ed. and trans. Tremp.

39. Angilbert, *De ecclesia Centulensi libellus*, ed. Waitz, 2, p. 175.

40. See McCormick, *Origins*, pp. 283–292; Evergates, “Historiography.”

41. Louis the Pious, *Diplomata*, ed. Kölzer, no. 1 (Nouaillé, 794), pp. 1–5; no. 5 (Nouaillé, 808), pp. 14–17. For the forged charter, see *Cartulaires*, ed. Alaus, Cassan, and Meynial, no. CCXLIX, p. 209.

Normandy and Aquitaine, and countess of Anjou” in several letters from 1199.⁴² In 2016, a referendum was held among the local population about the new name for a *région* in the south, following an extensive reorganization. An overwhelming majority opted for Occitanie over the old Languedoc-Roussillon/Midi-Pyrénées. But even so, Carole Delga, president of the *région*, noted that “some people could feel excluded” by this term, referring to the inhabitants of the *région* who identified as Catalan instead of Occitan.⁴³ Conversely, the new *région* to the west of Occitanie was dubbed Nouvelle Aquitaine in 2015 after representatives of several *départements* pointed out that simply using “Aquitaine” would not be historically correct, whereas “Grande Aquitaine” and “Belle Aquitaine” were deemed too presumptuous, and “Aquitania” seemed too much like a marketing ploy.⁴⁴

In the course of constructing the first *imperium* since the fall of the Roman Empire in the late fifth century, the Carolingians became aware of the many strategies of identification available to themselves and their subjects.⁴⁵ From the multitude of “ethnic” legal codes promulgated under Charlemagne on the one hand, to the invention of a universal Frankish history or the establishment of common liturgical grounds for the *cultus divinus* across the realm on the other, the unity of the Carolingian Empire depended on its diversity as much as on the authority emanating from its center, and it is needless to say that Aquitania played a part in this complex interplay of interests.⁴⁶ An amalgamation of former Roman provinces, the kingdom remained home to the Basque people, for instance, who continued to stir up trouble, and, if Ardo’s statement about Benedict’s descent is any indication, the site of lingering Visigothic identity.⁴⁷ Dealing with Aquitania thus meant figuring out to what extent these issues impinged upon Carolingian policies, and why—and this challenge extends into twenty-first-century historiography. Was Aquitaine like Lotharingia, a “verlorenes Reich,” in the words of Jens Schneider, or a “shadow kingdom,” according to Simon MacLean, with a malleable identity that could be adapted to whatever the local elites needed it to be?⁴⁸ Was it an “unreal kingdom,” torn apart by competing interests and buckling under the weight of an influential yet faraway court?⁴⁹ Or was it more like Bretagne as described by Julia Smith or Saxony as recently analyzed by Ingrid Rembold and Robert Flierman, or indeed the turbulent south-eastern border of the empire, as presented in a recent volume on that region: frontier regions locked in permanent

42. Eleanor of Aquitaine, *Epistola*, ed. De Richemont, no. 1. The second title (“of Aquitaine”) occurs more frequently, for instance, in Eleanor’s multiple charters for the Abbey of Fontevraud, “Chartes de Fontevraud,” ed. Marchegay, pp. 134–135, 334–335, 337–338, 339–340.

43. See *Le Monde*, “La nouvelle région.”

44. Lasserre, “La nouvelle grande région.”

45. Reimitz, “*Omnes Franci*.”

46. See Esders and Reimitz, chapter 9 in this volume; McKitterick, “Unity.”

47. See Collins, “Basques.”

48. Schneider, *Auf der Suche*; MacLean, “Shadow Kingdom.”

49. Airlië, “Unreal Kingdom.”

conflict with their overbearing neighbors, which in the process strengthened the political and social identification of both the Self and the Other?⁵⁰

To the extent that there even is an answer to this question, it will be different for the Aquitanian situation. When Charlemagne, in 781, carved out the sub-kingdom and put his infant son, Louis, in charge, this reflected the contemporary geopolitical situation to some extent.⁵¹ As a border, it connected the Carolingians to the Lombard, papal, Umayyad, and Visigothic spheres of influence, so even if there are no indications that Charlemagne followed the Diocletian outlines of the old provinces, it made sense to retain these borders as a point of departure. Doing so linked Aquitania's Roman origins to the history of the Franks, while at the same time incorporating an area with deep episcopal and monastic roots in the realm. Pragmatic as always, the Carolingian court would play with these many influences rather than try to control them. When dealing with Aquitania—or any “peripheral” region, for that matter—the past was as much a guide to the Carolingians as the present could ever be.

IN WITH THE NEW: THE *APRISIONES*

The year 781 marked a new chapter in the relations between local nobility and Frankish newcomers, all of whom had to deal with a new center of power and a reconsideration of their priorities regarding border security. The threat of Basque and Saracen incursions—later exacerbated by the Vikings coming in from the Atlantic as well—prompted the rulers to sponsor measures ranging from coastal defenses to preemptive strikes, which in turn fostered cooperation among the elites tasked with keeping their region safe.⁵² These measures reflected a real concern for and a consistent interest in keeping the region cohesive as a way of keeping it under control.

It is in the context of these Carolingian attempts at integrating Aquitaine that we should regard a particular type of immunity known as the *aprisio* grant. Originally a Visigothic institution that the Carolingians seized as an experimental way to grant lands to new arrivals in the realm, the *aprisio* was typically found on the southern fringe of the Frankish realm—the Spanish March, Septimania, and Provence, that is, regions that, broadly speaking, fell under the authority of Louis the Pious as king of Aquitaine, albeit at its very edges.⁵³ It concerned a type of grant that obligated the recipient to cultivate a plot of land in exchange for immunity or protection—even if, as noted by Jonathan Jarrett, it is difficult to pin down

50. Smith, *Province*; Flierman, *Saxon Identities*; Rembold, Conquest Dzino, Milošević, and Vedriš, eds., *Migration*.

51. Kasten, *Königssöhne*, pp. 138–141, 157.

52. For the strictly military side of things, see Kortüm, “Franks, Carolingian”; Bachrach, “Military Organization”; Stanton, *Medieval Maritime Warfare*, pp. 192–196.

53. For an overview of the context and current debate on this type of grant, see Chandler, *Carolingian Catalonia*, pp. 72–86. See also Depreux, “Préceptes,” with, on pp. 33–38, translations (in French) of the *diplomata* cited below.

the *aprisio* in general terms, as it was widely used in various contexts throughout the ninth and tenth centuries.⁵⁴ From a strictly Carolingian viewpoint, it was a donation of uncultivated land out of the royal fisc, in which the pledge to develop the land and make it productive appeared to have been reciprocated with immunity from local justice systems. Although the earliest sources concerning this particular Carolingian form of *aprisio* are no longer extant, a charter issued by Charlemagne in 812 confirms the practice at least thirty years prior, around the time the subkingdom of Aquitaine was first instituted.⁵⁵ The charter addresses a donation of royal lands to new arrivals in the southern reaches of Frankish influence. They had occupied or had been given lands, usually, abandoned agricultural sites, with the idea that they would create more arable lands within the realm. Should the recipients of this grant follow up on this, they would be exempt from local taxation and would be answerable to the king directly, instead of being subject to the justice of the local powerbroker.

What makes these donations especially interesting is that the settlers receiving them were not from regions within the realm proper. Called *Hispani* in Charlemagne's charter, they were people who "came from Spain and entrusted themselves to us" and who had "proved themselves loyal to us and our sons ever since then."⁵⁶ A similar charter, dating from 815 and issued by Louis the Pious, adds to this by stating that the newcomers "had escaped from the unjust repression and the yoke of the Saracens." They had "left behind their own homes and possessions, which they had justly inherited, came from Spain to us and left the power of the Saracens in order to voluntarily surrender to our rule."⁵⁷ These people, in other words, were presented as refugees, Christians who left the Umayyad-occupied Iberian Peninsula for the promise of a new existence within an *imperium Christianum*.⁵⁸

Although Charlemagne and his son appear to have warmly welcomed these *Hispani*, and there is every reason to think that their appearance was to the mutual

54. Jarrett, "Settling," responding to Chandler, "Between Court and Courts."

55. Charlemagne, *Diplomata*, ed. Mühlbacher, no. 217, pp. 289–290. The Catalan historian Ramon d'Abadal i de Vinyals attempted a reconstruction of the supposed first charter in his *Catalunya carolingia*, vol. 2/2, pp. 399–416, but this will not be taken into account for this argument.

56. Charlemagne, *Diplomata*, ed. Mühlbacher, no. 217, p. 290: *Propterea has litteras fieri precepimus atque demandamus, ut neque vos neque iuniores vestri memoratos Hispanos nostros, qui ad nostram fiduciam de Hispania venientes per nostram datam licentiam erema loca sibi ad laborandum prorsierant et laboratas habere videntur, nullum census superponere presumatis neque ad proprium facere permittatis, quoadusque illi fideles nobis aut filiis nostris fuerunt, quod per triginta annos habuerunt per aprisionem, quieti possideant et illi et posteritas eorum et vos conservare debeatis.*

57. Louis the Pious, *Constitutio De Hispanis*, ed. Boretius, 132, p. 261: *Sicut nullius vestrum notitiam effugisse putamus, qualiter aliqui homines propter iniquam oppressionem et crudelissimum iugum, quod eorum cervicibus inimicissima Christianitati gens Sarracenorum imposuit, relictis propriis habitationibus et facultatibus quae ad eos hereditario iure pertinebant de partibus Hispaniae ad nos confugerunt, et in Septimania atque in ea portione Hispaniae quae a nostris marchionibus in solitudinem redacta fuit sese ad habitandum contulerunt, et a Sarracenorum potestate se subtrahentes nostro dominio libera et prompta voluntate se subdiderunt, ita ad omnium a vestrum notitiam pervenire volumus, quod eosdem homines sub protectione et defensione nostra receptos in libertate conservare decrevimus.*

58. Generally, see Riché, "Les réfugiés."

advantage of both Frankish elites and Iberian newcomers, their emergence in the historical record indicates that local powerbrokers were not always as enthusiastic.⁵⁹ For instance, the document issued by Charlemagne in 812 is a confirmation of the privileges attached to the *aprisio* status in the face of the hostility encountered from the local elites. In it, among other things, the emperor admonishes the counts that they should not presume to collect taxes from these *Hispani*, and in a display of personal interference, he sent the newly elected archbishop John II of Arles as a *missus* to aid his son Louis in the upkeep of these regulations.⁶⁰

Over the twentieth century, the *aprisiones* have been seen as symptomatic of the “dissolution of the Carolingian fisc” and the beginning of the end of the dynasty’s authority in faraway regions, but this view was discredited by Jane Martindale in 1983.⁶¹ The Carolingian *aprisiones* have been studied as part of a program of “repopulation” of the region following the warfare of the preceding decades; they have been seen as a creative way to fill the royal coffers or to create a buffer between the caliphate and the Carolingians.⁶² Perhaps most importantly, the fact that recipients of the *aprisiones* found their way to the emperor’s ear thirty years after the initial grant demonstrates that Carolingian power remained noticeable in the region for generations. As far as we can see, these were not empty statements but charters that anchored the court to local interests and vice versa. Moreover, they also highlight the power dynamics at the highest echelons of the Carolingian realm. Charlemagne’s 812 charter, for instance, implies that he, and not his son, was the true power in Aquitaine. In spite of the fact that Louis the Pious held the title of king, his role was limited to carrying out his father’s wishes and supporting the *missi* his father had sent. Equally interesting is the observation that Carolingian authority in the region was apparently strong enough to import and subsequently adapt a phenomenon like the *aprisiones* from earlier Visigothic legal customs.⁶³ Applying it to a region that was primed to become “Carolingian” thus became an exponent of the pragmatism and legal pluralism that characterized Charlemagne’s reign.⁶⁴ Were the local aristocracy truly as recalcitrant as the historiographical record suggests, these new arrivals might not have felt as confident in promises made by a ruler who was never physically present in the region.⁶⁵ Conversely, if local elites indeed moved between Frankish overlords

59. See, for instance, Tigolet, “Hispani” and Peloux, “Lyon”.

60. Charlemagne, *Diplomata*, ed. Mühlbacher, no. 217, p. 290: *Quam ob rem iussimus Iohanne archiepiscopo misso nostro, ut ad dilectum filium nostrum Lodoicum regem veniret et hanc causam ei per ordinem recitaret, et mandavimus illi, ut tempore oportuno illuc veniens et vos in eius presentiam venientes hordinare faciat, quomodo aut qualiter ipsi Ispani vivere debeant.* On John II of Arles, see also Patzold, *Episcopus*, p. 326.

61. Martindale, “Kingdom.”

62. See also, e.g., Dupont, “Laprision”; Lewis, *Development*, pp. 71–87; Udina Abelló, “Laprisió.”

63. Chandler, *Carolingian Catalonia*, p. 78.

64. Davis, *Charlemagne’s Practice*, esp. pp. 104–105; Wormald, “The ‘Leges Barbarorum.’”

65. In the first chapters of his work, Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici Imperatoris*, ed. and trans. Tremp, pp. 280–555, the Astronomer makes a point of showing how Charlemagne never traveled to Aquitaine but instead had Louis travel northward to him. See also Werner, “*Hludovicus Augustus*,” pp. 7–10.

and local communities in a way that would ultimately benefit them, forging a direct link between these newcomers and the Carolingian dynasty through such an immunity might tie them to the central court while also inadvertently alienate their neighbors. As such, the framing of the *aprisio* grants provides a valuable insight into the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the Carolingian state and indeed becomes a mark of trust toward the local aristocracy who had to live with the *aprisiones* in their backyard.⁶⁶

Documents like these show that the price of *imperium* was eternal vigilance. When Charlemagne sent his representative to the region in 812 or when Louis praised the loyalty and diligence of those holding an *aprisio* in 815, they were both exerting their authority over the recipients of their admonishments. Thirty years after the settlement of the *Hispani*, something had gone awry in the sub-kingdom of Aquitania, and Charlemagne immediately seized the opportunity to remind the local aristocracy that they, too, had to answer to a king, Louis, who was answerable to an emperor, himself. Protecting the *aprisiones* thus turned into a convenient pretext for further consolidating and strengthening the Carolingian political framework.

In spite of this authoritative yet inclusive rhetoric, aimed at reminding those who would oppose imperial policies in the region that Carolingian rule was still present, the charters also make clear that the imperial court continued to regard the recipients of the *aprisio* grants as somehow distinct from the people already established in the region. Louis the Pious prescribed in 815 that when “severe crimes, such as murder, rape, arson, looting, dismemberment, burglary, robbery, or theft of other people’s possessions,” occurred, everybody, “regardless of their origins, will be subject to the justice of the local count.”⁶⁷ They are, in other words, not merely inhabitants of the region. The fact that it was specified that their provenance would not matter in determining such cases highlights the fact that it does in all others. In fact, the capitulary continues that in lesser cases, “things may be arranged among each other, as it has been done for a long time.” Almost thirty years later, in 844, Charles the Bald further specifies the status of the lands granted under the *aprisio* clause. He stipulates that this land “ought to be managed, cultivated, and traded according to the old usage, without anyone being allowed to object to this.”⁶⁸ The immigrants were thus given free rein when it came to local, small-scale affairs and were even given a somewhat insular status with regard to their ability to trade their land among themselves. Only in criminal

66. Generally, see Airlie, “Aristocracy.”

67. Louis the Pious, *Constitutio De Hispanis*, ed. Boretius, 132.2, p. 262: *Ipsi vero pro maioribus causis, sicut sunt homicidia, raptus, incendia, depraedationes, membrorum amputationes, furta, latrocinia, alienarum rerum invasiones, et undecunque a vicino suo aut criminaliter aut civiliter fuerit accusatus et ad placitum venire iussus, ad comitis sui mallum omnimodis venire non recusent. Ceteras vero minores causas more suo, sicut hactenus fecisse noscuntur, inter se mutuo definire non prohibeantur.*

68. Charles the Bald, *Diploma*, ed. Tessier, no. 46 (June 11, 844), pp. 127–132.

cases did they lose some of this independence. More than sixty years after they entered the Carolingian public record, *aprisiones* thus maintained a status separate from their surroundings. By the same token, however, local aristocrats were reminded of their judicial powers—specifically, who had granted them and who could limit them.⁶⁹

By allowing the *Hispani* to retain their own traditions and even exhorting their own (Frankish) aristocracy to respect their legal practices, the Carolingians integrated the recipients of the *aprisiones* into the empire while still marking them as outsiders in the region. The charters and capitularies highlight their status as refugees who have been taken in by the Carolingian rulers, coupling an image of charity with an idea of Otherness. After all, if these were indeed Visigothic refugees from the Iberian Peninsula, they were essentially moving across a political border inadvertently created by the conquest of a hitherto fully “Gothic” region by two very different “foreign” powers. Paradoxically, by showing their awareness of this Otherness, the Carolingians were also able to use the *Hispani* as an anchor, a way into a region that was and remained home to a plethora of modes of identification. Rather than attempting to quell this diversity, the Carolingians managed to turn it on its head and to strengthen their rule by acting as a guarantor of local traditions while simultaneously extolling the virtues of loyalty to the center of the empire.

OUT WITH THE OLD: FRANKS, AQUITANIANS, AND ROMANS IN THE *HISTORIA VEL GESTA FRANCORUM*

Even if the Carolingian *aprisio* charters hint at residual tensions between various groups in Aquitaine, they also imply that the Frankish rulers and southern elites did cooperate, or at least that Carolingian authority was accepted and even welcomed to a certain extent. This was not always the case. In fact, the establishment of Carolingian overlordship in the south was the result of a long-drawn-out conflict that all but devastated the region. Officially completed under Pippin III in the year 767–768, the (re)absorption of the southwest of Gaul into the Frankish realm was the result of a complex set of interactions that went back generations.⁷⁰ The conflict between the Franks and the people of Aquitania had its roots in the Merovingian/Visigothic era and left deep traces in Frankish recorded memory.⁷¹ It is in the memory of this war that we see the Carolingian ambiguity toward the region come to the fore. Presented as a rebellion, a war between peoples, or

69. See Hoppenbrouwers, “*Leges Nationum*,” pp. 262–264.

70. For a chronological overview of the last phase of the conflict in Aquitaine (including an emphasis on the importance of cities for the Carolingian strategy), see Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, pp. 213–242.

71. E.g. Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 100–101, 229–237; Rouche, *L'Aquitaine*, pp. 98–105. On the lasting memory of the Merovingians (especially Clovis) and the early Carolingians, see Remensnyder, *Remembering*, pp. 117–149, esp. p. 131.

a conflict ultimately aimed at keeping the Umayyads out of the Frankish sphere of influence, the “conquest” of the geographical region appears to have been as important as the submission of the people identified as Aquitanians. In fact, as often happens in such cases, the emergence of the Aquitanians as a distinct group in Carolingian discourse could well be a consequence of the persistent resistance of local aristocrats who happened to reside there, rather than the other way around.⁷² They were described as Aquitanians (or, rather, as Basques, Goths, Septimanians, etc.) in the Frankish sources, in order to give a name and thereby agency to the opposing faction.⁷³ More importantly, the narrative of such wars also shows how observers would make sense of the happenings after the fact. Whereas the *aprisiones* show the Carolingians taking a proactive and positive stance toward the integration of the region, lingering memories of protracted conflicts needed to be normalized as soon as possible. Integration and acceptance thus had to go hand in hand when it came to presenting a conquest in terms agreeable to everybody involved.

The description of the war as given in the continuation of Fredegar’s *Chronicle* (referred to by Roger Collins as the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*) is such a narrative.⁷⁴ Filled with martial language and political ideology, it narrates the conflict between the Carolingian dynasty—presented as a *pars pro toto* for the Franks—and the rebellious and disloyal *dux* Eudo (r. 700–735), his son Hunald (r. 735–745 [retired]), and his grandson Waifar (r. 745–768) in terms that leave no doubts as to where the author’s loyalties were.⁷⁵ The preexisting troubles in the southwest of Gaul came to a head, amplified by its Roman and Visigothic histories and its multiethnic makeup of Goths, Basques, and others, as well as the relative power and independence of the local aristocracy. According to Fredegar’s Continuator, the situation was exacerbated when the Merovingian king Chilperic II (r. 715–718) and his *maior domus* Ragenfrid (r. 715–720) offered Eudo the *regnum* in exchange for his help against the ambitions of Charles Martel. This initiative was nipped in the bud with the subsequent Battle of Soissons in 718, which ended both Chilperic’s and Eudo’s aspirations, but the inclusion of this information in the Continuations marked Eudo and his subjects out as potentially

72. In a way comparable to the interplay between conflict and representation during the Saxon Wars of the late eighth century: Flierman, *Saxon Identities*, pp. 89–118.

73. Garipzanov, *Symbolic Language*, pp. 21–23.

74. Fredegar, *Chronicon*, ed. Krusch, with the *Continuationes*, pp. 168–193. On the different choice for the title of this complex work, see Collins, *Fredegar-Chroniken*, pp. 4–7, 82–89; see also the forthcoming *Habilitationsschrift* by Andreas Fischer for a recontextualization of the *Chronicle* of Fredegar as a whole. For this chapter, I refer to the edition in the MGH by Bruno Krusch, using the designation *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* for the so-called Continuations.

75. On these dynamics in general, see Fouracre, *Age*, pp. 81–89; McKitterick, “Political Ideology.” By contrast, the local hagiographical *Vita Pardulphi*, also written in the eighth century, presents a much more positive view of Hunald and Eudo, although it does specify that Hunald ruled the region because Charles Martel allowed him to: *Vita Pardulphi*, ed. Levison, 21, p. 38.

separate from their Frankish neighbors.⁷⁶ According to the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, Eudo would later complicate the issue by entering into an alliance with the Saracens against the Carolingians, which in turn forced the hand of the Franks and prompted an expedition to the south by Charlemagne's grandfather, Charles Martel—starting the final war in earnest. This narrative, however, is clearly skewed towards the Frankish version of events. As the collection of papal biographies known as the *Liber Pontificalis* shows, Eudo was one of the heroes of the region in some versions of his story, and stood in close contact with Pope Gregory II.⁷⁷

It is difficult to disentangle the complex interplay among Franks, Aquitanians, and Saracens from the equally complicated situation described in the narrative of the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*.⁷⁸ Various theories have been proposed about its dating, ranging from the late 760s to the late 780s, but all generally agree that the text was probably composed to cater to a pro-Carolingian faction in Burgundy.⁷⁹ As such, the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* presents us with an early example of a version of the Frankish past that met Carolingian needs and was intended “to legitimize the Carolingian usurpation of the [Merovingian] throne.”⁸⁰ This agenda is already visible in the way the interactions with the Saracens are depicted. Forgoing any mention of Eudo's altercations with them, the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* makes Charles Martel the orchestrator of Frankish resistance against the raiders from across the Pyrenees and thus the hero of the story. Critical information, such as the fact that Eudo inadvertently got involved in an intra-Saracen conflict in his attempts to resist the Franks, is left out to make Charles Martel the unambiguous victor over Saracens and *Vascones* alike—the name used by Fredegar's Continuator to designate the inhabitants of the region. Following Charles's conquest and subjugation of the *duces* under Frankish hegemony and the death of Eudo (of natural causes), the Continuator ends this particular narrative arc with an “Amen” and a short bit of *computus* to give the reader a sense of time and to finish this phase in history.⁸¹

When these *Vascones in regione Aquitania* emerge again in 742, after the death of Charles Martel, they are described as “rebels” in the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*.⁸² This time, it is up to the sons of Charles Martel to subdue them. The description of their actions leaves no doubt that the entire population was now under Frankish hegemony. Whereas the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* mentions that it was the *Vascones* who started the rebellion, the story adds that

76. Fouracre, *Age*, pp. 70–71.

77. *Liber Pontificalis*, trans. Davis, 11, p. 8. For reasons of space, this chapter cannot go into the role of the popes in the diplomacy surrounding this conflict; see Gantner, “Eighth-Century Papacy,” pp. 245–261.

78. Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, pp. 280–284.

79. McKitterick, “Illusion”; Collins, *Fredegar-Chroniken*, pp. 8–25.

80. Reimitz, *History*, p. 295.

81. *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, ed. Krusch, 15–16, pp. 175–176.

82. *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, ed. Krusch, 25, p. 180.

Pippin and Carloman end up riding roughshod over the *Romani* in the region as well.⁸³ Following the reignition of the conflict in the 760s, the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* identifies the two main players in this *longa altercatio* as “Pippin, rex of the Franks,” and “Waifar, *princeps* of Aquitania.”⁸⁴ What is striking here is not only that the narrator suddenly pits a people against a region but also that he thereby gives agency to the ruler of the rebels exclusively. Waifar, not the *Vascones* or the *Gothi*, is the perpetrator of the rebellion, as he starts his campaign against the king “with a large army and most of the *Vascones* who live across from the Garonne.” Thus, having implicitly separated the *Vascones* from their neighbors, he elaborates that they “immediately turned to flee, as was their habit,” thus marking them out as a cowardly people, reminiscent of Caesar’s characterization of the *Aquitani* in the *De Bello Gallico*. That left the *Gothi*, who were presented as victims of Waifar’s “tyranny” and needed to be protected by the Franks.⁸⁵ This narrative conceit served a triple purpose. First, by making Waifar the leader of a rebellion that would ultimately lead to the incorporation of the region, the door is opened for the other members of the “great army” to accept a strong and stable Frankish overlordship by casting off their old leadership.⁸⁶ Second, the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* makes clear that the *Vascones* do not share an (ethnic) identity with the other inhabitants of the region. And third, it draws attention to the fact that the identity of the remainder of Waifar’s followers remains unclear. Their defiance of Carolingian aspirations is what defines them.

That is not to say that the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* gives no indication of who the author figured they might have been. One telling indication, for instance, is that Pippin’s army is mostly seen besieging (or, rather, taking over) cities during this final war.⁸⁷ There are hardly any battles throughout the conflict. Instead, Pippin reacts to the “betrayal” (*insidia*) of Waifar and his faction mainly by pursuing a scorched-earth strategy during which he apparently focuses his attention mainly on disrupting the cultivation and trade of wine.⁸⁸ While this would certainly have dampened the economic vitality of the region, progress in the campaign is presented as the result of a series of sieges aimed at taking over the administrative centers in the region. Throughout the *Historia vel Gesta*

83. *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, ed. Krusch, 25, p. 180: *Interea rebellantibus Wascones in regione Aquitania cum Chunoaldo duce, filio Eudone quondam, Carlomannus atque Pippinus germani principes, congregato exercito, Liger alveum Aurilianis urbem transeunt, Romanos proterunt, usque Beturgas urbem accedunt, suburbana ipsius igne conburent, Chunoaldo duce persequentes fugant, cuncta vastantes, Lucca castrum dirigunt atque funditus subvertunt, custodes illius castris capiunt; etenim victores existent.*

84. *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, ed. Krusch, 41, p. 186: *His itaque gestis, et duobus annis cum terra cessasset a preliis, praedictus rex Pippinus legationem ad Waiofario Aquitanico principe mittens; 44, p. 188: Facta est autem longa altercatio inter Pippino rege Francorum et Waiofario Aquitanico principe.*

85. *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, ed. Krusch, 41, p. 186.

86. As implied by Fouracre, “Incidence,” a rebellion quelled is a sign of a stable government to the author describing said rebellion.

87. Halsall, *Warfare*, pp. 137–138.

88. Verhulst, *Carolingian Economy*, pp. 70–71; Bachrach, *Charlemagne’s Early Campaigns*, pp. 126–129.

Francorum, the audience is given the impression that the Franks are not fighting against a *gens* or a *regnum* but are quelling a rebellion—the one explicit *gens* mentioned, the *Vascones*, give up the fight voluntarily. Instead, the Franks face a conspiracy of local elites whose power bases are centered on the cities in the region. Mutatis mutandis, Fredegar's Continuator sets out to demonstrate how these places of power ended up back under Frankish royal authority—quelling any doubts about the legitimacy of Chilperic II and Ragenfrid's offer of kingship to Eudo in exchange for his help against Charles Martel in 715–718.⁸⁹ This was, in other words, presented as a conflict within a single state or even a single *populus*; in a key passage, the author invokes 2 Samuel 3: 1, referring to the ongoing struggle between Saul and David.⁹⁰ In doing so, he implicitly equates Waifar (“the prince of Aquitaine”) with King Saul, and casts Pippin (“the king of the Franks”) in the role of David—implying that Waifar was in the clear politically speaking but had squandered divine support for his rule, and thus was not a leader of people, but rather someone who was in control of the land in which they lived.⁹¹ Pippin had somehow obtained this approval. The *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* here foreshadows the ending of the conflict even if the war continues, but it also draws attention to the fact that this would be considered an “internal” conflict. The region had, from a nostalgic Frankish point of view, been under their purview for ages, after all, and had only managed to slip away due to the turbulence caused by the combination of Saracen troublemakers and meddling dukes.

The cities (specifically Poitiers, Limoges, Saintes, Périgueux, and Angoulême, as well as Bourges) proved to be the key in the end. Their importance is clear in the narrative. Narbonne, for instance, is designated as a *metropolis*—the only place described as such in the *Chronicle*.⁹² It is a term laden with meaning, invoking images of (heavenly) Jerusalem, and its reconquest from the Saracens in 734 thus proves to be of vital importance for the establishment of Frankish authority in the region.⁹³ After the death of Eudo in 735, Charles Martel wasted no time crossing the Loire and subjugating the region around Bordeaux “with its

89. *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, ed. Krusch, 10, p. 174: *Chilpericus itaque et Ragamfredus legationem ad Eodonem dirigunt, eius auxilium postulantes rogant, regnum et munera tradunt*. See the remarks by Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 322.

90. Compare *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, ed. Krusch, 44, p. 188: *Facta est autem longa altercatio inter Pippino rege Francorum et Waiofario Aquitanico principe. Pippinus rex, Deo auxiliante, magis ac magis crescens et semper in se ipso robustior, pars autem Waiofarii et eius tyrannitas decrescens cotidie*; with 2 Samuel 3: 1: *Facta est ergo longa concertatio inter domum Saul et inter domum David: David proficiscens, et semper seipso robustior, domus autem Saul decrescens quotidie*.

91. Although it does not comment on the image of Saul, Garrison, “Social World,” shows the importance of such nicknames and the awareness at court of their existence and implications.

92. *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, ed. Krusch, 20, pp. 177–178: *usque Narbonensem Galliam peraccessit, ipsam urbem celeberrimam atque metropolim eorum obsedit*.

93. The etymology of *metropolis* as a “mother city” goes back to Paul's letter to the Galatians 3: 25–26 and was not infrequently commented upon by such intellectuals as Augustine or Philo of Alexandria. On this idea and its eschatological implications, see Kramer, “Bede Goes On,” pp. 713–716.

urban centers and suburban fortifications.⁹⁴ During Pippin's campaign against Waifar, most of the fighting occurs in the course of raids into enemy territory. But it is the siege of Bourges that proves a breaking point.⁹⁵ Described as the *caput Aquitaniae*, this might imply that the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* wished to present the city as the rallying point from which the rebellion was coordinated, or at least as one of the main strongholds of the resistance.⁹⁶ And indeed, after the successful siege of Bourges, the other cities quickly fall in line. Waifar even goes so far as to order the walls "of all the cities under his leadership in the province of Aquitania" to be razed, only for Pippin to build them up again shortly afterward.⁹⁷ The old guard has been replaced with the new, and now the Franks—Pippin's men—protect the cities and thereby the region. From a Frankish standpoint, this was one further step toward the reabsorption of Aquitaine into the Frankish sphere of influence. The war would last for another six years and five chapters in the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, ending only when Waifar himself is assassinated "by his own men" while fleeing from the Frankish armies—although the author felt compelled to add that this may have happened at the instigation of Pippin himself.⁹⁸

Given the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum's* focus on the dynastic history of the Carolingians, it is noteworthy that the story ends when Waifar's followers turn on him and that Pippin "acquires all of Aquitaine" when its inhabitants flock to him and submit to his rule, "as was the case in the olden days." This is also why the Saxons submitted to the Franks according to the Continuator or, interestingly, why the Franks submitted to the reign of King Pippin "together with his Queen, Bertrada."⁹⁹ The *antiquitus mos* or the *antiquitus ordo* that needed to be

94. *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, ed. Krusch, 15, pp. 175–176: *In illis quippe diebus Eodo dux mortuus est. Haec audiens praefatus princeps Carlus, inito consilio procerum suorum, denuo Ligere fluvio transit, usque Geronnam vel urbem Burdigalensem vel castro Blavia veniens, occupavit illamque regionem coepit hac subiugavit cum urbibus ac suburbana castrorum.*

95. Halsall, *Warfare*, pp. 137–138.

96. *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, ed. Krusch, 46, p. 189: *Videns praedictus Waiofarius princeps Aquitanicus, quod castro Claremonte rex bellando ceperat et Bytoricas caput Aquitaniae munitissimam urbem cum machinis capuisset.* This should not be taken as a "capital" per se, though, as the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* usually refers to those as *sedes*, but Aquitaine could not have had one, as it was no longer a regnum. Cf. Devailly, *Le Berry*, pp. 77–84. *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, ed. Krusch, 25, p. 180, describes how Bourges had been razed before, in the early 740s, but this time, it is not called *caput Aquitaniae*.

97. *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, ed. Krusch, 46, p. 189: *omnes civitates, quas in Aquitania provincia ditioni sue erant, id est Pectavis, Lemedicas, Sanctonas, Petrecors, Equolisma vel reliquis quam plures civitates et castella, omnes muros eorum in terra prostravit, quos postea praecellus rex Pippinus reparare iubet et homines suos ad ipsas civitates eustodiendum dimisit.*

98. *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, ed. Krusch, 52, p. 192.

99. Compare, for instance, *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, ed. Krusch, 52, p. 192: *Praefatus rex Pippinus, iam totam Aquitaniam adquesitam, omnes ad eum venientes ditionis sue, sicut antiquitus fuerat, faciunt, cum magno triumpho et victoria Sanctonis, ubi Bertrada regina resedebat, veniens;* with 31, p. 181: *Quod videntes Saxones, consueto timore compulsi, multi ex eis iam trucidati et in captivitate missi, regiones eorum igneque crematis, pacem petentes, iure Francorum sese, ut antiquitus mos fuerat, subdiderunt et ea tributa quae Chlotario quondam prestiterant plenissima solutione ab eo tempore deinceps esse reddituros promiserunt;* and 33, p. 182: *Quo tempore una cum consilio et consensu omnium Francorum missa relatione ad sede apostolica, auctoritate praeepta, praecelsus Pippinus electione totius Francorum in sedem regni*

maintained—an almost nostalgic referral to a bygone age that might not be historically justifiable but created a powerful narrative of the Carolingians as the guardians of continuity all the same. Once again, the point is hammered home that these were rebels who should have accepted Frankish rule instead of wishing to form their own (ethnically defined?) state, simply because that was the way it was supposed to be.¹⁰⁰

With this in mind, the vignette about the cities in Waifar's territory may shed further light on the priorities of the author of the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* in his description of the Carolingian conquest of the region. Although it is unclear if the author intended to continue the narrative set out by Fredegar in the first four books or if he only sought to extend chronological scope of the chronicle by adding a new sequence, the fourth book of the original *Chronicle* features another instance of a campaign that occurs mainly through cities.¹⁰¹ This story might actually provide an insight into the Continuator's description of Waifar's actions. It concerns the expansion of the Lombard kingdom under its ruler Rothari in the late seventh century.¹⁰² Rothari, Fredegar writes, "together with his army conquered the coastal cities of Genua, Albenga, Varigotti, Savona, Oderzo, and Luni from the empire" and destroyed them. Then, Fredegar adds, "because he tore the walls of these cities down to their foundations, he ordained that these cities (*civitates*) should henceforth be known as villages (*vici*)."¹⁰³ What is described here is not just how the cities mentioned came to be in Lombard territory but also how they lost their civic identity in the wake of this conquest by means of the destruction of their walls.¹⁰⁴ From cities within the Roman Empire, Rothari had made them into Lombard villages—a conquest that thus went beyond the merely territorial.¹⁰⁵ To the extent that this episode may have influenced the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum's* comments about the destruction and rebuilding of the walls of the cities of Aquitaine, it might well be that the author intended for this anecdote to

cum consecratione episcoporum et subiectione principum una cum regina Bertradane, ut antiquitus ordo deposcit, sublimator in regno.

100. Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, pp. 1–50, frames this and other campaigns as deliberate, long-term attempts by the Pippinids/Carolingians to reintegrate Aquitaine (as indicated by the subtitle, "Prelude to Empire"), rather than an authorial strategy used to justify war and authority after the fact.
101. The following passage builds upon ideas gleaned from Fischer, "Reflecting."
102. Not much has been written about Rothari explicitly, with the literature focusing predominantly on his famous *Edict*. See, however, Delogu, "Rothari," col. 1049; and Bougard, "Public Power," for an overview of the political issues in Italy at the time.
103. Fredegar, *Chronicon*, ed. Krusch, 4.71, pp. 156–157: *civitates litore mares de imperio auferens, vastat, rumpit, incendio concremans; populum derepit, spoliat et captivitate condemnat. Murus civitatebus supscriptis usque ad fundamento destruens, vicus has civitates nomenare praecepit.*
104. For a "global" perspective on the importance of walls for the identity of a community, see Connah, "Contained Communities." In the same volume, Bachrach, "Imperial Walled Cities," analyzes the impact of walled cities on the militarization of society and how they thus represent an ongoing Roman presence in a region.
105. Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. Bethmann and Waitz, IV.45, p. 125, and *Origo Gentis Langobardorum*, ed. Waitz, 6, pp. 5–6, both add that Rothari conquered these cities "from the Romans" and that he conquered lands "up to the boundaries of the Franks."

show more than Waifar's defeatism.¹⁰⁶ It also presented him with the opportunity to "erase" another part of the region's history—and, if the unique identification of Waifar in this passage as *Aquitanicus* rather than the frequently used *princeps Aquitanie* is any indication, to raise the issue of the rebels' identity just as it was about to be razed. Between the cities and the vineyards harangued by Pippin lived the old elites of a troublesome province, for whom the Roman past was still visible in the region's agricultural activities and in the makeup of their cities.¹⁰⁷ In the narrative presented by the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, the subjugation of these elites could not be thorough enough; to this author, the only sure-fire way of integrating Aquitaine into the empire would be to loosen the control of the inhabitants over their own history and then rebuild it from scratch. Perhaps the most powerful statement to that effect occurs in the penultimate chapter of the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, in which the division of the Frankish holdings between Pippin's sons Charlemagne and Carloman is detailed.¹⁰⁸ The latter of these is bequeathed a *regnum* consisting of "Burgundy, Provence, and Gotia (Septimania)," together with the Alsace and Alemannia. Aquitaine, however, described as a "province, which the king had acquired himself," is being divided between the two. Was this the Basque country? A prefiguration of the subkingdom of 781? The lands in the south that could not be assigned to any of the former kingdoms? Or maybe even the former possessions of the *Romani*, whose presence remains in the background of the narrative?¹⁰⁹ Whatever the case, it had become a Carolingian acquisition, theirs (or so the author strongly implied) to do with as they pleased.

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE: IDENTITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE *CAPITULARE AQUITANICUM*

The author of the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* primarily wrote for a non-Aquitanian audience and with the benefit of hindsight. The author's main interest was to show the Carolingian success story as conquerors and protectors of Frankish interests. The designation of the people in Aquitaine as "rebels" implied that they ought to be part of the Carolingian sphere of interest, if only their

106. Bachrach, "Imperial Walled Cities," p. 218, interprets the Continuator's narrative of the razing of the Aquitanian city walls in a different, more "practical" light. While razing walls undoubtedly had strategic advantages as well, it is my opinion that the inclusion of this action in the narrative served a purpose beyond highlighting Pippin's strategies.

107. McCormick, *Origins*, p. 651, briefly mentions that archaeological finds point toward an export of wine from the region around Paris to Aquitaine, which might be interpreted as a consequence of the decades of warfare, and an (un)expected economical advantage of Pippin's scorched-earth strategies for Neustria and Austrasia. However, on p. 10 of the same book, McCormick also points out that the archaeological records differ substantially between north and south, so it is impossible to say anything definitive on this at this point. Additionally, see McCormick, "Pippin III," on the position of southern Gaul as a pivotal region in the western Mediterranean.

108. *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, ed. Krusch, 52, p. 192.

109. For additional long-term perspectives on various competing identities in northern Iberia and southern Gaul, see García Moreno, "Building"; and De Brestian, "Vascones."

local rulers had not led them astray. The destruction and rebuilding of the cities symbolized the way the Carolingian takeover was almost a baptism by fire, a way for them to both destroy and show respect to the traditions that had made their presence felt since time immemorial. Nonetheless, as Petra Sijpesteijn notes, “even the least intrusive conquest is still a conquest”; at some point, the military bluster of the Carolingians had to be supported by administrative and legislative measures that allowed the new rulers to exert control over their new subjects.¹¹⁰

Exactly this was the thought behind the so-called *Capitulare Aquitanicum*, a short legislative text dated shortly after the conquest, in 767–768 and which is thus both Pippin III’s final statement and Charlemagne’s first act as king of the Franks.¹¹¹ As such, it presents an exclusively top-down view of the expectations held by the Frankish rulers regarding their newly acquired region and the people in it.

This capitulary is extant in a single manuscript, Leiden Vossius Lat. Q. 119, fol. 132r, which itself is probably a late-ninth-century copy from an earlier compilation made by a *missus* of Charlemagne in preparation for a journey to Aquitaine.¹¹² Although, as Hubert Mordek stated, the manuscript was written in a “skandalösen Latein,” he nonetheless acknowledges the interesting nature of the collection, which in toto reflects the priorities of somebody whose authority ultimately relies on the power of a Carolingian state.¹¹³ This would certainly explain the inclusion of the *Capitulare Aquitanicum* in this manuscript. The text is embedded in a collection aimed specifically at *missi*—representatives of the imperial court, sent to all corners of the realm to carry out the will of the ruler (and provide a tangible link to their presence).¹¹⁴ As such, the collection also includes excerpts from Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologies* on law, various Merovingian emendations to the *Lex Salica*, and a host of Carolingian capitularies. In fact, the modern name for this capitulary, given by Georg Pertz for its first MGH edition, derives from its manuscript context, as the caption in the manuscript itself simply reads, “incipiunt capitula quas bone memoriae genitur pipinus sinodaliter et nos in omnibus conservare volumus,” and encompasses several such smaller capitularies.¹¹⁵ The manuscript as a whole was, in the words of Rosamond McKitterick, “an eloquent witness to the role of the *missi* in providing essential links between the observance of the customs and laws of all the peoples within the Carolingian Empire, the royal administrative structures and Charlemagne himself.”¹¹⁶ If the *Capitulare Aquitanicum* was part of that chain, it would be as

110. See Sijpesteijn, chapter 12 in this volume.

111. *Pippini Capitulare Aquitanicum*, ed. Boretius, no. 18, pp. 42–43.

112. McKitterick, “Charlemagne’s *Missi*,” pp. 264–266.

113. See Mordek, *Bibliotheca capitularium*, pp. 210–217, for a full description of the manuscript. See also the updated description, transcription, comments, and bibliography in “Leiden, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit,” listed as secondary literature in the bibliography below.

114. Gravel, “Du rôle.”

115. The earlier MGH edition is *Pippini Capitulare Aquitanicum*, ed. Pertz, pp. 13–14.

116. McKitterick, “Charlemagne’s *Missi*,” p. 266.

a statement of how the Carolingians asserted themselves in the areas brought under their control.

Following the reconstruction of Pippin's whereabouts presented in the *Regesta Imperii*, the narrative provided in the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* actually gives a clue to where, when, and why this capitulary may have been first composed.¹¹⁷ This supposedly happened in Saintes, in the northwest of Aquitaine, where Pippin had a number of rules written out "for the good of the fatherland and the utility of the Franks."¹¹⁸ If the text in the manuscript itself is any indication, this had happened "during a synod"—a gathering of ecclesiastical elites and aristocrats that would have provided Pippin with a powerful and public avenue to assert his authority over the region.¹¹⁹ As such, the *Capitulare Aquitanicum* should be seen as a reflection of these attempts at consolidating power: destroyed or abandoned churches need to be renovated; landed possessions should be kept inviolate even if the owners are currently absent; bishops, abbots, and abbesses have to live according to a "sacred order"; and everybody should be obedient to the king's *missi* in the region. Even though the text is, in the end, rather short, it appears to represent a genuine attempt to cover all the bases, and in the process to demonstrate the all-encompassing nature of Carolingian rule in one concise document.¹²⁰ But underneath this veil of comprehensiveness is an equally powerful witness to the diversity of the Carolingian world. As stated in chapter 10 of the capitulary, "Everybody should keep their own laws, both Romans and Salians (*quam Romani tam et Salici*), and those hailing from another province should live according to the law of their own country."¹²¹

Taken at face value, this chapter appears to be a confirmation of the principle of the "personality of law," which was still relatively unproblematic in the late eighth century.¹²² It integrated Aquitaine into the ongoing "Carolingian experiment" to the extent that it implicitly allowed migrations to take place within the realm, which at that point consisted of Austrasia and Neustria in the northeast and northwest, respectively, Burgundy in the center and southeast, and Aquitaine in the southwest. Meanwhile, the rulers acted as the safeguards of justice for all, partially because in doing so they would become the ones guaranteeing the continuation of the old laws and traditions.¹²³ Going beyond the integrative

117. Böhmer and Mühlbacher, *Regesta Imperii*, vol. 1, n. 104 aa. p. 54.

118. *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, ed. Krusch, 53, pp. 192–193.

119. Hartmann, *Synoden*, pp. 1–11. Hartmann does not mention this particular synod in his book, as it is only mentioned in the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*.

120. Cf. the remarks by Pössel, "Authors."

121. *Pippini Capitulare Aquitanicum*, ed. Boretius, no. 18, p. 43.

122. Generally on the applicability of legal texts and capitularies, see McKitterick, *Carolingians*, pp. 23–76; Faulkner, *Law*, esp. pp. 9–11, on the "personality principle." The personality of the law would, according to some contemporary observers like the archbishop Agobard of Lyon, eventually clash with the ideals of Christian unity propagated by the court: Moore, *Sacred Kingdom*, pp. 301–305.

123. See Amory, "Meaning," on the integrative power of Carolingian treatment of barbarian laws. However, cf. the more nuanced view by Bothe, "From Subordination."

(but nonetheless expansionist) rhetoric of such statements, chapter 10 of the *Capitulare Aquitanicum* also shows how the Franks—or, rather, the Carolingian rulers—figured that henceforth there would be two “legal options” available to those living in Aquitaine.¹²⁴ One of these, the Salian Law, had been integrated into their legal self-identification to such an extent that its inclusion in the *Capitulare Aquitanicum* gave the inhabitants of Aquitania who identified as “Saliens” or “Franks”—or who found it advantageous to do so in the wake of the conquest—the possibility to opt in to this system.¹²⁵ What the Carolingians deemed to be Roman legal customs provided an alternative, primarily in that they were already there when the Franks arrived, and had taken root in, among others, Visigothic law in a way that differed substantially from the echoes of Roman law in the Frankish *leges*.¹²⁶ However, by placing Roman and Salian laws side by side, it also creates a vision of equality between the two and allows the Frankish system to supplant the Roman one, just as the Frankish rulers would impose their authority on the Roman senatorial elites abiding in Aquitania.¹²⁷

The rhetoric of conquest and substitution visible in the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, a narrative composed by and for a Carolingian agenda, is complemented by the rhetoric of inclusion that may be read into the Carolingian redaction of the *Lex Salica*. As both Karl Ubl and Helmut Reimitz have argued, this reworking deemphasizes the Roman/Merovingian legal tradition inherent in its predecessor in favor of divinely inspired—and thereby all-inclusive—concepts of law and justice.¹²⁸ The prologue to the reworked version reads, “Long lives he who loves the Franks”; peace and prosperity will befall those entering into this relation with the Franks, that is, those who choose to follow the *Lex Salica*. This subtext fits well with the context of the *Capitulare Aquitanicum*.¹²⁹ The prologue continues with a reminder that the Franks had actually superseded the Romans, both politically and religiously. But this brief reminder of the impact of the *Lex Salica* also becomes more salient if we consider the fact that Waifar and his entourage were likely present at the synod in Worms where this new version of the *Lex Salica* was presented in 764.¹³⁰ This lucky coincidence allowed the author(s) of the *Capitulare Aquitanicum* to reiterate the significance of this chapter. A new player had entered the Aquitanian scene, representing a tradition at least as old as those lingering in the region—and that made them arbiter as well as teammate.

124. Esders, “Roman Law,” esp. pp. 336–337.

125. On the many faces of the *Lex Salica*, the uses of the text by Merovingian and Carolingian rulers, and its ability to simultaneously mark off groups of people and allow them into the in-group, see Ubl, *Sinnstiftungen*.

126. Faulkner, *Law*, pp. 2–3.

127. Reimitz, “Early Medieval Editions,” esp. pp. 546–549.

128. Ubl, *Sinnstiftungen*, pp. 137–192; Reimitz, *History*, pp. 103–108, 358–359.

129. Reimitz, *History*, pp. 331–334.

130. Reimitz, *History*, pp. 331–333. Not much is otherwise known about this synod: *Annales Regni Francorum*, ed. Kurze, a. 764, p. 23.

The creation of a Carolingian version of history, combined with a legal framework built upon an amalgamation of Frankish identity and loyalty to the new rulers, shows how they maneuvered between past and present, between local identities and dynastic interests. This would be a new world order, and for it to succeed, local elites needed to be brought into the fold without ever giving them the idea that they ought to give up on their own ideas. The Carolingian realm was meant not to supplant the modes of identification already available to the elites but rather to add another option. Still, idealized identities and practical politics would clash on occasion. In his *Vita* of Louis the Pious, the Astronomer reminds us how Charlemagne was aware that “a kingdom is like a body which can be struck down by this or by that illness.” Consequently, the emperor went to great lengths to secure the loyalty of the (urban) bishops and set up Frankish “counts and abbots throughout all of Aquitaine” so as to keep the region under control following the creation of the subkingdom of Aquitaine in 781.¹³¹ Later, he again felt compelled to interfere in Aquitanian politics, strengthening Carolingian authority in the face of “aristocrats who were so zealous for their private affairs [that] they neglected the public good.”¹³² Even so, the Astronomer narrates, he kept having to “prevent the people of Aquitaine from growing insolent on account of his long absence” and was worried that his son might be “learning foreign customs on account of his tender years.”¹³³ His perspective, colored by the upheavals and rebellions in the region in the late 820s and throughout the 830s, as well as the threat of a full-blown civil war following the death of Louis the Pious in 840, showed that integration of Aquitania into the Carolingian realm remained an ongoing project and a major concern to those for whom obedience and loyalty were vital to the upkeep of the empire.¹³⁴

Chapter 10 of the *Capitulare Aquitanicum* confirms that the Carolingians were aware of this as early as the late 760s. The war was over. It now behooved them to work toward reconstruction and integration. Part of that process would be to allow the conquered to choose their own adventure, expecting that many would ultimately opt into the Carolingian system—a system that allowed for several types of justice to exist side by side but under the supervision of one singular court. Whereas the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* presents a more idealized, definitive version of the events, the *Capitulare Aquitanicum* shows the pragmatic side of conquest. All the same, it is interesting to note that the *Capitulare Aquitanicum* addresses the Roman side of the argument and seemingly omits the other options available. This is similar to the arrangement under the *aprisiones*. There, a space would be created for the new arrivals in the region, be they “Gothic” or “Spanish”

131. Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici Imperatoris*, ed. and trans. Treppe, 3, pp. 288–293.

132. Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici Imperatoris*, ed. and trans. Treppe, 6, pp. 300–305.

133. Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici Imperatoris*, ed. and trans. Treppe, 4, pp. 292–297.

134. On the Astronomer’s perspective on the affairs of empire, see de Jong, *Penitential State*, pp. 79–89; Treppe, “Thegan”; Nelson, “Last Years.”

(*Hispani*), tasked with rebuilding the landscape in return for retaining their identity under the auspices of an absentee landlord. Only in the capitulary, the conquerors set up a dichotomy between Frankish and Roman customs. On the one hand, this would create the illusion, for the recipients, that those who were not Roman were de facto Frankish. On the other hand, this simplistic model left enough wiggle room for other customs to persist, ultimately easing the integration of the region.

The narrative of the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum*, like the *Capitulare Aquitanicum*, was aimed at the ruling elites: the old senatorial class, whose power and authority resided in their legal traditions and the urban centers that represented continuity. The *aprisiones*, on the contrary, were emphatically not part of that same elite; they were even placed outside the system, marked out not merely as having a Gothic background but as coming from a wholly different region altogether. In the case of the *aprisiones*, it was religion—specifically, the religion of the elites of the region they had left—and not their ethnicity that became a motor for integration. In addition to pursuing territorial gains, after all, the Carolingian court was also invested in strengthening the bonds of the Church within their realm. This would make the diversity within their realm easier to manage, while also ensuring that their subjects would eventually be united in the Kingdom of Heaven.

AN UPWARD COURSE? REVISITING THE GOTHIC ORIGINS OF BENEDICT OF ANIANE

With that, we are back in Aniane and the ambitious yet localized vision of the Carolingian community presented by Ardo. Offering a bottom-up interpretation of what it meant to become a subject of the Carolingian *imperium* and an active player in the improvement of the *ecclesia*, this account exists between the idealized narratives of the conquest of Aquitania and the charters and capitularies that shed light on the realities of life in a multicultural, peripheral region.¹³⁵ It offers yet another view of the way Aquitaine would be integrated into the empire. More important, it offers a view expressed by somebody from the periphery.

The *Vita Benedicti Anianensis* firmly places its protagonist in the region where he was born and raised. Referring to many common hagiographical tropes, the text narrates Benedict's youth, emphasizes the importance of his first foundation on his father's ancestral lands, and links Benedict's clout as a member of Louis the Pious's inner circle to the significance of Aniane as the source of his holy endeavors.¹³⁶ With his sights set clearly on the establishment of a cult around Benedict's remains, Ardo used his writings as much to sing the praises of the saint as to add to the prestige of his monastic community. As such, the *Vita Benedicti*

135. On the meaning of *ecclesia* as a political tool, see de Jong, "Ecclesia"; de Jong, "State."

136. On Benedict's conversion, see Trecziak and Kramer, "Tears."

Anianensis also shows the monks of Aniane working to cultivate the surrounding area, helping the local population during a famine, and providing pastoral care to those who needed it most.

While the story of a local holy man and a local community would certainly help establish Benedict and Aniane within the region, Ardo appeals to the center of the empire by simultaneously presenting him as a representative of the Carolingian monastic ideal. This added to Aniane's importance, so that Ardo felt comfortable calling it the *capud* [sic] *coenobiorum* over all the monasteries in the empire—"not just those who were founded in the region of Gothia, but also those built according to this example at any time in other areas."¹³⁷ This juxtaposition of Aniane as a local center and as an institution of imperial importance allowed Ardo to reflect on the relation between center and periphery both implicitly and explicitly.¹³⁸ While the designation of Bourges as the *caput Aquitaniae* in the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* emphasized its role as a rallying point for anti-Carolingian resistance, Aniane is styled here as a focal point for monastic reform as framed by Carolingian interests and preoccupations.

This is already visible in the prologue, which makes clear that Ardo intended his work to be read at the imperial court. The work as a whole was addressed to the arch-chancellor Helisachar, Benedict's main contact in Aachen.¹³⁹ And the addressee was warned that his position in the halls of the palace allowed him to drink straight from "the flow of wisdom from an unfailing watercourse from the purest fountain," whereas Ardo, writing from his vantage point in Aniane, had to make do with "boisterous streams" instead.¹⁴⁰ For all his assertions about the importance of his own community, Ardo was well aware that the palace remained vital for the future of Aniane. He thus needed to emphasize his awareness that the real moral high ground was held there and indeed provided Benedict with his initial education.¹⁴¹ Yet, in doing so, he also reminds his readers at court that the "flow of wisdom" had originally come from the south. The court had cultivated Benedict and given him the power to reach across the empire. Nonetheless, it was in Septimania, a corner of Louis's Aquitanian kingdom, that he had found his calling and where his legacy would live on.

137. Ardo, *Vita Sancti Benedicti*, ed. and trans. Kettemann, 17, p. 168; trans. Cabaniss, 18.1, p. 79: *Cognoscat, quisquis ille est qui hanc cupit legere vel audire vitam, cunctorum hoc capud esse coenobiorum, non solum quae Gotiae in partibus constructa esse videntur, verum etiam et illorum quae aliis in regionibus ea tempestate et deinceps per huius exempla hedificata atque de thesauris illius ditata, sicut inantea narratura est scedula.* On the discrepancy between the chapter numbers in Kettemann and in Cabaniss, see Kettemann, "Subsidia Anianensia," pp. 110–123.

138. Kettemann, "Subsidia Anianensia," pp. 123–129; Gravel, *Distances*, pp. 305–306, 467.

139. Helisachar was arch-chancellor of Louis the Pious and abbot of Saint-Riquier: Depreux, *Prosopographie*, pp. 235–240; Dickau, "Studien," pp. 62–116.

140. Ardo, *Vita Sancti Benedicti*, ed. and trans. Kettemann, Praefatio, p. 140; trans. Cabaniss, p. 62: *Pavebam, ne hi, dum vitiose composita corrigere vellent, a male contextis exacerbati, adiudicarent neglegenda; presertim cum noverim, vos sacrae aulae palacii adistere foribus, nec turbulentis rivulis sitire potum, quin pocius ab indeficienti vena purissimi fontis sedulo sapientiae aurire fluenta.*

141. Cf. de Jong, "Sacrum palatium."

This is why Ardo did not attempt to hide Benedict's "Gothic origins." Against the background of Frankish understanding of southern identities, Ardo's Benedict had been a part of the Carolingian experiment from the beginning and managed to use his position as an "outsider" to his advantage. In this context, it is striking that Ardo only refers to Aquitaine when he connects Benedict to the rule of Louis the Pious. Otherwise, when narrating his origin story as a reformer, he mentions how the saint became a *nutrix* for the monasteries in the areas that make up the south of Louis's subkingdom, namely, *Provincia*, *Gotia*, and *Novempalitana*.¹⁴² These names show the care with which Ardo treated the regional identities around him. *Novempalitana*, for instance, was an archaic Roman name for the land that later came to be known as *Wasconia*, the land of the Basques.¹⁴³ It may have served the dual purpose of deemphasizing the persistence of that ethnic group in the region for a Frankish audience and highlighting its persistence as well. In a similar way, Ardo's references to *Provincia* and *Gotia* show that the "subkingdom of Aquitaine" actually harbored smaller regional polities that could be considered separate from an overarching Aquitanian identity as well.¹⁴⁴ This simultaneously reminded the audience of the resilience of pre-Carolingian identifications for the various regions, the universality of Louis the Pious's authority as king and later emperor, and how Benedict's reforming prowess helped draw together these different regions.¹⁴⁵

As a narrative device, this allowed Ardo to reflect upon the Carolingian dynamics of power in the region in a way similar to the situation sketched by the *aprisio* grants. Calling to mind the non-Frankish origins and Roman past of the areas touched by Benedict's influence and the cross-fertilization taking place between those modes of identification would further emphasize the enormity of the abbot's achievements at the imperial court.¹⁴⁶ It was a clever strategy. Ardo seemed intent on maintaining links between Aniane and Aachen by showing how it was the diversity of the empire that catalyzed its greatest successes.

This was the vision of the Carolingian Church community that Ardo hoped would resonate most with all his audiences. Even if the goal for the monks of Aniane was to establish a cult in Benedict's home region, the fact that Ardo addressed the court in his prologue served as an important framing device. Just as Benedict's anchoring in "Gothia" served as a message to the court, the

142. Ardo, *Vita Sancti Benedicti*, ed. and trans. Kettemann, 19.2, p. 177; trans. Cabaniss, p. 82: *Omnium denique monasteriorum tam in Provincia quam in Gotia seu Novempalitana provintia consistentium erat quasi nutrix fovens iuvansque, atque ab omnibus amabatur ut pater, venerabatur ut dominus, reverebatur ut magister.*

143. See Ewig, *Merowinger*, pp. 121–123.

144. For instance, Geary, *Aristocracy*, highlights the local nature of the elites in the Provence; Chandler, *Carolingian Catalonia*, shows how Catalonia and Septimania were similarly defined by aristocratic networks that retained a local (if not necessarily ethnically defined) flavor.

145. Remensnyder, *Remembering*, pp. 9–10.

146. Collins, "Ethnogenesis," esp. the concluding remarks at pp. 43–44.

fact that his *Vita* served as a lifeline to Aachen might have added to his prestige back home. Topical *humilitas* or not, Ardo was in touch with the center of power, just as Benedict had been. Through Ardo's authorial prowess, center and periphery melded together in such a way as to negate cultural, ethnic, or historical differences and, in short, to show that centers need not necessarily compete with one another.¹⁴⁷ Paradoxically, he managed to do this by emphasizing these differences but prioritizing the creation of a common set of beliefs despite the difficulties to overcome. It was thanks to Benedict's activities as a reformer and his prowess as a holy man that the empire and the court would be knit together.¹⁴⁸

CONCLUSION

Before the Franks entered the scene, the name the Romans had given to the region, Aquitania, had already been applied to ethnic groups, a geographic region, and an administrative province. While it remains unclear what prompted Diocletian's decision to name the area between Loire and the Garonne "Aquitania," the momentum provided by the creation of the province proved enough to give the southwest of Gaul a sense of identity that would withstand the centuries. The area that the Carolingians came to refer to as Aquitania bore the marks of its history and retained a sense of the multifaceted background of its various inhabitants. The sources analyzed for this chapter, however, retain that word for the subkingdom that would be created in 781 and otherwise reflect the observation that regional identity in the south was difficult to pin down—but also that it was not necessary to do so as long as the Carolingians exerted their (seemingly) benevolent influence. The many identities in the subkingdom of Aquitaine thus became a driving force for the interactions between the court and the southern borders of the empire, for better or for worse. The pro-Carolingian sources analyzed here all show various strategies of adapting to the impulses given by the southern elites. Due to this flexibility, the attraction exerted by the court, at least in the short term, proved stronger than the hostility that might be felt in the wake of the conflicts that set the stage for Franco-Aquitainian interaction.

Aquitania's complicated past became one of the first big challenges for the Carolingians but ended up being an important resource for its integration into the realm.¹⁴⁹ Whatever Roman, senatorial, Gothic, Basque, or other identity

147. Proclaiming a "new" center would usually be seen as part of a political conflict, as described, for instance, in Airlie, "Nearly Men." See also Remensnyder, "Topographies"; Conant, "Louis the Pious." The "traditional" view of the relationship between the two is best described by Geertz, "Centers." Appadurai, "Theory," offers a more "postcolonialist" reading in which the proclamation of a central status supersedes the observation of its existence; see also Cohen, *Symbolic Construction*, pp. 36–37.

148. More generally, see also Diem, "Inventing."

149. See Buchberger, *Shifting*, who makes a case for the flexible uses of ethnic identifications parallel to a lingering feeling of Romanness in pre-Carolingian and Visigothic Gaul and Iberia.

would linger within the region needed to be brought in line with the Carolingian vision of community—which, as it turned out, was a vision that preferred Christian harmony over ethnic or political unity.¹⁵⁰ Thus, the conquest and reconstruction of the region's Roman past would add to the prestige of the dynasty, which eagerly absorbed feelings of “Romanness” into its self-image. The narration provided by the *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* furthermore shows how, from a Carolingian perspective, the invasion had already succeeded before it had even begun; in the end, it was a matter of subduing local aristocratic interests more than it was the subjugation of a hostile people. The clause about legal options in the *Capitulare Aquitanicum* implies a similar approach, showing that the Frankish “legal system” had a fundamentally flexible attitude toward the principle of personality of law as long as people accepted that it was the Carolingians who allowed flexibility to persist. The settlement of *Hispani*, Christian refugees or migrants from the Iberian Peninsula, similarly showed how Charlemagne and his heirs took a pragmatic stance vis-à-vis diversity in the south. *Aprisiones* became both a way to demonstrate their benevolence and a method to exert authority over local aristocrats who retained power in spite of the changes at the top. Moreover, the *aprisiones* served as a reminder to those same elites that the real enemy lurked even farther south, beyond the Pyrenees. The Carolingians, in the meantime, were building up and strengthening their *ecclesia*. It was a visionary project, a Church that would provide anyone with the tools to achieve salvation—as long as these hopefuls were willing to become a part of their empire.

150. Close, “O inseparabilis unitas?”

From the Sublime to the Ridiculous

Yemeni Arab Identity in Abbasid Iraq

Peter Webb

THE study of identity hinges upon nuances of meaning. Communities are labeled with names, but those names are words, and words have their own histories of changing meanings that can connote different concepts and perhaps even different peoples from time to time. When we invoke names of communal identities—“Roman,” “Arab,” “Frank,” “Muslim,” “Melkite”—there is a risk of privileging one definition of a name’s meaning and imposing it upon past communities, anachronistically reorganizing peoples of the past and forcing them to become part of a historical narrative of our own making. In order to avoid the pitfalls of sorting generations of past peoples into “containers” of enduring nationalities under monolithic labels,¹ we are advised to sift the changing functions and significations of names as they passed through different historical periods and geographical locales. This chapter examines the meaning of being “Yemeni” expressed in poetry of early-Abbasid-era Iraq; it reveals the changing contours of Yemeni-ness as historical memories and Abbasid contemporary concerns passed through poems of nostalgia and boast, and it evaluates the potentials and limits of Abbasid-era poetry to provide answers to our questions about historical identities.

Yemeni identity navigates a complex array of possible meanings that have accrued over time. “Yemen” is a modern nation-state, “Yemen” is a division of Arab genealogy, “Yemen” is a cardinal direction, “Yemen” was a political faction in the early caliphate, and in the Abbasid period, “Yemen” was an identity embraced by disparate communities between Central Asia and the Atlantic. Any two individuals who both call themselves “Yemenis” could intend membership in very separate communities by virtue of *their* choice of what “Yemen” signifies. Jest and irony also hover between the lines of text: one reference to “Yemen” may have meant a solemn veneration of homeland, whereas a second might intend simply a joke, one writer’s satirical play on another’s serious identity.

1. For critique from the perspective of memory studies of gathering history into national “containers,” see Welsch, “Transculturality”; see also Rosenfeld, “Looming Crash”; Erll, “Travelling Memory.”

Into this thicket of meaning, early-Abbasid-era “Yemeni-ness” articulated an identity of high status in the caliphate’s Iraqi heartland, yet the meaning of such “Yemeni” community has eluded sustained scrutiny. Studies hitherto tended to assume that Yemenis were all members of a group of “Southern Arab” tribes, classifying them as essentially monolithic blocs of “Arabs” whose communal history is presumed to originate in pre-Islamic South Arabian kingdoms. The kingdoms fell shortly before Muḥammad’s lifetime, but their tribal divisions are believed to have endured into the Islamic period when they migrated en masse into the Fertile Crescent, where they purportedly expressed their communal solidarity via a faction known as *al-Yamāniya*, an alliance of groups descended from a common ancestor, Qaḥṭān.² The memory of these pre- and early-Islamic-era Yemenis is rehearsed today in the Yemeni nation-state, where claims that the ancient South Arabians were the original Arabs and masters of powerful kingdoms are central foundations in Yemeni nationalist narratives.³

While the above account of Yemeni identity appears straightforward, it obscures key questions. Did all Abbasid-era Yemenis descend from South Arabian migrants? Did they all use the term “Yemen” to connote a political faction? Did Iraqi-domiciled “Yemenis” imagine solidarity with populations in South Arabia? And more fundamentally, did pre-Islamic South Arabians ever call themselves “Yemenis” and imagine a shared community that crossed over into the Muslim era? Or were Muslims the inventors of a new concept of “Yemen” that emerged from the wide-scale sociopolitical reorganizations of Muslim conquest? When critically evaluating these questions, the Yemeni ethnic story begins to fracture.

For example, the putative progenitor of all Yemenis and the iconic identifier of their community, Qaḥṭān, is not cited as an ancestral figure in pre-Islamic South Arabian records. The name “Qaḥṭān” is only attested in two inscriptions signifying a minor regional group connected with the southwestern Arabian kingdom of Kinda in the third century CE,⁴ and it seems that Muslim-era populations alighted on memories of this name and forged a new meaning to invent a genealogy unifying a much larger collective identity than had ever existed before. The earliest layers of Arabic literature (written in the first centuries of Islam) about pre-Islamic South Arabia reveal very little accurate memory of the past beyond the names of kingdoms and broad outlines of political change; the frankincense trading, terraced farming, and polyglot communities that shaped pre-Islamic South Arabia are absent in the “Yemen” of Arabic historiography.⁵ Moreover,

2. References in Arabic literature to Qaḥṭān and “Southern Arab” *al-Yamāniya* as a means to explain political alignments and social groups are ubiquitous.

3. For the reuse of pre-modern stories of Qaḥṭān in Yemeni nationalist historiography, see Sharaf al-Dīn, *al-Yaman ‘abra al-tārikh*; Bāfaqīh, *Tārikh al-Yaman al-qadīm*; Dib, *al-Yaman hiya al-aṣl*, pp. 55–61.

4. Inscriptions Ja635 and DAI Bar ‘an 2000–2001.

5. Elsewhere, I refer to the effects of Muslim-era discourses on reshaping pre-Islamic history as the “Bedouinization of Memory,” which presents all pre-Islamic Arabia in an Arab-Bedouin mold (Webb, *Imagining*, pp. 337–340). A subsequent study on one specific “Yemeni” community, al-Azd, concurs

populations in Muslim-era South Arabia likewise demonstrate remarkably little ability to read pre-Islamic South Arabian scripts⁶ or to recall South Arabia's pre-Islamic history.⁷ The results of population movement and new political organization in South Arabia during the caliphate changed the meaning of Yemen on a broad scale: memories were disrupted, and new joiners in new forms of "Yemeni" community brought new stories to create new traditions. And beyond the disruption between the ideas of pre-Islamic and Muslim-era Yemen, even the supposed cohesion of the Muslim *Yamāniya* faction is debated, since the solidarity expected in a political bloc was not always operative.⁸ And, as will be considered presently, pre-Islamic South Arabian kingdoms never called themselves "Yemen"; the very name of the community appears to be a Muslim-era creation, too. It is accordingly inaccurate to treat Muslim-era Yemenis as members of a predefined community; rather, they were creating that community as they marched through history, and we ought to listen to their voices with care to determine what sort of community they believed they represented and how they interacted with Arabs, the political structure, and the wider society of Abbasid Iraq.

Few extant books date to the first generations of Abbasid rule (750–830 CE), but a significant quantity of poetry survives expressing varied examples of boast and invective marshaled by self-identified "Yemenis" to assert their honor in Abbasid Iraq. The poetry was intended as a public performance, and it circulated in courts and social circles of the caliphate's Arabic-speaking elites, hence analysis of poetic references to Yemen and investigation into the functions of the poems themselves can proffer clues about the meaning of being "Yemeni" at the height of Abbasid power.⁹

that the same Muslim-era process of forgetting of the group's pre-Islamic agriculturalist past in favor of constructing a new Arab-Bedouin heritage occurred (Ulrich, *Arabs*, pp. 11–56).

6. Traditionally, the latest dated Sabaic-language, Musnad-script inscription was dated to 669 of the Ḥimyaritic calendar (c. 555 CE). Cahen, "History," pp. 212–213, states that Muslim-era Yemenis lost the ability to read Musnad. More recently, and based on closer linguistic analysis, Stein, "'Ḥimyaritic' Language," suggests survival of Ḥimyaritic as a spoken language in central Yemen, and a bilingual Arabic-Sabaic inscription was found near Najrān, dating to the third/ninth century (al-Said, "Early South Arabian-Islamic Bilingual Inscription," p. 87). Thus, some Muslim-era South Arabians preserved pre-Islamic writing traditions, but the practice was not widespread and had little influence on Muslim-era histories of pre-Islamic South Arabia, those written in both the central Islamic lands and South Arabia itself.
7. Smith, "Problems."
8. Crone, "Were the Qays?" rejected Shaban's thesis of *al-Yamāniya* as a political party (Shaban, *Islamic History*), but the absence of seamless political cohesion does not necessarily entail that *al-Yamāniya* was not an idea around which populations could be mobilized for political ends. By the late Umayyad era, *al-Yamāniya* was a recognizable entity (even if its membership was fluid), but dating the beginning of Southerner solidarity remains unclear. See Amabe, *Emergence*.
9. Rina Drory proposed that poetry did not enjoy status as a serious form of discourse and that poets considered their role as one of "misrepresenting" reality. Drory, unfinished paper, detailed in Kennedy, "Preface," pp. xvii–xxi; see also Drory, "Three Attempts." This theory resonates with the medieval Arabic critical refrain, "poetry is at its best when it lies the most" (*aḥsan al-shi'r akdhabuhu*). Qudāma ibn Ja'far, *Naqd al-shi'r*, ed. Bonebakker, p. 26. Prima facie, Drory's study challenges efforts to use poetry in historical analysis, but her work focused primarily on *tashbib* love poetry, and her belief that *all* Arabic poetry followed the same rubric is a generalization. This is not the forum to enumerate the truthful and politicized aspects of early-Muslim-era verse, but we will return to the possibilities of jest and misrepresentation at

YEMEN: A DIRECTION, A HOMELAND, OR KINSHIP?

Since identities build on preexisting traditions and take their raw materials from memories of history that precedes them, some consideration of Yemeni-ness before the Abbasids will set the background from which Abbasid-era poetry flowed. Critical analysis ought to begin with the very word “Yemen” itself. The Arabic *al-yaman* appears to originate as a designator for the cardinal direction of “south,” and in pre-Islamic usage, its connotation was necessarily vague, since any land to the south of a given speaker’s reference could be called *yaman*.¹⁰ More research on the word’s early history is needed, but what seems clear is (i) peoples who lived in the country now known as Yemen did not call their homeland “Yemen” before Islam,¹¹ and (ii) populations in central Arabia marshaled the word *al-Yaman* in a binary relationship with *al-Shām/al-Sha’m* (“north”), imagining the world on a north-south axis with the Hijaz as the center; all land south of their territory was *al-Yaman*, and all land to a distant north was *al-Shām*.¹² Today, *al-Yaman* and *al-Shām*, respectively, connote defined *place*: (i) the nation-state of Yemen and (ii) greater Syria, including the national borders of Syria, Lebanon, and Israel/Palestine. But in pre-Islam, the terms articulated uncertain and unfamiliar *space*: worlds beyond the southern and northern edges of central Arabian geographical imagination.

As for pre-Islamic communal identities, the pre-Islamic Ḥimyar kingdom, which controlled much of today’s Yemeni nation-state¹³ between the fourth and mid-sixth centuries CE, never called itself “Yemen”;¹⁴ only central Arabians applied the “Yemeni” term as a broad concept connoting outsider “Southerner”

the end of the chapter. Moreover, since satire necessarily flows from a perception of reality, references to “Yemen” in verse, even if phrased as jest, will illuminate parameters around which more serious adherents to Yemeni identity were articulating their community.

10. Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, vol. 13, pp. 462–464. There are numerous examples in early Arabic literature where *yaman* is cited to mean “south” and not a defined region; for example, the wādī of Nakhla, to the east of Mecca, is divided into *Shāmī* and *Yamānī*, not because one is on the road to Syria and the other to Yemen but rather because one is at the northern/left side of the wādī, the other at its southern/right (Yāqūt, *Mu’jam al-Buldān*, vol. 5, p. 277). In early geographical imagination, Arabians counted three great world seas, two of which were the Sea of *Shām* and the Sea of *Yaman*—the “Northern” and “Southern” seas, respectively (Muslim ibn Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, al-Fitan*, p. 199). A report in al-Wāqidi’s *al-Maghāzī* depicts Muhammad marking a space and pointing “here is *Shām* and there is *Yaman*,” using the indefinite form of both words in a directional sense (al-Wāqidi, *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*, ed. Jones, vol. 3, p. 1021). Rain and constellations were also labeled as *yaman* (“south”) and *shām/sha’m* (“north”); see Ibn Qutayba, *al-Anwā’ fi mawāsim al-‘Arab*, pp. 52, 68 n. 5, 163–165.
11. “Ymnt” is attested in Sabaic writing but not as a name for homeland; rather, it meant “south.” Biella, *Dictionary*, p. 232; Beeston et al., *Sabaic Dictionary*, p. 168. A region was called Ymnt in Sabaic inscriptions from the third to sixth centuries CE (e.g., Ir 28, YMN 13, Ry 510), but it is not contiguous with today’s “Yemen”; it refers to a southern region within South Arabia. Robin, “À propos de Ymnt,” considers this in detail.
12. See Webb, “Pre-Islamic *al-Shām*,” pp. 143–146, for discussion of north/south spatial narratives.
13. Robin, “Ḥimyar,” notes that effective Ḥimyaritic control was variable, as provinces enjoyed considerable local autonomy.
14. Hoyland, *Arabia*, pp. 5, 8, 48.

peoples. In reverse, the pre-Islamic Himyarites saw central Arabians as “outsiders,” and there is no indication that any sense of ethnic or other communal bond united southern and central Arabians.¹⁵ In pre-Islam, South Arabians did not consider themselves the ancestors of central and northern Arabian peoples, and the word “Yemen” was a flexible pointer of direction, not the proprietary name of a specific people, empire, or homeland.

After the Ḥimyar kingdom’s collapse, some of its remnants alongside other South Arabian populations, both agriculturalist and pastoralist, joined the ranks of the early caliphate’s soldiers in the 630s CE,¹⁶ inaugurating a process of seminal sociopolitical change. The caliphate’s central Arabian elite called these new joiners “Southerners” (*al-yamāniya*), and the South Arabians accepted the term, using the adjective *Yamānī* to describe an identity and the term “Yemen” (*al-Yaman*) to connote a place for the first time to express their *own* identity and homeland. Conceptual separation between central and southern Arabia initially remained in early Islam, as Abū Zur‘a al-Dimashqī (d. 281/895) reports an Umayyad-era memory that “[The Prophet] left for the Hajj in year 10; by this time the Arabian Peninsula (*al-Jazīrat al-‘arabiyya*) had converted to Islam, as well as those people of Yemen whom God wished to convert.”¹⁷ From today’s perspective, such a separation of Yemen from “Arabia” is extraordinary, but such anecdotes stand as key indicators that early Muslims’ sense of Arabia’s cohesion took some time to develop as the fragmented zones of the pre-Islamic peninsula were amalgamated in subsequent Muslim thought.

Southerner and Northerner integration evidently took time to merge “Yemen” with the rest of Arabia, and this likely coincides with profound changes at the end of the first/seventh century, when Muslim elites started to call themselves “Arabs” as a strategy of distinction to articulate their community’s difference from the indigenous populations they had conquered and thereby maintain exclusive status as the caliphate’s sociopolitical elite.¹⁸ The descendants of the central Arabians and those “Southerners” who participated in the mid-first-/seventh-century conquests together adopted a collective name “Arab,” thereby asserting an ethnic boundary between themselves and the conquered and, in so doing, marked the first time in history when peoples hailing from different parts of Arabia began to experiment with terminology that enabled them all to integrate into *one* imagined community.¹⁹ From this point onward, the formerly

15. Robin, “Les Arabes”; Webb, *Imagining*, pp. 33–36.

16. Mad‘aj, *Yemen*; Smith, “Problems,” p. 134.

17. Abū Zur‘a al-Dimashqī, *Tārīkh Abī Zur‘a al-Dimashqī*, ed. al-Manṣūr, p. 30.

18. The thesis of the Muslim-era emergence of Arab identity as a social asset was first proposed in Müller, “Arabia.” Donner, *Muhammad*, pp. 217–220, and Millar, *Religion*, pp. 154–158, renewed the suggestion. The process by which Muslims identified themselves as Arabs is detailed in Webb, *Imagining*, pp. 60–176.

19. For the development of “Arab” as a communal identity of Muslims, see Webb, *Imagining*, pp. 85–88, 141–156.

distinct “Yemenis”/“Southerners” became part of a wider “Arab” collective identity, and the process by which they turned themselves into “Arabs” and merged their identity with the formerly distinct central Arabian peoples rewrote notions of ethnicity and communal boundaries across the Middle East.

The emergence of the Yemeni-cum-Arab identity in the later-Umayyad-era Syrian, Iraqi, and Iranian political circles engendered an unstable situation: the Yemeni-Arabs simultaneously sought to maintain distinct vis-à-vis both (i) the conquered peoples by integrating within Arab lineage and (ii) other Arabs by asserting the distinctiveness of Yemeni identity. In the sources about early Islam, the tension is associated with factional terminology: the Yemenis identified themselves as ‘*Arab* but specifically as “Southerners”/“Southern Arabs” (labeled *al-Yamāniya*, *al-Yaman*, or Qaḥṭān), as distinct from “Northerners”/“Northern Arabs,” who identified their collective via ancestral names, ‘Adnān, Ma‘add, Nizār, and Muḍar, each with broadly similar connotations.²⁰ For the *Yamāniya* Southerners, “Yemen” connoted both their collective lineage group and the entirety of South Arabian geography.

Groups of the *Yamāniya* in eastern Iran and Iraq supported the Abbasid movement against the Umayyads, and with the eventual success of the Abbasids in 132/750, the *Yamāniya*’s political fortunes were promising. Membership in the “Yemeni” community was imbued with status during the period this chapter explores, but it is pertinent to note that the main poet-“spokesmen” of Yemeni identity examined here, Abū Nuwās (139–195/756–814) and Di‘bil ibn ‘Alī al-Khuzā‘ī (148–246/765–860) never visited South Arabia itself. The poets projected themselves as “Yemeni” without residence in Yemen, and herein a key conceptual distinction is required. Abū Nuwās, Di‘bil, and their community can be called *genealogical* Yemenis, since they claimed “Yemeni” identity by virtue of lineages traced several generations backward to the South Arabians who joined the Muslim conquest armies. The Iraqi genealogical Yemenis were essentially detached by more than a century from the land of South Arabia, which itself was reorganized by the caliphate into one province called *al-Yaman*, marking the beginning of the use of the name “Yemen” as the label for a fixed geographical-political entity corresponding to South Arabia. The province’s inhabitants can be distinguished as *geographical* Yemenis.

By the second/eighth century, the genealogical and geographical Yemeni communities were evolving along separate lines. A number of groups who lived in Northern Arabia and even in Syria at the dawn of Islam joined the ranks of the

20. In Muslim-era genealogies, Muḍar was a son of Nizār, who was son of Ma‘add, who was son of ‘Adnān. Hence all four ancestors connote the top of the Northerner family tree, but Ma‘add, Nizār, and Muḍar appear to have had different connotations in pre-Islam, and ‘Adnān may have been a Muslim-era invention (see al-Jumāhī, *Ṭabaqāt fuḥūl al-shu‘arā*, ed. Shākir, vol. 1, p. 11). By the third/ninth century, genealogy was standardizing, and the terms became largely synonymous with “Northerner,” although Muḍar was distinguished from a smaller sub-branch of Northerners, the Rabī‘a.

genealogical *al-Yamāniya* faction in Syria and Iraq for reasons of political expediency, thereby asserting a “Southerner” genealogical identity without having historical, cultural, or lineage roots to South Arabia.²¹ While a vast amount of Arabic literature emerged in third-/ninth-century Iraq to construct “Yemeni” identity from the perspective of the genealogical community, the geographical Yemenis seem to have been aware of this fabricated Yemeni-ness articulated in Iraq, and South Arabia’s most celebrated writer of early Islam, al-Ḥasan al-Hamdānī (d. c. 334/945 or 360/971), rebuked Iraqi genealogical Yemenis for narrating Yemeni history in incorrect ways and with insufficient knowledge about South Arabia.²² His work nonetheless closely resembles the narratives of genealogical Yemeni historiography, indicating the power of the imaginative Iraqi discourse to fundamentally reshape how South Arabian–domiciled people could imagine their own identity in medieval Islam, but this is a topic for a different forum.

In the third/ninth century, the name “Yemen” (*al-Yaman*) could be invoked by members of the genealogical and geographical Yemens with potentially variant connotations, and historians thus confront two separate but intertwined identities. Our focus here is Iraqi cultural production and identity articulation among genealogical Yemenis.

POETRY AND YEMENI PARTISANSHIP

Abū Nuwās

Abū Nuwās is most famed today for libertine wine poetry, but his near contemporaries also knew him as “extremely partisan to Qaḥṭān over ‘Adnān,” *i.e.* a champion of the Southerners over Northerner Arabs,²³ and his connection to Yemeni community manifests in several guises. Abū Nuwās reportedly chose his sobriquet “Nuwās” as homage to the pre-Islamic South Arabian king Dhū Nuwās,²⁴ Ibn Qutayba’s biography of Abū Nuwās begins with discussion of the poet’s connection to the Yemeni tribes Ḥā and Ḥakam (as a client),²⁵ and upon Abū Nuwās’s death, a young companion (*ghulām*) from the Yemeni al-Azd eulogized him in stark Yemeni-partisan terms:²⁶

The creative one is dead, it’s the end of cleverness,
Death’s wrapped true poetry in a shroud.

21. The case of the Syrian Quḍā’a’s transformation into Southerners is thoroughly discussed. See Kister, “Kuḍā’a”; Crone, “Were the Qays?” Ulrich, “Azd Migrations,” notes a process of mythopoesis that connected central Arabian al-Azd groups to Southerner lineage.

22. Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, ed. al-Akwa’, vol. 1, pp. 60–61, 66–68.

23. The quotation refers to the Southerners and Northerners via their putative ancestors. Ibn al-Mu’tazz, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shu’arā’*, ed. Farrāj, p. 195.

24. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, ed. Muḥannā and Jābir, vol. 25, p. 29.

25. Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shi’r wa-l-shu’arā’*, ed. Shākir, vol. 2, p. 784.

26. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, ed. Muḥannā and Jābir, vol. 25, p. 306.

...
 Who now will carry the glory
 From the might of Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan?
 Who now will parry the evil of Nizār?
 Who will defend merry Yemen?

The Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan whom the poet invokes was a heroic pre-Islamic South Arabian king, extolled in Arabic literature for “liberating” South Arabia from Ethiopian domination shortly before Muḥammad’s lifetime. Nizār signifies the “Northern Arabs,” and the reference to their “evil” antagonizes them as factional foes of the Yemeni “Southerners.” Thus, the final word on Abū Nuwās has him carrying the torch of pre-Islamic Yemeni kingship, defending Yemeni honor in Abbasid Iraq.

Abū Nuwās’s “defense” of the Yemenis materializes in his “Poem Rhyming in B” (see appendix, poem 1). Its systematic praise of Yemeni identity and glory, contrasted by its thorough lampooning of every major Northern Arab tribe, lays bare a chasm of cultural and political achievement that Abū Nuwās intones separated “his” lofty Southerners from the base Northerners. The poem became famous: Ibn al-Mu‘tazz (d. 297/908) presents it as the first poem in his biography of Abū Nuwās,²⁷ al-Mubarrad (d. 287/898) comments on the widespread reaction it caused among Northern Arabs who tried (and mostly failed) to compose rebuttals,²⁸ and al-Ṣūlī (d. 335/946–947) reports that the verses prompted the caliph al-Rashīd (r. 170–193/786–809) to imprison Abū Nuwās.²⁹

The poem’s ways of praising Southerners and lampooning Northerner Arabs afford us opportunity to appraise how Southerner identity was articulating itself in early-Abbasid Iraq. Abū Nuwās begins with traditional *nasīb* description of abandoned desert camps (lines 1–6), but swiftly rejects the nomadic nostalgia by quick transition into vigorous praise of pre-Islamic South Arabian castles, Nā’iṭ and Ghumdān (lines 7–8). Lines 9–36 intertwine Yemeni identity and kingship, citing examples of pre-Islamic Yemeni kings who engaged in wide conquests and those who defended themselves against, or triumphed over, Persian and Byzantine kings, and lines 37–54 list the prominent lineage groups of the *Yamāniya*, along with epitomes of their glories. The remainder of the poem turns to lampooning Northerners, beginning with the Quraysh and the caliphal family. Abū Nuwās does concede the Quraysh’s merit in counting the Prophet as their ancestor (lines 55–56), but this is the extent of his charity, and he directs an array

27. Ibn al-Mu‘tazz, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shu‘arā’*, ed. Farrāj, pp. 195–200. Ibn al-Mu‘tazz cites commentary on the poem by al-Mubarrad and then cites lines of another poem as one of “many” examples of Abū Nuwās’s “extreme partisanship to Qahṭān” (p. 200).

28. Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, ed. Wagner, vol. 5, p. 493.

29. Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, ed. Wagner, vol. 2, p. 1.

of satirical and crude insults against the Quraysh and each Northerner group. This boast of Yemen's superiority over the caliphal family was reportedly the trigger of Abū Nuwās's imprisonment.³⁰ Similar themes repeat in other poems, too (see appendix, poems 2, 3), where Abū Nuwās contrasts glorious pre-Islamic Southerner kingship with ridicule of Northern Arabs, particularly the Tamīm, for their lack of generosity and their rudimentary desert lifestyle.

Taken together, salient parameters of Abū Nuwās's Yemeni-ness converge around a triad of settlement, kingship, and conquest in an oppositional relationship to the ignoble, nomadic, and impotent Northern Arabs. Whereas the Northerners are depicted as people of crude desert camps, the Southerners boast of castles. Southerners:

... we are the lords of Nā'it,
The castle of Ghumdān, of sweetly perfumed balconies. (lines 7–8)

Versus Northerners:

... the Taghlib mourn lost campsites,
Instead of avenging their dead. (lines 83–84)

Whereas pre-Islamic Northerners lived impoverished in the desert, Southerners are praised as greater than other pre-Islamic kingdoms, particularly the Sasanians. Southerners:

We beat the Romans at Sātīdamā,
Death descending on their battalions.
Peroz took refuge in us that day,
When battle raged its worst.
The Qabīṣa came to his defense
With their spears and razor swords. (lines 19–24)

Versus Northerners:

The Asad found no harm in dog meat,
Those pathetic donkey-riding slaves. (lines 79–80)

And whereas Northerners are shown boasting of insignificant Bedouin feats, Southerners are accorded wide conquests. Southerners:

... our lords subjugated the land,
For merit and for adventure.
When the Persians deposed Bahrām
We compelled their lords to restore him. (lines 11–14)

30. Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, ed. Wagner, vol. 2, p. 6.

Versus Northerners:

The long and short of [Tamīm's] glory
 Is that single merit of Ḥājib's bow.
 A bow! Mere clippings from a Shawḥaṭ tree,
 A miserable thing for a nobleman to boast. (lines 73–74)

Abū Nuwās's choice of material and imagery is striking. All praises of Yemen cite pre-Islamic history, yet the way in which Abū Nuwās portrays the pre-Islamic Yemenis corresponds precisely with urban Muslim-era Abbasid values.³¹ He presents pre-Islamic Yemenis as settled, sovereign empire builders, thereby projecting his community's pre-Islamic ancestors as essentially like the caliphal elites of Abū Nuwās's own day, whereas Northerner identity is encapsulated in austere desertescapes, entirely unlike the urban world of the Abbasid caliphate.

Since the basic building blocks of ethnic identity include a proprietary name, unique kinship, distinct homeland, origin tales, and communal history,³² Abū Nuwās's poetry casts Yemeni-ness in decidedly ethnic terms. He stops short of cleaving Yemenis from Arab community altogether, but in delineating Yemeni-ness with claims of their proprietary kinship and ancestry, and in constructing Yemeni past/origins as separate from the Northerners, Abū Nuwās's language insinuates an ethnic separateness distinguishing Yemenis from other Muslims. Inasmuch as Abū Nuwās's Yemeni-partisan poems do not marshal Arabness as a marker of distinction between Northerner and Southerner, the poems aspire to a balance by which Yemenis share Arab identity yet simultaneously possess autonomous lineage, culture, and heritage that set them apart and indeed prove their superiority over Northerner Arabs.³³

The poems also reveal a crucial plasticity in the way Abbasid-era genealogical Yemeni identity was crafted. Pre-Islamic South Arabians lived in terraced farming communities and established frankincense-trading kingdoms, but such historical details are absent in Abū Nuwās's poetry.³⁴ Abū Nuwās fundamentally forgets pre-Islamic South Arabian history and makes a new pre-Islamic "Yemeni"

31. The "B Poem" lists only two Muslim-era glories of the Yemen: the marriage into the Abbasid caliphal family (lines 55–56) and the Umayyad-era Muhallabid military leaders of al-Baṣra (line 42).

32. A helpful matrix of the elements by which groups articulate their unique ethnic identities is enumerated in Hutchinson and Smith, *Ethnicity*, pp. 6–7.

33. The ambivalent Arabness of early Abbasid Yemenis suggests that the basic building blocks of Arab identity itself were fluid and allowed various formerly distinct peoples to imagine themselves as Arabs, notwithstanding their otherwise incompatible origins, languages, and cultures. The gradual forging of unified Arabness from diverse Arabian groups is the subject of Webb, *Imagining*.

34. The pre-Islamic kingdom of Ḥimyar did have imperial interests, including conquests in Arabia during the fourth and fifth centuries CE (see Robin, "Ḥimyar," pp. 137–145). To read the historical Ḥimyaritic imperial expansion as the basis of the Muslim-era myths of world conquest, however, misconstrues the Arabic narratives. Muslim-era stories are not concerned with Ḥimyaritic Arabian empire but instead stress global dominion. More critical historiography is needed; from present research it seems that the memory of an empire of Ḥimyar survived, but its actual details were either lost or unimportant for Muslims who completely recreated a new imperial history for Ḥimyar that mirrored Abbasid-era conceptions of statecraft and geography.

identity that parallels his own cultural milieu: his world was populated by militarized elite groups of self-identified Arabs who held a monopoly of kingship over an empire, with substantial cultural borrowings from pre-Islamic Sasanian court culture, and his pre-Islamic Yemenis resemble those urban Iraqis more than they do pre-Islamic South Arabians. Likewise, the poems substantially obfuscate historical Sasanian relations with pre-Islamic South Arabia. The Sasanians conquered much of the region shortly before Muḥammad, and although their conquests are remembered in early Arabic literature,³⁵ Abū Nuwās stresses an opposite, more flattering (and fanciful) narrative of Yemeni military domination over the Sasanians (e.g., references to Qābūs, Bahrām, and Peroz, lines 13–28).

There is accordingly scant “real” South Arabian history in the boastful poem, and this seems an essential aspect of “genealogical Yemeni” identity. Iraqi Yemenis were far removed from the land, the relics, and the communities of South Arabia, and instead, they cultivated an imagined identity that reconstructed pre-Islamic South Arabia in the image of urban Abbasid Iraq. Abū Nuwās imports real pre-Islamic names, such as Ḥimyar, Ghumdān, and Nāʿit, but these are merely names transplanted into a new cultural universe. Abū Nuwās lauded “Yemeni” victories over the Sasanians, not because of real memories of pre-Islamic South Arabian wars with Sasanians but because it was Sasanian cultural capital that underpinned Abbasid Iraqi urban values. While praise of Yemen therefore focuses on pre-Islamic merits in name, in substance, the narrative is not antiquarian nationalism; there is no nostalgic urge to return to an “authentic” Yemeni way—rather, Yemen’s heritage is reimagined to become a likeness of the poet’s Abbasid present.

The Abbasid guise of Abū Nuwās’s Yemeni identity also erects boundaries between “inside” and “outside” to entrench Southerner status. The similarities drawn between pre-Islamic Southerners and Abbasid-era Iraqi culture establish both that the Southerners are on the Abbasid cultural inside and that they possessed such culture since time immemorial. Conversely, Northern Arab identity is narrowed into Bedouin stereotypes. This is revealing, since second-/eighth-century urban Muslims articulated a firm normative divide between settled people and Bedouins, whereby Muslim military elites called themselves *ʿarab* and distinguished themselves from Bedouin *aʿrāb*, whom they counted as outsiders with lower status, fewer rights, and a separate identity from the urban elite “Arabs.”³⁶ By bundling the traits of the Northerners into Bedouinism, Abū Nuwās therefore banishes Northerner heritage from urban Abbasid Iraqi norms of nobility and status. Northerners did constitute much of Iraq’s urban elite, but Abū Nuwās’s stress that their pre-Islamic ancestors were *aʿrāb* renders Northerners

35. The Sasanian conquest of Yemen is reported widely, including in the Prophet’s biography. Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira al-Nabawiyya*, ed. al-Saqqā, al-Abyārī, and al-Ḥafīz Shalabī, vol. 1, pp. 62–70.

36. The second-class status of *aʿrāb* in early Muslim society is discussed in Steppat, ““Those Who Believe””; Athamina, “*Aʿrāb*”; Binay, *Figur*; for the distinction between *ʿarab* and *aʿrāb* identities, see Webb, *Imagining*, pp. 121–125, 179–180, 319–321.

historically outside urbanized culture. Northerners become nouveau riche, a group of Bedouins whose enjoyment of the trappings of nobility in Abū Nuwās's day is projected as something acquired, not innate. Conversely, nobility, kingship, and settled luxury are proclaimed as integral to Southerner cultural identity, and Southerners are thus more authentically Abbasid; or, phrased the other way, Abbasid culture emerges as an extension of Yemeni pre-Islamic lifestyle, leaving the Northerners as mere invitees to the party of civilization that had been going on for quite some time without them.

While the poems neatly fuse Yemeni heritage into the Abbasid cultural status quo, difficult theological hurdles remained, since the Abbasids were Muslim, whereas Abū Nuwās's Yemeni heroes were pre-Islamic and therefore *prima facie* outsiders to the caliphate's Muslim order. To overcome this challenge, Abū Nuwās claims that the caliphal lineage is just as "Southern" as it is "Northern," by virtue of one Yemeni noblewoman who married into the Abbasid line (lines 57–60).³⁷ The argument is somewhat anemic, since Muḥammad and the Quraysh are thoroughly part of the Northerners' world, but Abū Nuwās pushes the argument with more success by drawing parallels between Abbasid caliphal *imperium* and pre-Islamic Yemeni "precedent." For example, the references to the Sasanian kings Bahrām and Qābūs in the "B Poem" (lines 13–14, 25–26) depict the Yemenis as dictating terms and imposing tribute over the Sasanians, a foreshadowing of the elimination of Sasanian sovereignty in the Muslim conquests. Hence the contemporary Muslim mastery over Persia is ascribed a Yemeni pedigree.³⁸ And the fact that the Abbasid caliphate based its glory on wide conquest is also anticipated in the line about Southerners (appendix, poem 3, lines 7–8):

We conquered the earth—east and west,
While your old man was just a fetus.

Just as late-eighth-century Abbasid Muslims enjoyed near-global domination, Abū Nuwās asserts that the pre-Islamic Yemenis did, too, whereas the pre-Islamic Northerners had nothing. Again, Abbasid-Muslim achievement is prefigured within Southerner history, expressly leaving Northerners on the outside, as late joiners to the history of empire. Essential features of what was valued in Abbasid *imperium* are thereby aligned with Southerner heritage, somewhat compensating for the community's otherwise limited Islamic credentials.

Abū Nuwās also makes a further, direct attempt to claim Muslim pedigree for his ancient Southerner forebears by linking the kings of Ḥimyar to a figure named "Tubba'" (appendix, poem 1, lines 53–54). Tubba' was not a name for

37. She was named Umm Mūsā Bint al-Manšūr al-Ḥimyarī.

38. The Muslim reconstruction of pre-Islamic historical events into anachronistic foreshadowings of the Muslim conquest of the Sasanians is also visible in Muslim reinterpretation of the pre-Islamic Battle of Dhū Qār as a "Northerner"/"Arab" victory over "Persians" (see Webb, *Imagining*, pp. 88–95).

Ḥimyaritic kings; rather, it appears to have originated as an Ethiopic word for “strongman,” which perhaps designated the Ethiopic rulers who toppled the kingdom of Ḥimyar in the sixth century CE.³⁹ Historically, therefore, Tubbaʿ was not indigenous to South Arabia, but two enigmatic and unelaborated Qurʾānic verses summon the word (Qurʾān 44:37, 50:14), and while the Qurʾān does not explain who its “Tubbaʿ” was, Muslim exegetes guessed, and most concluded that Tubbaʿ must have been a Muslim believer in times before Muḥammad.⁴⁰ The term’s obscurity, coupled with Muslim exegetical reasoning that Tubbaʿ was an ancient believer, evidently offered Southerner partisans, such as Abū Nuwās, opportunity to appropriate the name, forget its Ethiopic origins, and apply it to a fanciful reconstruction of pre-Islamic Yemen, in which they presented all kings of Ḥimyar as Muslim rulers with the title Tubbaʿ (pl. Tabābiʿa), and who conquered a Yemeni-Muslim world empire long before Muḥammad’s followers launched their conquests.⁴¹ The Ethiopic background of Tubbaʿ may already have been forgotten or was very obscurely known by the time of the Qurʾān, and hence its “Tubbaʿ” presented an empty shell that genealogical Yemenis filled with new meaning. Once again, pre-Islamic history was a casualty of Abbasid-era efforts to project South Arabia as the precursor to Abbasid Iraq. Sherds of memories from pre-Islam were reprocessed with Abbasid ingredients that grafted trappings of Muslim identity and created an appropriately “global-imperial” communal identity for Yemenis in a fashion specifically tailored to speak to the values of second-/eighth-century Iraqis, intoning that Abbasid Islamic *imperium* was a replication of an earlier Yemeni tradition.

Abū Nuwās’s bombast thus represents an urban Abbasid manipulation of history to construct a distinct Southerner identity deserving to sit atop contemporary social structure, while simultaneously demarcating a second community, the Northerners, as separate from them and as undeserving of the same privileged status. Such emphasis on Southerner versus Northerner lineage and their different respective communal histories as markers of separation intriguingly corresponds to discourses we could label “ethnic,” and although the Southerner/Northerner divide did not express itself violently in Abū Nuwās’s context, he was only one generation removed from a period when the two groups were clashing

39. The word “tb” appears in three pre-Islamic South Arabian inscriptions, none indicating kingly status (Ag 5, Fa 3, and CIH 343). Jeffrey, *Foreign Vocabulary*, p. 89, is equivocal about the Ethiopian link; Rippen, *Blackwell Companion*, p. 135, is more sanguine on Ethiopian origins but without elaboration. The process by which the word entered the Qurʾān is debated: Kropp, “‘People,’” argues that Qurʾānic Tubbaʿ refers to a community with no South Arabian connection intended; Shitomi, “Une hypothèse,” argues for a specific interpretation of Tubbaʿ as a kind of Yemeni king with special relations with Ethiopia.

40. See the convoluted exegesis to present Tubbaʿ as a believer and “Muslim” in al-Ṭabari, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān fi taʾwīl āy al-Qurʾān*, vol. 25, pp. 165–166; vol. 26, pp. 199–200.

41. See below for further discussion of the Yemeni-partisan histories, Wabḥ ibn Munabbih, *al-Tijān fī mulūk Ḥimyar*; ʿUbayd ibn Sharyā, *Akhbār ʿUbayd ibn Sharyā*; Pseudo-al-Aṣmaʿī, *Tārīkh al-ʿArab qabla al-Islām*, ed. Yāsīn.

in Iraq, and during Abū Nuwās's lifetime, Southerner and Northerner groups continued violent conflicts in the caliphate's provinces.⁴² In Abū Nuwās's Iraq, the affluence flowing from the caliphal capital meant that all Arab groups shared a seat atop the contemporary social order, thus dissuading them from violence, but a sense of real rivalry seems to have remained, which was deescalated to a cultural tussle in which poetry was a means to negotiate relative bragging rights. I venture this impression via the reported attempts by Northerners to rebut Abū Nuwās's message.⁴³ One response survives (appendix, poem 4), and its choice of material is instructive.

The response poem ignores Abū Nuwās's slights against Northerner *a' rāb* roots and rehabilitates Northerner merit instead via focus on ancient Northerner kingship, with express emphasis striking where the Southerners were weakest: Islamic credentials. The rebuttal begins with Northerner boasts of their sacred honor as custodians of Mecca (lines 3–6) and as kinsmen of the caliphs (lines 7–10). Northerners (cited here by the name "Ma'add") possessed much stronger claims to these cornerstones of Muslim identity, because the Quraysh, the tribe of Muḥammad and the caliphs, was Northerner. The Northerner poet also marshals the Qur'ān against the Yemenis, noting the Southerner queen of Sheba's submission to Solomon (lines 34–42), herein engaging in sacred lineage manipulation of his own, claiming Solomon as a relative of Ma'add (line 41). The assertion alludes to the biblical pair of Isaac and Ishmael, sons of Abraham, and the Northerner claim of genealogical descent of their progenitor Ma'add from Ishmael.⁴⁴ The Ma'add-Ishmaelite lineage model makes Northerners "brothers" of Isaac's line of Hebrew prophets, and by arguing for a Northerner share in Solomonic *prophetic* kingship, the poet trumps Abū Nuwās's claims of Southerner *worldly* kingship. Again rewriting history to reflect contemporary power relations, the submission of the biblical/Qur'ānic Sheba to Solomon and her conversion to his monotheism are self-evidently a metaphorical precursor to the South Arabians' submission to Muḥammad and their "late" conversion to Islam. The express mention of Ma'add as the "brother" of the queen of Sheba's "lord" (line 42) makes this explicit, since Solomon lived many generations before Muslim genealogists postulated Ma'add's birth,⁴⁵ and the poet's collapsing of chronology in order to link Solomon and Ma'add in the same breath transforms biblical history into a narrative of deep-rooted Northerner dominance over the Southerners.

42. Orthmann, *Stamm*, pp. 79–136, and Webb, *Imagining*, pp. 240–249, evaluate tribal factionalism in the early Abbasid caliphate.

43. As reported by al-Mubarrad in Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, ed. Wagner, vol. 5, p. 495.

44. The genealogical construction site is detailed in Webb, *Imagining*, pp. 209–213.

45. In traditions that attempted to reconcile Arabian with Mesopotamian pre-Islamic history, Ma'add was judged as contemporary with Nebuchadnezzar. Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Muḥabbar*, ed. Lichtenstädter, pp. 6–7; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. Ibrāhīm, vol. 1, pp. 557–560.

The Northerner poem's conclusion, where the Yemenis are depicted selling their precious pearl to a Ma'addite king who fixes it to his racehorse's ornament, categorically refutes Southerner pretensions to both wealth and sovereignty over pre-Islamic Northerners and also alludes to a related contemporary discourse that linked Arabian horses to prophetic origins. In the late second/eighth century, Arab horses were believed to have been bred in either the stables of Solomon or by Ishmael;⁴⁶ both options facilitating further intertwining of Northerner identity as imperial cavalymen with prophetic lineage. Though merely a fanciful historiographical conjecture, its value in embedding prophetic credentials for the elite of the post-conquest society is manifest.⁴⁷

Abū Nuwās's "B Poem" and the Northerner rebuttal point toward identity construction between competing elites as strategies within a race toward integration. The identity of the caliphate's elite was under construction, as the caliphate itself constituted a novel form of political organization. Arab identity as a social asset and form of self-identification was born of these elite attempts to forge ethnic boundaries to maintain their status atop the caliphate's social structure, and the scion of the original conquerors consequently shared mutual interest in embracing an Arab-qua-elite identity for themselves, but Arab identity was in a formative state, and different factions within the caliphate enjoyed considerable conceptual room to experiment and mold the parameters of Arabness to their own advantage. Southerners and Northerners thus articulated competing identities which each sought to monopolize, thereby asserting the most authentic share in elite Arabness.⁴⁸

In the matrix of power and cultural capital in early-Abbasid-era Iraq, the caliphal court and its claims to religious authority, imperial kingship, and material luxury set the standard for the identity desired amongst Iraq's elite. The poetry considered so far affords a glimpse into how different Arab elite groups articulated their status claims: each group claimed deep-rooted connection to Islam, kingship, and wealth, and each group focused in particular on the pre-Islamic past to "prove" that their ancestors were more Muslim, more sovereign, and richer than the pre-Islamic ancestors of their rivals. The intriguing emphasis on pre-Islam seems to have arisen from the relative parity between Northerner

46. Ibn al-Kalbī; see discussion in Webb, *Imagining*, pp. 262–263.

47. It is intriguing that Northerner poets did not attempt to reverse the Southerners' insults about the Northerners' Bedouin origins which insinuated that Northerners were an underclass given the inferiority of Bedouin *a'rāb* to the settled *'arab*. Perhaps the Southerners had so thoroughly marketed their past as pre-Islamic urbanites that they had created a "truth" which Northerners could not cogently critique. Actual pre-Islamic history may also have helped, since many South Arabian groups were settled agriculturalists before Islam, but a number of groups labeled as "Southerners" in the caliphate were originally Bedouins, and it is probable that the vociferous Southerner boasts of their pre-Islamic imperial heritage comprehensively rebranded their identity and shaped the discursive plane, leaving Northerners little room to lampoon the Southerners as Bedouins.

48. The process of imagining Arab community and the challenges that confronted early Muslims to articulate a cohesive sense of Arabness are the subject of Webb, *Imagining*.

and Southerner elites in early-Abbasid Iraq; their joint power-sharing meant that little could be gained by vaunting contemporary heroes, whereas the hazier and more malleable memories of pre-Islam offered better material for identity construction and competition. Memory of the existence of a historic pre-Islamic kingdom of Ḥimyar served as a beacon for genealogical Yemeni imagination of their imperial past, yet this Abbasid-era Yemeni imaginary elided the actual history of Ḥimyar, essentially emptying its significations and turning its name into a receptacle into which a new “pre-Islamic” Yemeni identity was formatted in an Abbasid-looking guise. Abū Nuwās’s genealogical Yemeni-ness is accordingly not a nostalgic wish to recreate the pre-Islamic Southerner past; rather, it was articulated to better integrate into the Abbasid present, and it therefore is disconnected from any form of community that could have been imagined in pre-Islamic South Arabia. Abū Nuwās’s Yemen is entirely part and parcel of Abbasid-era Iraqi elite identity.

Di‘bil

Di‘bil ibn ‘Alī al-Khuzā‘ī was less than ten years Abū Nuwās’s junior, but he appears to have composed very little poetry until middle age,⁴⁹ and the bulk of his surviving oeuvre commences from al-Ma‘mūn’s caliphate (r. 197–218/813–833), hence Di‘bil’s Yemeni-partisan verse primarily addressed the generation following Abū Nuwās. This was a period of seismic sociopolitical change, beginning in 186/802, when the caliph al-Rashīd divided the caliphate between his two sons, al-Amīn and al-Ma‘mūn. Immediately following al-Rashīd’s death, the brothers’ mutual distrust flared into the Fourth Fitna War (193–211/809–820), bringing combat to Iraq for the first time since the fall of the Umayyads, and al-Ma‘mūn’s eventual victory was only secured following a siege and sack of Baghdad and devastation in the Iraqi countryside. Iraqi elites, Northerner and Southerner alike, were shaken by the fall of al-Amīn, and new forms of courtly power based around the circles of al-Ma‘mūn and his eastern Iranian supporters began to marginalize the old status groups.⁵⁰

In this troubled environment, Di‘bil repeats discourses encountered in Abū Nuwās’s Southerner-partisan poetry, alongside new and bolder claims (see appendix, poems 5–8). Poem 6 lampoons Tamīm Northerners, invoking the familiar chiding of their Bedouin roots and contrasting their miserable existence with the Southerner boast to be “kings and sons of kings,” but Di‘bil adds the

49. Di‘bil was reportedly discovered by the caliph al-Rashīd (r. 170–193/785–809) (Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, ed. al-‘Amrāwī, vol. 17, p. 260). Di‘bil’s detailed biography in al-Ḥafāhānī’s *al-Aghānī*, ed. Muḥannā and Jābir, vol. 20, pp. 131–201, likewise contains scant information predating al-Rashīd, and the editor of Di‘bil’s *Diwān* dates very few poems prior to al-Rashīd. Di‘bil ibn ‘Alī al-Khuzā‘ī, *Diwān*, ed. al-Ashtar.

50. For a study of the expressions of protest and lament over the upset social order as expressed in poetry about the fall of Baghdad to al-Ma‘mūn’s forces, see Kennedy, “Pity,” pp. 155–162.

palpably more aggressive assertion of express Southerner domination over Tamīm (poem 6, lines 14–23). Whereas the earlier Abū Nuwās eschewed overt statements of Yemeni rule over specific Northerner tribes and made do instead with counterpoising general praise of Southerners against lampoons of Northerner groups for their own shortcomings,⁵¹ Di‘bil exaggerates an antagonistic declaration of Northerner submission to Yemen. The shift complements Di‘bil’s profession of pride in militant Yemeni-ness:

To my people I donate
 All the life given to me.
 I am the son of rulers and lords,
 The line of handsome nobles.
 We strike necks
 With sharp Indian steel.
 We nobles have no better recourse
 Than to steadfastness and the sword.⁵²

Di‘bil also escalates the antagonism in his treatment of Arabness. While Abū Nuwās chastised Northerners for their *a‘rāb* heritage, I have not found poems in which he outright denies the Arab identity of Northerner elites,⁵³ whereas Di‘bil regularly engages in racialist invective. He uses a triad of words connoting non-Arabness: *‘ajam* (non-Arab lineage), *nabaṭ* (Iraqi indigenous agriculturalists), and *‘ilj* (originally, “rough wild donkey,”⁵⁴ thence “boorish oaf,” and thence “non-Arab non-Believer”),⁵⁵ and Di‘bil marshals variations of these words in invective formulas denying the Arab identity of his foes and casting them into a repudiated conceptual category of non-Arab otherness,⁵⁶ such as the people of Qom:

Crosses between Arab-feigning oafs
 Or Arabs aspiring to be louts.⁵⁷

The terminology enhances the poetry’s aggressive voice, transcending simple boast of Southerners’ superiority over Northerners by wielding ethnicity as a weapon to relegate Northerners into an underclass.

In a comparable play on Arab/non-Arab identity, Di‘bil twists the familiar Northerner claim to prophetic heritage via the Abrahamic/Ishmaelite descent model into an admission of Northerner non-Arabness. He castigates

51. See appendix, poem 3, and Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, ed. Wagner, vol. 2, pp. 12–20.

52. Di‘bil, *Dīwān*, ed. al-Ashtar, p. 154.

53. Abū Nuwās roundly curses Basran Arabs (*Dīwān*, ed. Wagner, vol. 2, pp. 30–34) without denying their Arabness; he did chide a non-Arab for feigning Bedouin identity (*Dīwān*, ed. Wagner, vol. 2, pp. 102–103).

54. Al-Farāhīdī, *al-‘Ayn*, ed. al-Makhzūmī and al-Sāmarrā’ī, vol. 1, p. 228.

55. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, vol. 2, p. 326. Sijpesteijn, chapter 12 in this volume, encounters some of this terminology in Egyptian papyri cotemporary with Di‘bil.

56. Di‘bil, *Dīwān*, ed. al-Ashtar, pp. 74–75, 114–115, 130–131, 232–233, 255, 394.

57. Di‘bil, *Dīwān*, ed. al-Ashtar, p. 104. “Arab-feigning” (*ta‘arraba*); “aspiring to be louts” (*musta‘lij*).

Northerners who celebrate Abrahamic lineage as being “Jews,” laying bare the tautology of Northerner claims to Islamic pedigree via descent from Abraham, since the Northerner genealogical model ultimately traces its lineage to the non-Arab Hebrew prophetic line (appendix, poem 8, lines 1–4). Having made this triumphant observation, Di‘bil can associate the Northerners with Jews who were reportedly turned into pigs and monkeys by an act of God’s wrath,⁵⁸ and he extends the invective to the caliphal Quraysh whom he astoundingly describes as indistinguishable from *nabaḥī* Iraqi peasants (poem 8, lines 26–27). This latter observation underlines a strikingly binary sense of ethnicity between Arabs and *all* others, with Di‘bil’s assertion that only Southerners can truly claim Arabness, leaving the rest, even the caliphal family, in a servile state.

The lampoon of the caliphal family deepens into threatening statements, too, as two poems by Di‘bil relish the memory of caliphs killed by Yemenis.⁵⁹ Historically, Di‘bil is accurate, inasmuch as four regicides were committed by members of *Yamāniya* groups during the First, Third, and Fourth Fitnas,⁶⁰ but Di‘bil conflates these isolated acts into a presumptive penchant of Yemenis to kill caliphs generally, and he lampoons each successive caliph from al-Ma‘mūn to al-Mutawakkil, with foreboding reminders that Di‘bil’s “people” had murdered previous caliphs:

Don’t consider my passion like my father’s equanimity:
 The cool-headed elders are most unlike wild youth.
 I am from a people whose swords
 Killed your brother, and bequeathed you the throne.
 . . .
 So many nobles past, and caliphs too,
 Their blood a delicious goal for us.⁶¹

His scorn for caliphs reaches an incredible height in a poem directed against al-Mu‘taṣim (r. 218–227/833–842):

The books count the Abbasid house at seven,
 Nothing is said of the eighth.
 So it was in the Seven Sleepers Den
 Seven virtuous men, and the eighth, a dog.⁶²

58. The story derives from exegesis of Qurʾān 7:163–166 about the disbelieving people of *hādīrat al-balḥr* (likely modern Ayla, though also identified in exegesis contemporary with Di‘bil as Tiberias in Palestine; see Ibn Wahb, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, ed. Muryani, vol. 2, p. 15. The Qurʾān does not express their identity and only mentions their transformation into monkeys; the connection with Jews and the addition of pigs first appears in early exegesis; see Muqātil ibn Sulaymān, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAzīm*, ed. Shihāta, vol. 2, p. 70.

59. Di‘bil, *Dīwān*, ed. al-Ashtar, pp. 122–124, 258–259.

60. The caliphs are ʿUthmān (First Fitna), al-Walid ibn Yazīd and Marwān ibn Muḥammad (Third Fitna), and al-Amin (Fourth Fitna).

61. Di‘bil, *Dīwān*, ed. al-Ashtar, p. 123.

62. Di‘bil, *Dīwān*, ed. al-Ashtar, p. 49.

The line invokes the Qur'anic account of the Seven Sleepers, the eighth of whom was "their dog" (Qur'an 22:18). Al-Mu'taṣim was the eighth Abbasid caliph. Ostensibly, Di'bil's Southerner partisanship thus boasts of perceived impunity toward the new authority figures of the third-/ninth-century court.

Di'bil's bombastic partisanship also amplifies the Southerners' share of Islamic merit. We saw Abū Nuwās's poetry skip uneasily over the underlying reality that South Arabians were not related to Muḥammad's kin, but for Di'bil, this was no obstacle. He points to the people of Medina (appendix, poem 8, lines 15–20), central Arabians whom Muslim genealogists counted as Southerner Arabs and the first community to welcome Muḥammad, sheltering him when he was persecuted by his own (Northerner) Quraysh. Undercutting the standard Northerner claim for superior Islamic pedigree via kinship with Muhammad, Di'bil asserts that Muḥammad's "true descendants" are those who "truly believe," and memory of the Medinese converts thereby tips the scales of Islamic hierarchy to place Southerners in the pole position:

If you say that the Prophet is yours,
Know that Muḥammad is for all believers.⁶³
Nizār⁶⁴ knows that my people
Were the first to defend prophecy.
From our nobles are born purified men,
This purity is for those who love God.⁶⁵

On the theme of pre-Islamic Southerner *imperium*, too, Di'bil expands from Abū Nuwās with more detailed claims about pre-Islamic Southerner conquests. For instance, he is explicit that they reached the very extremities of the world: from the farthest Maghreb in the west, where they erected a statue at the entrance to the "sand sea of no return," to the gates of Merv, Samarqand, and China in the east (appendix, poem 5, lines 7–8). The eastern locations are expressive: Merv was the capital of al-Ma'mūn, Samarqand lay at the maximum extent of the Abbasid realm, and China was a step beyond Abbasid imperial dreams. Di'bil accordingly lays claim over the status locations of al-Ma'mūn and the new eastern Iranian elite and strongly implies that pre-Islamic Southerner *imperium* bettered the Abbasids. Di'bil's repeated stress that the pre-Islamic Yemeni conquerors "inscribed on the gates" of the captured cities (poem 5, line 5; poem 8, lines 7–8) further alludes to Abbasid practice of displaying caliphal control via inscriptions, and again Di'bil's assertions associate his contemporary cultural capital with pre-Islamic Southerners.

63. Di'bil, *Dīwān*, ed. al-Ashtar, p. 257.

64. Nizār symbolized Northerners; see note 20 above.

65. Di'bil, *Dīwān*, ed. al-Ashtar, p. 257.

As a body of work, Di'bil presents a more chauvinistic Yemeni-ness than Abū Nuwās. Di'bil's boasts portray the Southerners as uniquely Arab, preeminently Muslim, imperial, and sovereign since ancient pre-Islam and up to his present day. His vituperative non-Arab slurs and cavalier approach to caliphs and other urban notables are suggestive also that Yemeni identity had evolved since Abū Nuwās's generation into a more competitive and perhaps more self-conscious community, which, following the Fourth Fitna, was no longer content to spar culturally with Northerners but instead sought to displace them. To further evaluate such impressions, the poetry's context and function now need specific consideration.

YEMENIS AND ARABNESS IN THIRD-/ NINTH-CENTURY LITERATURE

Despite the differences in tone and volume of aggressiveness, a central commonality of both Abū Nuwās's and Di'bil's Southerner-partisan verse is the summoning of a South Arabian past that is almost entirely unlike South Arabian history recoverable from actual pre-Islamic archaeological, epigraphic, and literary indicators. Genealogical Yemeni identity was consequently a mostly imagined communal past constructed in the guise of the community's Abbasid present, and new legends to fill their imagined origins flowed fast and fanciful to build a suitable heritage for Abbasid-era Iraqi ears. The inaccuracies were noticed, as the historian Ḥamza al-İşfahānī (d. 350/961) chided: "there is nothing in all of history more corrupted and erroneous than the history of the governors and kings of Ḥimyar, for its dynasty lasted such a long time and so few of their kings are mentioned."⁶⁶ Given the disjoint between believable history and the Southerners' narratives about their past, we wonder why genealogical Yemenis ventured such constructions and became so chauvinistic, and herein evaluation of contemporary circumstances is revealing.

From Di'bil's perspective in post-Fourth Fitna Iraq, the social standing of self-identified "Arabs" was in flux. During the first fifty Abbasid years, they enjoyed prestige and wealth in the caliphate's heartland, but following the victory of al-Ma'mūn in the Fourth Fitna, the Iraqi economy declined,⁶⁷ and political and military power shifted from Arab tribal groups to smaller cliques personally connected to the caliph and newcomer Turkic and Eastern soldiery. The displacement of Arabs by Easterners is noted in Pohl's, Kennedy's, and Sijpesteijn's contributions in this volume (chapters 2, 3, 4, and 12), and for our purposes of the Arab elite perspective, such sociopolitical changes evidently entailed a decline

66. Ḥamza al-İşfahānī, *Tārīkh sinī mulūk al-arḍ wa-l-anbiyā'*, p. 106. The later Ibn Khaldūn was even more scathing: *al-'Ibar wa dīwān al-mubtada' wa-l-khabar fī ayyām al-'Arab wa-l-'Ajam wa-l-Barbar*, vol. 1, pp. 16–21.

67. For the economic ramifications of the Fourth Fitna, see Waines, "Third Century Internal Crisis," pp. 285–288; Kennedy, "Decline," pp. 13–16; Mårtensson, "It's the Economy."

of Arabness as a social asset of elite status. Di'bil might then be a spokesman expressing the anxieties of the Arab old guard.

Di'bil's use of Arabness to lambaste opponents does suggest the relevance of ethnicity in the conflict between the established Arabs and the Turkic/Eastern newcomers, wherein it is logical to expect Arabs to emphasize ethnos in order to maintain their status, since ethnicity was in their favor. The faith, language, and sense of origins and history of the caliphate were expressed in Arabic terms, and those groups professing Arab kinship were inexorably linked to the genesis of Islam, Muḥammad, the first conquerors, and the caliphal family. If Arabs could sustain ties between Arabness and legitimate political power, they could monopolize prestige alone and subordinate the Turkic and other non-Arab Easterner newcomers whose lineage was external to the cultural capital of Islam. Such was the value of Arab ethnicity in theory, but in practice, the military structure of the third-/ninth-century caliphate was skewed in favor of the Turkic and Easterner elites who rapidly monopolized access to power and economic resources.

We might then speak of an "ethnic predicament" in early-third-/ninth-century Iraq whereby the old Arab tribal elite enjoyed a prestigious ethnic identity, whereas the ethnically inferior Turks and other Easterners possessed de facto military and political power. In a Muslim-dominated system, the trappings of the newcomers' ethnicities could not compete with the established primacy of Arabness, and they would accordingly have been wise to downplay the scope for ethnos to legitimize status in general. As a case of "if you don't have it, discredit it," this is what appears to have transpired, as Kennedy's contribution in this volume (chapter 2) reveals the shifts away from the relevance of ethnic identity in state formation from the third/ninth century. Arabness transitioned out of political relevance, "de-ethnic" states rose across the caliphate, and Di'bil's belligerent Arabness accordingly may represent the voice of the last layers of Iraqi Arab-kin elites who sought to counteract the new trend by rallying around Arabness, since ethnos was one of the few social assets with which they still had an upper hand to stem the advancing power of the Easterner newcomers.

Di'bil's habit of denying his enemies' Arab lineage and lampooning them as *'ilj 'ajamī* ("non-Arab slob") could therefore indicate that the threatened Arab elites were growing more bigoted as they embraced a "reactionary Arabness" and rearticulated their identity in aggressively self-defensive forms. Di'bil does specifically critique the favors al-Mu'taṣim bestowed on Turkish military commanders:

The people are lost when their leaders
Are Waṣīfs and Ashnāses⁶⁸—what ruin!

...

The caliph cares for the Turks to a fault.
He is their mother and their father.⁶⁹

68. Waṣīf and Ashnās were two of the leading Turkic generals of al-Mu'taṣim.

69. Di'bil, *Dīwān*, ed. al-Ashtar, pp. 50–51.

The fact that the military leaders of the new caliphal order of the third/ninth century ethnically lacked a prestige identity from the perspective of established Muslim cultural capital also would explain why expressions of Persian-ness and Turkic-ness did not simply catch on as the new strongmen assumed power. It better suited the new rulers to develop alternative forms of elite identity that obviated matters of ethnos altogether. But lest we conclude that a heightening binary struggle of “Arabs” versus “Turks”/“Easterners” underwrote Di‘bil’s sense of identity, we need also to stress that most of Di‘bil’s surviving invectives are directed against Northerners, not Turks, and his vehement bluster is at its fiercest when assaulting Northerner identity and asserting specifically Southerner virtue. While there was a real shift of power away from self-identified Arab groups, Di‘bil’s poetry indicates that the old inter-Arab feuding was somehow more relevant for his attention.

Di‘bil was not unique: a broad sweep of early-third/ninth-century writing also debates the definition of “Arab” and Arab identity in antagonistic Southerner/Northerner terms. For example, there was debate about whether “Arabs” were those who speak Arabic as their mother tongue or those born into Arabian lineages,⁷⁰ and from the testimony of al-Jāhīz (d. 255/868), the Northerner Nizār faction endeavored to define the Arab as one who speaks Arabic,⁷¹ an argument to Northerner advantage since South Arabians did not speak Arabic in pre-Islam,⁷² and Northerners could rest their case of being “original” Arabs on the basis that Arabic had been “their” language since time immemorial. Ibn Durayd (d. 321/933) reports a rebuttal of Himyarite Southerners who defined “Arabic” as an umbrella term connoting many dialects, not a single language,⁷³ thereby facilitating Southerners to retroactively include South Arabians in the Arabic linguistic family and deny the Nizārī attempt to monopolize Arabness. Competitive genealogy was also marshaled in debate. Northerners appear to have backed the assertion that the first Arab was Ishmael, and they attached their genealogy to him to intertwine their identity with both original Arabness and prophecy. But Southerners advanced different claims, attempting at first to attach Southerner lineages to Ishmael, and when this failed,⁷⁴ they elaborated a bolder two-pronged assertion (i) that they descended from Qaḥṭān, who they claimed was *the* original Arab, and (ii) that Ishmael (and, by extension, all the Northerners) only “became

70. Al-Azharī, *Tahdhib al-lughā*, ed. Mukhaymir, vol. 2, p. 166. The evolving definition of the word “Arab” in Muslim-era writing is traced in Webb, *Imagining*, pp. 178–187.

71. Al-Jāhīz, *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn*, ed. Hārūn, vol. 3, pp. 290–291.

72. References to “Ḥimyarī script” (*musnad* or *al-khaṭṭ al-Ḥimyarī*) abound in the sources, indicating awareness of differences between Arabic and the pre-Islamic language of South Arabia, and specific differences were reported by philologists, e.g., al-Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt fuḥūl al-shu‘arā’*, ed. Shākīr, vol. 1, p. 11; Ibn Fāris, *al-Ṣāḥībī fī fiqh al-lughā*, ed. al-Ṭabbā’, pp. 53–54.

73. Ibn Durayd, *Jamharat al-lughā*, ed. Ba’albaki, vol. 1, p. 319.

74. For early statements of Yemenis as “sons of Qaḥṭān,” see Ibn Wahb, *Jāmi’*, ed. David-Weill, vol. 1, pp. 5, 6; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, ed. al-Saqqā, al-Abyārī, and al-Ḥafīz Shalabī, vol. 1, p. 7.

Arab” by virtue of marriage into Qaḥṭān’s lineages.⁷⁵ They assigned Qaḥṭān a son, Ya‘rub (lit., “He who is Arab”), positing him as the first Arabic speaker,⁷⁶ and claimed for themselves the prophets Hūd and Šāliḥ, who are mentioned in the Qur’ān but without express connection to Arabness or South Arabia. This model undercut all Northerner claims for precedence, and poetry was forged to “prove” the Southerners’ new Arab communal history, as in the following lines placed on the tongue of the Prophet’s poet Ḥassān ibn Thābit:

You learned your Arabic from old Ya‘rub,
Our father: you’re the lot who’ve become Arabs.
Of old you only had non-Arabic tongues
Talking like stupid beasts in the wild.⁷⁷

The poem is almost certainly anachronistic: poetry specialists comment on Ḥassān ibn Thābit being a favored target of forgeries since he was a Medinan poet who composed invective against the Quraysh in Muḥammad’s lifetime and thus engaged with topics later Yemeni partisans could rehash with their own embellishments added on.⁷⁸

Southerner historical inventions met with resistance: the Northerner Ibn Sallām al-Jumaḥī (d. 231/845–846) discredited such poems ascribed to Ḥassān and argued that pre-Islamic Southerners did not speak “our Arabic.”⁷⁹ But the volume of Southerner-partisan works expanded in the early third/ninth century with the emergence of narrative histories projecting the entire sweep of Southerner communal history before Muḥammad as a procession of Muslim-led, world-spanning empires. Four such texts survive: Wahb ibn Munabbih’s *al-Tījān*; ‘Amr (or ‘Umar) ibn Sharya’s *Akhbār al-Yaman*; *Tārīkh al-‘Arab qabla al-Islām*, attributed to al-Aṣma‘ī,⁸⁰ and *Waṣāyā al-mulūk*, attributed to Dī‘bil himself (or perhaps his son).⁸¹ While their manuscript traditions are questionable, their historical narratives mirror Dī‘bil’s more grandiloquent celebrations of Yemeni achievements as compared to the poems of Abū Nuwās. The contrast suggests that exaggerated Southerner pre-Muḥammadic Muslim *imperium* narratives coalesced too late to be available to Abū Nuwās but were current with

75. The complex debates about the “first Arab” are traced in Webb, *Imagining*, pp. 209–222.

76. See al-Khuzā‘ī, *Waṣāyā al-mulūk*, ed. Abāza, p. 27; Pseudo-al-Aṣma‘ī, *Tārīkh al-‘Arab qabla al-Islām*, ed. Yāsīn, p. 34.

77. Al-Khuzā‘ī, *Waṣāyā al-mulūk*, ed. Abāza, p. 27.

78. Al-Jumaḥī explains that for Muslim-era political reasons, “more poetry has been falsely ascribed to Ḥassān than any other poet.” *Ṭabaqāt fuḥūl al-shu‘arā’*, ed. Shākir, vol. 1, p. 215. The poem above appears to be one such forgery; it is not included in Ḥassān’s *Diwān*, ed. Walid ‘Arafāt.

79. Al-Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt fuḥūl al-shu‘arā’*, ed. Shākir, vol. 1, pp. 10–11.

80. The manuscript claims to have been transmitted by Ibn al-Sikkīt (d. 244/858), but the text reflects neither al-Aṣma‘ī’s nor Ibn al-Sikkīt’s style, hence we ascribe it to Pseudo-al-Aṣma‘ī.

81. The editor of the modern edition of *Waṣāyā al-mulūk* considers it more accurately ascribed to Dī‘bil’s son: al-Khuzā‘ī, *Waṣāyā al-mulūk*, ed. Abāza, pp. 12–13.

Di'bil in post-Fourth Fitna Iraq, thereby pointing to a maturation of Southerner boast by the early-to-mid-third/ninth century.⁸²

In sum, Iraqi cultural production in Di'bil's day reveals remarkable plasticity and disagreement over the core components of Arab identity, and the rival camps appear to have enjoyed considerable conceptual space to develop their own narratives about who qualified as a "true Arab." Such uneven Arabness underlines that Arab identity was still a rather novel form of ethnic community, and even two centuries into the Islamic era, a hegemonic discourse about Arabic lineage, language, and pre-Islamic communal history had not been established.⁸³ This may help explain the deft rise to power of Turkic groups, as there was evidently no unified "Arab" bloc with a self-assured identity to oppose them; instead, the early third/ninth century witnessed a sinking ship of Arabness as a social asset, upon which Southerners were busy rearranging deck chairs—that is, by making increasingly bold claims to increase their share in the imagined origins of the community.

The texts considered so far, and Di'bil's poetry in particular, ultimately leave us in a curious position. Why would Southerner/Northerner rhetoric have intensified against the backdrop of Turkic ascendance and the marginalization of Arab groups from Iraqi centers of power? Di'bil seems a veritable "national poet" of the Southerners, and his heartfelt profession of Southerner identity (appendix, poem 7) seems to run to the core of his soul, but did the caliphal court care for any of this rhetoric? It thus remains to engage a final hurdle facing historiographical use of poetry: were the poets serious, or did they merely intend their rhetoric to entertain? Such questions fundamentally affect our ability to extract conceptions of identity from poetry, and the chapter's last section shall interrogate the poems' reception and possible functions.

82. Comparison of Yemeni partisan poetry and the prose histories can assist in more precise dating of the latter. For example, the histories unanimously enumerate Hüd and Šāliḥ as Southerner Arab prophets; Pseudo-al-Aṣma'ī posits Hüd as Qaḥṭān's father, no less (*Tārīkh al-'Arab qabla al-Islam*, ed. Yāsīn, p. 30). But Di'bil's extant poetry makes no such claim, and given Di'bil's penchant for unrestrained glorification of the Southerners, his silence suggests the narratives were yet not mainstream in his lifetime; see Webb, *Imagining*, pp. 216–224. Also, the prose texts' consistent emphasis on Southerner conquests in Armenia and Azerbaijan (see, e.g., Wabḥ, *al-Tijān fī mulūk Ḥimyar*, pp. 74, 89, 90, 109, 112, 140) seem rather minuscule triumphs; however, the region was of particular consequence for Iraqi audiences of the 230s and 240s AH, when it was the stronghold of Bābak and rebellious groups against caliphal authority which proved extremely difficult to defeat. The narratives' avowals of Southerner domination in that region thus not so subtly claim that the Southerners' ancestors had greater might than the third/ninth century caliphate. Though it extends beyond the chronological scope of this chapter, it is noteworthy that the critiques of the exaggerated pro-Southerner claims abated by the fourth/tenth century, such that the Southerner version of Arabness became widely accepted. See, e.g. al-Mas'ūdi, *Murūj al-dhahab wa-l-ma'dīn al-jawhar*, ed. Pellat, §§ 390, 1005, 1029, 1086–1089; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. Ibrāhīm, vol. 1, pp. 204, 216, 666–667, 612–613, 631; vol. 2, pp. 96–97, 105–109.

83. I detail in Webb, *Imagining*, how pre-Islamic Arabian populations did not imagine themselves as all members of one "Arab" community, and the indicators of poetry in this chapter seem another form of corroboration that the early Muslims did not come together with a set conception of Arab community—otherwise, we should expect greater stability around the fundamental parameters of Arabness.

RITUAL CLOWNING OR ETHNIC IDENTITY?

Though his poetry acts avowedly Southerner, Abū Nuwās was not born into Southerner lineage. His precise origins are unknown, in part because he made various claims about his background, but his pro-Southern poems were reportedly composed to curry favor with Southerner elites in al-Baṣra from whom he hoped for payment.⁸⁴ Abū Nuwās's questionable lineage does not necessarily mean his poetry is meaningless—if it was intended to please the Southerners, then it assuredly spoke in terms aligned with their identity, and the poems circulated and were commended,⁸⁵ but there are nonetheless discrepancies over the details, for example, whether or not Abū Nuwās was imprisoned for the antagonistic “B Poem.” Al-Ṣūlī affirms Abū Nuwās was punished for it, but others narrate that Abū Nuwās was instead imprisoned for his inveterate drunkenness and libertine attitudes that overstepped lines of decorum, and hence the true extent to which the “B Poem” was politicized remains an open question.

There are also doubts about Di‘bil’s lineage;⁸⁶ he likely was a Southerner from the Khuzā‘a, but his persona as a poet and his relationship to Southerner political circles are intricate. Di‘bil arrived late into the literary limelight; almost nothing is reported of his life before his forties, and nearly all his surviving poetry emanates from his later years, too. There is one report of Di‘bil’s noble lineage,⁸⁷ but it is unsubstantiated, and there are no indications that he engaged in politicized activity before or after he became a court poet. The later writer al-Mas‘ūdī (d. 332/943–944) cites Di‘bil as a spokesman of Southerner historiography,⁸⁸ but Di‘bil’s biographers are silent on his political connections and refer to him instead as a “lampoon artist of filthy invective” (*qabīḥ al-hijā’ khabīth al-lisān*).⁸⁹ The earliest biographical entry on Di‘bil, composed by a contemporary, Ibn Qutayba (who claims to have met the poet),⁹⁰ mentions no Southerner bias, and intriguingly, Ibn al-Mu‘tazz, who is explicit about Abū Nuwās’s Southerner partisanship (*ta’aṣṣub*), makes no comparable comment regarding Di‘bil.⁹¹

Di‘bil’s purported involvement in another politically-charged context during the caliphate of al-Mutawakkil exhibits similar difficulties for interpreting the

84. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, ed. Muḥannā and Jābir, vol. 25, p. 29.

85. Ibn al-Mu‘tazz, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shu‘arā’*, ed. Farrāj, p. 195; al-Ṣūlī, reported in Abū Nuwās, *Diwān*, ed. Wagner, vol. 2, p. 1); al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, ed. Muḥannā and Jābir, vol. 25, p. 25.

86. Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, ed. al-‘Amrāwī, vol. 17, p. 258; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-a’yān*, ed. ‘Abbās, vol. 2, p. 270.

87. Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, ed. al-‘Amrāwī, vol. 17, pp. 259–260.

88. Al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab wa-l-ma’dīn al-jawhar*, ed. Pellat, §§ 389, 1086, 2271.

89. Al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Madīnat al-Salām*, ed. Ma’rūf, vol. 9, p. 360; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-l-Wafāyāt*, ed. Ritter et al., vol. 14, p. 13. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-a’yān*, ed. ‘Abbās, vol. 2, p. 267, notes his penchant for lampooning caliphs.

90. Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shi‘r wa-l-shu‘arā’*, ed. Shākir, vol. 2, p. 839.

91. Ibn al-Mu‘tazz, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shu‘arā’*, ed. Farrāj, p. 195.

intentions of his poetry. The caliph desecrated the tomb of the Shi'ite Imam al-Ḥusayn, and, according to the later litterateur Khalil ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1363), "Di'bil and other poets" lampooned al-Mutawakkil.⁹² Di'bil did compose poetry championing Shi'ite leanings, but once again, there is little evidence from sources closer to Di'bil's lifetime to suggest that this poetic penchant crossed over into actual politicking between Shi'ite Imams and the caliphal order. The modern edition of Di'bil's *Dīwān* does contain a poem alluding to a "donkey" which prevents the devout from visiting al-Ḥusayn's tomb⁹³: the donkey is presumably al-Mutawakkil, but the poem is of questionable authenticity. The *Dīwān*'s editor notes that the poem is of a category of poetry narrated solely in Shi'ite sources, and this particular poem appears only once in a Shi'ite "martyrology" of al-Ḥusayn compiled three centuries after Di'bil by Akḥṭab Khwārazm (d. 568/1172-3). Di'bil's memory as a pro-Shi'ite enabled subsequent Shi'ites to falsely attribute later fabricated impassioned poetry to Di'bil, and al-Ṣafadī, also at several centuries' remove from Di'bil, accepted their narratives, but ascribing Di'bil himself an operative role in sectarian politics is difficult to substantiate.

While Di'bil's activities after the Fourth Fitna connected him with influential figures in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Iran, and while these figures were embroiled in political and sectarian conflict, Di'bil's own role at court might better be read as simply business: he peddled poems for cash and turned to vicious lampoon when his patrons stopped paying.⁹⁴ When Di'bil claimed that Mālik ibn Ṭawq and Ṭāhir ibn al-Ḥusayn were "Peasants/non-Arabs/scum,"⁹⁵ he therefore may have been articulating the truth, or reflecting ingrained Southerner hatred of others, or just exaggerating for the purpose of lampoon. And likewise, pro-Shi'ite poems ascribed to Di'bil may have been composed to actively lampoon anti-Shi'ite figures, or they were merely composed to curry favor with influential patrons of Shi'ite persuasion, or they may not actually have been composed by Di'bil at all, and only became ascribed to him in the succeeding centuries.

Our interpretations are further complicated by the possibility that both Abū Nuwās and Di'bil deliberately played to ritual clown personae. Hamori's work on Abū Nuwās amply demonstrates the poet's role as a professional fool permitted to make statements impossible for others,⁹⁶ and Abū Nuwās's attempt to join the ranks of the Yemenis may have been another act of clowning. His claim to have been born a client of the Ḥā and Ḥakam lineage seems serious enough today, but to a second-/eighth-century ear, it may actually have been an obvious jest, since

92. Al-Ṣafadī, *Tamām al-mutūn*, ed. Ibrāhīm, p. 248.

93. Di'bil, *Dīwān*, ed. al-Ashtar, p. 337.

94. The relationship between poets, patrons, poetry, and gifts was delicately orchestrated, and the literary remembrances thereof were also liable to embellishment and reworking to fit literary tropes, as detailed in Gruendler, "Verse."

95. Di'bil, *Dīwān*, ed. al-Ashtar, pp. 58, 117, 232-233.

96. Hamori, *On the Art*, pp. 44-90; see also Gelder, *Bad*.

the Ḥā and Ḥakam were weak lineages in al-Baṣra, and moreover, there was apparently “not a single member of [the Ḥā and Ḥakam] in all of al-Ahwāz [Abū Nuwās’s birthplace],”⁹⁷ thus making Abū Nuwās’s claim an outright impossibility. Likewise, when Abū Nuwās had earlier pretended to be a Northerner, he claimed lineage in the clan of one ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād of the Taym Allāh, but it was pointed out to him that ‘Ubayd Allāh suffered from semi-paralysis (*fulij*) and had no children to ever start a clan.⁹⁸ Abū Nuwās’s lineage choices were thus all patently wrong, and although he would settle on the Yemeni claim, the stories of his misguided searches for kin seem rather analogous to Charlie Chaplin bumbling from one absurd situation to another.

It is difficult to adduce more certain conclusions for Abū Nuwās, since we are reliant on biographies written in the centuries after his death. While the “real” Abū Nuwās may be speaking to us through some of his extant verse, later biographers, particularly al-İṣfahānī, may have had an interest in reshaping history to produce entertaining stories of clowns, covering up more serious political issues that, by al-İṣfahānī’s time, had ceased to be relevant. Moreover, Abū Nuwās may have acted seriously on some occasions and as a clown on others, meaning the interpretation of his Yemeni partisan poetry hinges on its placement along the spectrum of his oeuvre. Regrettably, his biographies remain insufficiently studied, entailing a degree of imprecision when we try to discern what ethnic identity may have meant to him.⁹⁹

Di‘bil’s biography is very little studied,¹⁰⁰ but stories about him and his poetry also bear marks of the ritual fool. The extant tales of his first forty years reduce to three unflattering stories of a youth spent as a thief, a thug, or even a murderer, building a characterization of a disreputable and pugnacious man of little social worth.¹⁰¹ The stories of his later escapades are little better; he had no career beyond using poetry as a source of income, and while this is typical of Abbasid-era panegyrists, Di‘bil is distinguished by his penchant for swiftly turning against his patrons with sharp lampoons that are the source of most of his ethnic slurs noted above. Although *al-Aghānī* begins its biography of Di‘bil by noting his extreme partisanship to the Southerners,¹⁰² Di‘bil had no active role in politicized movements, and the main reported effect of his poetry was its ability to arouse

97. Al-İṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, ed. Muhannā and Jābir, vol. 25, p. 13.

98. Al-İṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, ed. Muhannā and Jābir, vol. 25, p. 25.

99. Al-İṣfahānī’s massive *al-Aghānī* has only received one detailed study (Kilpatrick, *Making*), and questions of ethnicity in early and medieval Islam are only beginning to be asked of the sources.

100. Limited studies include Zolondek, *Di‘bil b. ‘Alī*; Di‘bil, *Dīwān*, ed. al-Ashtar; al-Khabbāz, “*al-Nuz‘a al-hijā’iyya ‘ind Di‘bil al-Khuzā’ī*”; al-Karīm, “*Di‘bil ibn ‘Alī al-Khuzā’ī*.” These tend to take reported anecdotes as accurate reflections of Di‘bil’s history and character.

101. Al-İṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, ed. Muhannā and Jābir, vol. 20, pp. 136–137, 145, 149.

102. Al-İṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, ed. Muhannā and Jābir, vol. 20, p. 131.

the laughter of caliphs and other notables.¹⁰³ Given that context, the content of Di'bil's lampoons could have been designed as theatrical misanthropy to parody the traditional poet-patron relationship, and their seriousness bears questioning.

Di'bil's boasts, which sometimes verge on the ridiculous, likewise may have been intended frivolously. For example, he was past fifty when he composed a poem threatening the caliph with his "hot-tempered youth" and "bloodthirsty swords,"¹⁰⁴ and Di'bil moreover had no prior military experience.¹⁰⁵ The line may thus be more productively read as a deliberate parody of earlier Arabic warrior poetry stock themes,¹⁰⁶ instead of showing any real capacity to wield a sword and challenge the caliphate. The contrast between the elderly court poet Di'bil and his exaggerated self-image as a warrior was perhaps the crux of the fool persona that enabled him to compose such poems without fear of reprisal. The poems' content would in turn be dictated by the expectations of parody of the pre-Islamic and early Islamic poet-hero exemplar, and since Di'bil was a Southerner, and since Southerners had boasted about their merits in verse, Di'bil would follow suit, but the meaning and significance of his boasts shift from serious pride to overwrought bluster. In other words, Yemeni-ness may not have been so bold in practice as it masqueraded in verse, and cultured audiences would have appreciated Di'bil's poems as exaggerated parodies on what had been more serious issues.

The search for meaning in Di'bil's exaggerations leads us to an aphorism recorded by the medieval poetry critique Qudāma ibn Ja'far (d. c. 337/948–949) about the superiority of "lying poetry": *aḥsan al-shi'r akdhabuh*, "poetry is at its best when it is furthest from the truth."¹⁰⁷ By this, Qudāma did not mean fantasy or outright falsehood but instead explained that hyperbolic description is preferable to concision and that the best poets (including, according to Qudāma, Abū Nuwās) are those who can extend descriptive metaphors to extreme limits of logic.¹⁰⁸ For Qudāma, the merits of exaggeration are applicable to flowery descriptions invoked in poetry of praise and dispraise, which is somewhat distinguished from the more informal-sounding self-boasts of Di'bil, but in a context where audiences appreciated poetry that stretched metaphors in exaggerated directions, Di'bil's misappropriation of poetic hyperbole appropriate to a register of formal praise poetry for his own absurd self-praise parodies expectations

103. See, e.g., the interaction of Di'bil with al-Ma'mūn: al-*Iṣfahānī*, *al-Aghānī*, ed. Muḥannā and Jābir, vol. 20, pp. 133, 154, 166–167; see also p. 161.

104. See appendix, poem 8, line 36.

105. Al-*Iṣfahānī*, *al-Aghānī*, ed. Muḥannā and Jābir, vol. 20, pp. 180–181, records a humorous exchange between Di'bil and the warrior poet al-Makhzūmī, where Di'bil's lack of military credentials is the core of lampoons against him.

106. Warrior poet themes (*al-Ḥamāsa*) were a popular form of poetry collected by Di'bil's contemporaries.

107. Qudāma ibn Ja'far, *Naqd al-shi'r*, ed. Bonebakker, p. 26.

108. Qudāma ibn Ja'far, *Naqd al-shi'r*, ed. Bonebakker, pp. 25–27.

of the “good poet” and thus results in the enhancement of Di‘bil’s ritual clown persona.

As for the effects of Di‘bil’s poetry, almost all accounts agree that al-Ma‘mūn pardoned the rash and violent invectives. Later biographies report several possible explanations for the clemency,¹⁰⁹ though Geert Jan van Gelder has insightfully suggested that the pardon was a show of the caliph’s laudable trait of equanimity (*ḥilm*), deemed a key trait of true manliness.¹¹⁰ If this were true, we could couple the observation with the indications of Di‘bil’s entertainer/ritual clown persona and propose that the entire act of Di‘bil’s threatening poem and the caliph’s mercy was an orchestrated and public contrast of *jahl* versus *ḥilm* (passion versus equanimity), poet fool versus caliph statesman. The triumph of equanimous *ḥilm* over imprudent *jahl* lay at the heart of third-/ninth-century literary norms of virtue, and in this context, the extreme contrast between Di‘bil’s rash boasts and caliphal clemency bears reading as a courtly show to demonstrate the caliph’s wisdom and legitimacy, not a sincere take on Southerner communal autonomy.¹¹¹

The possibility of Di‘bil’s poetry being part of a staged act of military impotence is paralleled in verses and stories depicting his sexual impotence.¹¹² Di‘bil appears in several ill-judged circumstances attempting to woo younger girls with bluster and lusty poetry, but, like his empty martial invectives, his amorous verse was never consummated, either. The comic intent of his role as a failed lover fits well with a poem in which he claims to dislike girls older than twenty, with a preference for those closer to ten.¹¹³ Here, the spectacle of an elderly man with a large cyst on his neck¹¹⁴ lustily expressing desire for youthful girls plays out a traditional pantomime. Pointedly, when Di‘bil does mention sexual triumphs, it is with skinny girls (the essence of unattractiveness, given the Abbasid taste for corpulent women), and he lampoons them for their bony bodies, but he, as their sexual partner, comes out hardly any more heroic.¹¹⁵ A deliberate pandering for laughs may then be the inspiration for stories featuring Di‘bil’s failure in love, one of which entered the repertoire of the *Thousand and One Nights*.¹¹⁶

109. Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārikh Madinat Dimashq*, ed. al-‘Amrāwī, vol. 17, p. 262; al-Ṣafādī, *al-Wāfi bi-l-Wafāyāt*, ed. Ritter et al., vol. 14, p. 15.

110. Gelder, *Bad*, pp. 31–32.

111. Expressions of al-Ma‘mūn’s public refusal to punish Di‘bil are elaborated in al-Isfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, ed. Muhannā and Jābir, vol. 20, pp. 154, 167, 192.

112. See, e.g., Di‘bil, *Dīwān*, ed. al-Ashtar, p. 404, where he laments being unable, as an old man, to penetrate a virgin slave girl given to him and expresses his embarrassment at being unable to properly thank his patron for the gift.

113. Di‘bil, *Dīwān*, ed. al-Ashtar, p. 432.

114. The *sil‘a* (cyst) features as a salient aspect of Di‘bil’s physical appearance in the biographical literature. See al-Baghdādī, *Tārikh Madinat al-Salām*, ed. Ma‘rūf, vol. 9, p. 361; Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, ed. al-Arnā‘ūt, vol. 3, p. 213.

115. Di‘bil, *Dīwān*, ed. al-Ashtar, pp. 381, 396, 404.

116. Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārikh Madinat Dimashq*, ed. al-‘Amrāwī, vol. 17, pp. 253–254. *Al-Aghānī* narrates the same story, though its clown protagonist is Di‘bil’s contemporary, Muslim ibn al-Walid. Al-Isfahānī, *al-Aghānī*,

Di'bil's lack of serious resolve also colors his invective poetry. It is reported that Di'bil expressly denied composing the audacious comparison of the caliph al-Mu'taṣim to a dog,¹¹⁷ and in an expanded anecdote, we read that one of Di'bil's court-poet rivals, 'Alī ibn Shakla, admitted to composing the poem and falsely attributing it to Di'bil. According to the report, 'Alī's reason was not to land Di'bil in trouble; rather, it was part of an orchestrated prank. When the poem was recited and Di'bil was summoned to court for execution, his rival interceded at the last moment with the news that he was the true author and explained that he had faked the line only so that he could have the satisfaction of saving Di'bil's life, forcing Di'bil to be indebted to him.¹¹⁸ Once again, Di'bil is reduced to an impotent fool, his very life subordinated to a sarcastic prank of his rival.

In a similar manner, another anecdote depicts Di'bil as the victim of a crude and poorly articulated lampoon composed by a nameless amateur versifier from Qom. Instead of responding with a verse of his own, Di'bil attempted to bribe his satirizer with one thousand dirhams, surprising his companions, who supposed the sub-poet would have been happy with just five dirhams, but Di'bil protested that the verses could pass among the common folk and ruin his reputation, such that he would have gladly paid fifty thousand to silence the poet. But true to the form of a fool, Di'bil's bribe was impotent: the poem spread, "the masses of low-lives and slaves mocked him," and Di'bil could never enter Qom again for shame.¹¹⁹ The story may be fabricated—only one source reports it—but the humor in beholding the Abbasid era's most famous satirist out-lampooned by an amateur is self-evident, and the tale further envelops Di'bil in the clown's persona.

It is also material to question why Di'bil avoided punishment despite his many threats against authority figures. While anecdotes record that he was forced to flee al-Mu'taṣim's court following the "Dog lampoon,"¹²⁰ another states that he had to flee from al-Ma'mūn,¹²¹ a third claims he was executed by al-Mu'taṣim,¹²² and yet others relate that he was poisoned by Mālik ibn Ṭawq instead.¹²³ The conflicting stories obscure the overarching point that Di'bil survived several reigns, he composed innumerable invective poems without clear evidence of official censure, and he died in his mid-nineties. Perhaps the confusion over the

ed. Muḥannā and Jābir, vol. 14, pp. 47–48. Both memories merged into a story of Muslim outwitting Di'bil and winning a pretty girl in the *Thousand and One Nights*, Night 407.

117. Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shi'r wa-l-shu'arā*, ed. Shākīr, vol. 2, p. 839; see note 65 above.

118. Ibn 'Asākīr, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, ed. al-'Amrāwī, vol. 17, p. 258.

119. Ibn al-Mu'tazz, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shu'arā*, ed. Farrāj, pp. 268–269.

120. Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shi'r wa-l-shu'arā*, ed. Shākīr, vol. 2, p. 839; al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Madīnat al-Salām*, ed. Ma'rūf, vol. 9, p. 360; Ibn 'Asākīr, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, ed. al-'Amrāwī, vol. 17, p. 248.

121. Al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-l-Wafāyāt*, ed. Ritter et al., vol. 14, p. 13.

122. Al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-l-Wafāyāt*, ed. Ritter et al., vol. 14, p. 14.

123. Ibn 'Asākīr, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, ed. al-'Amrāwī, vol. 17, p. 277; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi*, ed. Ritter et al., vol. 14, p. 14.

punishment anecdotes results from later writers' conviction that Di'bil's poetry was so audacious that it *must* have been disciplined, and so they inserted punishment stories to fit the expectation, whereas the real Di'bil, protected by his clown persona, actually died of old age and not as a victim of his tongue.

In keeping with the reports of Di'bil's continued escape from what should have been inevitable punishment, almost all biographies report an opinion that "Di'bil has carried his cross for years, searching for someone to crucify him on it, but he never found the man to do it."¹²⁴ The consistent repetition is expressive that Di'bil was considered the paradigmatic and inveterate lampoon artist whose work was not intended for serious consumption, as he trotted out verses against caliphs, Northerner elites, and non-Arabs at court. He is even ascribed lampoons of his own Southerner tribe, his brother, his wife, and his own daughter.¹²⁵ Whether all are authentic is difficult to judge (perhaps the latter were fabricated to exaggerate Di'bil's persona as an incorrigible lampooner), but in sum, Di'bil emerges as a professional satirizer (*hajjā'*), at whose work audiences were expected to laugh, not necessarily take offense, and his blustery boast was accordingly an integral part of an act that kept him in coin. He is even reported to have celebrated the fact that poets are praised for lying,¹²⁶ and in this context, we may better understand what Di'bil, in his old age, meant when he informed the poetry collector Ibn Qutayba that his best poetry was "the old stuff"—Bacchic poetry composed with Abū Nuwās and Ibn Abī Shiṣ (both Southerners) before the Fourth Fitna.¹²⁷ Toward the end of his life, Di'bil had perhaps developed a distaste for the repetitive, contrived, and aggressive Southerner-partisan verse that had become his profession in the changing society of third-/ninth-century Iraq.

In addition to what appears a deliberately intended comic effect, Di'bil is moreover inconsistent in his Southerner partisanship. Two recorded victims of his lampoons, al-Muṭṭalib ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Mālik al-Khuzā'i and the people of Qom were genealogical Yemenis themselves, yet Di'bil's invective against them unleashed coarse satire against the former and denied the Arabness of the latter.¹²⁸ If Southerner solidarity was a social asset upon which Di'bil relied, such invective would be ill advised, and perhaps these poems underline that the ultimate sources of Di'bil's wages were nonpartisan courtly circles amused by buffoons. Anecdotally, Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ibn Ṭayfūr's *Kitāb Baghdād*, a uniquely

124. The text is consistently reported, though it is placed in the mouths of different characters, including Di'bil himself. For variants, see Ibn al-Mu'tazz, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shu'arā'*, ed. Farrāj, p. 265; al-Isfahāni, *al-Aghāni*, ed. Muhannā and Jābir, vol. 20, p. 192; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-a'yān*, ed. 'Abbās, vol. 2, p. 267; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-l-Wafāyāt*, ed. Ritter et al., vol. 14, p. 15.

125. Di'bil, *Dīwān*, ed. al-Ashtar, pp. 148, 149–150, 191, 430–431.

126. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-a'yān*, ed. 'Abbās, vol. 2, p. 268. The echo with Qudāma ibn Ja'far's aphorism (see note 107 above) is instructive here.

127. Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shī'r wa-l-shu'arā'*, ed. Shākir, vol. 2, p. 839.

128. Di'bil, *Dīwān*, ed. al-Ashtar, pp. 71–73, 209, 238 (al-Muṭṭalib), 104 (Qom).

valuable source about Iraq's elite circles during al-Ma'mūn's caliphate, provides explicit reference to Di'bil's invectives against Abū 'Abbād al-Rāzī, one of al-Ma'mūn's state secretaries (*kātib*), and Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ibn Ṭayfūr expressly describes how al-Ma'mūn laughed whenever he saw his secretary and recalled Di'bil's verse that portrayed Abū 'Abbād as a lunatic from the fabled asylum of Dayr Hizqal.¹²⁹ Di'bil's poetry and the caliph's amusement were evidently closely related, and such a context may be similarly applicable to Di'bil's lusty and flamboyant Southerner-partisan invective.

If Di'bil was a ritual clown, then we might best interpret his Southerner-themed boasts as repertoire satire and a facet of the de-ethnicizing process already well under way in the early third/ninth century. As ethnic identity receded from political significance, memories of ethnic slurs from earlier times could shift to the realms of carnival. The songs of Yemeni bravery on the lips of a foolish old man would enliven courts of the post-Fourth Fitna caliphate where Turks and Easterner elites cared less for the merits of Arabness and found such references to the antique ways amusing. The parody on what was once a serious issue would moreover serve the interests of the new elites: if Arabness could be converted into a topic of jest, the Turkic and Easterner usurpers of Abbasid power would escape potential embarrassment stemming from their non-Arab lineage.

Our interpretation of jocular poetry thus ends at a serious point: Southerner identity was tied to the changing fortunes of Arabness, and it transformed from a source of power to a sense of humor. In the de-ethnicizing polities of the third-/ninth-century Middle East, ethnic play looks to have become an aspect of courtly entertainment. Might we then speak of the later Abbasids as "post-ethnic"?

CONCLUSIONS: ETHNOS AND JEST?

Kennedy's and Pohl's contributions in this volume (chapters 2, 3, and 4) detail the decline of ethnos as an operative identity in the Middle East's political structures, and this chapter pursued the phenomenon by scrutinizing the trajectory of Arabness. Arab identity had evident utility as a social asset in the second/eighth century: the late-Umayyad and early-Abbasid caliphates marked the first time in history when people called themselves "Arabs" in order to assert elite status, and it was also the first time when Arabic became the language of prestige across the Middle East.¹³⁰ The vitality of Arab ethnic identity is also attested in the conflicts between Arab groups who considered themselves the major stakeholders on the political scene and articulated their sociopolitical communities as competing factions under an umbrella of the Arab ethnos. The second/eighth century was a

129. Ibn Ṭayfūr, *Kitāb Baḡhdād*, ed. al-Thāmīrī, pp. 204–205. The monastery of Dayr Hizqal features in various anecdotes as an asylum for colorful characters.

130. The rising association of Arabness and Muslim elite is discussed in Webb, *Imagining*, pp. 128–152.

point of high Arabness, and groups close to power (or those with aspirations to it) sought inclusion.

Our Iraqi literary indicators for the salience of Arabness in the second/eighth century mirror the increased presence of “Arabs” in Egyptian papyri from the same period, as analyzed in Sijpesteijn’s chapter 12 in this volume. Varied sources thereby suggest that indigenous populations of the Middle East migrated to the Muslims’ new towns and sought assimilation into the Arab linguistic, religious, and cultural systems in order to participate in the region’s new order.¹³¹ Thus, as Muslims were beginning to call themselves Arabs, immigrants into the Muslim towns were simultaneously maneuvering into the Arab cultural sphere, and therein a familiar story of aspirational assimilation and counter-reaction unfolded. “Real” Arabs (i.e., the scions of the original conquerors) felt a need to defend themselves from the onslaught of the former underclass who adopted the Arabness “cultural stuff”¹³² as they moved into the Muslim-established cities, but overall, the phenomenon of urban assimilation blurred the markers of social difference.

The Iraqi situation finds echo in the mid-twentieth-century British middle classes, who, as British *imperium* was collapsing as a political hegemon, celebrated their suburban land tenures and started speaking more “U” than their previous “non-U” in an intriguing middle-class adoption of what was then a declining upper-class lifestyle. In Britain, the interplay of upper- and middle-class cultural markers also fluctuated between serious social change and jest, especially as expressed through accent and language, exemplified in the essays of Nancy Mitford and Richard Buckle.¹³³ And Evelyn Waugh’s remark that Mitford was “someone who only just managed to be upper class” echoes the Abbasid Arabness predicament rather well. As Iraqi Arab elites urbanized and began losing their monopoly over power to Easterners, we find examples of early Abbasid Persians visiting the desert and returning to the Iraqi towns with duly gruff Bedouin accents and ways, adamant that they were new arrivals from Arabia.¹³⁴ Literature parodies the assimilators, but behind the joke, real processes of social climbing and assimilation multiplied the meanings of Arab identity. Arabness was (i) a serious mark of pride for military elites, (ii) a goal to be obtained by indigenous civilian Iraqis, and (iii) an absurdity when it materialized in crass attempts to feign Bedouin identity.

131. Rates of assimilation appear to have varied in different regions. I consider the Iraqi case in Webb, *Imagining*, pp. 240–249; Sijpesteijn, chapter 12 in this volume, indicates a discernibly slower process in the Egyptian countryside, but the *miṣr* of Fuṣṭāṭ (the early Muslim urban settlement in Egypt) perhaps tracked the Iraqi towns.

132. A term coined by anthropologist Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups*, p. 15, for the visible trappings of an ethnic identity.

133. Mitford, *Noblesse Oblige*; Buckle, *U and Non-U Revisited*.

134. Abū Nuwās, *Diwān*, ed. Wagner, vol. 2, pp. 102–103; al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn*, ed. Hārūn, vol. 1, pp. 160–163.

By the end of the second/eighth century, distinguishing actual Arabs from more recent joiners seems to have been difficult, and while the label ‘*arabī*’ connoted status, in contrast to the contemptible *nabaḥī*, there was ambiguity about whom should be labeled with what. Anecdotes of Iraqis masquerading under pretended Arab lineages come to light,¹³⁵ pretended “Arabs” were labeled *da‘ī*,¹³⁶ and invective poetry against “fake” Arabs circulated. For example, Abū Sa‘d al-Makhzūmī ridiculed Di‘bil with the language of Northerner chauvinism:

Without Nizār the world would be in trouble
 And bereft of stronghold or fort.
 The world would throw up its burdens,
 And Di‘bil will be stuffed up his mother’s arse.¹³⁷

But despite Abū Sa‘d’s protestations to be Northerner, reports about him attest that his lineage was mixed and uncertain,¹³⁸ and his ethnic pretense was itself the target of Southerner rejoinders by Ibn Abī Shīṣ:

Abū Sa‘d: swear by the five prayers and your ritual fast:
 Are you true about your lineage, or just dreaming in your sleep?¹³⁹

Di‘bil also lampooned Abū Sa‘d:

Ah! Abū Sa‘d the young poet,
 He’s known by his nickname, not his father.
 He’s looking for a father from the Ma‘add;
 The seeker and the sought are all lost!¹⁴⁰

By the third/ninth century, many Iraqis—even the caliphs themselves—were progeny of mixed social relations, and ‘*arabī-nabaḥī*’ divides would be hard to police, again giving way to humorous interpretation. For example, the Iraqi poet of Soghdian origin Abū Ya‘qūb al-Khuraymī (d. 214/829–830) was called an

135. See anecdotes in Szombathy, “Genealogy”; for parameters of uncertain Arabness, see Webb, *Imagining*, pp. 188–194.

136. Al-Isfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, ed. Muḥannā and Jābir, vol. 25, p. 23 (about Abū Nuwās); Ibn al-Mu‘tazz about Abū Sa‘d al-Makhzūmī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shu‘arā’*, ed. Farrāj, p. 297. Al-Ṣūlī reports a poem of Muslim ibn al-Walid (d. 208/823) in which he claims al-‘Abbās ibn al-Aḥnaf is a *da‘ī*. The terms *da‘ī* and *dī‘wa* are defined in al-Farāhīdī, *al-Ayn*, eds. al-Makhzūmī and al-Sāmarrā’ī, vol. 2, p. 221; al-Azhari, *Tahdhīb al-luḡha*, ed. Mukhaymir, vol. 2, p. 326.

137. Al-Jāhīz, *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn*, ed. Hārūn, vol. 3, p. 250. The verse alludes to Qur’ān 99:2, where the earth throws up its burdens on Judgment Day. The effect asserts that Nizār maintains cosmic order.

138. Ibn al-Mu‘tazz relates three opinions, each of which denies his Arabness. *Ṭabaqāt al-Shu‘arā’*, ed. Farrāj, pp. 295–297.

139. Al-Isfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, ed. Muḥannā and Jābir, vol. 18, pp. 50–54.

140. Di‘bil, *Dīwān*, ed. al-Ashtar, pp. 130–131. Di‘bil also composed a coarser lampoon of Abū Sa‘d, *Dīwān*, p. 162.

“Arab” in the presence of Ma’mūn in a joke against another courtier, ‘Alī ibn al-Haytham, who was known for falsely claiming Arabness and “sitting with the Arabs” at court.¹⁴¹ From the story, it appears no serious insults were intended, and thus, when we read of Di‘bil hurling his similarly intoned variants of *nabaḩī* and ‘*ajam* in the very same court, they also perhaps intended comparable jest. Moreover, Di‘bil’s anti-Arab slurs directed against individuals of clear Arab stock, such as Mālik ibn Ṭawq, seem examples of Arabness as humor and not social commentary.

Likewise, the preeminent poet of al-Mu‘taṣim’s court, Abū Tammām (d. 231/845 or 232/846), advertised himself as an Arab from the tribe of Ṭayyi’, whereas he was—as everyone seemed to have known—a non-Arab Syrian of Greek Christian origin. Di‘bil sparred with Abū Tammām, lampooning him for his fake Arab lineage:

Look to him and his wit,
 See how his Ṭayyi’-ing is playing.¹⁴²
 Be damned! Who tempted you with this lineage?
 A claim you dread in your heart.
 If the Ṭayyi’ are mentioned within a country mile
 The light in your eyes grows dim.¹⁴³

Despite the genealogical rhetoric, perhaps it was not the false ethnicity that riled Di‘bil. Di‘bil and Abū Tammām were poetic rivals, and Di‘bil is cited as one of the chief critics of Abū Tammām’s poetry.¹⁴⁴ The two accused each other of stealing lines from earlier poets, and the ethnic slurs may have emanated from a public display of competition for the benefit of courtly circles. Accordingly, their apparent ethnic vituperation seems, at least in part, an orchestrated quarrel akin to those of professional wrestlers today. Overall, Abū Tammām’s status does not appear to have been affected by his ethnic play, as evidenced in al-Ṣūlī’s biography of the mid-third-/ninth-century poet where

141. Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam al-Uḩabā’*, ed. ‘Abbās, vol. 5, p. 2006. For al-Khuraymī’s biography, see al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Madīnat al-Salām*, ed. Ma’rūf, vol. 7, pp. 335–336. Ibn al-Mu‘tazz identifies him as a Turk (*Ṭabaqāt al-Shu‘arā’*, ed. Farrāj, p. 292); in any event, sources agree on his Eastern origins.

142. Di‘bil mocks Abū Tammām’s claimed Ṭayyi’ descent by inventing a verb *taṭāyā* (Ṭayyi’-ing) and puns it with the word *manshūr* (to be spread out), since Ṭayyi’ is related to Arabic words for “folded”: lit., “He folds-up (*taṭāyā*) but really is spread (*manshūr*).”

143. Di‘bil, *Diwān*, ed. al-Ashtar, p. 388.

144. Abū Bakr al-Ṣūlī, *Akhbār Abī Tammām*, ed. Gruendler, pp. 68, 70, 208, 230, 278. Al-Ṣūlī professes a positive opinion of Abū Tammām, and he compiled the biography to defend Abū Tammām’s memory against detractors. Hence his reports displaying Di‘bil’s vitriol and cantankerous character may be targeted to show the absurdity of Abū Tammām’s antagonists. To this end, al-Ṣūlī never records Abū Tammām’s anger at Di‘bil, insinuating that the insults only flowed one way, which may not be wholly accurate.

polarized opinions about Abū Tammām abound, but none marshals ethnos as a means to chide him.

In some other cases, however, serious matters between Arabs and others were still at stake. Old Arab families retained some authority; for example, members of the clan of Abū Dulaf were expressly praised for their Arabness even at the end of the third/ninth century,¹⁴⁵ and it would be hasty to posit the Fourth Fitna as the *end* of Arabness as a political and social asset. Whether Diʿbil himself participated in “serious” comment on Arabness is unclear. He does challenge Aḥmad ibn Abī Duwād’s claim to be an Arab of the Iyād, and Aḥmad was a powerful courtier under al-Muʿtaṣim and al-Wāthiq who promoted Turkish military elites above Arab tribal leaders.¹⁴⁶ This may be a case of Diʿbil defending the Arab status quo, but given Diʿbil’s general disposition, it may be another jest, though one based upon an underlying reality. Further research on Arabness in the third-/ninth-century courts is needed, but one suspects that while individual self-professed Arab elites were attempting to maintain the dignity of their identity, the court was simultaneously pushing a different agenda to envelop Arabness in jest as new elite cadres formed.

At this juncture, the evidence paints the third/ninth century as a pivot point in Iraq. In the previous century, genealogical Yemenis had developed narratives and lineage systems to embed their community within an Arab identity. Their Arabness debates point to an ethnic moment in early Islam when Muslim elites marshaled Arabness as a strategy of distinction to protect their status. But while ethnicity became an important ingredient of power, the ambit of Arab identity was broader than the contemporaneous ethnicities of the post-Roman kingdoms in Europe explored in this volume. Unlike the multiethnic Carolingians with their regional divisions and even legal codes classified in ethnic terms, each powerful stakeholder group in the early Abbasid caliphate sought membership in one single Arab community. While the Northerners and Southerners competed, the trajectories of both pointed toward ethnic unification, since both shared complementary interests in preserving the status quo which they, as the original conquerors and original Muslim populations, had created.

During the generations of the second/eighth century of high Arabness, assimilation also made indigenous Iraqis in urban centers nearly as “Arab” as Northerners and Southerners, and with the changes in military power, the old Northerner-Southerner blocs lost practical function. Abū Nuwās may thus have presented his “B Poem” to a politicized Yemeni faction intent upon establishing its status in the mid-second-/eighth-century Abbasid order, but a century later,

145. See the poetry reported in al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. Ibrāhīm, vol. 10, pp. 48, 127.

146. Diʿbil, *Dīwān*, ed. al-Ashtar, pp. 75–76.

the “B Poem” had become part of nightly entertainment, where, after rounds of drinking, educated guests brought out “Northerner” versus “Southerner” poetry in a ribald environment.¹⁴⁷ Di‘bil’s boasts and lampoons occupy the chronological midpoint between those two poles, and deciding whether he was serious or joking depends on how we choose to interpret the poems and surrounding anecdotes.

What seems prudent to conclude is that the meaning of being genealogically Yemeni was intimately tied to aspirations of being Arab and that both Southerner-ness and Arabness lived with multiple significations. Some were sublime when they colored the identity of proud military factions; others were ridiculous parody. The fact that the names of Southerner tribes and pre-Islamic Southerner heroes were invoked in poetry implies their practical importance, but from the readings adduced here, the carnivalesque of Di‘bil suggests that he intended more of a shared joke than political competition. Like all satirists, Di‘bil necessarily based his allusions on real matters, so his language suggests the existence of a self-aware and proud Southerner community, but it seems remote to consider Di‘bil one of its spokesmen or to believe that the audience of his poetry at the caliphal court cared for the political ramifications as courtly tastes changed and ethnic identity was losing its former significance.

Early Arabic poetry is thus replete with references to community and identity, but its audiences were polyvalent, as the meaning of membership in communities was in flux. Isolating ethnonyms and guessing the contours of ethnic identity can thus furnish misleading inferences. We would like to know what each utterance of communal labels actually meant, and given the current state of knowledge, premodern Arabic literature still withholds from our gaze the full significance of the anecdotes upon which we rely to conceptualize Abbasid society. Arabness had serious and lighthearted meanings, and perhaps the greatest irony of the lampoon satires is their legacy. Later historians took the literary fragments of the Abbasid age at face value and saw fit to use both earnest and flippant expressions together as raw material to imagine Yemeni identity and Yemeni national history.¹⁴⁸ The task for scholars today is to revisit the narratives with questions of meaning in mind to better determine how early Islamic identities were lived and negotiated between what appear to be rather blurry and evolving lines of entertaining jest and serious difference.

147. Abū Nuwās, *Diwān*, ed. Wagner, vol. 5, pp. 497–499.

148. Fourth-/tenth-century historians who accepted the exaggerated Southerner narratives are cited in note 82 above; for modern works endorsing this history, see note 3 above.

APPENDIX

ABŪ NUWĀS

Poem 1(Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, ed. Wagner, vol. 2, pp. 1–11)

- Campsites effaced by the wind and the rain
 Are not for me.
 Nor do I sob over traces of lost abodes:
 They're for hairy hyenas and stripy old mountain goats.
- 5 Nor will I weep for distant, departed travelers,
 When you cry over their absence.
 No sir! For we are the lords of Nā'īṭ,
 The castle of Ghumdān, of sweetly perfumed balconies.
 Al-Ḍaḥḥāk was one of us too—
- 10 He who tamed the wild beasts and the Jinn.
 And our lords subjugated the land,
 For the wants of the needy and the fearful.
 When the Persians deposed Bahrām
 We compelled their lords to restore him
- 15 By our swift advancing cavalry,
 Trotting to battle as a pack of wolves.
 Led by lords from Ḥimyar,
 Proud, of lofty descent
 We beat the Romans at Sātīdamā,
- 20 Death descending on their battalions.
 Peroz took refuge in us that day,
 When battle raged its worst.
 The Qabīṣa came to his defense
 With their spears and razor swords:
- 25 We presented to him a realm
 Of countless multitudes.
 King Qābūs died in our chains
 For his seven years of withholding tithe.
 Truly, we preserved their nobles' girls
- 30 From the grasp of abductors,
 When a captive girl stumbled, she cried
 "Rise up!"—Down with her captor!
 Down with those who imperil their women
 On the day terror sweeps away her friends,

- 35 And with those who flee, fearful of thrusting stabs,
Dreading the death-dealing warrior.
Boast of Qaḥṭān unashamed!
For Ḥātīm the generous is among their glories.
You will find no horsemen like theirs
- 40 On days when heads roll from shoulders:
‘Amr, Qays, the two Ashtars, Zayd of the Horses:
All of them lions in their contests.
You must seek the proud lions of the Ashā‘itha,
The noble lords of the Muhallab.
- 45 And remember the ancient al-Ḥārith,
Who ascended heights words cannot describe.
The Kalb, the Yaḥṣub,
The Umlūk and Alhān of Ḥimyar—all exalted nobles,
And the bright-faced Yazan,
- 50 From whose clans Death launches slaughter.
And the tribe of Ghassān
And those who cloaked in sovereignty, swords in hand.
And Ḥimyar: God’s Qur’ān
Tells of their virtue and rank.
- 55 You can love Quraysh for their most noble one,
And acknowledge their great merit,
But in their genealogy
We have our share:
The Hashemite al-Mahdī’s mother,
- 60 The good Umm Mūsā: she’s ours, so let’s boast!
Should they vie with us in bragging,
They can vaunt but merchants,
Their celebrated deeds are
The profits of traders’ peddling.
- 65 Let’s revile Nizār; cut off their rot,
Pull back the curtain and see their flaws.
Do their women even clean out
What al-Azd’s men left in them?
As for the Tamīm: they never rinsed out
- 70 What the slave dribbled into their drink.
The long and short of their glory
Is that single merit of Ḥājīb’s bow.
A bow! Mere clippings from a Shawḥaṭ tree,
A miserable thing for a nobleman to boast.
- 75 For the Qays ‘Aylān, I will not mention

Any more than the disgrace of the Muḥārib.
 Penis eating is their humiliation,
 A smear on every decrier's lips.
 The Asad found no harm in dog meat,
 80 Those pathetic slaves' camels ride like donkeys.¹⁴⁹
 The Bakr have no defender,
 Save their idiot and the liar.
 While the Taghlib mourn lost campsites,
 Instead of avenging their dead.
 85 Their girl virginity bought dirt cheap,
 Daddy never did put her suitor in his place.
 The al-Nimr's mustaches are flowing,
 But you see dust on their eyebrows,
 The beards of every wretched one of them
 90 Like an old maid's pubic hair.
 Vile soul patches on their faces,
 Right in the sight of all who slap them.
 All that the Qāsiṭ and their cousins can milk
 Are farts they store in their pails.

Poem 2

(Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, ed. Wagner, p. 12)

What a group I had to endure!
 Men with no lordship, no nobility.
 The Quraysh—I tried them out,
 And they're less generous than they claim.
 5 Their money is only for their own,
 Handed among themselves—they band together.
 And the Tamīm are a crowd
 Who regret as soon as they give anything away.
 I cannot absolve the Qays 'Aylān
 10 Of their kin's faults: defective.
 The Wā'ils, I tried them too,
 Ignoble men: they disown their guarantees.
 The whole lot of 'Adnān are rotten,
 Ruined since the days of Adam.
 15 This is all I can say for all of them,
 Let them feign ignorance—they understand.

149. This line bears varied interpretation; see an alternative proposed by al-Šūli: Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, ed. Wagner, vol. 2, pp. 8–9.

Poem 3

(Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, ed. Wagner, vol. 2, pp. 13–20)

The following excerpts lines 6–10 from Abū Nuwās' lengthy poem, which lambastes the Tamīm and Asad and praises the Southerners in formulas similar to poem 1 above.

- When you Tamīmīs come boasting against us:
We change the topic: we'll ask how you eat your lizards.
You foolishly boast against the sons of kings,
While your pee runs down your leg to the ankle.
5 When it's time for great deeds—grab a stick,
And call your goats, you son of a fence maker.
We conquered the earth—east and west,
While your old man was just a fetus.
If you insist on extolling your Ḥājib,
10 I'll crack your front teeth with Sh'ib Jabala.¹⁵⁰

Poem 4: A Man from the Rabī'a

(Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, ed. Wagner, vol. 5, pp. 495–496)

- Leave off the praise of the abode from which
A slave of Ma'add collected tithes.
For we are the lords of Holy Mecca,
The sacred: we drink from its waters!
5 We are the custodians of its blessed house,
The land is ours, as are all those in its uplands.
And ours too are the caliphs—true praise
Is for those who obtain this rank.
These are the Quraysh, lords of ruby-floored mosques
10 And pearled palaces.
Tamīm has great might: if she angers
The quarters of the world quake
In fear; and when Tamīm unsheathes her swords
It's Death you hear talking in their thrusts.
15 The praiser of Qays 'Aylān
Can't cover a tenth of their glory.
Even the craggy mountains fear
When the claws of these hawks descend.
This awesome tribe blinds onlookers
20 In the flashes of their swords.

150. Ḥājib is Ibn Zurāra, a pre-Islamic leader and warrior hero of the Tamīm; Sh'ib Jabala was a pre-Islamic battle in which Ḥājib's clan was routed.

- So praise Ma'add, and boast of its merit
 High above all others.
 And fear not to tear the curtain
 From Yemen, the sons of Qaḥṭān.
- 25 Ma'add was given virtue
 From times of yore 'til today,
 The nobles of Qaḥṭān serve the train of
 Slaves and servants of Ma'add.
 If Ma'add says "Bow down!" they cower in fear.
- 30 If Ma'add says "Be strong!" they flee to their corner.
 Their only boast is aiding us
 In an ancient time faraway.
 They can boast of no victories,
 Save the Queen of Sheba when
- 35 Our Hudhud brought her humiliation
 And her unwilling submission to Solomon.
 She became his subject, and learned
 That there is no kingship like his.
 To him man and the jinn were made to serve
- 40 And the birds and beasts in the river beds.
 This is kingship: and it is for
 The brother of Ma'add, her companion.
 Qaḥṭān's kingship is simply
 Fine garments they weave in the wasteland.
- 45 Tell Qaḥṭān if they crow
 Not to forget their flaws.
 The sum of their merit
 Is diving for pearls from their ships:
 They may chance upon a shiny one
- 50 Like the sun outblazing the stars,
 But there will be no buyers from Qaḥṭān,
 They'll be distressed in their inability,
 Until they come peddling to one of our kings
 For whom money is a trifle, and he gives.
- 55 He will buy their precious pearl,
 A purchase: not forced tribute.
 And he'll fix it to a necklace
 To adorn one of his racing steeds.

DI' BIL

Poem 5

(Di'bil, *Dīwān*, ed. al-Ashtar, pp. 128–129)

- The sites of the tribe are Ghumdān and al-Naḍad,
Ma'rib, the Zafār kingdom and al-Janad.
The lands of the Tubba's, the Lords of Yemen,
Men of stallions, helmets and armor.
5 They inscribed their names upon their conquests,
Neither effaced, nor eroded.¹⁵¹
In Qayrawān they wrote, on the gates of China too,
And at Merv, India and also Soghdiana.

Poem 6

(Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, ed. Wagner, vol. 5, pp. 497–498)

The following excerpt translates lines ascribed to Di'bil by Ibn Durayd about Southerner boasting over the Northerner Tamīm.

- How miserable are the wasteland abodes I crossed
In the Baṭn al-Sarḥ, al-Yansū' and al-Naḍad.
Abandoned campsites of the Tamīm,
A refuge for waste,¹⁵² misery and misfortune.
5 Eaters of lizards, jerboas and the sour colocynth,
They sleep their nights on piled sacks.
[. . .]
Who would vie with them over their bleak homeland,
Who would compete with their life of suffering?
10 Each morning you see a crowd of them
Scraping together dregs of water into pails,
And then you'll meet them, parched again,
Burning with thirst, licking residue beads of water.
Qaṭarī fled from our claws,
15 Like an ass from a ferocious lion.
Tamīm's maidens wish for Muhallab
Wishing it was his sons they bore.
He defended their virtue and their bodies,

151. The permanence of the Yemeni king's writing here seems drawn as a contrast to a common motif in Northerner poetry, where traces of old desert campsites are compared to streaks of effaced writing.

152. *Khanā* usually refers to prostitution or fornication, which may be intended here, but, I select "waste" from the expression *akhmā al-dahr*, "for time to lay waste."

While Aḥnaf lazed with wretched Tamīm.
 20 We are the kings, the sons of kings,
 Mighty protectors, not tyrants.
 We ruled Tamīm in the way of our forefathers,
 The disobedient executed, the rest we led.

Poem 7

(Diʿbil, *Dīwān*, ed. al-Ashtar, pp. 89–95)

The following translates the poem's opening fifteen lines, where Diʿbil affirms his Southerner allegiance and boasts of Southerner glory.

When we raid, we invade Ankara.
 The people are of Mt. Sulmā, to the coast at Jurut,¹⁵³
 What a difference between these places,
 I have traveled far, and weep so much.
 5 Settled in a faraway parcel of land,
 Where even the wind cannot reach.
 There the thirsty cannot reach water,
 Except by urging their camels, and tugging at the rings in their noses.
 I love my people, I have never forsaken them.
 10 They say you are too partisan—what lies!
 I defend their honor and shoot in their contests,
 And I give them rest when their legs tire.
 They have my praise, I honor them,
 Yes! With all my heart can give.
 15 Let me be with my people: try to cut me off,
 But one always reunites with one's nearest kin.
 If not for my tribes, I'd be bereft of succor
 And my blood could never be avenged.
 Defend your closest kin group—
 20 They are dearer than your wives and women.
 My kin are the Ḥimyar and the al-Azd,
 The Kindites and the tribes of ʿUla
 Ever equanimous, but when their anger is piqued
 They draw their swords and smite all wrongdoers.
 25 They stand the most steadfast when ambushed,
 When very few would hold their ground.
 How often have they cheered those in distress,
 And how many hardships they endure, emerging victorious.

153. Sulmā and Aja' were mountains of the Ṭayyi' in al-Ḥijāz near Fadak; Jurut is a town near Sana'a.

Poem 8

(Di'bil, *Dīwān*, ed. al-Ashtar, pp. 253–259)

The following poem is Di'bil's rebuttal to the pro-Northerner poem by an Umayyad-era poet, al-Kumayt ibn Zayd (d. 126/743–744), who was famed for his dislike of Southerners. Although al-Kumayt died before Di'bil's birth, his poem became renowned as an established repertoire piece of anti-Southerner lampoon.

Di'bil's rebuttal is twenty-eight verses; the following translates his pro-Southerner claims that proceed from verse 11 to the end.

- If you count the Jews as yours,
Then your boast is about non-Arabs.
Don't forget the pigs that were
Transmuted with the vile monkeys
5 At Ayla and the Gulf
Where their relics stand, uneffaced.
Southerners wrote on the gates of Merv,
And on the China's gates they wrote too.
Samarqand is named for their Shimr,
10 And they populated Tibet.
And they set the brass monument in the West
At the gate of the sea of sands.
Al-Kumayt has no claim to blood money,
Rather we are lampooned for the assistance we gave!
15 Nizār knows that my people
Were the first to come to the Prophet's aid.
The best of our men were purified,
The love of God is for the pure.
And the verse revealed that those who fight them
20 Will be punished variously at our hands.
They will be humiliated: we will have victory over them,
And the hearts of the believers will be cured.¹⁵⁴
And if you claim that the Prophet of God is yours,
Know that Muḥammad is for all Muslims.
25 From whichever mountain pass Quryash happen to spill out,
Know that they're a Nabaṭī folk.
For the Qasrī brave we killed
Their Walid, Commander of the Faithful
And their Marwān we killed for our Yazīd
30 This is how we deal with criminals.

154. Di'bil inserts a quotation from Qur'an 7:14 into these lines 19–22.

And with our Ibn al-Simṭ we killed
Their Muḥammad ibn Hārūn, al-Amīn.
We killed al-Ḥārith al-Qasrī by force,
He was a true brave, Abū Layla was.
35 Those who kill peasants, know
That our religion is killing caliphs!

Loyal and Knowledgeable Supporters

Integrating Egyptian Elites in Early Islamic Egypt

Petra M. Sijpesteijn

TUCKED away in the “Rome and Ancient Sudan” section in the basement of Cambridge’s Fitzwilliam Museum is a marble gravestone inscribed with an Arabic text. It commemorates a woman who died in the month of Muḥarram in the year 256 AH (December 9, 869–January 7, 870 CE). The gravestone contains beautifully carved floral Kufic with Qur’ānic citations and an avowal of the dead woman’s belief in God, God’s Prophet, and death followed by the afterlife as ordained by God. The quality of the material used, its size, and its workmanship suggest that the family that erected the stone was a fairly affluent one. On the stele, the deceased is identified as Ḥujja daughter of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, *al-fārisī*.¹

Set up 230 years after the arrival of the Arab armies in Egypt, the gravestone offers a good entry point into the topic of this chapter, as a witness and expression of the social and cultural changes that Egyptian society underwent in the first two centuries of Arab rule. Starting with the conquest in the mid-seventh century and continuing into the ninth century, demographic shifts and processes of acculturation comprehensively reconfigured the social landscape, and with it the markers with which it was signposted and by means of which individuals and groups within it identified themselves. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān arrived in Egypt not as the result of a Persian invasion or such but rather as part of the waves of migrants moving from the eastern part of the Islamic Empire in the early ninth century CE. These newcomers, like al-Ḥujja’s family, apparently, often ended up on the upper rungs of the socioeconomic ladder. This was partially the result of the increased role that Turko-Persian military and governing cadres had started to play throughout the caliphate, but in Egypt, the old Arab-Muslim elites seem to have suffered especially badly as a result of the internal fighting that had afflicted the province from the end of the eighth century. The identification of

1. The stele has *الفارسي* written with defective long ā and without diacritical dots, allowing also for a reading of *الفرشي*. The gravestone was donated to the museum by Frederick William Green (1869–1949), Honorary Keeper of Antiquities at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (1908–1949), probably in 1914. Inventory number E.57.1914. For a translation, see Martin, *Stelae*, p. 185. This work was supported by the European Research Council under Grant number 683194.

al-fārisī, “the one from Fars,” that is used for our ‘Abd al-Raḥmān is, in this sense, a typically ninth-century phenomenon. Against the background of a developing regional identity, increased integration between Arab-Muslim settlers and the Egyptian population stimulated the use of religious and ethnic markers to light the increasingly undifferentiated ethno-religious murk and distinguish between the different social groups.

What was the role of local elites in these processes, and how were they affected by it? This chapter explores how Egyptian elites—broadly defined as those occupying the positions of economic and political influence, usually through a combination of land ownership and office holding—fared in the first three centuries of Muslim rule, who constituted them, and how they related to the central authorities in Fuṣṭāṭ and their own local constituencies. By examining the political-administrative, economic, military, and social roles played by the members of Egypt’s elite under Arab rule, and how these changed, I want to understand how these groups adjusted to their new functions, what possibilities were opened up for them, and what opportunities were closed off. Building on my earlier work into how post-conquest administrative measures supported the establishment of Muslim rule in Egypt, this chapter examines the process from the point of view of indigenous Egyptian elites rather than the conquerors’ perspective. It follows this development into the ninth century C.E.

In the context of this chapter, local “Egyptian” elites constitute different groups, some coexisting from the time of the conquest onward, others arriving later. First, there are the Christians and Jews who inhabited the Roman province of Egypt at the time of the arrival of the Arab conquering armies in the mid-seventh century. The indigenous Egyptians continued to play an important role in the administrative and socioeconomic life of the province, although their position changed over time. To these should be added the Arab and other groups who arrived with the conquerors and settled in Egypt, eventually forming a settler class of what has been called an Egyptian provincial elite, or, in Arabic, the *wujūh*.² Initially urban-based, but from the second half of the eighth century also settling in the countryside, these Arab families and their associates formed the backbone of the administrative power structure in the province into the early ninth century.

Arriving in the military entourage of governors appointed to Egypt, Turko-Persian soldiers settled permanently in the province. From the late eighth century they played a role in local military upheavals.³ Officials and scribes, but also merchants, pilgrims, and adventurers, settled from the east in Egypt in the ninth century. Turko-Persian immigrants took over the central positions in the Egyptian administration, pushing aside Arab-Egyptian families, who then allied themselves with local acculturated Egyptian elites with whom they shared a locally based identity and socioeconomic interests. Already earlier on, however,

2. Kennedy, “Central Government.”

3. Kennedy, “Egypt.”

non-Muslim administrators had been brought to Egypt from other provinces, most notably Syria, in order to serve the Muslim chancery.

CO-OPTING LOCAL ELITES

The mid-seventh-century Arab conquest of Egypt had, not surprisingly, very significant repercussions for members of Egypt's pre-conquest provincial elite and their role in the country's structures of power.

The continued employment of Egyptian district officers to run the provincial administration ensured the smooth takeover of the country that appears in our sources. The ability to draw upon the local knowledge and contacts of these groups, as well as their authority and leverage in their respective communities, was essential for the success of the new regime. With a small coterie of invaders superimposed on a preexisting power system, disruption had to be minimized in the interest of keeping the wheels turning. The precarious nature of Arab dominance, especially during the first decades, was exacerbated by internal strife and civil war, as well as threats and attacks from outside, most notably ongoing Byzantine aggression, but also the Nubian resistance in the south, which occupied the Arabs' attention and resources for the better part of the seventh century.⁴

Yet common sense—not to mention every available historical precedent—suggests that even the least intrusive conquest is still a conquest. The Arab conquerors necessarily left their mark on the administrative and military organization of Egypt as soon as they established control in the province (see below). A new Arab elite also had to be kept on board through financial and other inducements—how did these relate to local elite interests? Indeed, ambitious building projects to construct the capital *Fuṣṭāṭ* were initiated within years of the Arab takeover, with an administrative network laid down to support the effort.⁵ Moreover, as Arab rule became more secure, scope for more far-reaching goals opened up, consolidating and extending the Arabs' hold. Understanding how the Arabs achieved this, while retaining the cooperation of local notables, is key to our understanding of their success in moving from a conquest society to a Muslim empire.

To appreciate how the Arabs managed to establish their rule over Egypt so successfully, the response of Egyptian local elites needs to be taken into account as well. Maintaining their position under altered circumstances, seizing new opportunities, and, finally, amalgamating with their Arab rulers to serve their shared interests, Egyptian local elites were actively involved in the shaping of the administrative management and social organization of the province. While some

4. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping*, pp. 58–60. The same model applies to seventh-century Jazīra. Cf. Robinson, *Empire*, pp. 33–62.

5. Morelli, *Corpus Papyrorum Raineri*, vol. XXX; Legendre, "Neither Byzantine nor Islamic?"

Egyptians rose in the state service, others lost out. Both groups and their efforts are visible in the documentation. Comparative models from empire studies and regime change in the premodern Middle East can be used to study these phenomena,⁶ but the circumstances of the mid-seventh-century Arab conquests, the management of resources, and the role of (constructed) Arab identity in subsequent centuries deserve special attention.

SOURCES

For the role of local elites in the shifting social historical context, literary sources contain little useful information. Mainly concerned with events occurring at the urban courts, they typically attribute complex historical processes to the agency of single individuals. Produced at the political and intellectual centers, such literary accounts also pay disproportionate attention to religious issues and confessional politics, distorting the social reality of daily interaction and the strategic choices between groups.⁷ In addition, the Arabic literary sources were produced several centuries after the events they report, and while they doubtlessly contain information that dates back to this period, it is inevitably mixed with later perspectives and prejudices. The documentary sources, mainly Coptic, Greek, and Arabic papyri and ostraca, as well as Arabic inscriptions in the form of graffiti and epitaphs, serve a very different goal. Fulfilling a function that is limited in space and time, their audience is circumscribed by their immediate environment, specific applications, and targeted circle of users. That does not mean that this source base constitutes a uniform and equally spread body of evidence. Besides a preservation bias stemming from the vagaries of survival, the connection between media, text genre, and the way in which social relations, including self-identifications, appear should be taken into account when assessing the value of their evidence.

Egypt is exceptionally rich in documentary sources. Its uninhabited dry desert sands preserved papyrus documents for thousands of years, until they began to be excavated on a large scale from the end of the nineteenth century onward. Collections in the Middle East, Europe, and North America contain thousands of documents, preserving the written residue of an enormous variety of day-to-day activities and concerns. Egypt's antiquities attracted widespread attention early on, and the limited inhabited areas along the Nile valley were explored extensively, especially once the interest of European collectors and scholars had been sparked. Although most visitors were less interested in the artifacts of the Islamic period, many objects ended up in collections collaterally. The focus of exploration lay on deserted areas, where occupation was discontinued in the later

6. Crawford, ed., *Regime Change*.

7. Papaconstantinou, "Between *Umma* and *Dhimma*"; Robinson, *Empire*, pp. 30–32.

Muslim period, while papyri are hardly preserved in the wetter areas of the Delta. This has caused uneven patterns of survival, with the overwhelming majority of evidence originating in the southern part of the country and from smaller provincial centers, while the cities that continued to be occupied, which were also the political centers in the early period, have yielded little written material of value.⁸

The challenge with these sources is to move from the micro level of the documentary record to the macro level of the history of the Muslim Empire. How can the gravestones, letters, and receipts of individual Egyptians, who remain otherwise anonymous in the written record, connect to wider historical processes? How can the experience of the Arab conquests of the mid-seventh century and the subsequent transformation into the Muslim caliphate be connected to the dynamics of political transformation and empire building? As the position of local elite groups shifted along with their interrelationships, the use and character of (self-)identification markers in the documentary sources to delineate the different groups operating in Egypt changed as well. How can these identifiers be connected to the different stages in the establishment and development of a Muslim state in Egypt?

Another concern is how to combine different sources. Gravestones and official inscriptions are conditioned by concerns different from those of graffiti, while documents, although falling in different categories, ranging from official correspondence to private letters, have other parameters again. How do the self-identifying categories of these different media compare, and how do they relate to literary texts which served different goals and which in some cases were produced centuries later?

THE CONQUEST: INDIVIDUAL SUCCESS STORIES?

As a general rule, regime change means the replacement of the highest-placed administrators, while offering opportunities for lower strata to enter the new imperial structure.⁹ The Arab conquest of the Near East seems, similarly, to have offered opportunities to enterprising members of local elites. Opportunities might, in fact, have favored this group even more, as the Persian invasion that took place a decade or so before the Arab takeover seems to have dispersed the international elites of the late Byzantine Empire, those families of extreme wealth

8. Note the exception of the recently discovered material from Fustāṭ, dating, however, mostly from the late second/eighth and third/ninth century onward (Sobhi Bouderbala and Khaled Younes are preparing a publication of this material). See also Denoix, "Les ostraca"; Younes, "Arabic Letters."

9. Similarly, the dissolution of the Roman Empire in western Europe offered opportunities to local elites whose position improved, as they could play a role at local courts and were no longer subjected to the great aristocrats who operated on an empire-wide stage. Brown, *Through the Eye*, pp. 3–30, 394, 398; Heather, *The Fall*, p. 437; Reimitz, "The Historian," p. 42.

who possessed large estates extending over multiple provinces while holding important positions at the court in Constantinople.¹⁰

The literary record does indeed contain anecdotal evidence of individual Egyptians who joined the Arab army during the conquest. John of Nikiou (fl. late seventh century) mentions several Egyptians in the Byzantine army who converted and joined the Arab campaigns.¹¹ Another crucial figure who appears in the Arab sources is Abū al-Muhājir ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Balhībī. Captured by the Arab troops in the Delta, he played a critical role in gaining control of the province in the Umayyad takeover. He was rewarded with a high position in the army by Egypt’s conqueror and first governor, ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ (d. 664). As ‘arīf, he was responsible for recording changes in the population, births and deaths for the diwan, as well as for the distribution of stipends, the ‘*aṭā*,’ on the basis of the diwan.¹²

These figures are not known from the documentary record, and we have little information on how the process of inclusion of such high-profile *mawālī* in the Arab army worked at this time. On the contrary, everything suggests that the Arab army was run by Arabs. *Mawālī*, converts or freedmen, did, of course, serve, and some of them received stipends as high as those of *muhajirūn* soldiers, but the leading positions were reserved for the conquerors, not for the locals.¹³ At the local level, Egyptian administrators were stripped of all military responsibilities, which were taken over by amirs. Assisted by contingents of soldiers, these Arab army officials were placed throughout the province and also fulfilled administrative and financial duties (see the following section).¹⁴

POWERFUL LANDHOLDERS

In general, there is no indication in the documentary record of Egyptians filling the central positions in the immediate post-conquest Muslim civil administration of the province, while all military responsibility was removed from them. At a lower level, Egyptian elite members continued to play a role holding important executive positions in the administration and fiscal infrastructure. These “little big men,” to borrow Peter Brown’s formulation, would become the main support of Muslim rule in Egypt, initially—that is, during the first two generations—as executives of the new regime and, finally, dressed in Arabo-Islamic guise, as participants.¹⁵ Similarly, the central and provincial chanceries were heavily

10. For Syria, see Foss, “Syria”; Kennedy, “Syrian Elites.” For Egypt, see Banaji, “On the Identity.”

11. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping*, p. 57 n. 60.

12. Bouderbala, “Mawālī,” pp. 141–142.

13. Kennedy, *Armies*, pp. 31–32, 44–45; Hasson, “Mawālī”; Onimus, “Les mawālī en Égypte,” pp. 89–90; Crone, “Pay.”

14. Morelli, *Corpus Papyrorum Raineri*, vol. XXX, introduction.

15. Brown, *Through the Eye*, pp. 3–30, 398. For the crucial role of Egypt’s administrative functionaries at the village level for running the province, see also Papaconstantinou, “Great Men,” p. 182.

dependent on the skills of Egyptian scribes and secretaries. The Arabs' continued reliance on members of Egypt's local elites does not mean that there were no personnel changes. A practical approach was taken, aimed at providing expertise, capacity, and stability in the form of loyal servants in order to ensure the new regime security on the one hand and a steady income on the other. Ideas about who was best able to provide such loyalty, stability, and expertise changed over time, leading to subsequent administrative adjustments.

The social-economic class that fed the Arab administration had developed a crucial role in Egypt's administration in the late Byzantine period. With the late Roman changes in the organization of the public, city-based administration, and the subsequent entry of elite Egyptians into the Byzantine imperial service, income was generated that could be used to accumulate substantial landholdings back in Egypt. In this way, large country estates were formed whose owners took over most of the province's civic duties, such as tax collection, the maintenance of order, and public works, through a fusion of public and private power. The dukes, in charge of the four larger districts of Egypt, and the pagarchs who headed the fifty or so Byzantine pagarchies, the smaller administrative subdistricts that made up the Egyptian province, belonged to the same class of landholders but formed, it seems, a lower economic stratum. Their jurisdiction incorporated the towns and cities in the province but did not extend over the mega-estates that remained independent. The pagarchs and dukes wielded significant economic and military power, which was increased under Justinian's sixth-century reorganization of the empire.¹⁶ The same families kept these offices in their hands for generations, building up important local constituencies, reinforced by the economic leverage that derived from their agrarian enterprises.¹⁷

The Arab takeover does not seem to have resulted in large-scale confiscation or redistribution of land—in fact, there are no reports of estates or farms being occupied by the conquerors outside the fortress of Babylon and the newly founded capital, Fustāt. Large estates (the *oikoi* “houses” and *ousia* of the Greek papyri) continued to operate as independent fiscal units in the possession of Egyptian families in the Arab period, and their owners continued to play an important role in the (financial) administration of the province.¹⁸

In fact, there are plenty of indications that the Arabs not only left many of the same officers in place immediately following the conquest but also continued to rely on the same kind of landholding families to fill the local offices for the next decades.¹⁹ After gaining nominal control over the province, the Arabs replaced

16. Palme, “Imperial Presence.”

17. Banaji, *Agrarian Change*; Gascou, “Grands domaines”; Sarris, *Economy*; Ruffini, *Social Networks*; Hickey, *Wine*.

18. Sijpesteijn, “Landholding Patterns.”

19. For a list of Christian pagarchs who were also landholders in Arab Egypt, see Banaji, *Agrarian Change*, p. 153 n. 120.

several dukes, as is recorded in narrative and documentary sources.²⁰ The dukes appointed by the Arabs seem to have originated from the same local background as their predecessors, and some might have held the identical position before.

One level lower in the administrative hierarchy, the pagarchs continued to operate as family enterprises under Arab rule, forming dynasties of officials controlling the fiscal and administrative organization in the areas where they possessed land. The two brothers, Christophoros and Theodorakios, who succeeded their father as officials in charge of the *Ihnās/Herakleopolite* pagarchy, are examples. Their office coincides with the Arab conquest of Egypt.²¹ Papas, the pagarch of *Edfū/Appolonis Ano* in the 660s/670s, had succeeded his father, Liberios, as pagarch of the same district.²² This pattern continued among Christian pagarchs in the eighth century. The pagarch *Basileios*, who headed the district of *Ishqūh/Aphrodito* in 709–710, also came from a family of administrator-landowners; his brother headed a neighboring district.²³ Other examples are the father-and-son pagarchs of the *Fayyūm/Arsinoe*, *Stephanos* son of *Cyrus* and *Paul* son of *Stephanos*.²⁴

While the same class of landholding families continued to form the local administrative organization, their responsibilities, as well as their relation vis-à-vis the central authorities, changed profoundly. First of all, a new class of Arab officials filled the more central positions at the capital. Important functionaries, such as the governor (*wālī*, amir), head of police (*ṣāḥib al-shurṭa*), head of finances (*ṣāḥib al-kharāj*), and chief judge (*qāḍī*), were appointed from local Arab families.²⁵ Second, for about one decade following the conquest, Arab military leaders, amirs, were appointed in parallel to the dukes and pagarchs in charge of security. These amirs were also heavily involved in the administrative and fiscal administration of the districts. They can be seen in the sources giving orders to collect new kinds of taxes, organize, and supervise communal deliveries and taking other measures related to the organization of the district.²⁶

The role of the pagarchs in the taxation system also changed significantly. The system of tax collection, with communal tax demand notes sent to communities of taxpayers, such as villages, monasteries, and estates, remained in place throughout this period. At the level of the community, the taxes were divided

20. John of Nikiou, *Chronicle*, trans. Charles, CXX.29, pp. 192–193; Carrié, “Séparation,” pp. 118–120.

21. Rupprecht and Kießling, eds., *Sammelbuch*, vol. 6, no. 9576, dated 22/643; and discussion in Morelli, *Corpus Papyrorum Raineri*, vol. XXX, introduction.

22. Rémondon, ed., *Papyrus grecs*.

23. Bell, ed., *Greek Papyri*, vol. 4.

24. Banaji, *Agrarian Change*, p. 153 n. 120. For Paul’s landholdings, see Sijpesteijn and Worp, eds., *Corpus Papyrorum Raineri*, vol. VIII, no. 71; Foss, “Egypt under Mu’āwiya, Part II,” p. 265 n. 35.

25. To what extent these positions were introduced in the decades following the establishment of Arab rule is uncertain. See, for the *ṣāḥib al-kharāj*, Legendre, “Neither Byzantine nor Islamic?” pp. 15–16; for the *qāḍī*, Tillier, “Qadis’ Justice,” 41–45.

26. Morelli, *Corpus Papyrorum Raineri*, vol. XXII; Morelli, *Corpus Papyrorum Raineri*, vol. XXX, introduction; Legendre, “Neither Byzantine nor Islamic?” pp. 7–9.

among the individual taxpayers, supervised by officials of the Arab administration. Tax receipts and tax demand notes written in Greek and Coptic were issued by such local Christian Egyptian officials for the pagarchs. Immediately following the conquest, the role of the pagarchs in this process was pared back. Whereas the pagarchs had determined the amounts of taxes imposed on the different fiscal communities in their districts, under the Arabs, these amounts were decided centrally in Fuṣṭāṭ. The demand notes for the different communities were issued in the name of the Arab governor or his immediate subordinates, the dukes. The pagarch's role was merely to distribute the demand notes to the relevant communities and to supervise the collection and transport of the taxes to the capital.²⁷

Visible in the record at the beginning of Arab rule, the Arab amirs disappear in the early Umayyad period. This change was part of the administrative reorganization undertaken by Mu'āwiya (r. 661–680) but also shows a first step in the Arab extension of control over the regular administrative and financial positions in the province.²⁸ The administrative and financial tasks of the amir are again taken over by the dukes, who from the second half of the seventh century often have Arab names.²⁹ A Greek papyrus of 669 attests the presence of an Arab-manned, fixed, state-controlled rapid mail service in the Fayyūm, which forms another example of an expanding Arab infrastructure in the Egyptian countryside.³⁰

MAINTAINING A SEPARATION

In spite of an overwhelming sense of continuity of daily life after the Arab conquest of Egypt, the new order immediately made itself felt through the introduction of a new language, as well as new fiscal, military, and administrative institutions.³¹ Nevertheless, sound managerial judgment and their precarious military position inside and outside the country initially discouraged the Arabs from undue interference in the way the province was run.

The Arab presence in the Egyptian countryside in the seventh century was consequently limited, restricted to temporary stays and yielding little interaction with the indigenous population.³² Soldiers and other officials traveled or

27. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping*, pp. 88–89.

28. On the administrative changes that occur with the establishment of Mu'āwiya's caliphate, see, for Egypt: Legendre, "Islamic Conquest," pp. 239–240; Foss, "Egypt under Mu'āwiya, Part I"; Foss, "Egypt under Mu'āwiya, Part II"; Bruning, "Rise," pp. 159–161; and for Syria, Foss, "Mu'āwiya's State."

29. Legendre, "Neither Byzantine nor Islamic?" p. 11.

30. Rupprecht and Kießling, eds., *Sammelbuch*, vol. 6, no. 9232.

31. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State*, pp. 65–81.

32. By far the majority of Greek and Coptic sources of this period lack any reference to an Arab presence. The annual grazing of the *jund's* animals in the spring in preparation for the raiding season as an "occupation of the Egyptian rural space directly following the conquest" is discussed by Bouderbala, "Murtaba' al-jund."

were temporarily settled throughout the province for security and administrative tasks, while others visited for commercial reasons. As we have seen, Arab army commanders, amirs, with their contingents of Arab soldiers, were initially settled throughout the province. The same soldiers continued to work for indigenous Egyptian administrators in the second half of the seventh century.³³ Moreover, the responsibilities and relations vis-à-vis the central authorities of local administrators changed markedly after the conquest. Arabic was used to communicate with these indigenous officials, but, crucially, Greek and Coptic remained fully integrated into the administrative system for several centuries to come.³⁴ Egyptian administrators and their bureaucracies could thus continue to operate in their own languages, with all correspondence from the capital being transmitted in Arabic and Greek. In other words, there was no need for local administrators to Arabicize in order to operate fully in the political-economic system. Similarly, local administrators continued to originate in the class of the indigenous, Egyptian landed aristocracy with economic ties to the areas they administered.

For strategic and ideological reasons, but also from a socioeconomic point of view, there were good reasons to keep a distance between the conquered and the conquerors. The Arab soldiers were occupied with the continuous conquest for which purpose they remained settled in garrisons. In keeping with a decision attributed to the second caliph ‘Umar b.al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 634–644), the conquered territories were left in the hands of the subject people. The income generated by these lands was distributed among the conquerors via the diwan that recorded all those entitled to a stipend based on their social place in the Muslim community. The system kept the Arabs free to fight. The privileged register that determined the level of the stipends was well guarded, with the aim of maintaining the stipend for a limited group of conquerors. The system came, however, more and more under pressure from immigration, natural expansion, and conversion, as ever more people demanded inclusion.³⁵

Such a separation between conquerors and subject people prevented confrontations but was surely also motivated by the Arabs’ fear of losing a distinct identity among the majority Egyptians at a time when their religious ideas and practices do not seem to have fully crystallized.³⁶ In general, the new rulers abstained from imposing their religion upon or discriminating against non-Muslim Egyptians, or even formulating strict demarcations between themselves

33. Legendre, “Neither Byzantine nor Islamic?” p. 10.

34. This does not differ from language policy in Egypt after other conquests. See, for example, the initial continuation of the use of Demotic in the Ptolemaic administration, where Greek became the main administrative language some 150 years after Alexander the Great’s takeover of the province. Thompson, “Literacy.” I examine the multilingual language policy in the early Muslim empire in a forthcoming publication (“Did the Muslim Empire have a Multilingual Language Policy?”).

35. Sijpesteijn, “Army Economics”; Morimoto, “Diwāns”; Mikhail, “Notes.”

36. Kister, “Do Not Assimilate.”

and other religious communities, participating, rather, in the religiously diverse late antique landscape by adding yet another confessional community.³⁷

This situation is reflected in the terms used to describe the conquerors and the Egyptians in the documentary record. The paucity of attestations of specific terms and titles, as opposed to personal names, however, also reflects how limited interaction was on a day-to-day basis. There was little need to indicate the separate nature of these groups. In those cases where the two populations met, an important distinction between Arab and Egyptian self-identification appears in the way individuals are denominated in the documents. The contrast is clearest in bilingual texts but can also be detected in individual Arabic, Greek, and Coptic texts which clearly reflect different scribal traditions. Arabic texts identify individuals by their names and patronymics, while in the Greek and Coptic ones, titles are used for classification.³⁸ The Arabs are identified in Greek papyri as *sarakēnoi* and *m(ō)agaritai* (Ar. *muhājirūn*).³⁹ In Arabic papyri, they appear, again, not with a generic term but rather as followers of a specific commander: ‘*Abd Allāh ibn Jābir wa-aṣḥābuhu*.⁴⁰ *Mu’minūn*, believers, is used in Greek and Arabic texts as a technical term referring to the Muslim administration but not for individuals.⁴¹ Tribal affiliations occur in specific circumstances, for example, in legal documents to identify witnesses and in lists of individuals for administrative purposes.⁴² One Arabic epitaph, dated AH 31/652 CE, preserves the name of the deceased as ‘*Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Khayr al-Ḥajrī*.⁴³

Increased interaction and the establishment of an Arab presence in the Egyptian countryside postdate significant administrative Islamicizing and Arabicizing reforms dating to the turn of the eighth century. The adjectives used to describe Egypt’s inhabitants in the papyri and in inscriptions show how the relationship between the Arab-Muslim rulers and the local population had changed, as will be discussed below.

AGENTS OF ISLAMICIZATION AND ARABIZATION

Important changes took place around 700 CE in the organization of the administration of Egypt, with direct effects on the position of Egyptian local administrators. Most important, the middle administrative layer of the dukes disappeared, while the lower-echelon offices of the pagarchs were reshaped, with a new class of Muslim officials taking over the administration at this lower level of the province. The goal of the reforms was to introduce a thoroughly Arabicized and Islamicized

37. Papaconstantinou, “Between *Umma* and *Dhimma*,” pp. 134–139; Hoyland, “New Documentary Texts,” pp. 409–410; Hoyland, “Reflections”; Robinson, *Empire*, p. 30.

38. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping*, pp. 67–68.

39. Legendre, “Neither Byzantine nor Islamic?” pp. 7–8; Lindstedt, “Muhājirūn”; Hoyland, *In God’s Path*, p. 102.

40. Rupprecht and Kießling, eds., *Sammelbuch*, vol. 6, no. 9576, dated 22/643.

41. Bruning, “Legal Sunna.” See also below, for the meaning of *amir al-mu’minin*.

42. Khan, “Arabic Legal Document,” dating to 707; Sijpesteijn, “Seventh/Eighth-Century List.”

43. Hawary and Rached, eds., *Catalogue*, vol. 1, no. 1.

bureaucracy, whose loyalty lay with the central authorities rather than with their local constituencies. Clearly related to the empire-wide reforms designed to centralize control and increase Arabicization and Islamicization, the measures were also aimed at tightening administrative grip and improving efficiency, thereby increasing the fiscal income from the provinces.⁴⁴ At the village level non-Muslim Egyptians continued to be responsible as scribes, headmen and tax-collectors. Administrative reforms nevertheless had an impact, for example on how Coptic tax-receipts were written.⁴⁵

As part of the program of reforms, land was measured, and surveys of cattle and censuses of inhabitants were conducted. A better registration of taxable goods and people facilitated the raising of higher taxes from the indigenous population. Other measures, such as the introduction of safe conducts, tax seals, and a detailed registration of the population, enabled the close scrutiny of taxpayers and their movements. The measures were successful, as reports of a great surplus in the treasury at the beginning of the eighth century seem to indicate. Complaints of heavy taxes, especially in Christian sources, suggest, too, that the fiscal impositions were implemented successfully from the point of view of the fisc.⁴⁶

The pagarchs in charge of the execution of these measures had Arab names. They operated in Arabic, and even the Greek documents issued by their offices draw upon an Arabic model for the formulation and style used,⁴⁷ with Arabic-Islamic seals and other signs of identity. At the same time, Greek and Coptic continued to be used in the chancery. This change in personnel did not take place overnight and non-muslim personnel continued to serve the Muslim administration in Egypt in its lowest echelons.

The presence of the new Arab-Muslim officials is signaled by a new terminology in Greek and Arabic to describe their status. They were called by the title *epikeimenos*, a term in use for all sorts of functionaries, with a general meaning of supervisor, rather than the earlier *pagarchos*.⁴⁸ The Arabic terminology changes as well: while the Christian pagarchs are described as *ṣāhib* plus a place name, that is, as owner or manager of a place, the Arab pagarchs were called *ʿamil al-amīr ʿalā* followed by a place name, “agent of the governor (appointed) over . . .” Besides being simply a different word, the formulation also shows another aspect of these new local administrators, that they were loyal representatives of the governor (amir), exactly the kind of faithful servants the reforms aimed to put in place.⁴⁹ Their title might also refer to the changed relationship between

44. Robinson, *ʿAbd al-Malik*.

45. Cromwell, *Recording Village Life*, chapter 6; Cromwell, “A Village Scribe,” pp. 137–138.

46. Al-Kindī (d. 350/961), *Kitāb al-Wulāt wa kitāb al-quḍāt*, ed. Guest, p. 59.

47. For example, the introduction of sequences of sentences each preceded by *kai* (“and”) mirroring the Arabic style of endless series of sentences connected with *wa* (I owe this observation to Federico Morelli). Cf. Garosi, “Cross-Cultural Parameters,” pp. 75–79.

48. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping*, p. 120. Legendre, “Neither Byzantine nor Islamic?,” p. 14, argues that the *epikeimenos* took over the tasks from the dukes and were Arabs.

49. Legendre, “Neither Byzantine nor Islamic?” p. 15. Cf. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping*, p. 103 n. 382.

the pagarchs and the land under their jurisdiction. None of these new pagarchs is known to have belonged to the class of estate holders from which the previous Christian class of pagarchs was chosen.⁵⁰

Without owning estates in the areas they governed, unlike their Christian predecessors, these Arab pagarchs lacked a local independent power base. Their being moved around through different offices during their careers, generally along a promotional track, from smaller to larger districts and into more significant offices, added to the pagarchs' dependency on the central authorities to which they were personally beholden.⁵¹ There is also no indication, at least not at this stage, of families controlling the offices of the pagarchies.

Another reform involved the role of the pagarch in the fiscal administration and the relation between the pagarchs and individual taxpayers. While the role of Christian pagarchs had been reduced to that of little more than a messenger, transmitting the demand notes for fiscal communities issued at the central bureaucracy, Arab pagarchs exercised this responsibility themselves. The Arab pagarchs thus write that *they* have divided the amount that the whole district is told to pay among the different communities in the pagarchy. At the same time, the tax demand notes for individual taxpayers were issued in name of the pagarch as well, rather than that of the lower village administrators. All tax demand notes sent in the name of pagarchs to individual taxpayers come from Arab pagarchs' offices.⁵² In other words, more responsibilities were placed in the hands of this new class of administrators.

Who are these new-style pagarchs? They clearly operate in a very different administrative tradition and have a background unlike that of their Christian predecessors. Comparative studies indicate that the first group to join a new regime through acculturation are exactly the same kind of provincial middle-elite members with administrative positions as our Christian-Egyptian landowning pagarchs.⁵³ For early-eighth-century Egypt, however, the situation seems to have been slightly different, with a new group being brought in, rather than a local group being elevated, to serve the Arab administration.

The first Arab-named pagarch is Atias (Ar. 'Aṭīyya) son of Ju'ayd. Atias first appears in 698 CE as pagarch in Upper Egypt. His Hellenized name and *nomen gentilicium* might indicate (descent from migrants with) a background in the Byzantine Levant, where Arabs had been settled for several generations and had become thoroughly integrated into the Greek administrative culture. Such a background, providing him with administrative experience and Arab stock, would have made him an ideal candidate to fill the place of an Egyptian local administrator.⁵⁴ There are other indications of a Levantine Byzantine Greek

50. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping*, p. 205 n. 468.

51. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping*, pp. 103–104, 201–206.

52. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping*, p. 203 n. 460.

53. Clarysse, "Greeks"; Brown, *Through the Eye*, p. 398.

54. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping*, pp. 201–202.

presence in Egypt under Umayyad rule. New Greek (from Latin) administrative technical terms that are attested in Egypt in the second half of the seventh century point to an influence on the administration from Byzantine Syria.⁵⁵ A population movement from the Levant is suggested as well by the onomastic evidence in the Nessana papyri. A new group of Arabs settled in the garrison in the Negev desert, whose Arabic names are not Hellenized as were those of the people who occupied the site in the pre-Islamic period.⁵⁶

Since their socioeconomic and linguistic background as well as their *modus operandi* were very different, it is unlikely that the new, Arab-named pagarchs were (converted) Egyptians from the same class of landowners that had provided the previous generations of local administrators. The new pagarchs do not own estates, nor do they form administrative dynasties. Moreover, there is no indication in our sources (for example, through the use of double Greek and Arabic names) that these officials have a local background. Quite the opposite: even in Greek documents, their Arab names appear transcribed often in different ways, indicating their alien credentials.⁵⁷ On the other hand, the new administrators constitute a fully formed, rather than experimental, system of organizing the administration, based on experience gained elsewhere. In fact, there had not been a need or much opportunity for Egyptian landholding elites of the countryside to gain the necessary proficiency in Arabic or understanding of Arab culture at this stage. They were executors of a policy made much higher up. At most, they were asked to justify their actions in the capital, but their input, in spite of literary accounts of Egyptian local expertise being commandeered by the Arabs, seems otherwise to have remained very small.⁵⁸ Nor was there a language policy that promoted the use of Arabic in the administration.⁵⁹

So while the Egyptian land-based elites had remained loyal to their ancestry and the linguistic, economic, and social structures that underlay their authority, because there had been no need or much opportunity to change their ways, the new group of Arabicized (Muslim) bureaucrats, whose loyalty to the central authorities was based on their close relation to them, represented an entirely new style of governmental and administrative organization. Their origins should be sought with Arab or Arabicized, Byzantine-trained administrators who established close alliances with the Muslim rulers either at the center of the caliphate in Syria or at the provincial capital Fustāṭ.⁶⁰

55. Morelli, "Gonachia"; Sijpesteijn, *Shaping*, pp. 69–71.

56. Al-Jallad, "Arabic."

57. See, for example, in the case of 'Aṭiyya, Sijpesteijn, *Shaping*, pp. 201–202.

58. See, for example, the Egyptian Christian "knowledgeable old man" who is often presented in Arabic chronicles to speak to Egypt's conqueror and governor 'Amr b. al-ʿĀṣ to explain how the province is best run.

59. As there was in Ptolemaic Egypt, for example, with tax breaks for those, such as teachers, who facilitated the use of Greek; see Verhoogt, "Administration."

60. Christian Arabs played a role in the conquest armies and could be found as wives and mothers of caliphs at the center of power. See Fück, "Kalb b. Wabara"; Dixon, "Kalb b. Wabara. II."; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*.

Another case of personnel change in the Arab chancery similarly shows the importance to the Arab authorities at this time of securing loyal administrative supporters with close associations to the Arab rulers. At his installation as caliph, al-Walīd (r. 86–117/705–735) is said to have ordered his governor in Egypt, ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Malik (in office 86–90/705–709), who was also his brother, son of the previous caliph ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 65–86/685–705), to transfer the diwans, the fiscal registers, from Coptic to Arabic.⁶¹ Long considered to have been a measure aimed at general Arabicization of the administration, this seems more likely to have signaled the installation of a new group of administrators to support a regime change, whether or not accompanied by administrative reorganization. This becomes clear when we examine the backgrounds of the officials heading the diwan and their political and ethnic-religious affiliations. The chiefs of the Egyptian diwan, Athanasios, originally from Edessa, and Isaac, an Egyptian Christian, were appointments of the previous governor ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Marwān (in office 65–86/685–705), brother and fierce competitor of the caliph ‘Abd al-Malik.⁶² At the death of his brother, ‘Abd al-Malik sent his son, the aforementioned ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Malik, as governor to Egypt, ordering him “to remove all traces of his uncle ‘Abd ‘Azīz as heir apparent and to replace every official and appointee (appointed by ‘Abd al-‘Azīz).”⁶³ ‘Abd al-Malik died only five months later, and his son al-Walīd was appointed caliph. Together with the command to translate the diwan, al-Walīd also ordered the replacement of Athanasios and Isaac, the two secretaries in charge of the diwan, replacing them with a certain Ibn Yarbū‘ al-Fazārī from Ḥims, a *mawlā* of the Banū al-Dhiyāl.⁶⁴ This appointment seems to have been a continuation of the changes of personnel that were supposed to prevent any future claims to the caliphal throne by ‘Abd al-‘Azīz’s descendants. Accounts of contemporary measures in the chanceries of Syria and Iraq make the association with a change in personnel even more explicit, with representatives of the previous tradition of secretaries lamenting that they, or some of them, would lose their jobs due to this measure.⁶⁵ Whenever the names of new heads of the diwan are mentioned, they invariably are also *mawālī*.⁶⁶

61. Al-Kindī, *Kitāb al-Wulāt wa kitāb al-quḍāt*, ed. Guest, pp. 58–59; Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam (d. 257/871), *Futūḥ Miṣr*, ed. Torrey, p. 122; *History of the Patriarchs*, ed. and trans. Evetts, vol. 3, pp. 48, 54; al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), *al-Mawā’iz wa-l-i’tibār fi dhikr al-khiṭa’ wa-l-āthār*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1, p. 98.

62. *History of the Patriarchs*, ed. Evetts, vol. 3, p. 12.

63. Al-Kindī, *Kitāb al-Wulāt wa kitāb al-quḍāt*, ed. Guest, p. 58.

64. Al-Kindī, *Kitāb al-wulāt wa kitāb al-quḍāt*, ed. Guest, p. 59; *History of the Patriarchs*, ed. Evetts, vol. 3, p. 48.

65. Al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892), *Futūḥ al-buldān*, ed. de Goeje, p. 193. The making of calculations with the aid of Greek numerals is, on the other hand, seen as an indispensable skill that “non-Arabic” scribes continued to offer the administration. Theophanes (d. 818), *Chronicle of Theophanus Confessor*, trans. Mango and Scott, p. 376.

66. In Iraq, it was Šāliḥ b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, *mawlā* of the Banū Tamīm, who replaced Zadhānfarūkh (al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, ed. de Goeje, pp. 300–301). In Syria, Abū Thabit Sulaymān b. Sa’d al-Khushanī (or *mawlā* of Ḥusayn/Khushayn), a *mawlā* of Quda’a, took over from Sarjūn b. Maṣṣūr (Rebstock, “Observations,” pp. 233, 235–236, 245). In Syria, ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 685–705) (al-Jahshiyārī [d. 331/942], *Kitāb al-wuzarā’ wa-l-kuttāb*, eds. al-Saqqā, al-Abyārī, and ‘al-Ḥafīz Shalabī, pp. 38, 40) or al-Walīd (by

Non-Muslim secretaries continued to serve the Muslims also in the central administrative departments. It is therefore likely that the accounts in the literary sources of caliphs such as ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz and Hishām (r. 724–743) issuing decrees prohibiting the hiring of non-Muslim administrators are later fabrications.⁶⁷ On the other hand, it is indeed around 700 that the conquerors start to form a clear Muslim and Arab identity, seemingly in an effort to distinguish themselves from their non-Muslim, non-Arab subjects.⁶⁸ In reaction, it seems, Christian communities start, from the 690s onward, to emphasize confessional boundaries more sharply as well, both between Christians and Muslims and between different Christian groups.⁶⁹

In Islamic Egypt, apparently, the incorporation of the local middle elites is a longer, more drawn-out process than in comparative examples, such as in Ptolemaic Egypt, or as occurred at the political, administrative centers of the caliphate. After an initial period in which local elite members continued to feed into important positions in the central and local chanceries, they were unable to transform themselves into fully integrated members of the new administration. Their place was taken in by Arab Muslims and *mawālī* from the centers of Arab rule who were more reliable and closely dependent on the Arab rulers.⁷⁰ Only after the acculturation, Arabicization, and Islamicization processes of the eighth century did this change again, with Egyptians, in Arabic-Muslim guise, rising again to high positions in the administration as home-grown, full participants in the Muslim Empire.

PEOPLE OF THE LAND, PEOPLE OF THE ARMY

The identification markers in documentary texts reflect the relation between the Arabs and Egyptians in this early period. The rulers and the ruled were confined to separate economic, linguistic, cultural, and spatial spheres. Arabic

different Christian authors, all seemingly getting their information from a source c. 750 CE; cf. Theophilus of Edessa [d. 785], *Chronicle*, trans. Hoyland, pp. 199–200; I would like to thank Robert Hoyland for pointing me to these latter references) is credited with the measures. Cf. Sijpesteijn, “Did the Muslim Empire Have a Multilingual Language Policy?”

67. Sarjūn b. Maṣṣūr’s son continued to serve as *kātib* in the caliph’s administration, albeit not, it seems, at the head of any of the diwans, as did his descendants (Griffith, “Maṣṣūr Family,” p. 32). Yarbrough, “Did ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Issue an Edict?,” p. 182. For Hishām, see Rebstock, “Observations,” p. 232.
68. For the development around 700 of a distinctive and exclusive Muslim identity, see Donner, *Muhammad*; Donner, “Qur’ānicization”; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, pp. 549–554. For a description of the contemporary process of Arabicization of the Muslim conquest, see Webb, *Imagining*.
69. Papaconstantinou, “Between *Umma* and *Dhimma*,” pp. 139–144. Although “in the first 150 years after the conquest, the main understanding of belonging and community among the population was clearly that of the local village group” (Papaconstantinou, “Great Men,” p. 182).
70. Arietta Papaconstantinou argued that competition between Egyptian lay and ecclesiastical authorities might have been another reason for the Arab authorities to switch to Muslim administrators (“Between *Umma* and *Dhimma*,” p. 150).

papyri of the seventh and early eighth centuries are mostly of an administrative nature. Egyptians are referred to with the terms “people of the land” (*ahl al-arḍ*) and *nabaḥī* (pl. *anbāḥī*), signifying a local, subject, indigenous inhabitant.⁷¹ Most references to both these terms occur in the letters sent from the governor Qurra b. Sharīk (in office 709–715) to the Christian administrator Basileios of the Upper Egyptian town of Ishqūh/Aphroditō. Qurra uses *nabaḥī* when referring to specific, quantifiable individuals, while *ahl al-arḍ* refers to Egyptians as an undefined group.⁷² This is also how *nabaḥī* is used in a later document. In a letter, the governor ‘Abd al-Malik b. Yazīd (in office 133–136/750–754) writes to a lower official concerning the claim by “a subject from amongst the people of your district (land)” (*anna nabaḥīyyan min ahl arḍika*).⁷³ Another term that is used is *a‘jam* (pl. *a‘jīm*).⁷⁴ Four witnesses are mentioned at the end of an Arabic quit-tance from Luxor, dating to the seventh or eighth century: two Muslims and two Christians who are identified, the latter described as being *min al-a‘jam*, from among the “locals.”⁷⁵ This term continues to be attested very occasionally in later documents as well, for example, in the guarantee contract dated 225/840, which is dated by *shuhūr al-a‘jīm*.⁷⁶

On the other side stand the *ahl al-jund* or *ahl al-dīwān*, the Arab-Muslims registered on the diwan, or the “people of Miṣr” (*ahl miṣr*).⁷⁷ Thus, the indication on four lead seals dated 93 AH (712 CE) and 95 AH (715 CE), “*min ahl Miṣr*,” that were used to close off and secure goods or money.⁷⁸ In an inscription dated 164/780–781 on Cyprus, a certain ‘Abd Allāh b. Maṭraḥ, presumably a soldier who died on campaign, is identified as being “from the people of Miṣr (*min ahl miṣr*).”⁷⁹ The two individuals who died in Egypt in 174/790 and 184/800 and who are identified with the *nisba* al-Ḥaḍramī were probably descendants from the conquering Arab armies who had a Yemeni background.⁸⁰ The terms *sarakēnoi*, *m(ō)agaritai* (Ar. *muhājirūn*), and *mu‘minūn* continue to be used in the papyri. Only one personal allusion to the caliph can be identified with

71. Diem, “Einige frühe amtliche Urkunden,” no. 2, dating 632–800; Abbott, *Kurrah Papyri*, no. 3, pp. 47–49.

For the meaning of *nabaḥī* in the literary sources as referring to indigenous “agriculturalists opposed to the Arabian militarised élite of the *amṣār*,” see Webb, “Identity,” p. 145.

72. For *ahl al-arḍ*: Grohmann, *Arabic Papyri*, vol. 3, nos. 148, 159; Becker, *Papyri*, nos. 1–3, pp. 58–77; Abbott, *Kurrah Papyri*, no. 2, pp. 45–46. For *nabaḥī*: Abbott, *Kurrah Papyri*, no. 3, pp. 47–49; Grohmann, *From the World*, p. 129; Grohmann, *Arabic Papyri*, vol. 3, no. 155; Becker, *Papyri*, no. 1, p. 58, l. 7.

73. Diem, “Einige frühe amtliche Urkunden,” no. 2.

74. Liebrecht, “Frühe arabische Quittung.”

75. For *a‘jam*, meaning local, subjected people, as opposed to the term *‘ajam*, which from the eighth/ninth century got the more specific meaning of Persian, see Webb, “Identity,” p. 148.

76. Houry, *Chrestomathie*, no. 37.

77. Diem, “Einige frühe amtliche Urkunden,” no. 1; Rāgib, “Lettres nouvelles,” no. 1; Hinds and Sakkout, “Letter.”

78. Four of such seals are known; see Schindel, “Nochmals zu umayyadischen Bullen.”

79. Megaw, “Muslim Tombstone,” p. 108.

80. Hawary and Rached, eds., *Catalogue*, vol. 1, nos. 2, 18. These are the only geographical *nisbas* attested in Egyptian documentary sources up to the year 200/815 (see notes 132–144 below).

certainly in a work contract dated 699/700 to produce wine from the vineyards of the *prōtosymboulos*.⁸¹ This word does not occur in pre-Islamic documentation and only occurs once for the caliph, but it relates to the frequently used Greek term for Egypt's governor: *symboulos*.⁸²

WHERE DO THE EGYPTIANS GO?

With the introduction of a new class of Arab administrators at the lowest level of the administration, Egyptians did not disappear from the record. Their wealth, status, and social prestige made them valuable assets for the Arab administration. We see these wealthy Egyptians operating as collectors and guarantors of the public taxes. They are the "strong, solvent" men called upon to go into the villages to secure fiscal payments, to locate and return fugitive taxpayers, and to compile the records on which the fiscal assessments were based.⁸³

Their continued local social prestige sustained their position among their own constituencies, while their contacts with the Arab authorities made them valuable middlemen. They are the most important channel through which official requests to the Arab authorities are directed via petitions. As the "powerful" men, they are called upon by the local population in times of conflict and disagreement. Their role in mediation and informal conflict resolution seems, in fact, to have increased as their role in the official administration diminished.⁸⁴ The Egyptian elite members also seem in the eighth century to have entered in large numbers into ecclesiastical positions in monasteries and bishoprics.⁸⁵

The question remains whether these members of Egypt's elites accepted the reduction of their responsibilities and removal from the office of the pagarchy without objections. The absence of revolts in the first sixty years of Muslim rule in Egypt has been commented on as remarkable.⁸⁶ The ease with which Egypt's readily navigable and manageable countryside could be controlled must have had a lot to do with this, but another reason is surely that it took the Arabs sixty years to erode the Egyptians' rights and responsibilities in a substantial way.

The first recorded Egyptian revolt seems to have been limited to a monastic context. It is referred to in one Greek papyrus dated 699 CE. The reasons for the uprising are unclear, and the monks are only warned not to attempt a repeat on punishment of losing their "privileged position."⁸⁷ From the early eighth century

81. Sijpesteijn and Worp, eds., *Corpus Papyrorum Raineri*, vol. VIII, no. 82. The term is also used for the caliph by the ninth-century Byzantine historian Theophanes.

82. Morelli, "Consiglieri."

83. For the terms used in the papyri to describe these officials, see Sijpesteijn, *Shaping*, pp. 152–162.

84. Sijpesteijn, "Establishing"; Sijpesteijn, *Shaping*, pp. 152–163.

85. Papaconstantinou, "Between *Umma* and *Dhimma*," pp. 146–147.

86. Kennedy, "Egypt," p. 67.

87. Bell, "Two Official Letters."

onward, extending into the ninth, Egyptian Christians did rise in revolt repeatedly, soon attracting the attention of the Arab inhabitants of Egypt. Rather than expressing Egyptian Christian dissatisfaction with Arab-Muslim anti-Christian measures, as they are often described in the narrative sources, these revolts seem to express a general concern among the inhabitants of Egypt—Christian and Muslim alike—over the expanding Arab state and its heavier fiscal burdens.⁸⁸ There are no indications that members of the indigenous Egyptian elite used the revolts to further their own political or socioeconomic interests, for example, as fomenters or leaders.

The support of the indigenous Egyptian elites—still a formidable economic and social force—was crucial for the Arab authorities. What, then, kept the Egyptians appeased? One could argue that under the more confident, because stronger and more secure, Arab rule, members of the Christian Egyptian elite had little room to object. Successful rule, however, as premodern empires tend to show, can only rely so much on force.⁸⁹

Perhaps the economic opportunities in the early Islamic Empire offered sufficient compensation for the reduced role in the administration of the province. The reallocation of tax monies under the Arabs must have resulted in more money remaining in Egypt than under the Byzantines. The Arab fiscal structure which demanded payments in cash seems, moreover, to have benefited the rich inhabitants of the province who could provide ready cash to those in need.⁹⁰ The payment to the Muslim army in cash in the form of the *ʿaḩā* and the striking of coins in individual *ajnād* must have had a stimulating effect on the local economy as well.⁹¹ The building projects and other public works initiated by the early Muslim administration in Egypt invigorated the economy, reaching into the smaller communities of the provinces.⁹² Economic stimulus also came from extending economic activity in the early Muslim Empire, with especially fruitful commercial opportunities in the Mediterranean. Commercial activity under the Umayyads, which can be traced in the Islamic material with an influence that spread throughout the eastern part of the sea (Cyprus, Anatolia, Greece, Sicily), benefited the Egyptian economy enormously.⁹³ Egypt in late antiquity boasted the largest internal market in the Eurasian world besides China, which continued to fuel commercial and artisanal demand for imported and local products.⁹⁴

88. Lev, "Coptic Rebellions."

89. Haldon, "Late Rome," p. 377.

90. Papaconstantinou, "Great Men," pp. 185–186.

91. Kennedy, "Military Pay."

92. While the delivery of building materials was part of the levies imposed by the rulers, financial compensation was provided as well. Morelli, *Corpus Papyrorum Raineri*, vol. XXX.

93. Ward-Perkins, "Specialisation"; Vroom, "Trading." Merovingian graves show continuous influx of eastern and southeastern objects until the end of the seventh century, when the furnishing of graves was abandoned; see Drauschke, "Development," p. 126.

94. Sarris, *Economy*, p. 10. For the continued demand in Islamic Egypt, see Sijpesteijn, "Rise."

The concerns of non-Arabs to participate fully in Muslim society extended beyond the ranks of Egypt's middle elite. The empire-wide reforms of the Marwanids aimed at greater centralization, Islamicization, and Arabicization and were implemented in Egypt at the end of the seventh and the beginning of the eighth century. While the first Arab officials had already been settled outside the garrison cities to head specific government services, such as the imperial post, Arabs now replaced Egyptians at the lower levels of the regular fiscal-administrative system. From the second half of the eighth century, Arab settlement in the Egyptian countryside expanded to nongovernmental activities, as can be traced in agricultural leases, tax receipts, legal contracts, and letters that document commercial activities in trade and agriculture.⁹⁵

Increased Arab settlement in the countryside accelerated acculturation, Arabicization and, eventually, Islamicization. From the 720s, *hijra* years start to appear in Greek and Coptic papyri indicated with the term *kata arabōn* or *kata sarakēnōn*.⁹⁶ Indeed, it is from the second half of the eighth century that Christian texts show greater concern with conversion, or apostasy, as they called it.⁹⁷ While economic incentives—non-Muslims paid an extra poll tax and Egyptian Christians were increasingly pressured by their community leaders to help carry the financial burden of the Christian infrastructure—surely played a role, the slowly improving social and economic opportunities for converts, vis-à-vis Arab Muslims, must have made conversion increasingly attractive, while (the suggestion of) conversion was also exploited to achieve legal and social advancement within their own communities by Christians and Jews.⁹⁸ In the Egyptian countryside, *mawālī*, clients, converts, or freedmen associated with Arab individuals, only appear in the documentary record in the course of the eighth century.⁹⁹ In other words, only with increased opportunities for Egyptians to intermingle with Arabs could Egyptians establish the necessary relationship with Arab patrons that led to their status of *mawlā* and inevitably also to Arabicization. They would have been an obvious source of personnel for the Arab administration. Indeed, the term *mawlā* seems at times to have been used as a title, such as in the *mauleōs tou maneufēmou symboulou*, “*mawlā* of the governor,” who comes to the Upper

95. E.g., Morelli, *Documenti*, no. 34; Frantz-Murphy, *Corpus Papyrorum Raineri*, vol. XXI.

96. Worp, “Hegira Years”; Bagnall and Worp, *Chronological Systems*, p. 300 n. 1.

97. Papaconstantinou, “Between *Umma* and *Dhimma*,” p. 144.

98. On economic motives, see Papaconstantinou, “Between *Umma* and *Dhimma*,” p. 151; Simonsohn, “Conversion,” p. 202. On the position of *mawālī* versus Arab Muslims, see Crone, *Slaves*. On advancement within their own community, see Simonsohn, “Conversion,” pp. 206–209.

99. Strikingly, there are no *mawālī* in the dossier of texts associated with Senouthios dating to 643–644 CE. Cf. the overview in Onimus, “Les mawali,” p. 87, where the only seventh-century *mawlā* appears in a papyrus from Nessana dated 64/684.

Egyptian town of Ishqūh/Aphrōdito as messenger of the chancery,¹⁰⁰ or the *mawālī amīr al-mu'minīn* who start to appear in the documentary record from the second half of the eighth century.¹⁰¹ Egyptians and others who had joined the central administration in Fuṣṭāṭ worked as intermediaries between the indigenous population and the Arab authorities, but now they did so as clients of the regime, incorporated as inferior but nevertheless distinct status holders.¹⁰² Christians and Jews continued, of course, to fill the administrative offices, both at the political centers and in provincial towns, as secretaries, scribes, and different kinds of lower executive officials.¹⁰³

Again, the change in the level of interaction is reflected in the documentary record. Starting in the late second/eighth century, a new legal terminology is introduced for fiscal purposes. As Arabs moved into the countryside to settle and work the land, the opposition between them and the Egyptians occupied with agriculture and paying taxes, which had been distributed among the Arabs, who remained in the garrisons standing by to continue the conquests if needed, was no longer relevant. Egyptians were not the only ones to be called “people of the land,” and new terms were introduced to distinguish the different population groups. The new juxtaposition was between the “people of the protective covenant” (*ahl al-dhimma*) and Muslims (*muslimūn*), which in an administrative context started in the 790s.¹⁰⁴ In a tax-related document dating to 784, the term is combined with *anbāṭ*, in the meaning of “local peasant/landlord.” In the document, the inhabitants of a district (*kūra*) are described as “the wealthiest (most important) indigenous landholders, its (regular) indigenous landholders and (the other) non-Muslims” (*jamājim anbāṭ kūra . . . wa-anbāṭihā wa-jamī' man yaskunuhā min ahl al-dhimma*).¹⁰⁵ Another term to describe the Egyptians that occurs at this time is *qibṭī* (pl. *aqbāṭ*), which makes its debut in an eighth-century document related to taxation, where it is juxtaposed with “Muslim.”¹⁰⁶ Similarly, fiscal dues and contributions in kind imposed on the Egyptian population are described with this terminology (e.g., *fuḍūl al-qibṭ*; *baqṭ al-qibṭ*).¹⁰⁷ The term *qibṭī*, the Arabic transcription of the Greek *Aegyptos*, was thus introduced in the late eighth century for legal-fiscal purposes, referring to the Egyptians as inhabitants of the land of Egypt, not in the later meaning of adherents of the Coptic Church.¹⁰⁸

100. Morelli, *Corpus Papyrorum Raineri*, vol. XXII, no. 55; Bell, *Greek Papyri*, vol. 4, no. 1441, pp. 343–347.

101. Hawary and Rached, eds., *Catalogue*, vol. 1, no. 20, dated 192/808.

102. Bouderbala, “Les *mawālī*,” p. 146; Crone, “Mawlā II”; Simonsohn, “Conversion,” pp. 200–203.

103. Papaconstantinou, “Administering”; Papaconstantinou, “Between *Umma* and *Dhimma*,” p. 150.

104. Grohmann, *From the World*, pp. 132–134, dating to 789; Diem, “Einige frühe amtliche Urkunden,” no. 7, dated 790. Again, the earliest attestation of *dhimmā* referring to the subjected population comes from Nessana; Hoyland, “Earliest Attestation.”

105. Diem, “Einige frühe amtliche Urkunden,” no. 7.

106. Sijpesteijn, “Archival Mind,” no. 1.

107. Grohmann, “Arabischer Steuerpapyrus,” nos. 2, 4.

108. Cf. Omar, “Crinkly Haired People.”

THE CRUCIAL NINTH CENTURY

The processes that set in motion fundamental changes in the linguistic, ethnic, and religious composition of the Egyptian countryside crescendoed in the ninth and tenth centuries.¹⁰⁹ Increasing numbers of Arabic papyri coming from the ninth century onward attest, on the one hand, to an increase in Arab settlement in the countryside, where most papyri are found, and, on the other, to the growing use of the Arabic (written) language and Arabic-producing institutions by Egypt's inhabitants of whatever background.¹¹⁰ Fiscal demands and receipts were increasingly written in Arabic, although the chancery continued to use Greek and Coptic as well.¹¹¹ While Egyptians had little choice in the language in which they communicated with the authorities, Arabic legal documents were also drawn up for Egyptians who sometimes did not even speak Arabic.¹¹² Finally, increasing numbers of Arabic letters, recording commercial transactions, requests for help, or demands for deliveries, were produced. The result was an amalgamation of Egypt's Arab and non-Arab, Muslim and non-Muslim inhabitants, who shared the same space, language, and economy.

The call for a full participation of non-Arab Muslims in the Muslim Empire coincided with political events and demographic developments in the ninth century that further undermined the position of Arab Egyptians. Although conversion rates in general seem to have continued to be low, the number of *mawālī* increases in the Greek, Coptic, and Arabic papyrological and epigraphic material from the mid-eighth century onward. Not all *mawālī* mentioned in the documentary record need to have been Egyptian converts and freedmen—they could very well have migrated to Egypt. New Muslims not only increased in numbers, but they demanded equal treatment, challenging Arab superiority.

The revolts and factional fighting that plagued Egypt in the eighth and ninth centuries must have had a damaging effect on agricultural estates and the economic situation in general in the province. This affected Egyptian and Arab landlords and merchants equally, but what is important is that it undermined the economic power of the older Arab elite who had settled in the Egyptian countryside.¹¹³

109. For a similar development in North Africa, see Aillet, "Islamisation"; for al-Andalus, see Fierro, "Les généalogies."

110. Judeo-Arabic developed as a language used by Egyptian Jews with the first specimens on papyrus dating to the ninth century; see Blau and Hopkins, "Judaico-Arabic Papyri."

111. Coptic tax receipts issued for individual taxpayers are systematically being redated to the ninth century. I would like to thank Cecilia Palombo for sharing her observations concerning the Coptic documentation.

112. See the tenth-century Christian marriage contracts drawn up in the Fayyūm; Abbott, "Arabic Marriage Contracts." The phrase used in Arabic legal documents for non-Arab speakers is "after it was read in Arabic and explained in Coptic (*ʿajamiyya*)" (Frantz-Murphy, "Comparison," nos. 1, 2, dating to 961); "after it was read to them and translated" (Abbott, *Monasteries*, no. 1, dating to 946).

113. Kennedy, "Egypt," pp. 78–82.

Finally, migrants from the eastern part of the caliphate challenged the position of the old Arab settlers. Starting in the late eighth century, the role of administrators sent from the eastern Islamic Empire increases. While the governors were, of course, already appointed from Baghdad, the head of police (*ṣāḥib al-shurṭa*), the head of finances (*ṣāḥib al-kharāj*), and the chief judge (*qāḍī*) were traditionally appointed from among the local Arab families, sometimes chosen locally by the governor, sometimes appointed (confirmed) directly from Damascus or Baghdad. The practice of relying on local Arab families to fill these positions changed in the early ninth century.¹¹⁴ The caliph al-Mahdī (r. 158–169/775–785) appointed Ismāʿil b. Alisāʿ al-Kindī from Kufa *qāḍī* of Fuṣṭāṭ in 164/780, who remained in office until 167/783. From then on, the *quḍāt* of Egypt regularly came from Marw, Kūfa, Medina, Balkh, and Basra, although native Egyptians continued to be appointed occasionally to the office.¹¹⁵ With the rising power of Turko-Persian military and administrative elites in the Abbasid caliphate, governors appointed over Egypt were also increasingly chosen from among them. While this process had begun in the late eighth century, the arrival of ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṭāhīr (d. 230/844) in Egypt in 827 to restore order for the caliph al-Maʾmūn (r. 189–218/813–833) in the aftermath of the fourth civil war was instrumental. The administrative reforms introduced by him resulted in greater centralization of the different governmental domains and their institutional infrastructure.¹¹⁶

Coming as part of the military entourage of the governors, Turko-Persian soldiers settled permanently in the province.¹¹⁷ Scribes, secretaries, and other administrative personnel probably accompanied these governors and their troops, as the introduction of Persian technical vocabulary and scribal customs from the east shows.¹¹⁸ Others, including large groups of Christian and Jewish merchants from Tikrit and Mosul, were attracted by the much more favorable economic situation in Egypt, especially in the cities. Among the immigrants were well-known intellectuals such as the lawyer al-Shāfiʿī (d. 820), the geographer al-Yaʿqūbī (d. 897/8), and the family of the Prophet Muḥammad’s biographer Ibn Hishām (d. 828 or 833). The famous Egyptian monastic communities offered another magnet for temporary and permanent visitors from the rest of the Muslim

114. Kennedy, “Central Government.”

115. See the overview of *quḍāt* in Tillier, *Histoire*, pp. 24–30.

116. Sijpesteijn, “Delegation,” p. 69; Kennedy, “Egypt”; Kennedy, “Central Government.”

117. Where they appear as agricultural leaseholders (Frantz-Murphy, *Corpus Papyrorum Raineri*, vol. XXI).

118. The Persian *jahbadh* replaced *qusṭāl* for paymaster; see Khan, “Pre-Islamic Background”; Frantz-Murphy, “Economics.” The use of star-shaped drawings on fiscal documents, tax receipts, and demand notes seems to imitate the stars on clay seal imprints that appear on fiscal documents in Khurasan; see Khan, “Newly Discovered.” Similarly, the cursive chancery script introduced in Egypt in the ninth century is attested in documents from Khurasan already in the mid-eighth century; Khan, “Newly Discovered.”

Empire. Their impact on the material and religious-linguistic domain of their coreligionist communities in Egypt is clearly detectable.¹¹⁹

The old Arab elite did not undergo the dismantling of the privileges it enjoyed on the basis of descent and early achievements passively. Members of the Arab settler population led several revolts, sometimes joining dissatisfied Egyptians.¹²⁰ The development, however, was inevitable, and the process was completed with the caliph al-Mu'taṣim's decision in 218/833 to "drop the Arabs from the diwan, stopping the payment of their stipends."¹²¹

These demographic, economic, and political developments seem to have had three main results. First, an Arab and Egyptian common regional identity, coalescing around shared interests and convergent cultures, developed. Second, with the disappearance of the distinction between Arab and Egyptian inhabitants of the province, new markers began to be used. Finally, with the decline of Arab hegemony, other instruments of social and administrative hierarchy and authority came into existence.

SHARED INTERESTS

As Turko-Persian officials took over the main positions in the administration of the province, members of Egypt's Arab elite become more visible in the countryside, where they made alliances and eventually integrated into the indigenous Egyptian strata. Arab landholders suffered the same fiscal burdens as their non-Muslim neighbors, and they rose in revolt to protest financial pressure and other governmental measures.

The increased interaction between Egyptians and Arabs also led to the development of a shared Egyptian regional identity. Histories and tales establishing a common Arab-Egyptian narrative pointed to the intertwined trajectories of the different population groups.¹²² It is in the ninth century that the historical myth of the Egyptian-Arab alliance during the seventh-century Arab conquest comes into existence.¹²³ Other accounts emerge aimed at appropriating the Egyptian landscape and history for Islam, installing Islamic values and events in reports

119. Patriarch Michael (in office 881–899?) is said to have sold Coptic churches and other properties in and around Babylon to Jews in the reign of Aḥmad b. al-Ṭulūn (r. 868–884); Abū Ṣāliḥ al-Armani, *Churches and Monasteries of Egypt*, trans. Evetts, fol. 44a. The use of Syriac in Egypt's monastic communities increased, with the most explicit expression in the foundation of Dayr al-Suryān, the monastery of the Syrians; see Innemée and van Rompay, "Présence." This monastery and other buildings in ninth-century Cairo, such as the mosque of Aḥmad b. Ṭulūn, display the characteristic stucco works of the Abbasid palace city of Samarra. Cf. Sijpesteijn, "Visible Identities."

120. For example, Ibn 'Ubaydūs, who led a Christian-Muslim revolt in the Delta in 216/831; Kennedy, "Egypt," p. 83. See also the violent uprisings against al-Shāfi'ī's legal reforms instigated by Egypt's leading Maliki scholars and members of the old Arab settlers; El Shamsy, *Canonization*, pp. 115–116.

121. Al-Kindī, *Kitāb al-Wulāt wa kitāb al-quḍāt*, ed. Guest, pp. 194–195.

122. For example, in the accounts on Muḥammad's Coptic bride Māriya; see Öhrnberg, "Mariya al-Qibtiyya."

123. Mikhail, *From Byzantium*, pp. 23, 33, 191.

set in pre-Islamic Egypt.¹²⁴ Such local histories established inalienable ties to the land and emphasized the early Arabs' achievements, boosting their status when faced with competition from the newcomers.¹²⁵ That such stories did not need to have an especially robust historical grounding but could rather be entirely the confessions of the Islamic period only emphasizes the importance of this phenomenon.¹²⁶ These developments as observed in the Egyptian sources should be connected to the more general trend of the appearance of regional histories or world histories organized according to regions.¹²⁷

ETHNIC-RELIGIOUS IDENTIFIERS

In the ninth century, significant changes occur in the terms used to describe the Egyptians that reflect a different spatial and social interaction among the province's population. Increased intermingling of Arab and Egyptian populations led to a shared Egyptian identity and stimulated processes of conversion. Greater movements of people across the empire in this period added to the mixing of population groups. As a result, religious and ethnic identifiers were used more frequently to express social distinctions among a population that had otherwise converged culturally, religiously, and linguistically. This process of reacting against the intermingling and, eventually, convergence of diverse populations as a result of globalization—a movement to universalization—by drawing upon local and particularistic identifications has been described as “glocalization.”¹²⁸ A similar movement can be observed in legal and other normative texts that from the end of the eighth century aim to regulate relations between Muslims and non-Muslims.¹²⁹ Another development is the increased importance of space, as can be concluded from the introduction of geographical markers as onomastic identifiers from the ninth century onward.

With the abolition of the diwan, Arabs lost their privileged status in the province. It comes as no surprise that the use of Arab tribal *nisbas* virtually disappeared from this period onward.¹³⁰ Only a handful of common tribal identifiers—such as al-Qurashī, al-Anṣārī, and al-Hāshimī—continue to be attested.¹³¹ Similarly, attestations of the word *mawlā* diminish sharply at the end of the ninth century,

124. Sijpesteijn, “Building.”

125. As when Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam recorded the achievements of his family, who were among the first Arabs to arrive in Egypt; Kennedy, “Egypt.”

126. Cook, “Pharaonic History.”

127. Antrim, *Routes*, pp. 87–88, 102–107.

128. Robertson, “Globalisation.”

129. Simonsohn, “Conversion,” p. 202; Papaconstantinou, “Between *Umma* and *Dhimma*,” pp. 148–150.

130. This compares well with the situation in other areas of the Muslim Empire; Webb, “Identity.”

131. E.g., David-Weill, “Papyrus arabes,” no. 16, dating to 773; Khan, “Arabic Legal Document,” dating to 796; Grohmann, *Arabic Papyri*, vol. 1, no. 51, dating to 811; Grohmann, *Arabic Papyri*, vol. 2, no. 96, dating to 841–842; Hawary and Rached, eds., *Catalogue*, vol. 1, no. 15, dated 190/806; no. 57, dated 205/820; 372, dated 238/853–854.

to disappear entirely from the papyrological and epigraphic record by the tenth.¹³² No longer separated in space or by language and not even able to gain some advantage from ethnicity, Egyptians turned to religious and regional markers to assert differences.

The use of *nisbas* such as *al-yahūdī* and *al-isrāʿīlī* to refer to Jews and *al-naṣrānī* and *al-masīhī* for Christians, as well as other religious descriptors occur more frequently from the ninth century onward. Among these are also religiously defined names such as Yahūdā and ʿAbd al-Masīh and expressions such as Banū Isrāʿīl.¹³³ The so-called Era of the Martyrs used to date Coptic documents spread in the ninth century, establishing a connection with the early-fourth-century Christian martyrs at the hands of the Roman emperor Diocletian as an expression of a self-conscious religious identity.¹³⁴

Curiously, geographical markers representing cities, regions, or provinces outside Egypt only occur twice—for descendants from Yemeni conquerors of Egypt¹³⁵—in the documentary record from Egypt before the ninth century, and they are only sparingly used for people after that date. This pattern seems to compare with other regions in the Muslim Empire. The exception is Arabia, where a couple of regional markers occur already in seventh- and eighth-century graffiti, presumably left by pilgrims, identifying the garrison city from which they originate.¹³⁶

References to provinces or larger regions are less commonly applied to individuals on documents and epitaphs in Egypt than are *nisbas* referring to cities. Several individuals who died in the ninth century are identified as descending from migrants from Khurasān.¹³⁷ *Al-Andalusī* is attested on an epitaph dated 235/850.¹³⁸ *Al-maghribī* is not a *nisba* that is used in the epitaphs of this period, but several individuals are identified as such in the papyri. These all date from the tenth century onward, possibly coinciding with increased immigration from North Africa.¹³⁹ *Nubian* is used to describe slaves, especially female ones.¹⁴⁰ Another possible association with slavery appears in the epitaph of a woman who died in 335/946 in Aswān and who is identified as the daughter of Hārūn *mawlā*

132. Onimus, “Les mawālī.” Epitaphs mention descendants of *mawālī* into the eleventh and twelfth (very occasionally) centuries.

133. Sijpesteijn, “Visible Identities.”

134. Bagnall and Worp, *Chronological Systems*, pp. 67–68.

135. In epitaphs dating to 174/790 from the cemetery ʿAyn al-Šīra, south of Fustāṭ, and 191/807 (Hawary and Rached, eds., *Catalogue*, vol. 1, nos. 2 and 18).

136. E.g., Muḥammad b. ʿArīf al-Dimashqī, who completed the *ʿumra* in 144/761; see al-ʿAbūdī and al-ʿĀmir, “Nuqūsh al-Islamiyya muʿarrikha,” pp. 54–55. Another geographical *nisba* that occurs relatively often is *ʿAylāʿī*. I would like to thank ʿAbd Allāh AlHatani for pointing me to these references.

137. E.g., Hawary and Rached, eds., *Catalogue*, vol. 1, no. 35, dated 200/815–816; no. 190, dated 222/837; no. 273, dated 230/845.

138. Hawary and Rached, eds., *Catalogue*, vol. 1, no. 328.

139. E.g., Grohmann, “Arabische Papyri,” no. 10; Rāḡib, *Actes*, no. 6.

140. Rāḡib, *Marchands*, vol. 5.1, no. 13; no. 14, ninth century; Rāḡib, *Actes*, no. 7, dating to 966; no. 9, dating to 983; no. 10, dating to 994; no. 11, dating to 994.

al-Nūbī.¹⁴¹ The identification *al-fārisī*, from the province of Fāris, occurs in several epitaphs.¹⁴² The earliest attestation in the epigraphic record, however, comes from Arabia, where it occurs in a graffito from Najrān dated 190/805–806.¹⁴³ *Al-Shāmī* is not very commonly attested in epitaphs.¹⁴⁴

There are many attestations of migrants from Iraqī and Khurasani cities such as Baghdād, Kūfa, Baṣra, and Khwarizm in papyri and inscriptions dating to the ninth and tenth centuries.¹⁴⁵ This compares well with the migration movements from the central Abbasid lands to the west described above. Other towns that appear in the documentary record, albeit less frequently than the above-mentioned ones, to refer both to individuals and, more often, to goods, are Ḥimṣ, Dimashq, Tūnis, al-Quds, Tripoli, Ba'lbak, and Mecca.¹⁴⁶ Egyptian towns occur sparingly, but among them is Aswān, possibly also because a garrison was stationed there.¹⁴⁷

With Egyptian and Arab identities converging, the terms *qibṭī* and *ʿajamī* start to be used by Muslims and non-Muslims for indigenous Egyptian practices as well as the Coptic language. In this way, “Coptic months” (*shuhūr al-qibṭī*; *shuhūr al-ʿajamī*) occur in fiscal documents produced by the Muslim chancery and in legal documents preserved on papyrus, as well as on epitaphs.¹⁴⁸ *ʿAjamiyya* is used to refer to the Coptic language in four legal documents dating from 961 to 964

141. ʿAbd al-Tawab, *Stèles*, vol. 3, p. 129, no. 428. It is also one of the *nisbas* of the father of a woman deceased in 208/823–824 (Hawary and Rached, eds., *Catalogue*, vol. 1, no. 76).

142. E.g., Hawary and Rached, eds., *Catalogue*, vol. 1, no. 196, dated 223/838; no. 268, dated 230/844; vol. 3, no. 852, dated 253/867–868; Wiet, ed., *Catalogue*, vol. 9, no. 3399, dated 229/843–44; vol. 10, no. 3876, dated 250/864–865.

143. Kabawi et al., “General Survey Reports,” p. 60, no. 31.

144. E.g., Wiet, ed., *Catalogue*, vol. 4, no. 1213, dated 272/885–886; vol. 5, no. 1774, dated 341/952–953.

145. Al-Baṣrī, e.g.: Hawary and Rached, eds., *Catalogue*, vol. 1, no. 314, dated 234/849; vol. 3, no. 810, dated 252/866–867; Wiet, ed., *Catalogue*, vol. 2, no. 401, dated 241/855–856; no. 566, dated 246/860–861; Combe, Sauvaget, and Wiet, *Répertoire*, vol. 2, no. 661, dated 263/876–877; Margoliouth, *Catalogue*, no. III 12, dating to 926–927. Al-Kūfī: Hawary and Rached, eds., *Catalogue*, vol. 3, no. 865, dated 254/868; Wiet, ed., *Catalogue*, vol. 9, no. 3287, dated 214/829–830; Combe, Sauvaget, and Wiet, *Répertoire chronologique*, vol. 1, no. 250, dated 221/835–836; ʿAbd al-Tawab, *Stèles*, vol. 1, no. 13, dated 227/841–842; Grohmann, *Arabic Papyri*, vol. 5, no. 289, dating to the ninth century. Al-Baghdādī: Khan, *Arabic Papyri*, vol. 1, no. 12, dated 844; Wiet, ed., *Catalogue*, vol. 2, no. 419, dated 241/855–856; no. 542, dated 245/859–860; vol. 4, no. 1313, dated 278/891–892; vol. 10, no. 3924, dated 300/912–913; Hawary and Rached, eds., *Catalogue*, vol. 3, no. 832, dated 252/866–867. Al-Khwarizmi: Hawary and Rached, eds., *Catalogue*, vol. 1, no. 353, dated 237/851.

146. Only the *nisbas* associated with individuals are listed here. Al-Ṭrābulṣī: Hawary and Rached, eds., *Catalogue*, vol. 1, no. 37. Al-Ba'lbakki: Hawary and Rached, eds., *Catalogue*, vol. 1, no. 324. Al-Dimashqī: Hawary and Rached, eds., *Catalogue*, vol. 1, no. 215, dated 226/840–841; Wiet, ed., *Catalogue*, vol. 2, no. 410, dated 241/855–856. Al-Makki: Hawary and Rached, eds., *Catalogue* vol. 1, no. 297, dated 232/847; vol. 3, no. 823, dated 252/866–867; Combe, Sauvaget, and Wiet, *Répertoire chronologique*, vol. 2, no. 456, dated 247/861–862; Wiet, ed., *Catalogue*, vol. 9, no. 3294, dated 215/830–831; ʿAbd al-Tawab, *Stèles*, vol. 1, no. 81, dated 247/861–862; P.Vind.Arab. III, no. 17, dated 919–920. Al-Qudsi: Diem, *Arabische Briefe*, no. 60, ninth century. Al-Ḥimṣī: Wiet, ed., *Catalogue*, vol. 9, no. 3348, dated 220/835; Diem, ed., *Corpus Papyrorum Raineri*, vol. XVI, no. 4, dated 952.

147. Hawary and Rached, eds., *Catalogue*, vol. 1, nos. 191, 255, 279; Grohmann, *Arabic Papyri*, vol. 6, no. 394, ninth century; Khoury, *Papyrologische Studien*, no. 9, dated 856–857.

148. E.g., on epitaphs: Wiet, ed., *Catalogue*, vol. 5, nos. 1776, 1867, 2021. On papyri: Frantz-Murphy, *Corpus Papyrorum Raineri*, vol. XXI, no. 20, dated 277/891; Khoury, *Papyrologische Studien*, no. 6, dated 264/878; no. 11, dated 185/800–801. For the unique use of *shuhūr al-aʿjāmī*, see note 73 above.

from the Fayyūm. As it is stated, the legal documents were read to the parties of the legal transaction in Arabic as one of the conditions of their validity but were subsequently translated or explained to them in Coptic.¹⁴⁹ *ʿAjāmī* and *qibṭī* also occur in descriptions of female slaves dating to the tenth century.¹⁵⁰ In a Muslim epitaph dated 323/934–935, the deceased is described as Kalma (كلمة) bint Maymūn al-Qibṭī.¹⁵¹ The *nisba al-Miṣrī* appears several times in the epigraphic record of the ninth century in Egypt. An epitaph from Aswān dated 247/861–862 identifies the deceased woman’s father as *al-miṣrī*.¹⁵² The famous mystic Dhū al-Nūn is identified on his mausoleum, dated 245/859–860, as “Egyptian” (*al-miṣrī*).¹⁵³ In a dedicatory inscription dated 299/911–912, the beneficiary is called *Nimr al-Miṣrī mawlā amīr al-muʿminīn*.¹⁵⁴ In ninth-century papyri, coins are sometimes identified as “Egyptian.”¹⁵⁵

RULES FOR EVERYONE

The breakdown of Arab supremacy called, on the one hand, for new ways of announcing social distinctions. On the other, it paved the way for a different legal framework, which did not privilege Arabs but had rules that applied to all Muslims regardless of their ethnic background. The great architect of Islamic law, al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820), designed his legal theory in Egypt. His intellectual project was very much inspired by the Egyptian context. Among his fiercest opponents were representatives of the old Arab-Egyptian families who upheld the Maliki *madhab*, while his supporters and students included many *mawālī*.¹⁵⁶

Another development that facilitated merit-based achievement, as opposed to privileges acquired at birth, was the emphasis on the office or position that someone held in the administration. A small papyrus document dating from between Rajab 10, 212 AH (October 5, 827 CE) and Ramaḍān 214 AH (November 2–December 1, 829 CE) illustrates this well. It contains an official document produced by “Ḥasan b. Yaʿqūb, representative (*khalīfa*) in the Fayyūm of Yahyā b. Saʿīd who is the representative of the judge (*qāḍī*) ʿIsā b. al-Munkadir.” ʿIsā b. al-Munkadir (d. after 215/830) is the well-known chief judge of Fuṣṭāṭ who held office from 827 to 829.¹⁵⁷ Ḥasan b. Yaʿqūb and Yahyā b. Saʿīd are not otherwise known. Significantly, Ḥasan b. Yaʿqūb identifies himself with only minimal reference to his own office and geographical constituency. More important seems

149. See note 108 above.

150. Rāḡib, *Actes*, no. 6, dating to 923; no. 9, dating to 983.

151. Wiet, ed., *Catalogue*, vol. 5, no. 1652.

152. ʿAbd al-Tawab, *Stèles*, vol. 1, no. 83, dated 247/861–862.

153. Wiet, *Matériaux*, vol. 2, p. 63, no. 562.

154. Combe, Sauvaget, and Wiet, *Répertoire chronologique*, vol. 3, no. 904.

155. Rāḡib, *Marchands*, vol. 3, no. 1; Grohmann, *Arabic Papyri*, vol. 1, no. 42.

156. El Shamsy, *Canonization*, pp. 115–116; Brockopp, *Early Mālikī Law*.

157. Sijpesteijn, “Delegation.”

to be the chain of officials reaching back to the main officeholder in the capital itself, of which he is a part.

In earlier centuries, lower officials also made reference to their superiors when implementing government policy or specific orders, such as the imposition of a new tax, the collection of tribute, or the rounding up of fugitive taxpayers. This took place, however, in a direct, face-to-face manner, for example, by quoting from a decree or letter received from a higher-placed official. Other documents indicate that the letters were taken along by officials as they went about their tasks, making references to the mandate their superiors had imposed on them. Starting in the second half of the eighth century, the highest officials, representatives of the governor or caliph, were identified through this relationship. So *mawālī* of the *amīr al-mu'minīn* appear frequently as fiscal and other administrative agents, and local officials identify themselves as *ʿāmil al-amīr*, the governor's agent.¹⁵⁸ Establishing authority through the delegation of power from above in the (self-)identification of third-tier officials such as al-Ḥasan is new. It signals the final stage of the integration of Egyptian elites into the Muslim Empire: using Arabic in a Muslim environment, they could fulfill the same offices that Arab Muslims could.

CONCLUSION

The Arab takeover does not seem to have resulted in large-scale displacement; in fact, there are no reports of estates or lands occupied by the conquerors outside the fortress of Babylon and the newly founded capital, Fuṣṭāṭ. There is no evidence of large-scale deportations, sequestrations, or ejections of local elite communities. Strikingly, there are also no revolts or uprisings recorded in the first sixty years of Muslim rule. The picture is one of almost eerie calm, but we have no specific reason to question it.

The role of local elites, especially the middle layer or "little big men," in a successful regime change and empire building is crucial.¹⁵⁹ As potentially dangerous as the forces of resistance were, pulling together their local constituencies in revolt, local elites are vital to the smooth transition in the day-to-day running of affairs and as necessary middlemen between the rulers and the local population. The inclusion of local elites in the new regime determines its success, while local elites are attracted to the opportunities offered by the new political constellation. A balance needs to be found between devolution through total co-option and annihilation through replacement. State service typically offers middle local

158. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping*, p. 103. For the observation that the *mawālī amīr al-mu'minīn* are administrators, I should like to thank Marie Legendre.

159. See also Brown, "Byzantine Italy"; Brown, "Gentlemen"; Brown and Christie, "Was There a Byzantine Model?"

elites an opportunity for social mobility within one to two generations after the military-political takeover.

How do these models compare with the Arab takeover of Egypt? And how were the Egyptian middle elites incorporated into the empire, ensuring its successful transition from a conquest society to a political empire? After the conquest of Egypt, the small number of high governmental positions were immediately filled with Arab officials. The Arab rulers of Egypt had several main concerns. First, they had to make sure to maintain their own identity apart from the people they had conquered. As a minority with many elements of their religion and culture still undefined, measures to keep a safe distance from the majority subject population were crucial. Inside the garrison city of Fustāṭ and in some other places such as Alexandria, paid from the diwan, there was initially deliberately little interaction between the Arabs and the Egyptians.

Next was the care of their own Arab elites. The leaders of the earliest conquerors received prime plots of land in Fustāṭ to build on. Stipends were provided for them and their families while they continued to fight on campaigns in North Africa, on the Nubian border, and on the Mediterranean. This was no longer the work of the “whole” Arab militarized population but rather a more or less professionalized standing army. New opportunities for the Arabs from Fustāṭ thus arose.

At the lower level of the administrative structure, Egypt’s pre-Islamic administrative and economic local elites were reduced to the status of functionaries, maintaining the same positions in the local administration but with drastically reduced responsibilities vis-à-vis Arab officials, initially located in the countryside and then in the central chancery. At the same time, the need to find new sources of income became more urgent. In the course of the seventh century and definitely in the early eighth, pressure on the diwan increased, with more and more people demanding to profit from it. At the same time, the authorities in Damascus might have needed new sources of income as the winding down of the great conquests led to a decrease in income through booty, so that they, too, made more of a demand on the fiscal income of the province. The administrative offices lower down the administrative hierarchy might have provided good career prospects for the Arabs from Fustāṭ. The replacement of Christian Egyptian administrators by Arab ones was part of a program aimed at greater centralized control to increase fiscal income from the provinces. New ambitions among the Arab rulers, extending naturally from the development of the Muslim Empire, were enabled by the consolidation of their position. It was possible *and* desirable to take matters more firmly into their own hands.

Egyptian local officials were gradually replaced by Arab-Muslim substitutes, but even then, Egyptian middle elites continued to play an important role in the administrative management at the lowest levels of the administration. Other

occupations in an enhanced economy offering new opportunities and profits might have provided some relief. At the same time, their crucial role at the village level and as middlemen with the Arab authorities might have provided sufficient compensation.¹⁶⁰ Still, the so-called Coptic revolts that begin in the first half of the eighth century and continue for the next century or so are surely related to the reduction of local Egyptian elites' status.

Only with the fundamental social changes that took place in the ninth century were pathways created for Egypt's middle elite to rise through the different layers of the administration.

It takes some two centuries after the Arab conquest of Egypt for local middle elites to acquire the opportunities of social mobility that post-conquest societies typically offer after one or two generations. This deviation from the rule of post-regime-change involving middle local elites was the result of the circumstances of the Arab conquest. It was caused by the strictly imposed separation of the majority of the Arab and Egyptian populations in garrisons and the Egyptian countryside, respectively, which lasted into the second half of the eighth century. The Egyptian middle elite had little need and not much opportunity to get fully acculturated before this period. Two generations later, at the beginning of the ninth century, Egyptian middle elites do appear fully participating in the Muslim Empire in Egypt. Through conversion and Arabicization toward the end of the eighth century, Egyptians become more intertwined with the Arab community, providing opportunities to pass on cultural traits and knowledge. The influx of eastern administrators in the ninth century (post-Fourth Fitna) create openings for a drawing together of the Arab and Egyptian inhabitants of Egypt. With Arab supremacy broken, Egyptians were no longer hampered by the ethnic background that they lacked but could rather benefit from the cultural-linguistic adjustments they had been able to make. Incorporating indigenous Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Arab Muslim elements, "Egyptian" now meant something very different from what it had meant at the time of the conquest.

160. Papaconstantinou summarizes how at the village level Christian Egyptian notables could exercise tremendous power as village headmen ("Great Men," pp. 182–183).

Concluding Thoughts

Empires and Communities

Chris Wickham

EVERY empire is a large collection of communities, of many different types, overlapping as community identity overlaps.¹ Some of them are weak, some strong, and—in the latter case—they are both important for the effective use of central power and potentially dangerous if consent to that power is withdrawn. Any state will want to bring strong communities onside, as a result, and will (whether consciously or unconsciously) mold all community identity if it can, so as to help the development of local forces who will be more likely to support than undermine it. This is not always successful in history, and failure is often what makes historical developments interesting; but sometimes it is effective, too, and some of the chapters here show it operating relatively well. The workings of political power in itself can be characterized as the processes by which different communities were affected by, and reacted to, empires and other polities. We have not been concerned in this book, and in the workshops that preceded it, to impose systems and typologies on such processes, and still less to impose on contributors a common set of approaches to the problematic. Both empires and communities in early medieval western Eurasia, our focus, were too varied for that. We were interested less in a general sociology of power than in developing specific examples of empire-community dynamics, to see how they worked as individual cases. The sociology of power is important (several of us have developed it elsewhere, and John Haldon discusses it here with specific reference to Byzantium), but it comes after, once the specification of differences is explored.

We have set out here a great variety of such differences, and they are certainly incomplete. We have sought to give each example we have chosen a full treatment, so as to make its specification easier for others to identify; but to pin down

1. I will avoid terminological discussions about “empire.” As will be clear from the book, none of us was concerned to restrict its usage to polities whose rulers claimed an “imperial” title. Broadly, we might agree that empires tended to be bigger than other polities, sometimes more organized in their government, and, often, ethnically diverse as well; and most of the chapters here are indeed about relatively large states—above all Francia, the Byzantine Empire, and the caliphate up to its tenth-century breakup. When I refer to “empires” here, I will, accordingly, mean relatively large states of any kind. But we have been looser than that in our comparisons, and the problems that our polities had in engaging with local societies were equally there in smaller and/or weaker political systems.

all the different types of possible community in enough detail—religious, ethnic, linguistic, genealogical, urban, central-administrative, military, provincial, village, law-based, elite, or subaltern and, of course, many mixtures of these—would have made this book uncontrollably unwieldy. But we have at least a range of case studies in empire-community interaction, and we can already see some patterns. Here I want to develop some of them under two headings: (1) what happens to communities of different types when empires expand and change and (2) how imperial legitimacy is constructed (or breaks down) in the eyes of such communities. These will give us some ways to see how more systematic analysis could be constructed.

Every expanding empire takes over communities that existed already and that developed inside different political systems. How are these communities constructed, and how do such constructions change once new political structures are in place? How do new communities emerge, perhaps out of the old? Community construction is largely ideological, and it is not surprising that many of us focused on “identity” as a shorthand for such constructions. But we have to look for the internal structuring of social relationships, as well, if we want to understand why this type of community was more prominent than that.

Take ethnic communities, characterized here by Walter Pohl as “social groups that are regarded as naturally and intrinsically constituted.” They take force from a sense of that supposed naturalness—we are Franks or Lombards or Poles or Armenians, we have always been, and only we are—even though, at least in the first three cases, we are not very distinct in language or culture from our neighbors. Such communities were in reality far from immemorial, particularly in western Europe, before they crystallized on entering the Roman Empire; there is a substantial historiography on the instability of identity of the Heruls or the Quadi, or the rather recent origin of the sixth-century Bavarians, or the vanishing of the Vandals after their defeat by East Rome in 534.² One of the reasons for the latter was doubtless the loss of kingship, but kingship in itself was not an essential element of a *gens*—the Saxons did not have kings, and the Lombards did without them for a decade in the 570s. As Pohl says, even the Franks did not much stress the genealogies of either the Merovingian or the Carolingian dynasty—despite the fact that the first of these was regarded as so uniquely royal that the Carolingian coup of 751 had to be buttressed by all kinds of legitimizing justifications for two generations (Stefan Esders and Helmut Reimitz). Even if the Salian Franks undoubtedly owed their dominance over and absorption of other Frankish communities to the military success and charisma of Clovis, it is very hard to imagine his army identifying themselves as the *Filii Chlodovechi*,

2. E.g., Heather, “Disappearing”; Hardt, “Bavarians” (both of the books these articles are in give plenty of other examples of such discussions).

along the lines of the tenth-century Banū ‘Uqayl in Iraq (Hugh Kennedy).³ But why not? I think, in the West, one important reason has to be assembly politics, a regular reinforcement of common interest and political legitimacy that was, indeed, regular enough for us to be able to see it in structural terms.⁴ Assemblies, not dynasties, carried “Frankishness.” It was the assembly that the newly royal Carolingians appealed to as the metonym for “all” the Franks who gave consent to the 751 coup, for example (Esders and Reimitz); it was also an assembly that reestablished Lombard kingship in the face of political difficulty in 584.⁵

Assemblies cannot be seen as determinant for the ethnic identity of a community; the Armenians did not have them, for example. The strong and long-lasting sense of identity there, which it is not a stretch to call ethnic and which survived any amount of disunity and foreign conquest, can be explained, as Kennedy noted, not only by a unique language, religion, and written culture but also by a structural element: a long-term location in a single, fairly remote, and inhospitable region. But some structure was needed. The Aquitanians in the Frankish Empire were very certain that they were not Franks, and the Franks equally certainly agreed (Rutger Kramer), but what were they? They used Roman law and were often called Romani; there are indications in seventh-century texts that such Romani could be seen as a *gens*, an ethnic group with hereditary characteristics.⁶ But Roman community identity of any kind did not survive the Carolingian period here. The ethnicization of “Roman-ness” had evidently failed; nor was Roman law enough to underpin an enduring collective identity. And nor did an Aquitanian community subsume it; for the most part, Aquitaine remained only a geographical region thereafter, defined by non-Frankishness rather than by positive characteristics. Would a long-lasting Aquitanian assembly have helped the creation, perhaps the ethnicization, of that community? We cannot tell, but the absence of any clear structure to underpin it cannot have helped.

We have seen communities of a variety of types operating inside empires in these chapters. Leslie Brubaker and Chris Wickham discussed urban communities, of differing degrees of strength and weakness (strong in the case of Constantinople, weak, at least outside their own walls, in the case of most Gaulish cities). Peter Webb discussed the Yemenis, whose community identity, lacking any real structural underpinning except in the period of diwan payments, slipped between regional, (supra-)tribal, factional, and eventually mock-factional, as

3. The only region in Europe where genealogical names for independent communities dominated was Ireland, but the context there was very different: that was a tribal identity, of a type familiar to Arabists (see Hugh Kennedy, chapter 2, and Peter Webb, chapter 11), and the fact that these communities were all independent was simply the result of the absence of any power in Ireland, until our period was nearly ending, which was able to dominate even a single county, never mind the whole island.

4. See, e.g., Wickham, “Consensus.”

5. Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. Bethmann and Waitz, III.16, pp. 45–187.

6. Buchberger, *Shifting*, pp. 134–136, 157–161, 170–172.

they reacted to the different phases of caliphal history. Daniel Reynolds discussed the force of a religious community, the Melkites of Jerusalem, whose internal coherence was aided structurally by the same sort of processional ritual explored by Brubaker and Wickham. Petra Sijpesteijn discussed the regional community of Egypt and how its internal divisions shifted to reflect caliphal administrative change, with native Egyptians seen as subject to Arabs at the start but, when these two communities integrated later to a greater extent, religious divisions appearing instead. Kennedy indeed showed that there were too many forms of community identity in the caliphate as a whole for any single one to dominate over the others, although some (tribal/dynastic and religious in particular) were stronger than others. Haldon discussed the force of an empire-wide community in Byzantium, which managed to integrate even provincial elites into a strongly Constantinople-centric political and fiscal structure, and convincingly argued that the entire survival of that empire in the century after 640 depended on it.

This is quite a range, and on one level quite heterogeneous. What is apparent in almost every case, however, is how community solidarity, structuration, and identity inside each empire were malleable in changing historical situations. This is most obvious for the Yemenis and for the changing configuration of Egyptian communities, but it appears regularly. What “being Bavarian” meant under Frankish rule changed radically between the sixth century and the tenth (cf. Pohl). Being an ‘Alid in the caliphate was sometimes subversive in religious-political terms (particularly under the Umayyads), sometimes a simple mark of elite genealogical status (particularly under the Abbasids), sometimes a commitment to a wholly different regime (particularly under the Fāṭimids).⁷ Christian community sectarianism changed, too, as Roman and Sasanian rule was replaced by the caliphs; it became less violent and high-flown, more sullen and focused on small-scale advantage, as the place of Christianity in the empire had altered so radically. Even Jewish sectarianism was altered by caliphal rule, in that its internal disputes came to be modeled on those between Muslim law schools.⁸ Outside these specifically religious contexts, the Constantinopolitan urban community was always feisty, but its protagonism hit a peak in the century or so after 950, as the capital expanded in size, the sense of pulling together in a crisis faded with renewed military success, and factions inside government became clearer.

So empires did not only rule communities; they had a considerable effect on how those communities themselves worked. What this means is that the way community structures and identity changed can be seen as a direct guide to the way empires themselves were structured and changed. Yemeni identity really mattered when it was connected to money and to Umayyad factional recruitment strategies; it was more jokey (even if very rude), a bit Spurs versus

7. See Bernheimer, *Alids*.

8. Rustow, “Karaites,” pp. 46–48.

Arsenal, when Arab solidarity had itself to become greater in the face of new Persian-Turkish elites (that theme recurred in Sijpesteijn's Egypt, too). Ethnic solidarity inside Francia seems to have mattered least in the high Carolingian period, when a trans-regional *Reichsaristokratie* developed and enriched itself, with active royal/imperial support; all the same, not only Bavarians and Saxons returned to older ethnic imagery with the breakup of that empire, but even the Franks themselves, as with Hugh Capet in 987, identified as duke of the Franks but "king over the Gauls, the Bretons, the Normans, the Aquitanians, the Goths, the Spanish, and the Gascons" (see Pohl). If we keep our focus on how individual communities operated and changed, then we can get a good sense of wider political structures, too.

Communities did not only react to the structuration of empires. They reacted to imperial claims and actions as well, and these reactions had consequences. No empire is safe if its armies—its military communities—are disloyal, obviously; and no ruler is safe if the leaders of those armies seek power on their own account, as Byzantines and Arabs both regularly found. The communities of the capital, elite and non-elite, also need to be kept on side, for they, too, can, in more ad hoc fashion, bring rulers down (as with Pope Leo III, temporarily, or the Byzantine emperor Michael V; see Brubaker and Wickham). The chapter by Brubaker and Wickham explored how processional ritual helped to establish imperial legitimacy in major urban centers and how the negotiations around it helped to produce a sense of buy-in on the part of at least the leaders of non-elite groups. Haldon explored how officeholding, law, and religious orthodoxy had the same effect on elites, both civilian and military, in the crisis situation that faced the Byzantine Empire after 640 (for the most part, at least; the years 695–717 were pretty unstable and risky). And Esders and Reimitz explored how oath swearing and law—plus, of course, assemblies—acted as major legitimizing elements for elite communities in early Carolingian Francia, when the new dynasty was at its most fragile. In Christian empires and polities, Church communities needed to be brought on board, too, for they could be both bastions of legitimation and a regime's loudest (because generally untouchable) critics—sometimes both at once. Legitimacy, indeed, only works and worked if it is successful in the eyes of different communities, for it is they that make up the state as a whole. They need and needed to be targeted, especially if they are major players.

This was arguably most important outside capitals. Any empire on the defensive and (some that are not) need to keep the loyalty of provincial communities of whichever kind, for it is at the edges of empires that power as a whole is most at risk. One way of doing this was to demilitarize them: Maḥmūd of Ghazni was very critical of the citizens of Balkh for resisting an invading army in 1007, as it was not their right to do so, and he refused to reimburse them for the damage they suffered; when peasants in northern France resisted the Vikings in 859,

the Frankish elite actually had them killed.⁹ Sometimes they were neutralized in other ways; Haldon, in effect, argued this for Byzantium, for provincial elites were brought directly into the armies or the capital, stripping the provinces of autonomous centers that might come to terms with enemies—only the Armenians might do that, and they sometimes did, but they were also partially kept in check by imperial armies. Overall, one had to be vigilant and proactive, for provincial elites might well be less loyal if they were really under threat. The Western Roman Empire, for example, fell as much because provincial elites switched allegiance to the new ethnic armies in the later fifth century as because of those armies themselves; in Byzantium, too, later, provincial revolts marked the end of the hegemony of the imperial center in the 1190s, and as a result, when a weakened Byzantium faced the Fourth Crusade, the center itself fell. In the Abbasid caliphate of the tenth century, similarly, provincial elites peeled off everywhere, leaving a very small central power. But how did one keep the loyalty of provincial communities and one's legitimacy in their eyes?

The standard medieval mix of generosity, justice, and military protection was, of course, always important. Western historians have long known this, because Western medieval polities were for the most part so weak, at least by Byzantine and Islamic standards. Here it was worked through by Esders and Reimitz in their discussions of the politicization of Frankish identity (a process that took place at the center but was carried back into the provinces, not least because the legitimizing role of that identity was being extended, at least in principle, to non-Franks, too). But it mattered quite as much in the empires farther east, particularly the caliphate, because it was so big, and its outlying provinces were so hard to get to. Here it helped very greatly if different sorts of community in the provinces—religious, military, factional, urban—overlapped sufficiently that it was difficult for any given one of them to cease to recognize the legitimacy of the center on its own.

And that is where the role of the state in forming and reshaping such communities was most important: if reshaped, they might be less dangerous and happier to accept the self-legitimizing activities of the center. The late Romans for a long time achieved this in the provinces, using law, decentralized tax raising, and the transverse networks of the Church, although they never seriously tried it beyond the borders of their empire—and, as a result, the ethnic communities that came to dominate in the empire after 400 were more cohesive and had staying power in many cases. The Abbasids, whose borders were farther away, needed to manage their neighbors less, and inside their provinces, they achieved it for a century at least. It was only when their organizational and cultural protagonism lessened after the 860s civil wars that the provinces became more disengaged.

9. Bosworth, *Ghaznavids*, p. 253; *Annales Bertiniani*, ed. Grat, Vielliard, and Clémencet, s.a. 859, p. 81.

The wide range of different community identities set out by Kennedy for the immediately post-Abbasid period was, in large part, a direct result of that earlier success. So, perhaps, was the lack of staying power of most of the post-Abbasid states; new dynastic legitimacies, backed up by military power, were the model for most, but they did not manage, after a while, to be legitimate *enough* for the varied communities they ruled—eventually, the Abbasid caliphs would reappear in the Friday prayer again. Only the Fāṭimids really established a long-lasting alternative, because the legitimizing practices, central and provincial, that they adopted were new in type and much more comprehensive.

Which is to say: to be able to counterpose empires and communities is crucial heuristically. As one works through how each affected the other, in a permanent dialectic—and a complex one, given the array of different communities involved—we can come to understand how political systems succeeded, changed, and failed as a whole. The chapters in this book, taken together, are a marker for how that set of processes could work, across half of Eurasia for five centuries.

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Index

- Aachen, 160, 161, 254, 279, 280–281
- Abbasids, dynasty, 12, 24, 26, 34, 39, 61, 62, 63, 67, 72, 79, 119, 177, 184, 203, 206, 286, 288, 294, 301, 314, 363, 365
- caliphate of the, 6, 39, 41, 47–49, 64–65, 77, 86, 87, 178, 198, 200, 201, 207, 292, 294–295, 301, 351, 365–366
- dissolution of the, 4, 9, 14, 17, 30, 33, 38, 42, 43, 44, 46, 60–61, 70, 72, 76, 78, 80, 88, 106
- early, 15, 37, 285, 288, 297–298, 302, 314, 318
- elites of the, 47, 49, 65, 86, 351, 365
- later, 34, 39, 49, 67, 191, 195, 221
- Turko-Persian soldiers in the, 329–330, 351, 352, 364
- al-‘Abbāsiyya, 178
- ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Malik, governor, 343
- ‘Abd Allāh b. Ṭāhir, governor, 351
- ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Marwān, governor, 327, 343
- ‘Abd al-Malik, Umayyad caliph, 343
- ‘Abd al-Malik b. Yazīd, governor, 345
- ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Fārisī, 329–330
- ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Khayr al-Ḥajrī, 339
- Abraham, biblical patriarch, 296, 299–300
- Abū ‘Alī Miskawayh, official and historian, 33, 58, 72
- Abū al-Misk Kāfūr, governor, 188, 220
- Abū al-Muhājir ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Balhībī, 334
- Abū Nuwās, poet, 288, 289–294, 295–299, 301, 302, 305, 307, 308–309, 313, 318–319
- Abū Sa’d al-Makhzūmī, poet, 310n105, 316
- Abū Tammām, poet, 80, 317–318
- Abū Ya‘qūb al-Khuraymī, poet, 316
- Abū Zur‘a al-Dimashqī, 287
- Adam, biblical patriarch, 36
- ‘Adnān, ancestral name, 288, 289
- Aegean, 96, 102, 217
- Aetius, Roman general, 20, 44, 47
- Africa, 5, 7, 30, 33, 43, 50
- North, 8, 18, 78, 79–80, 96, 101, 102, 105, 114, 350n108, 354, 358
- Africans, 79
- Agnellus, archbishop of Ravenna, 157
- Agobard, archbishop of Lyon, 227–228, 230, 232, 275n122
- Aḥmad ibn Būya (Mu‘izz al-Dawla), 46, 47, 49
- Aḥmad ibn Abī Duwād, courtier, 318
- Aio, count, 248, 250
- Aistulf, king of the Lombards, 239–240
- Al-Andalus, 29, 50, 350n108, 354
- Alamannia, 238, 247, 248, 273
- Alamans, 11, 34, 63, 227
- Alaric II, Visigothic king, 39
- Alboin, king of the Lombards, 36, 49, 51

- Alcuin of York, scholar and poet, 56
 law of the, 230, 231, 241, 242, 246, 250
- Aleppo, 47, 217, 219, 224
- Alexander the Great, 26, 86, 338n34
- Alexandria, 214, 216, 358
- Alexios I, Byzantine emperor, 216
- Alfred, Anglo-Saxon king, 36, 215
- Algeria, 79, 83
- ‘Alī, founder of the Būyid dynasty, 46
- ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib, husband of Fāṭima, 17
- ‘Alids, dynasty, 66, 363
- ‘Alī ibn al-Haytham, courtier, 317
- ‘Alī ibn Shakla, poet, 312
- Amals, Ostrogothic dynasty, 36
- al-Amīn, ‘Abbāsīd caliph, 298, 300n60
- Amor, river, 247
- Amorion, 104
- ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ, governor of Egypt, 334, 342n57
- Anastasius, Eastern Roman emperor, 137, 142, 151
- Anastasius Bibliothecarius, anti-pope, 173
- Anatolia, 6, 21, 22–23, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99–100, 103, 104, 113, 115, 117–118, 119, 347
- Angers, 160, 163
- Angles, 52, 55, 56, 71, 73, 74
- Anglo-Saxons, 56, 63
 law of the, 68, 69
- Anna Dalassene, Byzantine empress, 214
- Antioch, 96, 130, 201, 210, 214, 216
- Anti-Taurus Mountains, 103, 115
- Appolonis Ano/Edfū, 336
- Aquitaine, 6, 11, 244, 258–259, 261, 271–273, 277, 282, 362
 Carolingian subkingdom of, 244–245, 255–256, 260, 262–264, 265, 277, 280–281
- Aquitanians, 4, 258, 259, 266–267, 268, 273, 362, 364
 identity of the, 256, 257–261, 276–277, 362
- Arabia, 52, 77, 78, 79, 86, 287, 315, 354, 355
 Central, 286, 287
 Northern, 288
 South, 12, 284–285, 287, 288, 289–290, 293, 295, 298, 305
- Arabian Peninsula, 29, 38, 54, 287
- Arabicization, 8, 52, 62, 338, 340, 342, 343, 344, 348, 359
- Arabs, 12, 15–17, 38, 40, 51, 55, 57, 67, 71, 81, 86, 104, 106, 140, 171, 231, 284, 285, 287, 289, 290
 in Egypt, 329, 330, 331, 333–334, 335–336, 341–342, 344, 345, 347, 348, 349, 353, 358, 359, 363, 364
 elites of the, 15, 285, 287, 293, 302–303, 304, 314, 318, 363, 364
 identities of the, 6, 14, 15, 17, 35, 66, 70, 80, 81, 86, 87, 283, 288, 292, 293, 297–298, 299, 300, 302, 303, 304, 306, 314–318, 319, 338
 language of the, 15–16, 23–24, 25, 26, 29, 33, 35, 40, 50, 62, 66, 70, 79, 80, 81, 86, 196–197, 198, 204, 286, 304, 305, 338, 350, 356
 Northern, 12, 290, 291, 292, 293–297, 298–299, 304, 305, 313
 Southern (*see* Yemenis)
- Arbeo, bishop of Freising, 245
- Ardo, monk and hagiographer, 254–255, 257, 261, 278–281
- Ariovist, leader of the Suebi, 40, 66
- Aristotle, 72
- Armenia, 14, 20–21, 115, 306n82
- Armenians, 9, 15, 20, 23, 35, 50, 70, 200, 361, 365
 identity of the, 9, 21–22, 55, 73, 362
- Arminius, 66
- Arn, archbishop of Salzburg, 247
- Arnulf, Carolingian king and emperor, 47, 171, 174, 175–76
- Arnulf, bishop of Metz, 36, 234
- Arsenius, patriarch of Alexandria, 218, 219
- Asia, 5, 7, 29, 30, 101
 Central, 51, 85, 283
 Minor, 102, 103, 106
- Asser, biographer of King Alfred, 36

- Astronomer, biographer of Louis the Pious, 256, 264n65, 277
- Athanasios the Athonite, monk, 190, 212
- Athanasios, secretary, 343
- Atias, pagarch, 341
- Augustus, Roman emperor, 33, 34, 232
- Austrasia, 237, 273n107, 275
- Avars, 125, 135, 246, 248
- Ayyūbids, dynasty, 81
- Azerbaijan, 20, 22, 98n32, 306n82
- al-ʿAzīz, Fāṭimid caliph, 79, 178, 216, 219, 343
- Baghdad, 14, 18, 20, 42, 46, 47, 49, 54, 62, 70, 77, 177, 180, 206, 218, 298, 351, 355
- al-Balādhurī, historian, 204
- Balboura, 99, 100
- Baldovin, John, 132, 148, 167
- Balkh, 351, 364
- Banū al-Dhiyāl, 343
- Banū Taghlib, 68
- Banū Tamīm, 16, 343n65
- Banū ʿUqayl, 17, 35, 65, 68, 362
- Barcelona, 159
- Barthes, Roland, 76
- Basil I, Byzantine emperor, 147, 148
- Basil II, Byzantine emperor, 144, 216
- Basileios, pagarch of Ishqūh/Aphrodito, 336, 345
- Basques, 70, 256, 261, 267, 280
- Başra, 17, 48, 292n31, 307, 309, 351, 355
- Bauer, Franz Alto, 128, 146, 148
- Bavaria, 70, 238, 245, 247–248
- Bavarians, 11, 34, 45, 46, 63, 245, 361, 363, 364
law of the, 59, 230, 241, 242–243, 244, 246, 251–252
- Bede, Saint, 56
- Bedouins, 16, 17, 34, 40, 42, 54, 77, 81, 104, 291, 293–294, 297n47, 298, 299n53, 315
- Benedict, abbot of Aniane, 253–255, 261, 278–281
- Benedict III, pope, 169, 173–174
- Benevento, 245
- Berbers, 14, 42, 62, 70, 79, 81, 82, 83
- Berengar I, king of Italy, emperor, 47, 162, 174n203
- Berengar II, king of Italy, 160
- Berger, Albrecht, 146, 148
- Bertrada, Carolingian queen, 254, 271
- Bithynia, 99
- Boniface, Roman general, 43, 44
- Boniface, Saint, 56
- Bonitus, bishop of Clermont, 157
- Bordeaux, 155, 156, 229, 270
- Bourges, 270, 271
- Bretons, 45, 46, 364
- Brioude, 155, 156
- Britons, 69
- Brown, Peter R. L., 58, 334
- Buc, Philippe, 175
- Buckle, Richard, 315
- Bulliet, Richard, 25
- Burbank, Jane, 1–2, 41n61
- Burgundians, 28, 34, 41, 44, 46–47, 48, 49, 52, 54, 62, 63, 64, 69, 227, 228–229
law of the, 59, 60, 68, 69, 231, 237, 246, 251
- Burgundy, 41, 42, 161n182, 163, 236, 260, 268, 273, 275
- Buṭrus, bishop of Bayt Raʿs, 207
- Būyids, dynasty, 14, 26, 42, 44, 46, 58, 62, 63, 71, 81
- Byzantine Empire, 4, 10, 48, 104, 118, 153, 215, 248, 250, 360, 364
elites in the, 333–334, 363, 364, 365
as Roman Empire, 3, 231, 233, 252, 333
- Byzantines, 21, 33, 63, 83, 103, 104, 110n62, 125–126, 141, 185, 200, 217, 221, 347, 364
See also Rhomaioi
- Byzantium, 6, 29, 39, 41, 59, 91, 124, 183, 184, 216, 231, 363, 365
- Cadolah, count, 248, 250
- Caesar, Gaius Julius, Roman general, 34, 40, 258, 269

- Cairo, 19, 77, 80, 82, 123, 125, 153, 177–182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 208, 216, 352n118
- Capitulare Aquitanicum*, 274–276, 277–278, 280
- Cappadocia, 95, 100
- Caracalla, Roman emperor, Edict of, 85, 86
- Carloman, Carolingian mayor of the palace, 238, 239, 269
- Carloman, son of Charlemagne, 273
- Carolingians, dynasty, 160, 178, 237, 238, 243, 245, 250–251, 256, 257, 262, 264, 265, 266, 274–275, 281–282, 318, 362
- empire of the, 4, 6, 11, 68, 228, 250, 252, 254, 255, 261
- elites in the, 11, 45, 46, 47, 244, 250, 264, 266, 277, 278, 282, 364–365
- identity in the, 11, 44, 46, 250
- laws in the, 11, 228, 241, 242–244, 246–247, 251, 266, 274, 276–278
- as renovation of the Roman Empire, 3, 46, 227, 230, 231, 232, 233, 248
- in historiography, 36, 58, 233–235, 236, 239–241, 245, 267–268, 271–273, 276, 277–278
- Caskel, Werner, 16
- Caspian Sea, 14, 18, 42, 46
- Cassiodorus, senator and writer, 36
- Cautinus, bishop of Clermont, 155, 156
- Chalcedon, Council of, 197
- Chalcedonians, 200, 203, 207, 215, 225
- Chamavi, 247
- Charlemagne, Carolingian king and emperor, 11, 42, 46, 56, 59, 159, 160, 170, 173, 175, 227, 230, 232, 233, 235, 240, 241, 244–245, 246, 247–249, 251–252, 253, 255, 256, 260, 262, 263–265, 268, 272, 274, 282
- Charles the Bald, Carolingian king and emperor, 265
- Charles III, Carolingian king, 213, 215
- Charles Martel, 234, 237, 238, 244, 260, 267–268, 270
- Childebert II, Merovingian king, 237, 244
- Childebrand, son of Pippin II, 233–234, 235, 240
- Chilperic II, Merovingian king, 267, 270
- China, 29, 301, 347
- Chlothar I, Merovingian king, 156, 237
- Chlothar II, Merovingian king, 237, 239, 241, 244
- Chramn, Merovingian king of Aquitaine, 156
- Christodoulos I, patriarch of Jerusalem, 216
- Christodoulos II, patriarch of Jerusalem, 222, 223n133, 225
- Christopher of Mytilene, poet, 134, 143, 144
- Christophoros, patriarch of Antioch, 219, 222
- Christophoros, pagarch of Ihnäs/
Herakleopolite, 336
- Cilicia, 21, 96, 97, 101, 104, 217
- Clermont, 156, 187
- Clovis I, Merovingian king, 36, 53n105, 57, 158, 229, 236–237, 243, 266n69, 361
- Cohen, Anthony, 187
- Collins, Roger, 233, 267
- Cologne, 161
- Constant II, Byzantine emperor, 108, 172
- Constantine I, Roman emperor, 109n61, 128–129, 165, 172, 189n2, 202, 252
- Constantine V, Byzantine emperor, 138
- Constantine VI, Byzantine emperor, 138, 150
- Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, Byzantine emperor, 149–150, 212
- Constantine II, rival pope, 169, 170n195
- Constantinople, 4, 5, 44, 45, 62, 70, 96, 98, 99, 101, 102, 107, 108, 111, 113, 114, 115–119, 122, 123–126, 127–153, 155, 159, 162, 164–165, 171, 172, 176, 181, 182, 184, 185, 186–187, 215, 216, 224, 334, 362, 363
- church of, 197, 198
- siege of (626), 125, 133n60, 135, 155
- Constantius II, Roman emperor, 130, 172
- Cook, Michael, 40–41, 57
- Cooper, Frederick, 1–2, 8, 41n61
- Copts, 24, 35, 70, 81, 198, 200, 359
- language of the, 332, 337, 338, 339, 340, 343, 348, 350, 354, 355–356
- Crete, 217
- Crone, Patricia, 29, 37, 72

- Cumming, Graeme S., 92
 Curta, Florin, 51
 Cyprus, 96, 190, 217, 221, 245, 247
- Dagobert I, Merovingian king, 161n183, 237, 242
 Damascenes, 27, 83–84
 Damascus, 54, 82, 83–84, 101, 119, 201, 351, 358
 Damianus, archbishop of Ravenna, 157, 168
 Danube, 96
 David, biblical king, 270
 Dāwūd, bishop of Damascus, 201
 Daylamites, 14, 26, 40–41, 42, 46, 49, 65, 67, 69, 70, 71
 Dhū al-Nūn, mystic, 356
 Dhū Nuwās, pre-Islamic South Arabian king, 289
 Dijon, 52
 Di'bil ibn 'Alī al-Khuzā'ī, poet, 288, 298–302, 303–304, 305–306, 307–308, 309–311, 312–314, 316–319
 Diocletian, Roman emperor, 256, 258, 262, 281, 354
 Dioskoros, bishop of Alexandria, 142
 Doyle, Michael W., 3
- Ebbo, archbishop of Reims, 160
 Eberhard, margrave of Friuli, 47
 Edfū. *See* Appolonis Ano
 Egeria, pilgrim, 131
 Egypt, 6, 14, 18–19, 24, 29, 38, 62, 65, 77, 78, 79, 80, 82, 85, 96, 98, 101, 107, 117, 126, 178–183, 188, 190, 194, 200, 201, 206, 242, 308, 329, 332–333, 349, 354
 elites in, 12, 330, 331, 333, 334–335, 341–342, 344, 346–348, 351–352, 357–359
 identities in, 15, 18, 24, 84–85, 339, 352–356, 359
 See also Jews in Egypt, Fāṭimids in Egypt
 Egyptians, 4, 24, 26, 35, 50, 82, 183, 330, 332, 333, 334, 345, 347, 348, 349, 363
 Christian, 337, 340–341, 343, 344, 346–347, 348, 354, 358
 Einhard, biographer of Charlemagne, 160n180, 232
 Eirene, Byzantine empress, 130n41, 138, 150
 Eleanor, duchess of Aquitaine, queen, 260
 England, 28, 29, 36, 52, 56, 71, 90
 Ephesus, 96, 103n49, 137
 Erikson, Erik H., 196
 Euchaïta, 99, 103
 Eudo, dux of Aquitaine, 267–268, 270
 Eudoxia, Roman empress, 135
 Eugenius, Western Roman usurper, 130
 Eulalia, Saint, 121
 Euphratensis, 101
 Euphrates, 29, 97, 201
 Eurasia, 347, 360, 366
 Europe, 3, 5, 7, 8, 28, 29, 30, 35, 36–37, 42, 43, 47, 50, 52–53, 63, 64, 66, 69, 70–71, 74, 76–77, 85, 86, 122, 196, 228, 232, 233, 318, 332, 362
 Central, 18, 42, 119
 Christian, 82, 230, 255
 Eastern, 41, 74
 Western, 15, 19, 41, 51, 84, 111n69, 117, 119, 154, 158, 212, 215, 333n9, 361
 Euthymios II, patriarch of Jerusalem, 214, 216
 Eutychios, patriarch of Constantinople, 138
 Eutychios, patriarch of Alexandria. *See* Sa'īd ibn Batrīq
- al-Fārābī, philosopher and jurist, 72
 Fārs, 22, 25, 26, 40n55, 42, 46, 62, 86, 330
 Fāṭima, daughter of Muḥammad, 18
 Fāṭimids, dynasty, 18–19, 63, 78, 79, 80–81, 83–84, 123, 125, 205, 216, 218, 225, 363, 366
 caliphate of the, 79, 198, 215, 224
 in Egypt, 62, 77, 82, 123, 125, 177–180, 182–184, 185, 194
 Fausto, Saint, 121
 Felix, Roman commander, 44
 Fertile Crescent, 17, 35n29, 42, 54, 65, 284
 Fidelis, bishop of Mérida, 121–122, 135, 155

- Firdawsī, poet, 25–26
 Flavius Josephus, historian, 71
 Fortunatus, patriarch of Grado, 248, 250
 France, 29, 52, 66, 90, 213, 228, 229, 364
 Francia, 46, 51, 159, 174n203, 212, 253, 257, 364
 Franks, 3, 4, 28, 34, 41, 46, 51, 53, 57, 59, 63, 156, 173, 200, 235, 238, 239, 244, 246, 251, 254, 256, 266, 267, 268–271, 362
 elites of the, 234, 239–240
 identity of the, 11, 42, 44, 52, 65, 69, 160, 234–235, 244, 250, 259, 277, 361, 362, 364, 365
 laws of the, 59, 230, 231, 232, 234, 237, 240, 242, 244, 246–247, 275–276
 Frisians, 246, 247
 Fuṣṭāṭ, 5, 48, 179–181, 182–183, 185–186, 194, 206, 220, 224, 315n131, 330, 331, 333n8, 335, 337, 342, 349, 351, 357, 358
 Fuṣṭāṭīs, 181, 183, 187

 Gainas, *magister militum*, 44
 Gallus, bishop of Clermont, 155
 Garonne, river, 281, 296
 Gaul, 43, 50, 56, 62, 66, 153–155, 157–159, 163, 171, 176, 184–185, 186, 259, 260, 362
 northern, 47, 229, 236, 243
 southern, 158, 159, 236, 254, 255, 256n18, 258, 266, 267, 273n107, 281
 Gauls, 45, 258, 364
 Geat, Scandinavian god, 36
 Gelder, Geert Jan van, 311
 Geneva, 52
 Genghis-Khan, 24
 Germani, 33, 51
 Germania, 34
 Germany, 160–161, 163, 260
 Ghaznavids, dynasty, 18, 29, 77, 78, 80, 81, 84
 Gingrich, Andre, 72
 Godelier, Maurice, 37
 Göksu, 99
 Gothia/Gotia, 254, 260, 273, 279, 280
 Goths, 28, 34, 36, 41, 42, 45, 48, 50, 54, 59, 64, 69, 70, 73, 82, 129, 364
 in Aquitaine, 254, 267, 269, 277–278, 281
 Arian creed of, 26, 63, 82, 259
 army of, 44, 49, 59, 67
 See also Ostrogoths; Visigoths
 Gotland, 41
 Great Britain, 196, 315
 Greece, 242, 347
 Greeks, 55, 59, 72, 86, 174, 198, 204, 248–249
 language of the, 8, 38, 50, 72, 109n62, 137, 154, 158, 168, 335, 337, 338, 339, 340, 342, 346, 348, 349, 350
 Gregory I the Great, pope, 157n171, 167–168, 169n194, 171
 Gregory II, 169, 268
 Gregory VII, pope, 213
 Gregory of Nazianzos, archbishop of Constantinople, 123, 131, 142
 Gregory, bishop of Tours, 56, 154–156, 158, 168, 237, 259
 Griffith, Sidney H., 198
 Gundobad, Burgundian king, 46–47
 Guntram, Merovingian king, 158

 Habsburgs, dynasty, 18, 42
 Hadrian I, pope, 170
 Hadrian II, pope, 174
 al-Ḥākīm, Faṭimid caliph, 181, 182n220, 183, 190, 213, 216, 218, 219, 223, 225
 Haldon, John, 2, 3, 231
 al-Hamdānī, scholar, 36, 289
 Ḥamdānids, dynasty, 68, 81, 217
 Ḥamza al-İṣfahānī, historian, 302, 309
 Han, dynasty, 58
 Hārūn ibn-Yahyā, 144
 Hārūn al-Rashīd, ‘Abbāsīd caliph, 15, 177
 Ḥasan b. Ya‘qūb, 356–357
 Ḥassān ibn Thābit, poet, 305
 Henry II, Holy Roman emperor, 161, 162
 Henry IV, Holy Roman emperor, 163
 Herakleios, Byzantine emperor, 130, 133n60, 221
 Herodotus, historian, 47
 Hiereia, 147, 151

- Hilāl al-Ṣābi', historian, 177
 Ḥimṣ, 343, 355
 Ḥimyar kingdom, 286–287, 292n34, 293, 294–295, 298, 302
 Himyarites, 304
 Hincmar, archbishop of Reims, 174, 175
Hispani, 263–264, 265, 266, 278, 282
 Hispania, 59
 Holling, Crawford S., 10, 93–94, 95, 96, 97, 99, 120
 Holmes, Catherine, 8
 Hūd, Qur'ānic prophet, 305, 306n82
 Hugh of Arles, king of Italy, 162, 174n204
 Hugh Capet, king of the Franks, 45, 364
 Ḥujja, daughter of 'Abd al-Raḥmān, 329
 Huneric, king of the Vandals, 39
- Iberian Peninsula, 263, 266, 282
 Iberians, 258
 Ibn Abī Shīṣ, poet, 313, 316
 Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ibn Ṭayfūr, writer and poet, 84n21, 313–314
 Ibn al-Azraq, chronicler, 23–24
 Ibn Durayd, philologist, 304
 Ibn Hishām, biographer of Muḥammad, 351
 Ibn al-Kalbī, genealogist, 16, 36
 Ibn Kathīr, scholar, 82–83, 84
 Ibn al-Mu'tazz, biographer, 290, 307
 Ibn al-Qalānisī, chronicler, 83
 Ibn al-Qāṣṣ, scholar, 311
 Ibn Qutayba, biographer, 289, 307, 313
 Ibn Sallām al-Jumaḥī, philologist, 305
 Ibn Ṭūlūn, governor, 178
 Ikhshīdids, dynasty, 194, 206, 220
 Il-Khanids, dynasty, 24, 51, 66
 Illyricum, 101
 Ilyās III, patriarch of Jerusalem, 201, 215
 India, 29, 78, 101
 Iran, 15, 19, 22, 24, 29, 38, 42, 43, 46, 62, 65, 77, 78, 79, 81, 85, 298, 308
 Iranians, 9, 42, 50, 70, 289
 identity of the, 19–20, 24–26, 50–51
 Iraq, 17, 20, 22, 29, 34, 35, 42, 77, 79, 81, 85, 86, 101, 200, 284, 288–289, 296, 302, 306, 308, 313, 318, 343, 355, 362
 Abbasid, 283, 285, 290, 293, 295, 297–298, 302
 Iraqis, 293, 295, 299, 300, 315, 316, 318
 elites of the, 297–298, 303, 314, 315
 identity of the, 17, 289, 298, 303
 'Īsā b. al-Munkadir, judge, 356
 Isaac, biblical patriarch, 86, 296
 Isaurians, 65
 Ishmael/Ismā'il, 79, 296–297, 299, 304
 Ishqūh/Aphrōdito, 336, 345, 349
 Isidore, bishop of Seville, 33, 242, 246, 274
 Ismā'il b. Alisā' al-Kindī, judge, 351
 Israel, 286
 biblical, 55
 people of, 34, 55
 al-Iṣṭakhri, geographer, 22, 25
 Istifān ibn Ḥakm, monk, 199
 Istria, 248–250
 Istrians, 248–250
 Italy, 33, 43, 44, 46, 49, 50, 51, 59, 66, 101, 114, 118, 157, 163, 212, 260
 Carolingian, 47, 159
 Northern, 162
 Southern, 113
 Iznik, Lake, 97
 Izzo, priest, 248, 250
- Jagiellonians, dynasty, 42
 al-Jāḥiẓ, scholar, 304
 Jarrett, Jonathan, 263
 Jazira, 18, 29, 68, 200, 331n4
 Jerusalem, 78, 125, 130, 131, 132, 188, 190, 191, 194–195, 200, 204, 206–210, 211, 212–213, 214, 215–216, 217–218, 220–221, 223, 224, 363
 heavenly, 270
 Jesus Christ, 40, 55, 57, 59, 108, 161n182, 168, 181, 199, 201, 202, 227
 tomb of, 189n2, 190, 210–211, 214, 225
 Jews, 6, 35, 55, 56, 70, 73, 82, 156, 180, 198, 206, 213, 217, 227, 300, 363
 in Egypt, 330, 348–349, 351, 352n118, 354
 law of the, 68
 John II, archbishop of Arles, 264
 John XIII, pope, 174n204, 176

- John Chrysostom, archbishop of
Constantinople, 132, 133, 134–135,
137, 142, 148n137
- John Malalas, chronicler, 128n30, 137–138
- John, bishop of Nikiou, 334
- John, Western Roman usurper, 130
- John, dux of Istria, 248, 249
- John Skylitzes, historiographer, 145,
146n124, 151, 181, 190, 217
- John Tzimiskes, Byzantine emperor,
133n60, 218
- Jordanes, historiographer, 36
- Joseph, biblical person and Qur'anic
prophet, 24
- Judith, Bavarian duchess, 212
- Jund Filasṭīn, 190–191, 192, 198, 200, 201,
203, 204–205, 206, 207, 208, 209,
210, 212, 213, 214, 215, 217, 219,
223–225
- Jund al-Urdunn, 207, 214
- Justinian I, Eastern Roman emperor, 62,
101, 130, 138, 203n46, 335
- Kairouan, 178
- Kaldellis, Anthony, 145
- Karaman, 97
- Khurasan, 14, 18, 61, 77–78, 84, 315n117,
354, 355
- Khurasanians, 77–78, 80, 81, 84
- Kūfa, 17, 48, 351, 355
- Kurds, 9, 15, 22–23, 26, 34, 35, 40, 42, 50,
53, 69, 70, 71, 81
identity of the, 14, 20, 22, 23–24
- Lakhmids, dynasty, 38, 40
- Lambert, king of Italy, emperor, 176
- Lancaster, William, 16
- Lantfrid, *dux* of the Alamans, 241
- Laon, 162
- Lavan, Luke, 172
- Leo III, Byzantine emperor, 138, 140
- Leo IV, Byzantine emperor, 138
- Leo III, pope, 168, 170, 173, 175–176, 364
- Leo IV, pope, 170, 171, 173
- Leopolis, 171
- Leudegar, bishop of Autun, 156
- Levant, 98, 104, 212, 221, 225, 341–342
- Lewis, Bernard, 33
- Leyser, Karl, 161
- Liberios, pagarch of Edfū/Appolonis Ano,
336
- Lindisfarne, 56
- Liudprand, bishop of Cremona, historio-
grapher, 45, 144, 162, 174n204
- Loire, river, 228, 255, 270, 281
- Lombards, 11, 36, 42, 43, 49, 50, 51–52,
56, 59, 63, 68, 73, 74, 162, 169, 227,
239, 245, 361
kingdom of the, 28, 52, 59, 159, 162,
272, 362
law of the, 49, 59, 251
- Lombardy, 41, 52, 70
- Lothar II, Carolingian king, 174–175
- Lotharingia, 45, 46, 70, 261
- Lotharingians, 45
- Louis the Pious, Carolingian king and em-
peror, 47, 149, 227, 228, 230, 232,
245, 248, 250, 254, 255, 278
as king of Aquitaine, 256, 257, 260, 262,
263, 264–265, 277, 279–280
- Louis II, Carolingian king, 162, 169, 173,
174–175, 231
- Louis IV, Carolingian king of West
Francia, 164
- Lucrecia, Saint, 121
- Lyon, 52
- Ma'add, ancestral name, 79, 288, 296, 316
- Magdeburg, 160–161
- Maghreb, 29, 62, 301
- al-Mahdī, 'Abbāsīd caliph, 351
- al-Mahdiyya, 80
- Maḥmūd of Ghazni, Ghaznavid ruler, 364
- Main, 47
- Mālik ibn Ṭawq, governor, 308, 312, 317
- Mamertus, bishop of Vienne, 154
- al-Ma'mūn, 'Abbāsīd caliph, 298, 300–301,
302, 310n103, 311, 312, 314, 317,
351
- Mango, Cyril, 146, 148

- al-Manṣūr, 'Abbāsīd caliph, 79–80
 al-Manṣūriyya, 80
 al-Maqrīzī, historian, 83–84
 Marbod, king of the Marcomanni, 66
 Markianos, Saint, 134
 Martin I, pope, 108
 Martyrios, Saint, 134
 Marwanids, dynasty, 23, 87, 348
 al-Mas'ūdī, historian, 197n25, 206n59, 307
 Mateos, Juan, 148
 Maurice, Byzantine emperor, 138
 Mauritania, 81
 Mazyadids, dynasty, 40
 McCormick, Michael, 129–130, 131, 140, 172, 183, 273n107
 Mecca, 77–78, 177, 218, 296, 355
 Medina, 301, 351
 Mediterranean, 9, 10, 38–39, 96, 98, 101, 122, 125, 178, 180, 215, 347, 358
 Melkites, 190–191, 193, 198, 205, 211–214, 215–216, 218–219, 220–221
 identity of the, 192, 195–196, 197–205, 206, 209–210, 219, 223–226
 Menas, patriarch of Constantinople, 138
 Mérida, 121–122, 135, 155
 Merovingians, dynasty, 11, 36, 58, 154, 158–159, 161, 163, 228, 229, 236, 240, 241, 242–243, 259–260, 361
 kingdom of the, 52, 230, 234–235, 237–238, 244, 250
 law of the, 244, 274, 276
 Michael Attaleiates, 146n124, 151
 Michael V, Byzantine emperor, 145, 146n124, 151, 152, 181, 187, 364
 Michael Psellos, Byzantine scholar, 133, 146n124
 Middle East, 3, 8, 14–15, 19, 20, 24, 27, 35, 65, 67, 81, 82, 84–85, 288, 314–315, 332
 Mikhā'il, patriarch of Alexandria, 201
 Milan, 162, 163
 Mitford, Nancy, 315
 Mitterauer, Michael, 71
 Modestos, patriarch of Jerusalem, 221
 Morocco, 81
 Moses, biblical prophet and lawgiver, 242
 Mosul, 47, 351
 Mu'āwiya, Umayyad caliph, 337
 al-Mubarrad, 290
 Muḍar, ancestral name, 288
 Mufarrij ibn Daghfal ibn al-Jarrāh at-Ṭa'i, pretender caliph, 218
 Muḥammad, Prophet, 55, 57, 63, 102, 204, 284, 286n10, 287, 290, 293, 294, 295, 303, 305, 351, 352n121
 as ancestor, 18, 51, 78, 80, 290, 296, 301
 Muḥammad ibn 'Ismā'il al-Ṣinājī, governor, 188–190, 194, 195, 206, 219, 220–221, 222, 224
 al-Mu'izz, Fāṭimīd caliph, 79, 178, 181, 183
 al-Muqādassī, geographer, 206, 210
 al-Muqtadir, 'Abbāsīd caliph, 20, 206n58
 al-Musabbiḥī, historian, 77–78, 79, 81, 84, 87, 182
 al-Mutawakkil, 'Abbāsīd caliph, 177, 300, 307–308
 al-Mu'taṣim, 'Abbāsīd caliph, 300–301, 303, 312, 317, 318, 352
 al-Mutī, 'Abbāsīd caliph, 217
 Napoleon Bonaparte, 41
 Narses, Roman general, 43
 Nāṣer-e Khosraw, Persian pilgrim, 182
 Nasser, Gamal Abdel, Egyptian President, 52
 Near East, 70, 333
 Neustria, 273n105, 275
 Nibelung, son of Childebrand, 233–234
 Nicaea, 99
 Nicetius, archbishop of Lyon, 155
 Nicholas I, pope, 175
 Nikephoros I, Byzantine emperor, 138
 Nikephoros II Phokas, Byzantine emperor, 140–141, 145, 217
 Nikephoros, patriarch of Jerusalem, 148n137, 213, 216
 Niketas, cleric, 211, 212
 Nile, 181, 332
 Nizār, ancestral name, 79, 288, 290, 301, 304, 316

- Noah, biblical patriarch, 36
 Normandy, 46, 212, 260
 Normans, 28, 29, 45, 63, 216, 364
- Odoacer, king of Italy, 62
 Oesterle, Jenny, 181, 183
 Orestes, patriarch of Jerusalem, 216, 218
 Oriens, 101
 Orléans, 155, 158, 159
 Ostrogoths, 36, 63, 67
 Otto I, Holy Roman emperor, 160–161, 176n108
 Otto III, Holy Roman emperor, 161, 176n108
 Ottomans, dynasty, 19, 41, 70
 Ottonians, dynasty, 45, 161, 163, 174, 183, 184
- Palestine, 11, 65, 96, 97, 101, 105, 190, 205, 286, 300n58
See also Jund Filasṭīn
- Papas, pagarch of Edfū/Appolonis Ano, 336
- Paris, 157, 158n53, 160, 273n107
 Paul the Deacon, historiographer, 36, 71
 Paul, apostle, 55, 57, 227, 270n93
 Pavia, 132, 159, 173
 Pelagius II, pope, 171
 Persians, 14, 23, 26, 34, 35, 71, 72, 81, 86, 290.
 identity of the, 15, 66, 70, 304
 kings, 291, 315, 329–330, 333
 languages of the, 23, 25–26, 33, 351
See also Turko-Persians
- Peterson, Garry D., 92
 Photios, patriarch of Constantinople, 133n60, 215
- Pippin II, mayor of the palace, 237
 Pippin III, Carolingian king, 233–234, 235, 237–238, 239–240, 241, 243, 244, 254, 260, 266, 269–270, 271, 273, 274, 275
- Proklos, patriarch of Constantinople, 137
 Prokopios, historian, 130
 Provence, 52, 229, 262, 273, 280n144
- Pseudo-Kodinos, 126
 Pulcheria, Eastern Roman empress, 137
 Pyrenees, 213, 255–256, 258, 268, 282
- Qaḥṭān, tribal ancestor, 37, 284, 288, 289, 304–305
- Qarāmiṭa, 20, 82, 83, 84
 Qays, 67
 Qom, 299, 312, 313
 Qudāma ibn Jaʿfar, scholar, 310
 Quintianus, bishop of Clermont, 155, 156
 Quraysh, tribe of the prophet Muḥammad, 57, 87, 290–291, 294, 296, 300, 301, 305
- Qurra b. Sharik, governor, 345
- Raetia, 248
 Ragenfrid, mayor of the palace, 267, 270
 Ramla, 77, 188, 194, 199, 206, 207, 217
 Reimitz, Helmut, 32, 44, 276
 Reims, 156, 157, 160, 170
 Remigius, bishop of Reims, 156
 Rhine, 34, 47, 51
 Rhomaioi, 8, 61, 89n7
 Rhône, 47, 52, 228
 Richard II, duke of Normandy, 212
 Richer of Reims, historian, 45
 Riziano/Rižana, 248–250
- Roman Empire, 2, 3, 6, 28, 34, 38, 39, 43, 47, 48, 58, 62, 63, 67, 85, 86, 88, 98, 106–108, 114, 143, 183, 229, 230, 236, 261
 Eastern, 38, 72, 89, 91, 95, 96, 101, 105, 106, 108, 109, 115–117, 119–120, 251, 361
 elites in the, 112, 115
 Roman identity in the, 109
 Western, 3–4, 8, 28, 29, 47, 64, 65, 66, 73, 77, 228, 231, 232
 dissolution of, 9, 14, 30, 38, 46–47, 60–62, 333n9, 365
 military and Barbarian elites in the, 9, 38, 44, 47, 67, 365
 senatorial elites in the, 39, 259, 276, 365

- Romans, 9, 33, 36, 39, 42, 43, 45, 48, 51,
59, 61, 62, 67, 86, 120, 237, 244, 275
elites of the, 69–70, 77, 82
law of the, 60, 110–111, 242, 276, 281,
291, 365
identity of the, 110
- Rome, city, 4, 125, 132, 144, 152, 153, 162,
164–176, 178, 181, 182, 184, 185, 186
church of, 197, 198, 202, 214, 215, 231, 284
inhabitants of (Romans), 166, 171, 173,
174, 175–176, 182, 186, 187
- Rothari, king of the Lombards, 272
Edict of (*Edictus Rothari*), 59
- Rudaki, poet, 25
- Rudolfus Glaber, monk and historiogra-
pher, 212
- Saborios, general, 114
- Sadaqa I, Mazyadid *rex Araborum*, 40
- Safavids, dynasty, 15, 19, 24, 51, 66
- Sagalassos, 97
- Said, Edward, 5, 85
- Sa'īd ibn Batrīq, patriarch of Alexandria,
201, 202, 204
- Saladin/Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, 9, 24
- Salians, dynasty, 42, 174
- Ṣāliḥ, Qur'ānic prophet, 305, 306n82
- Ṣāliḥ Ibn Sa'īd Al-Masiḥī, monk, 211n80,
213, 223
- Samanids, dynasty, 18, 26, 29
- Samarqand, 18, 301
- Sāmarrā', 177
- Sanders, Paula, 178
- Saracens, 38, 98, 103, 231, 257, 262, 263,
268, 270
- Sasanians, 221, 291, 293, 294, 363
empire of the, 3, 18, 23, 25, 26, 38, 65, 91
- Saudi-Arabia, 52
- Saul, biblical king, 270
- Saxons, 34, 45, 46, 56, 63, 239–240, 245,
246, 247, 271, 361, 364
- Saxony, 261
- al-Sayyida al-'Azizīya, consort of al-'Aziz,
216, 219
- Scandinavia, 42
- Scythia, 42
- Scythians, 33, 55, 66, 227
- Seljuks, 14, 21, 22, 23, 29, 81, 214, 217
- Septimania, 253, 256–257, 260, 262, 273,
279, 280n144
- Sergios of Jerusalem, envoy, 214
- Sergios, patriarch of Constantinople, 107,
125, 133n60, 135
- Sergius I, pope, 168, 172
- Sergius II, pope, 173, 175
- Ševčenko, Nancy, 133
- al-Shāfi'ī, lawyer, 351, 352n119, 356
- Shaybān, 16, 17, 35
- Sheba, biblical queen of, 296
- Sicilians, 79
- Sicily, 101, 109n62, 113, 117, 347
- Sidonius Apollinaris, bishop and poet, 44
- Siems, Harald, 242
- Sigibert III, Merovingian king, 237
- Sim'ān, patriarch of Antioch, 201
- Sinai, Mount, 203, 207, 209, 213
- Sinop, 96
- Slavs, 51, 53, 249
- Sokrates of Constantinople, church histo-
rian, 130–131
- Solomon, biblical king, 296–297
- Sophronios, patriarch of Jerusalem, 207, 208
- Spain, 26, 50, 66, 81, 102, 121, 158, 257, 263
- Standen, Naomi, 8
- Stephen II, pope, 168, 169, 171, 174n203,
174n204
- Stephen III, pope, 56, 169
- Stilicho, Roman general, 20, 43, 44, 172
- St Paul, Carinthian monastery, 231
- Strabo, geographer and historian, 258
- Sulaymān al-Ghazzī, Melkite bishop and
poet, 200–201, 205, 223, 225–226
- Sulaymān, bishop of Mount Sinai, 207
- al-Ṣūlī, biographer, 290, 307, 316n126, 317
- Syria, 29, 38, 43, 65, 77, 78–79, 81, 84, 85,
96, 98, 101, 105, 188, 201, 220, 286,
288–289, 308, 331, 342, 343
- Syrians, 35, 61, 66, 70, 78, 289, 352n118
identity of the, 17, 85
- al-Ṭabarī, historian, 25, 204

- Ṭabariyyā, 207, 217
 Tainter, Joseph, 105
 Takin, commander, 188, 189, 220
 Tarsus, 97
 Tassilo, Bavarian duke, 240, 244–245
 Taurus Mountains, 97, 103, 104–105, 115
 Ṭāwudūrus Abū Qurrah, Melkite bishop
 and theologian, 199, 202–203
 Tehran, 26
 Theoderic, Ostrogothic king, 36, 172
 Edict of (*Edictus Theoderici*), 67
 Theodorakios, pagarch of Ihnās/
 Herakleopolite, 336
 Theodore Lektor, historian, 142
 Theodoros, patriarch of Jerusalem, 201, 216
 Theodosios, patriarch of Antioch, 215
 Theodosius I, Roman emperor, 128n30, 130
 Theodosius II, Eastern Roman emperor,
 129, 130–131, 137
 Theodulf, bishop of Orléans, 159, 160
 Theophanes Confessor, chronicler, 137–138,
 142, 150, 151–152
 Theophilos, Byzantine emperor, 150
 Theophilos, patriarch of Jerusalem, 218
 Theuderic I, Merovingian king, 156, 242
 Thietmar, bishop of Merseburg, 161
 Thrace, 96, 150
 Thuringians, 11, 34, 63, 146, 250
 Tiber, river, 156, 166
 Tigris, river, 29
 Timothy, patriarch of Constantinople, 135
 Toledo, Councils of, 59
 Totila, Ostrogothic king, 171
 Tours, 155, 156, 158, 237
 Transoxiana, 102
 Troy, 42, 65
 Ṭūmiyā II, patriarch of Jerusalem, 222
 Tunisia, 79, 83, 178
 Tunisians, 79
 Turchin, Peter, 1
 Turko-Persians, 351–352, 364
 Turks, 14, 21, 22, 33, 35, 51, 78, 81, 85,
 100, 306, 314, 318
 language of the, 22, 33
 in military service, 39, 49, 61, 65, 70,
 302, 303
 Ubl, Karl, 243, 244, 276
 ‘Umar b.al- Khaṭṭāb, second caliph, 338
 ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, Umayyad caliph,
 344
 Umayyads, dynasty, 58, 66, 208, 256,
 262, 263, 267, 288, 298, 342,
 347, 363
 caliphate of the, 38, 48, 81, 87, 101,
 118–119, 287, 314, 334
 Vandals, 28, 34, 43, 44, 50, 63, 64, 66, 68,
 70, 114, 155, 361
 Vascones, 268–269, 270
 Venantius Fortunatus, hagiographer,
 bishop of Poitiers, 155
 Victor III, pope, 214
 Visigoths, 12, 26, 62, 63, 121, 254, 259,
 262, 266
 identity of the, 256–257, 261
 kingdom of the, 50, 227, 236, 259
 law of the, 60, 242, 246, 262, 264, 276
 Vitalian, pope, 172
 Vlachs, 70
 al-Wāthiq, ‘Abbāsīd caliph, 218
 Waifar, *dux* of Aquitaine, 244, 260n38,
 267, 269–273, 276
 al-Walīd I, Umayyad caliph, 343
 Woden, Germanic god, 36
 Worms, 276
 Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd, 356
 Yaḥya ibn Sa‘īd, historian, 190, 191–192,
 193–195, 204, 206, 217, 218, 219,
 220–221, 223–224, 225
 Yamani, 34, 35, 37
See also Yemenis
 al-Ya‘qūbī, geographer, 351
 Ya‘rub, son of Qaḥṭān, 305
 Yemen, 18, 29, 35, 37, 70, 79, 283–285,
 286–287, 289, 298, 299

- Yemenis, 4, 6, 29, 34, 67, 86, 283–285, 286,
295, 297, 300, 313, 345, 354, 363
identity of the, 12, 198, 283–285, 288–
293, 295, 302, 310, 318–319, 363
in Iraq, 284, 289, 296
Yūḥannā ibn Jami, patriarch of Jerusalem,
11, 188–189, 192, 194, 200, 207, 208,
210, 212, 215, 217, 220, 221, 224
murder of, 11, 190, 191, 193–195, 204,
205, 216, 220–222, 223, 225
Yūsuf b. Abī'l-Sāj, warlord, 19–20
Zagros Mountains, 22, 23, 42
Zaragoza, 156
Ziyād al-A'jam, poet, 81
Zoe, Byzantine empress, 145

