NEW HISTORIES OF A TIME OF CONFLICT: THE SEVENTH CENTURY IN THE *CHRONICLE* OF MICHAEL THE SYRIAN*

by Philip Wood

For both Muslims and Christians in the Middle East, the Muslim conquests of the 7th c. were momentous events that seemed to have a wider religious significance. For many, the conquests seemed to demonstrate the superiority of the Muslims and the truth of Islam. The *futūḥ* narratives, the Arabic accounts of a divinely-mandated Muslim conquest, describe the Roman Christians as morally corrupt, and their abandonment of true religion explains their defeat to their Muslim opponents. In these narratives, the conquest is a divinely ordained war, where the Muslims are simply instruments of God.[1]

Even to Christian critics of Islam, the defeat of the Christians posed a near unanswerable question: in an 8th-c. Syriac text set in Iraq, the *Dialogue of the emir and John of Beth Hale*, the emir tells John, "Here is the sign that God loves us and is pleased with our religion: He has given us authority over all religions and all peoples: they are slaves subject to us." When John convinces him of the truth of Christianity he still holds an objection: "While I know your religion is right, and your way of thinking preferable to ours […] why has God handed you over to us to be slaughtered like sheep?"[2] As the prospect of a Roman reconquest waned, some Christians within the caliphate sought to distance themselves from the Roman Empire. This distancing occurred at different rates in different places. It was a function of both the empire's political weakness and its ongoing theological

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1. Al-Azdi's *Futūḥ al-Shām* is a good example; Scheiner, Grundlegendes, dates its composition to 785–825.

2. Taylor, The Disputation, pp. 209 and 238. Christians employed two main strategies in response to Muslim victory: either to point to the large parts of the earth that remained unconquered (e.g. Theodore bar Koni) or to accuse Muslims of relying on the sword to convert others because they had no miracles (e.g. al-Kindi): Griffith, *The church*, esp. p. 87.

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vacillation, as emperors took up, and then abandoned Monotheletism in the 7th c. and experimented with Iconoclasm in the eighth.[3]

Some modern historians have seen the Arab conquests as a major moment of opportunity for "heretical" Christians, such as the Miaphysites, in the Roman Near East. Geoffrey De Ste. Croix argued that the Chalcedonians' persecution of the Miaphysites reduced their will to resist the invasion.[4] De Ste. Croix's view is now widely thought to be false,[5] but it was based on a primary source, namely the 12th-c. Syriac *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian. There is no suggestion in Muslim Arabic sources that the invaders did in fact receive any assistance from disaffected Christians (though they do report the defection of Persian cavalrymen in Iraq and Samaritans in Palestine).[6] But the passages that interested De Ste. Croix in Michael merit our investigation here as indications of how Miaphysite Christians sought to re-write history to differentiate their own past from that of the Romans.

Before we proceed further, I would also like to stress that Michael's *Chronicle* is a complex source that draws on many earlier texts. For the material set in the 7th c. we can divide our authors into five groups:[7]

A. Qura of Batna. An ecclesiastical historian writing in Syriac whose works are not extant. The tradition saw him as a successor to John of Ephesus (wr. 588) and as the predecessor to Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, who began his history during the reign of Maurice (d. 602).

B. Daniel of Tur Abdin, John bar Samuel, Theophilus of Edessa and Theodosius of Edessa. Dionysius names these men as his sources but did not consider their treatment of their own times to be sufficiently complete and went over the same period in his own writing. Two chronographers, Jacob of Edessa and John of Litarba, were also used as sources by Dionysius.

C. Dionysius of Tel-Mahre. Dionysius wrote his history in ca. 838–42 in two parts, devoted to ecclesiastical and secular material respectively. This text is not extant but many sections survive, in paraphrase or direct quotation, in the Syriac historians of the 12th or 13th c., including the anonymous *Chronicle to 1234*, Bar Hebraeus and Michael the Syrian.

D. Historians of the 11th c., such as Ignatius of Melitene, who may have transmitted earlier material to Michael, as well as writing about their own times. Ignatius' history began with Constantine, though its coverage seems to have been very terse.

E. Michael the Syrian himself. Michael's *Chronicle* is organized into three columns that relate roughly contemporary events. Often these relate to ecclesiastical and secular history and natural disasters.

3. Wood, Changing geographies, for the historical consciousness of different West Syriac communities. For these theological experiments see Haldon, *The empire*, pp. 284–94.

4. De Ste. Croix, *The class struggle*, pp. 484–5. Woodward, *Christianity*, p. 65 attributed the "easy submission" of Syrian Miaphysite Christians to the Arabs to the persecution of the 6th c.

5. E.g. Moorhead, The Monophysite response; Kaegi, *Byzantium*, p. 30.

6. Kaegi, *Byzantium*, p. 173; Hoyland, *In God's path*, p. 97.

7. Cf. Van Ginkel, Michael the Syrian.

In this paper I examine the depiction of the conquest in Michael. I aim to assess passages that depict the emperors' relationship with Miaphysites both before and during the Arab conquests. These are Domitian of Melitene's persecution (X.23); Heraclius' meeting with Athanasius Gamala (XI.3) and the activities of the Roman generals Theodore (XI.5), Gregory (XI.6) and David (XI.10). In particular, I attempt to show where and how the passages identify heroes and villains to situate individual episodes within possible historiographical contexts. I should stress that this is only an initial assessment, and I remain uncertain about the authorship of the passages I examine here.

Maurice, Heraclius, and the Miaphysites

A core narrative runs through the account of political and military events of 580–630 in Michael that is shared, at least in outline, with the Greek historian Theophanes. This narrative describes the betrayal of Maurice by Phocas and the war of Khusrau, culminating ultimately in Heraclius' victory. Like the Greek account, it begins by depicting Phocas as the chief villain, before switching its antipathy to Khusrau and his generals.[8] For our purposes, it is notable that it receives Heraclian propaganda positively: the Persians are criticized for seizing the True Cross and for abducting the patriarch Zacharias.[9] Both of these "crimes" were features of contemporary lamentations at Persian tyranny, such as the writings of Antiochus Strategos on the fall of Jerusalem in 614, and formed part of Heraclius' efforts to win over Christian allies in the Caucasus.[10] Conversely, Heraclius' restoration of the True Cross was a significant part of his own presentation as a victorious Christian emperor.[11]

There is little anti-Chalcedonian sentiment in this narrative. When Khusrau comes in exile to Antioch in 590 the churches that he founds are consecrated by the Chalcedonian patriarch without any negative comment from our author.[12] And though our author does note that Zacharias is the Chalcedonian bishop, this seems to be more a note for clarification (perhaps added by an editor) than a criticism. And this narrative does little to criticize Heraclius for his Chalcedonianism. Inter-confessional politics are avoided in favour of celebrating the achievements of a Christian emperor.[13]

However, the political narrative is supplemented by additional strands of material that are more local in focus and discuss the relationship between Edessene Miaphysites and political authority. These supplementary narratives begin with Maurice and focus on his role as a persecutor through the bishop Domitian (d. 602). Domitian of Melitene,

8. Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle* [henceforth MS] X.24–5 (ed. Chabot vol. 4, pp. 389–90, transl. vol. 2, pp. 375–7). Khusrau's general Romizan promises "to spare neither old men nor children". Compare Theophanes AM 6095 (ed. de Boor p. 291, transl. Mango & Scott p. 418) ff. on Phocas and AM 6105 (ed. de Boor p. 300, transl. Mango & Scott p. 430) ff. on Heraclius and Khusrau.

9. MS XI.1 (ed. vol. 4, p. 404, transl. vol. 2, p. 400).

10. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, pp. 164–8.

11. Stoyanov, *Defenders*; Zuckerman, Heraclius.

12. MS X.23 (ed. vol. 4, p. 387, transl. vol. 2, p. 372).

13. MS X.23 (ed. vol. 4, p. 386, transl. vol. 2, pp. 372–3). We can draw a parallel with the positive initial depiction of Heraclius in the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*, pp. 485–6, which contrasts the depredations of the "pagan" Persians to Heraclius, who kills the unbeliever *(kāfir)* Khusrau by the grace of Christ *(b-ni'ma al-sayyid al-masiḥ)* (p. 489). Heraclius is also positively compared to the unbeliever *(kāfir)* Phocas.

the emperor's nephew, is a "ferocious beast", who seizes the churches of Mesopotamia and hands them over to the Chalcedonians (X.23).[14] He urges the monks to receive Chalcedonian communion and, when they refuse, he has them burnt in the ditch by the door of Beth Shemesh at Edessa[15] and the people gather their bones and build a church for the relics. The local *spatharios* (a bodyguard, possibly attached to Domitian) hears monks criticize Maurice and Domitian and orders them to be put to death. These persecutions are followed by a series of natural disasters, including the death by plague of the Chalcedonian patriarch of Constantinople John IV (r. 582–95).[16]

Evagrius Scholasticus (wr. 593) describes how Maurice initiated a successful missionary campaign against Miaphysite villages in Roman Mesopotamia.[17] It may be that this was accompanied by the small-scale "persecution" described in Michael.[18] The involvement of the *spatharios* suggests that this may have been a case of coerced communion which led to public criticism of the emperor, and how this in turn was punished by execution, technically for their treason rather than for their beliefs. This was, of course, a sensitive militarized region on the Roman-Persian border and Maurice would himself be toppled by rebellion in due course.[19]

The reference to the gathering of the relics of the "martyrs" of this persecution at Beth Shemesh may imply that there was a local memory of this event (or imagined event) when the author of this text was writing. Nevertheless, a cult that commemorated 6th-c. neo-martyrs never became widespread and they are not mentioned in the medieval synaxaria. Indeed, the fact that Michael cannot name these martyrs or locate the church may imply that there was no active cult for these martyrs when Michael wrote.[20]

Heraclius in Mesopotamia

The narrative on Heraclius in Edessa is markedly more complex than that on Domitian.[21] It shows considerable internal variation and probably uses multiple sources with different agendas. I summarise XI.3 here for ease of reference. The divisions here are my own, and have not been inserted by Michael:

14. For Domitian's earlier career see Whitby, *The emperor Maurice*, p. 14. John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical history* 3.5.19 (written before these events occurred) notes the important position held by Domitian, his relationship to Maurice and his devotion to Chalcedonianism. Cf. *PLRE* 3, "Domitianus".

15. Presumably this is a church. In the Old Testament, Beth Shemesh was a city allotted to the Kohenim in Joshua 21:16.

16. MS X.23 (ed. vol. 4, p. 387, transl. vol. 2, p. 373). For plague and natural disaster as a divine punishment in the 6th-c. imagination see Kaldellis, The literature of plague.

17. Evagrius, *Ecclesiastical history* 6.22.

18. Jankowiak, *Essai d'histoire politique*, p. 16.

19. Greatrex, Moines, discusses the fortification and garrisoning of the frontier.

20. For the treatment of Maurice himself as a martyr, and the development of his reputation during Heraclius' reign, see Booth, The ghost of Maurice.

21. MS XI.3 (ed. vol. 4, pp. 409–10, transl. vol. 2, pp. 412–13). Of these passages, the first two and the last appear in *Chronicle to 1234* (ed. Chabot pp. 236–7, transl. Palmer pp. 140–1), which makes a strong case of their appearance in Dionysius of Tel-Mahre. The meeting with Athanasius is referred to by *ibid*. (ed. Chabot p. 238, transl. Palmer p. 142) as being part of its ecclesiastical section, which is not fully extant. The *Chronicle to 1234* is much more explicit than MS in blaming Isaiah's refusal on his "foolishness and lack of education". The difference may reflect more interventionist editing on Michael's part.

1. Heraclius enters the cathedral Edessa and distributes largesse. But the metropolitan Isaiah, "in the fervor of his zeal" bans the emperor from communion. Isaiah tells him: "If you do not anathematize the synod of Chalcedon and the *Tome of Leo*[22] I will not allow you to touch the mysteries." Heraclius departs in a rage.

2. Isaiah departs from the church along with the nobles of the Rusafaye, Tell Mahraye and the house of Qosma son of Arabi, who had given many gifts to the church and hoped to return after the emperor's departure.

3. Athanasius Gamala, the Miaphysite patriarch of Antioch (d. 631), meets Heraclius with his bishops at Mabbug (Michael gives a list of names). Heraclius asks for a *libellus* of their belief, and then asks to receive communion if he states that he accepts two natures in Christ united in a single will and operation "according to Cyril [of Alexandria]".

4. When the bishops see that he is in accord with Nestorius and [Pope] Leo, they refuse him and Heraclius is irritated. Heraclius writes to the whole empire to mutilate anyone who rejects Chalcedon.

5. Many monks at Beth Maron and elsewhere go over to the synod [of Chalcedon] during a long persecution and take their churches with them.

6. A concluding comment: "It is because of this theft of 'our' churches by the Romans that God allowed the south to be given over to the Ishmaelites to deliver us from the hands of the Romans. If it is a misfortune that the Chalcedonians therefore received the churches in their possession at the time of the conquests, it was no small advantage to be freed from the cruelty of the Romans."

Section 2 shows a clear interest in the changing fate of church property and its links to aristocratic families in Edessa. This is taken to be a key effect of theological disagreement and the narrative seems to function as a claim by a recently disenfranchised group of elites. These families were ancestors of the historian Dionysius of Tel-Mahre and it seems likely that this account, and others like it, have been transmitted by Dionysius' own relatives such as Daniel of Tur Abdin.[23]

But the Heraclius who enters Edessa after his victory in section 1 is depicted positively (much more so than Domitian of Melitene). There is no suggestion that his largesse is an attempt to win over people to "heresy", or that the monks he greets are somehow apostates from their faith. Of course, it is dangerous to read too much into texts that have been abbreviated and may have additions from later editors. But an editor with a sectarian agenda would have played up distinctions between Miaphysites and Chalcedonians, rather than minimized them. Indeed, the end of this section depicts Heraclius as a brutal persecutor, so I suggest that the editing process has allowed different representations of

22. The *Tome of Leo* was one of the foundational documents used at Chalcedon in 451.

23. Other records of the importance for political events for how church property changed hands in Edessa are given in X.23 (ed. vol. 4, p. 386, transl. vol. 2, p. 372) and X.25 (ed. vol. 4, p. 390, transl. vol. 2, p. 379). These comments read like glosses on otherwise disparate material. Other sections of Michael that are interested in the fate of aristocratic fortunes are X.24 (the rise of the family of Iyarios of Harran); X.25 (on Iwannis Rusafaya and his argument with Khusrau during his exile in Edessa) and XI.1 (the governorship of Cyrus of Edessa and the relationship between the Edessene elite and Khusrau). These scenes are likely to derive from Sergius Rusafaya via Daniel of Tur Abdin, both of whom were Dionysius' ancestors. Palmer, *Monk and mason*, p. 169. Sergius and Iwannis are explicitly referred to as ancestors of Dionysius in MS XI.3 (ed. vol. 4, p. 409, transl. vol. 2, p. 411).

the emperor by different historians to stand alongside one another.[24] In section 1 of XI.3 it is Isaiah, rather than Heraclius, who comes across as intransigent.[25]

This representation of Isaiah suggests an Edessene author(s) to whom the victorious Heraclius was an impressive figure, and who blames Isaiah for the insult and the nobles' loss of property and influence. Isaiah's belligerent behaviour here is rooted in the fact that he was one of the bishops appointed by eastern Miaphysites during Khusrau's occupation of Edessa (Isaiah's predecessor Paul was still alive while he was in office).[26] Isaiah was associated with the Persian occupation and he may have lacked the local links that might have encouraged compromise. A lack of local links may also explain our source's animosity: if Isaiah was not an Edessene, he might have made an easy scapegoat for the breakdown in relations. [27]

Athanasius Gamala and Heraclius

The initial presentation of Heraclius' position (section 3, above) is not polemical: the appeal to the single will and energy of Christ was indeed an attempt to make a two-nature Christology seem plausible and, like neo-Chalcedonians in the late 6th c. before them, Monenergists stressed that their position was in accordance with Cyril of Alexandria, the 5th-c. opponent of Nestorius who was revered by the Miaphysites.[28]

Though it is not alluded in this passage, Athanasius was a member of a prominent family who probably already had connections with the Roman authorities. Phil Booth has argued that Athanasius spent the Roman-Persian wars in Roman-occupied Cyprus.[29] And the assistance of the Roman government must explain the ability of Miaphysites in Antioch to establish control over Miaphysites in the Sasanian Empire through the foundation of a new see at Takrit.[30]

Letters preserved elsewhere in Michael's *Chronicle* (XI.1 and 2) confirm the tenor of the account in section 3 and suggest that correspondence between Heraclius and Athanasius was, in fact, relatively cordial, if not conclusive. Heraclius refers to the Miaphysites as

24. Palmer, Brock & Hoyland, *The seventh century*, p. 102 comments that Michael did not (necessarily) suppress differences between his sources. He gives the example of the use of different dates for the accession of Maurice.

25. Cf. *Chronicle to 1234* (ed. Chabot p. 236, transl. Palmer p. 140), where this criticism of Isaiah is stronger.

26. MS X.25 (ed. vol. 4, p. 390, transl. vol. 2, p. 380); *Chronicle to 1234* (ed. Chabot p. 225, transl. Palmer p. 125).

27. Note Wood, Miaphysites, on the role played by eastern Miaphysites in Khusrau's occupation of Roman Mesopotamia.

28. On this scene and Heraclius' preference for symbolic gestures over discussion of theological technicalities see Jankowiak, *Essai d'histoire politique*, p. 68; cf. Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, vol. 2, p. 326. Monenergism is the belief that Christ, while having two natures, had a single energy. For the establishment of Monenergism and Monotheletism see Booth, *Crisis of empire*. For the positive reception of Heraclius' proposed solutions to the impasse in Christological debate, in Armenia, Egypt and the Sasanian world, note Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, vol. 2, pp. 319–23 and Booth, The last years.

29. Booth, From Alexandria to Dvin.

30. Wood, Miaphysites. Jankowiak, *Essai d'histoire politique*, p. 23 situates Athanasius' rapprochement with Heraclius against the disillusionment of Roman Miaphysites with the Persian occupation. Mango, Deux études; Flusin, *Saint Anastase*, vol. 2, pp. 112–4 with Bar Hebraeus I.263.

Diakrinomenoi, "hesitaters", a term that avoids polemical labels that imply that they are followers of a heresiarch (such as "Eutychians").[31] Heraclius' letter stresses his devotion to Mary as mother of God, a reference both to her role in saving Constantinople during the siege of 626 and her function as Godbearer, an anti-Nestorian symbol.[32] He emphasises that he believes in two natures of God that are not confused in one another, but are united in a single will.[33] And he affirms his allegiance to the faith proclaimed at Chalcedon. But he also considers this to be compatible with Cyril's theology of Miaphysitism, of the single nature of the incarnate word of God, a key slogan for the Miaphysite churches.[34] In his reply Athanasius sets out his objections to Chalcedon and to the *Tome of Leo*. But he still establishes considerable common ground with Heraclius in his allegiance to the councils of Nicaea and Constantinople and in his devotion to Mary. And he refers to Heraclius as "the philanthropic and peaceful emperor". Athanasius asserts his differences firmly, but is not belligerent.[35]

However, the depiction of Heraclius from section 4 onwards becomes markedly more polemical. The bishops simply reject his position as Chalcedonian, implying that any kind of compromise between Miaphysites and Chalcedonians was impossible. This representation of the encounter implies that debate was and should be conducted at the level of slogans and symbols (the synod; the *Tome of Leo*) rather than the substantive discussion of theology (which did in fact occur in the letters exchanged by Athanasius and Heraclius). Heraclius' response, to mutilate any who rejected Chalcedon, presents him as a bloodthirsty persecutor.[36] According to the author, it is threat of persecution, rather than the attraction of Monenergism, that leads parts of Syria to go over to Heraclius. As Phil Booth has argued for the Egyptian material, we can see how narratives of violence might have functioned as a fig-leaf for the real success of Monenergism in this period.[37]

The account of the same events in Theophanes lie on the other extreme. Here Athanasius is presented as accepting Dyophysitism, but then asking whether Christ has a double or single will. Sergius, patriarch of Constantinople (d. 638), was a major proponent of the Monenergist formula. But Theophanes imagines that Monenergism was

31. On this nomenclature, note Millar, The evolution, pp. 53-4. He suggests that *Diakrinomenoi* was an acceptable term of self-identification for the Miaphysites.

32. Cameron, The cult. For Heraclius invoking Mary the Theotokos during combat, see Theophanes AM 6118 (ed. de Boor p. 317, transl. Mango & Scott p. 448). Nestorius was notorious for his denial of the term Theotokos for Mary in favour of Christotokos, which seemed to imply an extreme division of the natures of Christ.

33. The union of the divine natures of Christ in a single will is Monotheletism, the doctrine proclaimed in the *Ecthesis* of 638. Michael's text, or that of his source, may have been altered on this point, since this meeting occurred in 631. The original probably referred to the union of the divine natures in a single energy (Monenergism). My thanks to Phil Booth for discussion of this point.

34. MS XI.1 (ed. vol. 4, pp. 403–4, transl. vol. 2, p. 402).

35. MS XI.2 (ed. vol. 4, pp. 405–7, transl. vol. 2, pp. 405–8). For discussion of these two letters see Booth, *Crisis of empire*, pp. 202–3. Zuckerman, Heraclius, p. 212 suggests that Heraclius concluded an agreement with Athanasius but that this fell apart because of the disagreement of Athanasius' own bishops.

36. Jankowiak, *Essai d'histoire politique*, p. 71 finds this unlikely as a description of the 7th-c. reality.

37. Cf. Booth, The last years, p. 512, n. 24. Tabari I.2395 also reports conflict between the people of Edessa and Heraclius. The Edessenes, he notes, "separated themselves from both [Heraclius] and the Muslims".

a response to Athanasius' cunning questioning, as well as Sergius' own Syrian Miaphysite parents. For Theophanes, the Miaphysites saw Sergius' Monenergism as a great victory: "It is not we who have communicated with Chalcedon, but rather Chalcedon with us by confessing one nature of Christ through one energy."[38]

Theophanes' account is polemical and it is probably garbled in its representation of Monenergism as an idea that was prompted by Athanasius, rather than originating with Sergius.[39] Nevertheless, there is a core idea in Theophanes' account that does support the image of Athanasius and Heraclius given in the letters, namely that their meeting was civil and collaborative. It was only after the formula had lost its prestige that later historians underplayed the degree to which there had been real and persuasive consensus. This disavowal of Monenergism has meant that both Chalcedonian and Miaphysite writers have presented it as a plot by the other party, which sometimes conceals its real ability to persuade both sides for a brief moment after the defeat of the Persians. Here a reality of compromise, which in many cases led to shared communion and reconciliation, was rewritten to present early 7th-c. actors as unbending and inflexible.[40]

The punishment of the persecutors

The coda to Heraclius' meeting with Athanasius Gamala in section 6 describes how the confiscation of the Miaphysites' churches prompted the Arab conquests as a divine punishment.[41] Here a commentator interprets the loss of property in the context of later events, which renders it a cost worth bearing for removing Roman tyranny. The coda is an example of how a narrative critical of Heraclius for localized injustice has been reinterpreted in the light of the Arab conquests. The author has searched for a reason to explain the divine punishment implied by the conquests and epidemics of the time.

A similar analysis might apply to XI.1, where the anarchy of the circus factions has been made possible by the "estrangement from religion" of Maurice, Phocas and Heraclius.[42] Here an author has also linked these to the first Arab victories and to a solar eclipse. This too may be an association made by an author some time after the event, to whom the chaos of the time could be explained by the impiety of the rulers. Michael himself likely understood this impiety to have been their Chalcedonianism (ignoring the religious distinctions between the emperors). But, it is not necessary to assume that this impiety was simply their Christology, since it might instead refer to their conduct as emperors: to Maurice's over-taxation and underpayment of his troops; to Phocas' murder of Maurice and to Heraclius' scandalous marriage to his niece Martina.[43]

38. Theophanes AM 6121 (ed. de Boor pp. 329–30, transl. Mango & Scott pp. 460–1).

39. Though it had been an idea that Severus of Antioch had also supported: Frend, *The rise*, p. 345.

40. Similar problems surround the Monothelete formula, which found some success among both Chalcedonians and Miaphysites in Egypt (Moorhead, The Monophysite response) and Syria (Tannous, In search, esp. pp. 52–4).

41. The military events of this period can be followed in Kaegi, *Heraclius*, and Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*.

42. MS XI.3 (ed. vol. 4, p. 402, transl. vol. 2, p. 403).

43. *Chronicle to 1234* (ed. Chabot p. 233, transl. Palmer p. 137) is much more explicit in its condemnation of Heraclius as incestuous, and probably reflects Dionysius of Tel-Mahre (himself drawing on earlier sources). Here MS XI.3 (ed. vol. 4, p. 410, transl. vol. 2, p. 410) seems more

Roman defeat is sometimes explicitly placed in the context of persecution by members of a Chalcedonian establishment. Divine anger is then displayed through natural disasters and the Romans' military defeat. The first of these humiliations for the Romans is set immediately after the fall of Bostra to the Arabs in 634.[44] Heraclius dispatches his brother Theodore (sometimes called Theodoric in the text) to disperse them. [45] The historian Nikephoros (d. 828) accused Theodore of military overconfidence, because he sought to use a major victory over the Arabs as the basis for a coup against Heraclius.[46] The Theodore that Michael depicts is also full of arrogance: he exclaims "These sons of Hagar are nothing but dead dogs!" Theodore's army reaches the village of Gousit where they meet a Chalcedonian stylite. He delivers a prophecy to Theodore that he will rule the Roman Empire just as Heraclius had done, and that he will receive victory if he persecutes the Miaphysites. Theodore replies that even before their conversation, he was already disposed to persecute the partisans of Jacob.

However, a Miaphysite soldier ("orthodox" in the language of the text) hears this dreadful conversation and "burnt with zeal", though he could not take any action immediately. When Theodore comes to the Arabs he is overconfident and they take him by surprise and defeat him. During the flight, the Miaphysite soldier approaches Theodore and mocks him: "What now, Theodore? Where are the promises that the stylite made to you, that you will return with a great name for yourself?" Theodore is shamed by the soldier's words and flees and hides. The victorious Arabs then seize great booty.[47]

The second text is set during Heraclius' retreat from Syria. The emperor appoints one Gregory to hold the pass of Callisura in the mountains of Cilicia as he pulls back.[48] Here Epiphanius, a Miaphysite ascetic, had fled from the Arabs and taken refuge in the land of the Romans, but he is denounced to Gregory. Gregory is filled with pride and condemns both the sons of Hagar [the Arabs] and "the partisans of Severus". He then asks Epiphanius what confession he adheres to. Epiphanius replies that he is "from the land of the Isaurians",[49] "I march on the road of truth […] and I am a member of the party of Severus." He then makes a detailed statement of Miaphysite Christology. Gregory threatens him, telling him to adhere to Chalcedon and receive the honours of the emperor, or else be put to death. Epiphanius refuses and Gregory orders him to be put to death.

abbreviated. Some Chalcedonians understood the "heresy" that generated divine displeasure to have been Heraclius' experiments with Monenergism and Monotheletism. Heraclius was condemned in these terms by his own great-grandson, Constantine IV, whose council of 680/1 (Constantinople III) established Dyotheletism as an imperial orthodoxy: Theophanes AM 6120 (ed. de Boor pp. 359–60, transl. Mango & Scott pp. 499–500). Cf. Kaegi, *Byzantium*, p. 211.

44. MS XI.5 (ed. vol. 4, p. 414, transl. vol. 2, p. 417). The scene is also reported in *Chronicle to 1234* (ed. Chabot pp. 242–3, transl. Palmer pp. 147–8). Again, this strengthens the case for seeing it as originating in Dionysius.

45. *PLRE* 3, "Theodore 163".

46. Nikephoros, *Short history* 20.

47. MS XI.5 (ed. vol. 4, pp. 414–15, transl. vol. 2, p. 418).

48. Callisura near Melitene was a Miaphysite see until at least the 13th c., based on the episcopal lists in Appendix III of Michael, so this toponym does not give any clues that help us to date the scene.

49. Isauria hosted a Miaphysite population after the Arab conquests, and Irenopolis in Isauria continued to be a Miaphysite see until ca. 920.

But just before his execution the saint predicts Gregory's own death and the general is killed in an ambush the very next day.[50]

Both of these texts depict the Roman leaders as overconfident, arrogant tyrants. Theodore is defeated when he makes camp too near the Arabs; Gregory when he underestimates "the sons of Hagar". The Romans consider themselves superior in behaviour and orthodox in belief, and despise both the Arabs and the Miaphysites. But both expectations are subverted when their arrogance leads to defeat. The Arabs are not called liberators here, and they seize slaves and gold in their pillaging, but we may be intended to see them as instruments of God's justice.

We should also highlight the connection that both these texts make between piety and the ability to predict the future. Stylites were often associated with giving advice to kings and aristocrats and giving pronouncements on matters of dogma.[51] But the stylite of Gousit shows himself to be a false ascetic: his prediction, and his wish for persecution, ultimately dooms Theodore. By contrast, Epiphanius confirms his holiness by predicting Gregory's death the very next day. In the chaos of the Arab conquests, when the rules of established military strategy were being overturned, God's hand on the battlefield may have been eagerly sought, even at an individual level. If the stylite of Gousit offered success in return for persecution, then the authors of the martyrdoms imply the reverse, that it will bring down divine displeasure on the persecutors.

Farewell Syria

The last of these anti-Heraclian scenes set during the war with the Arabs concerns the accusation that the Romans treated Syria as enemy territory:

> *Heraclius, emperor of the Romans, seeing the devastation that had occurred, left Antioch in sadness and went to Constantinople. Some say concerning this that he said farewell as he left, crying out "souzou Syria", which is to say, "Rest in peace Syria."*
> *He gave orders to his troops to pillage and devastate towns and villages, as if it was enemy territory. The Romans stole and pillaged all they found and they themselves devastated the land more than the Arabs. They departed and left the land to the Arabs who began to rule.*[52]

There is a marked difference between the first and second paragraphs. The first is a rather bland story of Heraclius' retreat, in which the emperor wishes peace to a land he is forced to abandon.[53] But the second paragraph makes him responsible for a terrible

50. MS XI.6 (ed. vol. 4, p. 416–7, transl. vol. 2, pp. 422–3).

51. For the attribution of Chalcedonian theology to Simeon the Stylite see Torrey, The letters. Stylites were often consulted by powerful laymen: Simeon the Stylite the Younger was a correspondent of the emperors Justinian and Justin II: Boero & Kuper, Steps, p. 378. John of Nikiu, *Chronicle* 108 describes a prophecy of Heraclius' victory in the revolt against Phocas that was made by the Egyptian stylite Theophilus to Nicetas.

52. MS XI.7 (ed. vol. 4, p. 418, transl. vol. 2, p. 424).

53. This scene, or variants upon it, is very commonly found in Muslim and Christian Arabic historiography. References are gathered in Stratos, *Byzantium*, p. 73. Hoyland, *Theophilus*, pp. 107–8 also gathers reports of this scene in Agapius, *Chronicle to 1234*, MS and Theophanes and suggests that they had a common source such as Theophilus of Edessa (though the scene is not unique to these). Woods, Heraclius' alleged farewell, argues that the original force of the statement was "save yourselves Syrians".

scorched earth policy that makes the Romans seem worse than the Arabs who replace them.[54] The implication may be that the Romans have renounced their claim to Syria, and, therefore, that Syrians need no longer feel any loyalty to the Romans, who have shown themselves to be both tyrannical and untrustworthy.[55]

The flagship example of the Romans' disavowal of Syria (and the locals' disavowal of the Romans) comes in the conflict between the commanders David and Titus in ca. 641.[56] Michael describes how David the Armenian takes an army from Constantinople, enters Syria and finds it empty of Arab soldiers (who were, at that time, destroying another Roman army under one Valentinus). David's soldiers loot a village called Beth Ma'da and torture the Christian inhabitants to get them to reveal where they have hidden their wealth and rape women in front of their husbands.

One Titus is present[57] during these atrocities and sees that David does not reprimand his soldiers. He tells him that "Since you are a Christian, it is not fitting that you should use your sword against [fellow] Christians. The emperor would not support you if he learnt that you had entered the land to pillage it and burn it." Titus then frees a large number of the people whom the Armenians in David's army had taken captive.

Iyad, the Arab commander, hears stories that David was threatening Damascus and goes to face him. On his approach, the Armenians take flight and abandon the defensive trenches that they had dug. The Arabs then gleefully attack them piecemeal. David appeals to Titus and his men to come to help him: "Now is the moment to show your affection to the Romans", but Titus responds, "If I were to follow you, I would not be followed by the Lord." David is then killed along with many of those who stood with him, but Titus takes refuge at Amida.[58]

The force of this story is that the Romans have failed to acknowledge the solidarity that binds all Christians. The author feels that common religion ought to generate common loyalties: in pillaging Beth Ma'da David's forces show that they are not real Christians, though Titus is absolved from blame by his abandonment of David. This narrative grapples with the unravelling of Roman-Christian solidarity. A force that had been so powerful only a few years before during the Persian wars had lost its prestige for former members of the Roman army, who now scattered to cities that lay beyond the fighting. The narrative could reflect a point of composition a generation after the events it describes, as men like Titus defended their reputations and represented the Roman military as unChristian and irresponsible. At the same time, the narrative might also absolve local men who had served in the army from being tarred by accusations of looting. A military background might well be remembered long after the war itself: for instance, one Miaphysite patriarch

54. Kaegi, *Heraclius*, p. 247 argues that the Romans did indeed employ a scorched earth policy on their retreat from Syria.

55. MS XI.7 (ed. vol. 4, p. 418, transl. vol. 2, p. 424).

56. MS XI.10 (ed. vol. 4, pp. 428–30, transl. vol. 2, pp. 440-442), cf. *Chronicle to 1234* (ed. Chabot pp. 257–9, transl. Palmer pp. 164–5). Donner, Visions, pp. 22-23 discusses this extract but treats it as a record of fact and does not subject it to source criticism. Also on the dating of this scene see *PLRE* 3, "Iad".

57. *Chronicle to 1234*, ed. Chabot p. 257, drawing on the same source as Michael, calls him "a Suryaya by race", but this detail is not present in Michael's account. Titus is not known from other sources.

58. MS XI.10 (ed. vol. 4, pp. 428–9, transl. vol. 2, pp. 443–4).

of Antioch was called Julian "the Roman" (r. 687–708), whose father was an Armenian who had served in the Roman army under David and who had taken a Suryaya wife.[59] The sharp distinction between the forces of David and Titus allows the reader to imagine "good soldiers" and "bad soldiers", with the latter as outsiders. Nevertheless, we should note that the author passes up any attempt to generate religious invective: David's lack of Christianity is illustrated solely in his behaviour rather than his beliefs, and there does not seem to be any religious polemic to the identification of his men as Armenians.

Finally, the text also distinguishes David's atrocities from the emperor Heraclius: Titus warns David that Heraclius will not approve of his actions. For this author, the emperor is absolved of the bloodshed of his troops by ignorance, which is a rather different emphasis from the paragraph quoted at the start of this section from XI.7, where Heraclius personally authorizes his forces to lay waste to Syria.

This distinction between David and Heraclius would be heightened if Chabot is correct in identifying David as David Saharuni. Saharuni participated in a failed coup attempt against Heraclius but managed to escape from imprisonment and was subsequently promoted to governor of Armenia and *curopalates* for three years in the late 630s after being acclaimed by the Armenian princes. However, the princes expelled him after three years and he was subsequently employed as a Roman general.[60] His ally Valentinus had a similar background and a similarly colourful career: he too was a member of the Armenian nobility who survived this battle and went on to participate in the coup against Heraclius' widow Martina soon afterwards in 641.[61] If Chabot is correct, then the author of this scene may have been describing Armenian villains who were already known to the readers as untrustworthy servants of the emperor, one of whom had attempted a coup against Heraclius and one who would do so against his widow.

Agenda, authorship and dating

How then should we treat the narratives preserved in Michael? Are there any indications of the kind of anti-Chalcedonian and anti-Roman sentiment that De Ste. Croix observed?

The extracts discussed here carry a core that look like 7th-c. compositions. They describe a small-scale punishment of monks under Maurice, which stimulated a short-lived martyr cult (X.23). They tell how Heraclius attempted a reconciliation with Miaphysites in Edessa, but was defied by the bishop Isaiah, an eastern appointee. Heraclius then attempted to negotiate a compromise with Athanasius Gamala, a Miaphysite leader who already had good links with the Roman authorities (XI.3). After the Arab invasions, Roman failure is understood as a consequence of the emperor's "impiety", but we need not assume that this refers to his Christology and it may be a reference to his incestuous marriage to his niece Martina. The Syriac narratives also report a scorched earth policy by Heraclius as he retreated from Syria, and there seems to have confusion over whether to blame the emperor himself for this or his generals on the spot (XI.7). But local men also served in

59. Bar Hebraeus I.293; Palmer, Brock, & Hoyland, *The seventh century*, p. 87.

60. *PLRE* 3, "David 6". Sebeos, *History* 29 describes his election as *curopalates* and his relations with the Armenian princes. See also *PmbZ* 1241.

61. *PLRE* 3, "Valentinus 5". Sebeos, *History* 32 describes the coup.

the Roman army, and there was an attempt to differentiate between these and the badly behaved outsiders (XI.10).

Christology does not function as a strong boundary between actors in most of these narratives: in the arrival of Heraclius at Edessa it is Isaiah not Heraclius who is blamed for the breakdown in the relationship. However, there are five exceptions in the material we have surveyed. The first is the "persecution" under Domitian (X.23). I would read this as a report of a real event that mirrors the earlier policy of 6th-c. emperors that used targeted force against hard-liners and/or reflected strategic sensitivities around the Roman-Persian border. The second is the depiction of Athanasius' quarrel with Heraclius (XI.3), and this is a clear case of later editing, where there are substantial internal differences in the attitude towards Heraclius in the narrative that Michael quotes, and where the documents that Michael himself uses (XI.1) show a much more irenic relationship than the later parts of the narrative in XI.3. The third is the statement that the loss of the churches by the Rusafaye was worth being freed from the cruelty of the Romans (XI.3). This too looks like a case of later interpolation.

The final two cases are the deaths of Theodore (XI.5), after consulting the stylite of Gousit, and the death of Gregory at Callisura (XI.6). There are interesting parallels here to a passage in John of Ephesus (*Ecclesiastical history* 3.3.40–3) set in the late 6th c. that describes the (heretical) Romans as irrational and ill-disciplined and contrasts them to the (orthodox) Arabs whom they mistreat and who unexpectedly defeat them. Another passage in Michael's coverage of the late 6th c. (IX.29) makes a similar inversion of an audience's expectations of civilization and barbarism where Ephrem of Antioch (r. 527–45), a Chalcedonian bishop, tries to persuade Harith (r. 528–69), a Miaphysite Arab leader, to receive communion. Harith refuses and serves a dish of camel meat to the bishop. When Ephrem is disgusted, Harith observes that Chalcedonian communion is as disgusting to him as camel meat is to Ephrem.[62]

We also find a second set of parallels to John of Ephesus in the examples where individual Romans like Gregory or David engage in persecution or mistreat local people and receive their just reward, and where the author is also careful to distinguish between the wishes of Heraclius and the actions of David on the ground. We find a similar attitude in John of Ephesus' *Ecclesiastical history*, who criticizes individuals like the patriarch John III Scholasticus or the emperor Justin II but praises the emperors Tiberius and Maurice.[63] The point is not to make stereotypes about all Chalcedonians, but to criticize the bad behavior of individuals: it is a strategy that fits an environment where the divisions between communities were much more fluid than they would later become. These two sets of similar tropes between John of Ephesus and XI.5, XI.6 and XI.10, may be a case for arguing for a 7th-c. date of composition.

62. MS IX.29 (ed. vol. 4, p. 311, transl. vol. 2, p. 247), cf. Wood, *We have no king but Christ*, pp. 252–3. Shahid, *Byzantium*, pp. 746–7 ascribed MS IX.9 to John of Ephesus, but this is not certain. The passage is not present in the third section of the *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, whose main source was the second part of John of Ephesus' *Ecclesiastical history*, which extended from Anastasius to the reign of Justinian. Shahid dated the scene to 536.

63. Wood, *We have no king but Christ*, pp. 171–3

I am agnostic about the authorship of these passages. One tempting option might be the historian Qura of Batna.[64] The Armenian preface to Michael the Syrian lists Qura among his major sources for the sixth to ninth centuries (assuming that the Armenian Guria is the Syriac Qura):

> *Theodore Lector of Constantinople and Zachariah, bishop of Mytilene, up to Justinian the elder. John of Asia [John of Ephesus] wrote from Anastasius to Maurice. Guria wrote from Justinian to Heraclius and on the entrance of the Arabs into the lands of the Suryaye, which occurred under Heraclius. Saint Jacob of Edessa covered all of this in an abridged fashion. Dionysius of Tel-Mahre wrote from Maurice to Theophilos, emperor of the Greeks and Harun [al-Wathiq], emir of the Arabs.*[65]

The reference to a historian who succeeded John of Ephesus and wrote about Heraclius and the Arab conquests would fit the texts I have discussed here very well. However, the issue is not clear cut because the Syriac text of Michael contains a contradictory statement from Dionysius of Tel-Mahre (d. 842), where he states that he began his own history in the reign of Maurice and where Qura had left off.[66] Another option might be Jacob of Edessa (d. 708) or John of Litarba (d. 737/8), both of whom cover the early 7th c.[67] But both of these are said to have written history in an abridged fashion and been primarily concerned with chronology, which does not match the material discussed above. A further possibility may be that the period was covered in unnamed sources available to someone like Daniel of Tur Abdin, who was himself one of Dionysius' sources and was Dionysius' own grandfather.

Problems of transmission

Above we identified two points where the narrative was subjected to editing to create stark boundaries between protagonists on the basis of Christology, where these do not appear to have existed in the original material, such as the later passages in XI.3, where Heraclius was depicted as a persecutor. But who was the editor(s) who generated this shift?

One possible candidate is the 9th-c. historian Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, who was a major source for Michael.[68] He transmitted the work of his grandfather Daniel of Tur Abdin, who in turn transmitted the reports on the loss of property by noble families in Edessa.[69] But was Dionysius responsible for the editorial comment that this was a small price to pay to be freed from the tyranny of the Romans? Dionysius also acquired access

64. Two passages are explicitly ascribed to Qura by Michael: MS X.17 (ed. vol. 4, p. 370, transl. vol. 2, p. 344) and X.13 (ed. vol. 4, p. 356, transl. vol. 2, p. 322). Both relate to events in ca. 580 (Damian of Alexandria's visit to Edessa and a Persian invasion of Mesopotamia).

65. Translation in Chabot's introduction to MS, vol. 1, p. 2.

66. Dionysius' statement is at MS X.20 (ed. vol. 4, p. 378, transl. vol. 2, pp. 357–8). Dyakanov, *Cyrus*, argued that Qura did cover part of the reign of Heraclius, including X.23 and XI.3. Debié, *L'écriture*, pp. 380–81 and 535 discusses the contradictions between the testimonies of the prefaces to Michael and Dionysius.

67. Debié, *L'écriture*, pp. 548–51 and 554. Cf. Palmer, Brock & Hoyland, *The seventh century*, p. 102.

68. See now Wood, *Imam of the Christians*, esp. ch. 2.

69. See note above, note 23.

to a saint's life of the Alexandrian Miaphysite patriarch Benjamin, probably during his visit to Egypt, and this led him to represent the Arab conquest of Egypt as a liberation.[70] Can we infer from this that he was responsible for a similar gloss during his edition of his sources for 7th-c. Mesopotamia?

Dionysius wrote at a time when the caliphate and the Byzantines were returning to frontier warfare: the caliph al-Mu'tasim inflicted a prestigious victory over the Byzantines at Amorium in 838, but the Byzantines were also able to strike east of the Taurus mountains even after this defeat, including an attack against Antioch.[71] Some Chalcedonians in Palestine hoped for a Byzantine victory,[72] but Dionysius also criticises an Edessene aristocrat, Shmouna, who collaborated with the Byzantines and may have been a Miaphysite.[73]

The heightened tension of the Abbasid-Byzantine border might have motivated Dionysius to repeat the tropes of earlier historians that equated the Romans with Chalcedonians in order to distance his own community from accusations of collaboration.[74] The problem here is that Dionysius mentions Chalcedonians on only a couple of occasions in the part of his history that deals with his own lifetime (and this is the material that can be most securely attributed to him). When he does so, Dionysius is not positive: he reports various schisms in the Melkite hierarchy during his own lifetime[75] and the role of a Chalcedonian secretary to a tyrannical Arab governor of Edessa.[76] But he never takes the opportunity to accuse contemporary Chalcedonians of being disloyal to the caliphate. When he reports Byzantine political history he is rarely critical of emperors.[77]

The short editorial note that concludes XI.3 ("it was no small advantage to be freed from the cruelty of the Romans") is also present in the *Chronicle to 1234*. This is more likely to have been transmitted through Dionysius, since he is shared source for Michael and the *Chronicle*. But, for the reasons stated above, I do not think that Dionysius is likely to have been the author of this statement, and we might attribute it to Daniel of Tur Abdin, who was one of Dionysius' sources, since the statement is a gloss on the loss of church property that had been endowed by aristocratic families that he was interested in.[78] Another possible editor may be Michael himself. For instance, Michael differs from the *Chronicle to 1234* in placing much less blame on Isaiah for the break down in

70. MS XI.8 (ed. vol. 4, p. 422, transl. vol. 2, pp. 432–3). The representation of (Chalcedonian) Romans as foreign oppressors, and Egyptian Miaphysites as the indigenous population seems to date from the Marwanid period: Zychowicz-Coghill, *Conquests*, and Booth, Images.

71. MS XII.20 (ed. vol. 4, p. 535, transl. vol. 3, p. 95), on the fall of Amorium. MS XII.18 (ed. vol. 4, p. 527, transl. vol. 3, p. 85), Zubatra and Arsamosata in 837; MS XII.19 (ed. vol. 4, p. 532, transl. vol. 3, p. 89), Melitene and Hadath in 841; MS XII.21 (ed. vol. 4, p. 539, transl. vol. 3, p. 101), Antioch in ca. 839. For the course of warfare on the frontier see Treadgold, *A history*.

72. Signes-Codoñer, *The emperor Theophilos*, pp. 396–7.

73. MS XII.19 (ed. vol. 4, p. 531, transl. vol. 3, p. 89).

74. For such fears see, e.g., MS XII.5 (ed. vol. 4, p. 489, transl. vol. 3, p. 20).

75. MS XII.20 (ed. vol. 4, p. 535, transl. vol. 3, p. 98).

76. MS XII.13 (ed. vol. 4, pp. 513–4, transl. vol. 3, p. 61).

77. When Dionysius is critical, as in his report on the emperor Nikephoros, he seems to be following the Greek sources that were available to him: Dickens, The three Scythian brothers.

78. As I note above, Egyptian Christians began to depict the Romans as Chalcedonian persecutors in the Marwanid period, which would be only slightly earlier than Daniel of Tur Abdin if he wrote in ca. 750.

relations with Heraclius.[79] Given that Dionysius is a shared source for both Michael and the *Chronicle to 1234*, we might reasonably ascribe this intervention to Michael.

Conclusions

Robert Hoyland has commented on the surprising absence of histories written in the seventh or eighth centuries. He observes that this was not because histories were not written, but because 9th-c. authors (and, we might add, later authors as well) felt the need to revise earlier works.[80]

I have argued here that it is possible to identify early 7th-c. Syriac perspectives on the Muslim conquests. Like John of Ephesus, these may have been more willing to differentiate between the persecuting tendencies of certain Chalcedonian clergy and the emperor himself. When they sought to explain Roman failure in the face of the Arabs, the persecution of Miaphysites may have triggered divine punishment, but they also laid the blame at the door of the overconfidence of Roman generals and their contempt for local people. However, later authors began to edit narratives from the 7th c. to exaggerate religious differences and present Heraclius as a persecutor.

It is instructive to compare the texts we have looked at here with the accounts of the Arab conquests in the historical tradition of the Church of the East. Some of these are very brief and localized, and describe the conquests as violent events in particular localities.[81] But there is a marked contrast between these accounts and those written in the ninth or tenth centuries: the account of Muhammad in the *Chronicle of Seert*, for instance, describes a lengthy agreement between Muhammad and the Christians of Arabia in which he makes a series of guarantees to the Christians who would be ruled by his successors in the caliphate.[82] It is an account that reflects a middle Abbasid context where Muslim jurists were trying to create a legal framework for taxing non-Muslims and assessing their rights in contexts where Christians increasingly lived alongside Muslims.[83] Similar scenes can be found in the Samaritan Arabic historical tradition, where Muhammad is imagined to have provided initial guarantees for the conquered peoples.[84] Both the Church of the East and the Samaritan historical traditions presume that the early Muslims made contracts with the conquered peoples and attempt to produce charters of rights that would constrain Muslim rulers at the time of writing. We see none of this in the account in Michael: there is no attempt to use the Arab conquests as a setting to demand rights from later Muslim rulers. Instead, the main others of the accounts that we have examined here are (Chalcedonian) Romans and the Arabs function in these accounts as a foil to criticize Roman leaders, rather than agents in their own right. In general, I think this indicates that the accounts in Michael were relatively unedited during the Abbasid period, when this period was a key site of historical invention for many different communities.

79. *Chronicle to 1234* (ed. Chabot p. 236, transl. Palmer p. 140) and MS XI.3 (ed. vol. 4, pp. 409–10, transl. vol. 2, pp. 412–13).
80. Hoyland, History writing.
81. *Chronicle of Seert*, PO 13, LXI and XCVI.
82. *Chronicle of Seert*, PO 13, CII and CIII.
83. Wood, The treaty (with discussion of earlier literature).
84. *Continuatio of the Samaritan chronicle* 203–4, transl. pp. 46–8.

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