

Theophylact Simocatta and the Persians



Sasanika
Sources

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The Byzantine historian Theophylact Simocatta was probably born in Egypt in the late 580s. During his bureaucratic career he composed a *History* and three other minor works which survive: *Problems of Natural History*, *Ethical Epistles*, and *On Predestined Terms of Life*. The *History* was written in the early seventh century and was written in the tradition of secular, political history following Procopius, Agathias, and Menander Protector. Although he had not lived during the events he described, Theophylact's *History* is an important source for the sixth-century Byzantine wars in the Balkans and in the East. However, his understanding of geography, the sequence of events, and the events themselves is often confusing.¹ To clarify geographical matters, most of the important Eastern campaigns of the sixth century took place in Upper Mesopotamia, an area divided into north and south parts by the Tur Abdin plateau. The Batman (Nymphius) River further divided the northern portion into Byzantine Sophanene and Sasanian Arzanene.² To clarify chronological matters, the following table of events in the East is adapted from Michael Whitby's *The Emperor Maurice and His Historian*.³

502		When the Byzantines fail to make agreed-upon payments, the Sasanians attack, initiating a new era of conflict
561/2		A 50-years' peace treaty is concluded, again requiring Byzantine payments
572	Winter	Persarmenians revolt and murder the local Sasanian commander; several leading Armenians flee to the Byzantines
	Spring	Sasanian ruler Khusro I (r. 531-579) sends Sebukht as ambassador to Justin II
	Summer	Marcian is appointed Byzantine commander in the East
572		Non-payment by Byzantine ruler Justin II (r. 565-578) provokes a new War
		Marcian raids into Arzanene
573	Spring	Marcian's victory at Sargathon
		Marcian besieges Theobothon and Nisibis
		Dismissal of Marcian
		Khusro surprises the Byzantines at Nisibis, and they flee past Dara to

¹ The History of Theophylact Simocatta: an English translation with introduction and notes, trans. Michael Whitby and Mary Whitby (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), xiii-xvii, xxv-xxvi.

² Michael Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and His Historian: Theophylact Simocatta on Persian and Balkan Warfare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 199-200.

³ Whitby, 219-21.



		Mardin
	Summer	Khusro besieges Dara
	Winter	Capture of Dara
		Justin II goes mad
574	Spring	Empress Sophia sends ambassador Zacharias to Khusro
		1-year truce is concluded, not covering Armenia
	Winter	Tiberius (r. 573-582) is appointed Byzantine ruler
		Tiberius' ambassadors Trajan and Zacharias start to negotiate a 3year truce
575	Spring	Justinian is made commander in the East
	Summer	Terms of 3-year truce agreed
576	Spring	Khusro invades Armenia
	Summer	Failure of Khusro's campaign in Armenia
	Fall	Byzantines ravage northern Persia
		Khusro opens peace negotiations
577	Winter	Peace negotiations on the frontier
	Summer	Negotiations break down when Tamkhusri defeats Justinian in Armenia
		Death of Justinian
	Fall	Sasanians protract peace talks to delay Roman
578	Winter	Peace talks break down
580		Summer Maurice's second campaign
581		Summer Maurice and al-Mundhir campaign down the Euphrates
		Maurice appointed commander in the East
	Summer	40 days before the truce expires, the Sasanians begin ravaging
		Maurice's first campaign
	Fall	Maurice captures Singara
		Death of Justin II
		Accession of Tiberius
	Winter	Tiberius opens peace negotiations
579	Spring	Death of Khusro I
		Accession of Hormizd IV (r. 579-590)
		Negotiations are deliberately protracted by the Sasanians, preventing a major campaign in 579
		The Sasanians ravage Upper Mesopotamia and defeat the Byzantines in Armenia
	Winter	Tiberius attempts to negotiate with Hormizd
582	Summer	Tamkhusro invades, but is defeated and killed at Constantina
		Defeated Sasanian troops camp near Dara
		Death of Tiberius
		Accession of Maurice (r. 582-602)
	Fall	John Mystacon is appointed commander in the East
		Campaign in Arzanene
583	Summer	A new campaign in Arzanene
		The Byzantines capture Akbas

		Byzantine victory at Solachon
	Summer	Philippicus campaigns in Arzanene
	Winter	The Sasanians open negotiations
584	Spring	Byzantine embassy in Persia Philippicus replaces John Mystacon
	Fall	Philippicus ravages Beth Arabaye
585	Summer	Philippicus campaigns in Arzanene
586	Spring	Sasanians renew peace talks Philippicus besieges Chlomarou, but is surprised by the Kardarigan and is forced to retreat
	Fall	Heraclius campaigns down the Tigris
587	Summer	Byzantines besiege Persian fortresses
588	Winter	Priscus appointed to replace Philippicus
	Spring	Mutiny of the Roman army Philippicus reappointed commander Mutiny continues, with Germanus elected as leader
	Summer	Germanus defends Constantina Byzantine victory near Martyropolis
588	Winter	Attempts to reconcile army
589	Spring	End of mutiny Philippicus accepted as general Martyropolis betrayed to Sasanians by local commander Sittas Maurice organizes invasion of Azerbaijan by Iberian tribes
	Summer	Philippicus besieges Martyropolis, but is defeated by Persian reinforcements Vahram opposes the Byzantines in Azerbaijan Romanus defeats Vahram in Suania
	Fall	Comentiolus replaces Philippicus as commander in the East, and defeats the Sasanians at Sisarbanon Vahram revolts against Hormizd
589	Winter	Comentiolus besieges Martyropolis and captures Akbas Vahram camps near river Zab Hormizd's general Farrukhan opposes him, but is murdered
590	Spring	Deposition of Hormizd Coronation of Hormizd's son Khusro II (r. 590-628) Vahram and Khusro confront each other near Ctesiphon Vahram attacks Khusro by night Flight of Khusro to Byzantine Empire Coronation of Vahram VI (r. 590-591) Khusro appeals to Maurice for help Unsuccessful coup against Vahram Khusro's uncle Vindoe flees to Azerbaijan and Armenia
	Summer	Maurice decides to support Khusro Preparations begin for expedition to reinstate Khusro
	Fall	Khusro gains support in Mesopotamia
	Winter	Return of Martyropolis to the Byzantines Vahram prepares to resist Khusro

591	Spring	Hormizd's general Zatsparham approaches Nisibis Capture of Zatsparham
	Summer	Khusro advances to Dara, and returns city to the Byzantines Byzantines and Sasanians advance to the Tigris Mahbodh sent to attack Lower Mesopotamia Khusro and Vahram maneuver near the Zab river Armies cross Zagros mountains to Azerbaijan Khusro and the Byzantines defeat Vahram near Canzak The current phase of Byzantine-Sasanian war ends with a peace favorable to the Byzantines
602		Byzantine-Sasanian war threatens to erupt again

The following excerpts from Theophylact's History contain information about Persia and the Persians. Footnotes have been abbreviated from the commentary by Michael and Mary Whitby.

Book One: i.9.1-11

(9.1) But, since the prelude of my history has been concerned with the Huns who live beside the Ister, come now, come and let us bestir the Persian actions on the lyre of narrative. For I will return to the proclamation of the emperor Maurice, now that I am about to record the Median war. (2) Let no one be angered at me on the grounds that I am now regressing to earlier events, since we are not returning to the same actions even though we are going back in turn to the same times; (3) for the continuity of the previous narrative did not tolerate a bridle, let by the intermediate insertion of different narratives confusion might be brought upon events.

(9.4) It was still during the course of the first year of the reign of the emperor Maurice, after that glorious Persian campaign in which Tamchosro was at that time leader of the Median armies;⁴ the emperor transferred John (the hairiness of his upper lip provided a surname for him, and Romans in fact called him Mystacon) from the camps in Armenia to the Roman eastern forces. (5) Then, when the general was newly invested with the eastern cares, he camped where the river Nymphius is united with the waters of the Tigris; in this very place a battle was prepared⁵, the Roman force being commanded by John and the Persian by the Kardarigan. (6) This is a Parthian title;⁶ the Persians like to be called by their titles, as if they consider it unworthy to bear their birth-names: for, regarding their own appellation, they have greater admiration for fortune's benefaction than for parental custom which grows up with them when they have newly emerged from their mothers' wombs.

⁴ The battle of Constantina (iii.18.1-2) fought in June 582, in which Tamchosro was killed.

⁵ Nymphius = Batman. Theophylact does not record on which side of the river the battle was fought, but it is probable that the Romans were on the offensive and were invading Arzanene.

⁶ The name means Black Falcon.



(7) And so John marshaled the whole body of his force in three parts; he himself took over the center of the army, the second-in-command Curs the right wing, and Ariulph the left. The three groups were arranged roughly like this, and the Persians were also drawn up in the same way. (8) When the trumpets sounded for war and the intervening gap was narrowed, the battle made its entry. Accordingly, the Romans attacked with two sections, John in the center and Ariulph on the left, and indeed overcame the opposing forces. (9) Curs did not join battle, since he begrudged John success on the grounds that he was contending for greatest glory. Therefore the Persians turned back, since they feared that the opposition might perhaps press the assault more heavily. (10) When the Romans saw that Curs and his force were not engaging, they showed their backs to the barbarians and retreated towards the higher ground. (11) The Persians made a counterattack when they saw that the Roman cavalry was exhausted by the exertion of the chase and by the difficulty of the retreat to their steeply sited fort; they bravely attacked, slaughtered most of the Romans, and the barbarians scarcely allowed the Romans to return to their camp. At this the war was terminated, and the autumn season gradually crept in.⁷

Book One: i.12.1-8

(12.1) The satrap of the Median force invested and attempted to capture the fort of Aphumon. When the Roman brigadier learned of this, he approached the Nymphius and tried to capture Akbas.⁸ (2) This stronghold is difficult to capture and is impregnable by siege: the fort is placed on the neck of a mountain, there are sheer drops on both sides, and its rear side is hollowed out by deep ravines, so that in consequence the sole approach is at the front, which is fortified by a construction of close-fitted stone. (3) When the general attacked those in the fort, the besieged lit signal-fires on the parapet of the fortification, indicating the magnitude of the danger to the Kardarigan's men who were striving to reduce Aphumon; for the Persian general had established such an agreement with the men in Akbas. (4) At the first hour, as day grew bright, the Persians stood in array against the Romans; the barbarians dismounted from their horses, began the battle, and by their continuous bombardment defeated the Romans. (5) For they confused their opponents' vision by their discharges of missiles: for they are a nation of archers and their might is this winged dart. (6) The Romans were hemmed in and close-pressed on a part of the mountain, since the assault was, as it were, squashing them. Many of the soldiers jumped off the cliff that fronted the river Nymphius, for the descent was not raised above an unattainable depth; some were captured by the barbarians; (7) but others made their way down through the foothills of the mountains, escaped the danger, were unexpectedly saved, and after crossing the river Nymphius encamped with the Roman contingent.

⁷ Autumn 582.

⁸ The year is now 583, and the Romans and Persians are again operating in Arzanene, with the Persians trying to recapture Aphumon in central Arzanene, which they had lost to the Romans in 578 (iii.15.14), while the Romans attacked Akbas, a fort sited further to the west on the east bank of the Nymphius opposite Martyropolis.

Book One: i.13.1-i.15.15

(13.1) In this current year,⁹ John was relieved of the reins of generalship, since the Persians had proved irresistible and had been granted the balance of advantage in the war. (2) But Philippicus was nominated instead and proclaimed as general by the emperor; he was a man of talent and was most closely connected with the royal family: for he had in fact married the emperor's sister Gordia. (3) And so, following this appointment, the general came to Monocarton, pitched camp near the mountain known as Aïsouma, and collected men for military service. At the beginning of autumn he camped by the Tigris; (4) and after many camps he reached a place named Carcharoman. While he was, as if, residing there, he learned that the Kardarigan was about to move on Mount Izala by way of the strong points of Maïacariri. (5) It was for this reason that the general set out from that place, approached the plain adjacent to Nisibis, camped on the high ground, and then suddenly swooped down upon Persia and won massive booty.¹⁰ (6) Not long afterwards a farmer disclosed the Roman incursion to the Kardarigan; what he said was this, that he, on the one hand, was wandering in the mountains, borne along by mere hopes, while the Romans were ravaging the Median land. (7) Then, after the Kardarigan came back and was making some attempt to lay an ambush for the Romans, the general gathered his forces, moved camp to Mount Izala, because the region provides security to those who approach it, and assigned the booty to a most watchful guard. (8) After this he came to the river Nymphius,¹¹ having accomplished a not inglorious prelude to his command. Once again Philippicus was emboldened to attack the Median land, and he ravaged the areas by Bearbaës. When the Persians heard of this, they spurred on their cavalry, for which reason indeed the greater portion of the cavalry perished. (9) Report has it that the Romans, in amazement at the enthusiasm of the barbarian approach, withdrew from the Median land, after dividing the whole contingent in two. (10) The men with the general came to Sisarbanon, and next to Rhabdion, while the other section strayed apart and unprofitably toiled along the road to Theodosiopolis. That land, as we know by hearsay, is waterless and parched as far as the river called Aboras.¹² (11) So inexorable danger befell the Romans, for they were exceedingly short of water: what could be more serious than this for an army? However, they formulated a very harsh decree against the captives, and slaughtered all the men and women; (12) they spared the children, out of pity for their immature youth. Nevertheless, not long afterwards, the shortage of water destroyed these as well; after encountering great troubles, the Romans entered Theodosiopolis.

⁹ 584.

¹⁰ Theophylact's description of Philippicus' moves is not completely clear. After camping at Monocarton near Constantina, to the south of Mount Aïsouma (Karaca Dag), he must then have marched north-east to the Tigris, and then south-west across the Tur Abdin plateau (Mount Izala) in a circular move that allowed him to attack the vicinity of Nisibis as soon as the Persian army moved from Nisibis. The Kardarigan had lost track of Philippicus' moves and must have believed that he was still north of the Tur Abdin, hence the Persian decision to campaign westwards from Nisibis towards Maïacariri, which was located on the main route from the Mesopotamian plain across the Tur Abdin (between Mardin and Amida/Diyarbakir).

¹¹ Philippicus had retreated north across the Tur Abdin plateau, probably following the same route as his earlier advance.

¹² The description of this second raid resembles the immediately preceding expedition, with Philippicus crossing the Tur Abdin to ravage Bearbaës (Beth Arabaye), the vicinity of Nisibis, and then retreating north in the Tur Abdin. The only difference is the retreat of the second Roman detachment south-east across the parched Mesopotamian plain to Theodosiopolis on the Khabour river. The reference to 'hearsay' is odd, and might indicate that Theophylact's account of the second raid was not derived from John of Epiphania but from a participant (possibly the elder Heraclius, who is prominent in the subsequent campaigns). If this suggestion about two separate sources is correct, then the second raid should probably be regarded as a doublet of the first.



(14.1) In the following year,¹³ Philippicus proudly planted his spear in the region of Arzanene and captured a glittering and most distinguished booty. (2) A story was current that the general, who was very fond of learning and who drew his military knowledge from the experts of the past, had acquired this aptitude for wise strategy from the shrewdness of Scipio, the perfect general. (3) For, according to the reports of those who have set down the histories in writing like sacred statues in the precinct of memory, when Hannibal the Carthaginian general was ravaging the European territory of the Romans, the elder Scipio committed the war at home to deferment, attacked the Carthaginian land, and drove the enemy to serious trouble; (4) when Hannibal heard about the fortunes of the Carthaginians, he retreated to his own land, being taught the mutability of affairs from the adversities which had befallen himself. This seemed to be an account parallel to that of Philippicus, and his plan did not miss the mark.¹⁴ (5) It chanced that the general was afflicted in body, since he was struck by a severe illness; therefore he came to Martyropolis, after he had entrusted the army to the brigadier Stephen (this man had been bodyguard of the emperor Tiberius), and appointed Apsich the Hun as second-in-command of all the companies. (6) And so the general was thus a non-combatant because of disease, but the Kardarigan took his whole force and attacked the city which had recently been designated Tiberiopolis, but which had formerly been named Monocarton. In the previous year the general had strengthened its aged walls and fortified it in foresight of the future. (7) The Persian general attacked the city but was unable to reduce it; therefore he entered the environs of Martyropolis and burnt down the church of the prophet John, which was situated about twelve miles from the city towards the western horizon.¹⁵ (8) Here indeed there happened to be an academy of men who spend their lives in thought: these men are in fact called monks, and their task is to anticipate departure from the body, to be dead while living, and to transmigrate to higher things through a sort of prudent madness. The barbarian also razed this place to the foundations. (9) On the next day he set out from there and came to the place Zorbandon, where he ordered his followers not to leave the rampart on any account. On the eighth day he returned to his own country.¹⁶ (10) His own intention perhaps was to enter Roman territory on further brigandage and to carry off the same glory as the Romans. But the general shook off his illness and broke camp (for the season of winter had apparently already arrived), and returned to Byzantium to salute the emperor.

(15.1) When spring emerged again and warmth spread over the earth,¹⁷ Philippicus set out from the royal city. When he entered Amida, the Persians sent an embassy to settle the war in some glorious manner: for they sent the satrap Mebodes to the general and instructed him to secure a treaty at Roman expense. (2) Therefore the Persian Mebodes arrives among the Romans, and the general convened an assembly, summoning to his presence the brigadiers, captains, bodyguards, and the more distinguished of the fighting force. When the meeting was fully gathered, the Persian began with these words:

¹³ 585.

¹⁴ The application of the analogy of Scipio Africanus to Philippicus is odd, since there has been no reference to a Persian attack that Philippicus was trying to disrupt. The example of Scipio was, however, more appropriately used as a parallel for the emperor Heraclius (George of Pisidia, Heraclius i. 97-8), and this might have influenced Theophylact in this passage.

¹⁵ Theophylact's narrative conceals a considerable jump in the theatre of military operations, from Monocarton in the plains south of the Tur Abdin to the vicinity of Martyropolis, north of the Tigris. It is possible that, unknown to Theophylact, Martyropolis was attacked by a separate Persian army and general operating from Persian Armenia, not by the Kardarigan, who was based on Nisibis.

¹⁶ The Persians have probably retreated to Persian Armenia, via the Illyris pass across the Taurus to the north-west of Martyropolis.

¹⁷ Spring 586.

(3) 'Enemies (may the prelude of the embassy not upset the audience: for if you change your minds, I too will alter the salutation), dismiss war and array peace, let spear and sword take leave as obsolete, and enlist a flute that sounds a melody at once gentle and pastoral. (4) The Persian king is a lover of peace and takes pride in being the first to cast off war: for the cultivation of peace is regal, just as belligerence is characteristic of tyrants. (5) You men who share the same sufferings as us, let war, which alone of all things is insatiate, be stayed. We have enriched the earth with blood and have often observed death, for war is death's artist in my opinion, its archetype, the founder and self-taught teacher of human troubles. (6) 'Is there anyone who loves money? But we have become a sport for wealth and poverty, sometimes conquering, sometimes being conquered; we participate in the fluctuations of war, and eternally reap a harvest of change, so to speak. Is there a warrior who preens himself at gold? He has acquired mistrust as well as pleasure: (7) for what is less trustworthy in war than money, which is immediately transferred to another and again from that man to another, so that the man who possessed it looks at a dream on waking, or remembers on the morrow a recent drinking bout? (8) 'You, Romans, have in the past given free rein to war; you too become disciples of peace; at the invitation of the Persians, cast off the lamentable war; for it is fitting that those who initiated a wrong should also repent in its rectification.¹⁸ (9) Do not let yourselves be emboldened by these benevolent words: for the Persian king is not renouncing the conflict because he was terrified only the other day when the Romans outraged the land of Media, since he commands that the Romans purchase peace with much gold and glorious gifts. (10) For it is not right for the transgressors to settle the war with impunity. For the payment must be sufficient both to soothe Persian anger and to repress Roman boldness, which reaches for the trumpet of war.' (11) Then, while the speech was still in progress, the Romans condemned the ambassador, hissing and creating uproar by shouting, as if they were distressed by the barbarian's words: for the Romans saw fit to take pride in recent events, whereby they had invaded the Persian state, won booty, and deceived the Kardarigan. (12) The general dismissed the assembly, and the Persian did not bring his words to completion. Then, after a few days had elapsed, the chief luminary in the priestly ranks of Nisibis came to the general and made public the same proposals as Mebodes. (13) Accordingly, at this point the general conveyed the Persian words to the emperor by courier, but when the emperor had examined the general's message, he at once responded with royal injunctions, commanding Philippicus to reject this disgraceful agreement as incompatible with Roman majesty. (14) However, when the general had folded up the imperial missive, he moved camp to Mambrathon. (15) And so the war thus blossomed forth. But the general assembled the army and enquired whether they were advancing to battle with hearts inspired by manly desire. When the forces assented and reinforced their aspirations with sworn agreements, the general moved from there and came to Bibas, where the river Arzamon flows by.¹⁹

¹⁸ Although the Romans had been aggressors in 572, they had subsequently made strenuous efforts to secure peace and been thwarted by Persian reluctance to make peace on terms (iii.15.5-10; 17.2). The devious rhetoric of this speech is intended to illustrate Persian dishonesty.

¹⁹ The Romans had advanced south from Amida on the Tigris to Bibas (Tel Bes) and the river Arzamon (Zergan) in the Mesopotamian plain immediately south of Mardin and Tur Abdin plateau.



Book Two:ii.1.1-ii.10.7

(1.1) On the next day he moved camp towards the uplands adjacent to the plain, in the foothills of the mountain, putting Mount Izala on his left.²⁰ Mount Izala is very fertile, for it produces wine and bears countless other varieties of fruits. The mountain is densely populated, and its inhabitants are fine men; the mountain is particularly exposed to attack, and is a subject of dispute, since the enemy do not live far away. (2) You could not persuade these people to leave their contentious land either by threats or promises, even though the neighbouring Persians frequently encroach on and plunder their territory. (3) This particular mountain of Izala is adjacent to another mountain whose appellation is Aïsouma: Aïsouma is like a ridge, it stretches up to a very great height, and from its summit two spurs reach downwards. (4) From these Izala proceeds: it begins to rise from a lowly position, next it gradually rears up its head, and, progressively stretching out its neck, it extends as far as the river Tigris. And it would even link with the Eastern or the Caucasian range, if some solicitude of the Creator had not established the division.

(5) Here the general stationed his army, reckoning that there was no water between the river Bouron in Persian territory and the Arzamon,²¹ and that the enemy would be compelled to choose one of two alternatives: (6) for they would either remain inactive, content to defend their own territory, or otherwise, if they attempted to attack the Latins, they would be weakened by exertion and thirst; their cavalry would very soon perish, since the Roman force would not allow the barbarians to draw water from the river Arzamon.

(7) On the third day, the Persian contingent learned that the Romans were waiting at the Arzamon. (2.1) The Kardarigan had reached such a degree of insolence that he roundly poured scorn on his informants, as if it were a piece of idle gossip, but as the substance of the report buzzed among the Persians more clearly, the enemy were infuriated. (2) The satrap questioned the disciples of sorcery, demanded from the magi to learn the steps of prophecy, and from those women inspired by the Pytho's breath, who appeared to be impregnated by the error of the devil, he demanded a prediction of the future.²² (3) Those possessed by the demons said that victory would accompany the Medes, and that in the course of the expedition Persians would carry off Romans and at the same time change Persian luck.²³ And so the Persians, as if in exultation, were fortified by the prophecies. (4) Then they set out from the river Bouron and moved towards the Romans. Next they loaded up herds of camels with a heavy burden of water- skins, so that the Romans should not conquer them easily because of their shortage of the watery element. They were so firmly possessed by their hopes of success that they also carried with them fetters, some made of wood, others of iron, and in very great quantity.

(5) The general instructed the Romans not to touch the farmers' labours, enjoining this in order to spare the countryside. So, on the next day he equipped selected men to reconnoiter the enemy, and entrusted them to the captain Sergius, by whom the protection of Mardes had been undertaken, along with Ogyrus and Zogomus; these were tribal chiefs of the force of Roman allies, whom Latins are accustomed to call Saracens.²⁴ (6) And so the men sent out by the

²⁰ The text is uncertain at this point. Philippicus sited his camp so that Mount Izala protected his left flank as he faced east against the Persians.

²¹ The Bouron is most probably the Dara river.

²² The Kardarigan's consultation of the magi is grandiloquently described in language derived from the practices of the Delphic oracle.

²³ In Greek the prophecy is ambiguously phrased, and could equally mean '... Romans would carry off Persians ...'

²⁴ i.e. the Ghassanid Arabs.



general hunted down some of the barbarian throng and, after torturing them, found out about the Kardarigan's current and earlier camps. This was in fact the seventh day in the cyclical progress of the week; this was named the Sabbath by the high priest Moses.²⁵

(7) When these events were announced to the Roman contingent, a suspicion came to the general that the enemy would attempt an attack on the following day, on the grounds that the Romans honoured the day as a rest from labour out of respect for its sanctity. The next morning the scouts came and announced to the general that the armies were approaching.

(3.1) And so Philippicus arranged the Romans and marshalled the army in three divisions: the left wing he entrusted to Eilifreda (this man was governor of Emesa); furthermore Apsich the Hun also assumed the same force; the brigadier Vitalius took that on the right, while the general, that is to say Heraclius, the father of the emperor Heraclius,²⁶ took over the central section. (3) The Persians were drawn up as follows: on the right flank was Mebodes the Persian, on the left flank Aphraates, who was said to be a nephew of Kardarigan the satrap, and the Kardarigan himself was allotted the central portion.

(4) When the enemy came into view and the dust was thick, Philippicus displayed the image of God Incarnate, which tradition from ancient times even to the present day proclaims was shaped by divine wisdom, not fashioned by a weaver's hands nor embellished by a painter's pigment. (5) It was for this reason that it is celebrated among the Romans even as 'not made by human hand', and is thought worthy of divine privileges: for the Romans worship its archetype to an ineffable degree. (6) The general stripped this of its sacred coverings and paraded through the ranks, thereby inspiring the army with a greater and irresistible courage. Next, when he reached the middle of the throng, pouring out an unquenchable flood of tears over the wastage of the conflict, he employed phrases of exhortation to the army. (7) The character of his words was sufficient both to heighten the efforts of the eager and to arouse the enthusiasm of the indolent and slothful. Now indeed the trumpets echoed the call to attention and when they sounded forth whetted the forces for battle. (8) The general conveyed that image of the Lord to Mardes, to Symeon who occupied the priestly throne of Amida; for it happened that the man was staying in the fortress at that time.²⁷ (9) Those in the fort besought and propitiated the Divinity on that day, and with an abundance of tears made supplications that the Romans might gain the victory in the contest. (10) The captains and the front ranks of the forces, or rather the tribunes, assembled and entreated the general to move to the rear of the force; for they feared that the fighting might at some stage become more dangerous for them if they were allocated the general as a colleague in their labours. (11) 'For fighting, they said, 'does not have clear movements, since it loves variety and takes many forms; for its nature is to be habitually changing and it is reliable only in its unreliability. Hence chance misfortune has infinitely exceeded successful attainment.' (12) And they persuaded the general to change his station slightly.

The plain where the fighting was enacted was named Solachon, taking the same name as a nearby district. (13) From there Theodore, whom Byzantines call Zetonumius, and who had also served in the office of magister among the Romans, originally drew his descent; and indeed that

²⁵ i.e. Saturday, so that Sunday, the day of rest, followed.

²⁶ The elder Heraclius plays a prominent part in this and the following eastern campaigns, and his actions tend to be praised, whereas those of his commanding general are denigrated (e.g. ii.7.11-8.5, 10.1-5; iii. 6.1-5). It is probable that some of Theophylact's information on these events was provided by a member of the Heraclius family, or by a source which was eager to praise the family's actions.

²⁷ The fort of Mardes, the modern Mardin, was perched on a peak of the Tur Abdin that commands an extensive view over the Mesopotamian plain and the site of the battle.

Solomon, the emperor's eunuch, who organized the Carthaginian war in Libya while Justinian controlled the imperial chariot. This has been recorded by the historian Procopius in the volume of his history.

(4.1) When the Persian lines came to grips with the Roman divisions, the brigadier Vitalius pushed forward more boldly than the other ranks and quickly routed the opposing force; then he wrought very great slaughter and took possession of the Persian baggage, which Romans in their native tongue are accustomed to call toulidon. (2) Then indeed the victors were occupied with the booty, but the general was dismayed and angered at the sight of these acts of disorder. (3) Therefore he improvised a clever plan: he took off from his own helmet, which was distinctive and conspicuous, and placed it on Theodore Ilibinus, who was the general's bodyguard; next he instructed him to beat with his sword the merchants of plunder. This in fact came about and was of particular benefit to the formation. (4) Since they supposed that the general was on the prowl and correcting the looters' error, they turned their attention to the battle, and took their share in the labours of war. The routed opposition escaped to the central section of the Persians, where the Kardarigan was in command. (5) So the central Persian division became deeper through the addition of the fugitive left wing, and the opposing Roman force would have had difficulty in standing their ground if they had not dismounted from their horses and engaged in hand-to-hand combat. (6) So the centermost lines were equal to the fight and their fighting was prolonged; as a result it came about that the battle-line stood on the remains of the dead, since the face of the earth was covered because of the continuity of corpses upon the surface. (7) But since the evil was unending, some divine purpose gave judgement against the foreign tribe, making the battle incline to the other side, and a voice sped through the Romans with great resonance, ordering them to strike at the enemy horse. Accordingly, the Romans obeyed this particular order and overcame the opposing force. (8) The Romans supposed that the shout had come from the captain Stephen, and after the fighting the Romans asked whether that Stephen had himself in fact been the originator of the tactic. (9) But he made denial and swore a great oath that he had never produced such an ingenious enterprise; for he was reluctant to seek glory thereby and to distort divine operations into his personal shrewdness. (10) The third Roman division, that is to say the left, confounded the opposing contingent and the survivors were hotly pursued as far as Daras, which was twelve miles distant from the site of the engagement.²⁸ (11) Then, as the Roman victory became so clear, the barbarians acknowledged their defeat and turned to flight. The central Persian section, together with its commander, fled and escaped the danger on a certain hillock. (12) When the Romans had heard that some of the enemy were on a hillock sheltering in a state of shock from the victors, they immediately encircled the strong point and ordered the enemy to surrender. But they scorned death and swaggered to the verge of madness. (13) Therefore the Romans ignored them, since they were unaware that the Kardarigan had crept on to the hillock and was paying close attention to the danger. (14) And so the Kardarigan, although he had no food and was hard-pressed by hunger, held out on the hillock for three or four days, since the unforeseen danger had thrown the Persian general into utter panic: for the convergence of unexpected changes is terrifying, since they alter opinions as well as actions.

(5.1) When they returned to the general, Stephen was subjected to a harsh rebuke because he had not reduced the remnant; but he rebutted the general's criticism with a defence most

²⁸ Dara, the former Roman fortress, had been captured by the Persians in 573 (iii.11.2). The distance between the site of the battle and Dara indicates that the Romans had in fact advanced several miles to the east of the river Arzamon in order to confront the Persians.



appropriate for a leader, saying: (2) 'I know both how to respect the limits of victory and to fear the summit of Fortune. For she holds the scales which hate wrong, and she is not accustomed to tolerate success that flaunts itself more than necessary. And so when the Persians thus found that the descent was free, they crept down the lower slopes. (3) After they had descended from the ridge, they encountered some Romans who were returning and congregating at the camp; therefore, many were slaughtered and more than a thousand captured, who were dispatched to Byzantium. (4) Before the approach to battle, the Kardarigan ordered the Persians to burst open those skin flasks of theirs: thereby he stimulated the Medians to more reckless bravery, by making this fact clear to them, that they would die of thirst if they did not grapple with great dangers, since the Romans were stationed by the river Arzamon and were guarding its course with considerable industry. (5) Nor indeed did his boldness stand him in good stead: for it is foolish, by trusting in the dice of Fortune, to be confident at the heights of peril, and to glean favourable outcomes from previous errors. For if the opening is unwise, the conclusions too will take their course in accordance with the antecedents. (6) This in fact destroyed many of the Medes after the defeat: for when they came across wells, some of the Persians gulped down water too insatiably, and so sank into great trouble, since their stomachs, under the sudden incursion of water, could not endure to contain the excessive burden of water, (7) The Kardarigan reached the vicinity of Daras and made an attempt to enter the town; for the townsmen, or rather the Persians guarding the city, refused to open the gates for the Medes, since indeed Persian custom permits that fugitives should not be admitted. (8) After they had abused the Kardarigan and added their insults to the disaster they persuaded him to return home to the accompaniment of most shameful words. (9) As day was waning, a sudden visitation of panic affected the Roman camp and rumour spread around that the Persians had acquired a reinforcement and were on the very point of attacking the rampart. (10) Therefore Heraclius, the father of the emperor Heraclius, and another of the leaders, on horseback and protected by steel, ranged about with irresistible impetus on the tracks of the barbarians; and they came to the hillock where those who had recently escaped with the Kardarigan had bivouacked. (11) Therefore they rushed to the heights and gazed round from an excellent vantage-point, and the enemy were not to be seen. Then, after they had made a clear search and there was no possibility of deception in their reconnaissance, they returned to the Romans. (6.1) At a certain point on their route they observed a Roman soldier in the throes of death, his body adorned by four wounds; (2) a Median arrow had penetrated deeply through his helmet and planted itself in his upper lip; another had in turn entered his other lip from below and was extended in antithesis, as it were, so that by means of opposing shafts his tongue was marked with a cross by the counterposed conjunction of the barbs, and hence the hero was unable to shut his two lips. (3) On his left arm he also bore a spear's incursion, and a further wound in the side from a Median javelin; this indeed was the epitaph even for his bravery. (4) And so Heraclius' companions, seeing the hero bathed in his noble blood and marveling at his courage, set him on horseback and carried him to the camp. (5) Next, they drew out and extracted the other missiles implanted in his body, but the one in his side they were unable to withdraw; for those who are instructed in these things, the skills of Chiron and Machaon, whispered among themselves that with the departure of the weapon his soul would also pass away. (6) But that Macedonian, or Leonidas in spirit, a Callimachus or Cynegirus, - but it will suffice to call it Roman - when he heard the doctors' words, asked if the Romans had been victorious. When the bystanders assented and said that the Latins had raised the trophy, he tested their words on oath.

(7) When he had learned that the Romans had in reality gained the lighter pan in the balance of war, whereas the Persians had the opposite turn of the scale and were being dragged down to calamity by the weight of defeat, he leapt up with a gasp, saying that the statement was a great consolation and relief for his pain, and that he now awaited death. (8) With a nod he fawned upon the onlookers, as it were, to withdraw from his side without mercy that far-famed Median dart; for he said that the man departing this world would never find any other such good provision to take with him from among things mortal.

(9) They say that the hero was on the roll of the Quartoparthoi, which is the appellation borne by the men stationed at the city of Beroe in Syria.²⁹ When that fatal weapon was extracted from his side, that great and most noble spirit of the hero sprang forth with it, hastening to reach the Elysian land, I might say in poetic terms; but I am ashamed to besmirch with the myth the dignity of the triumphs. (10) On the next day the general held a review of the soldiery: he favoured the wounded with gifts, gold and silver decoration was a reward for courageous spirit, and he weighed out the recompense according to the extent of the perils. (11) For some people received promotion as a prize for fortitude, another man a Persian horse, fine in appearance yet good in battle, another a silver helmet and quiver, another a shield, breastplate, and spears. The Romans inherited possessions equal to the battle's inheritance of corpses. (12) But at midday the general dismissed the parade and dispatched the wounded to the cities and nearby forts, so as to heal and soothe the pangs of their wounds through the gentle sorcery of the works of Asclepius. (13) He himself took the rest of the force and invaded Median territory; and wherever the Persians lacked foresight they suffered severely. The Roman onslaught was irresistible and unapproachable for those who encountered it.

(7. 1) And so the Roman general quite suddenly, like a hurricane at sea or a violent thunderbolt, visited the district of Arzanene, and he wrought havoc in the Persian state. The inhabitants of Arzanene descended into the hollows of the earth, for the story is current among us that at a depth they have constructions in the manner of cave-like houses. (2) Accordingly their own safety was for a time treasured up in these same underground shelters. Now indeed the people of Arzanene had stored away bread and barley-cakes in the caves, which they thought to be good for defence. (3) But after briefly beguiling perception, they were before long discovered by the Romans, when captives revealed the underground mysteries and displayed the secret in the open. (4) Therefore the Romans tested for those lurking underground through echoes, and the testing by means of resonances was an infallible guide that revealed the rites of the bowels of the earth. (5) The people of Arzanene, however, were led up as if from the very foundations of their fellow initiate earth to the day of slavery, to describe in more tragic terms their tragedy. (6) But when the Romans had finished the task of groping around in the nether regions, and the barbarians did not escape the most hateful fate, thereafter they camped near the fort of Chlomaron.³⁰ On the next day two men deserted who were brothers in blood as well as in purpose. (7) One was named Maruthas and the other Jovius, and the two were both leaders of Arzanene. After they had deserted and been accorded a friendly audience with the general, thereafter they most eagerly desired goodwill. (8) Then, since speech most commonly takes precedence over action, they first fawned upon the general, as it were, with well-chosen discourse, and these in fact were their words of goodwill: (9) 'General, if you wish the Romans to take possession of Arzanene, we will

²⁹ This good story of a very insignificant incident in the Solachon campaign is perhaps more likely to have been retailed by the elder Heraclius than by John of Epiphania.

³⁰ Chlomaron, the chief town of Arzanene and the seat of the Persian governor and of a Nestorian bishop, had been unsuccessfully besieged by Maurice in 578, after his capture of the nearby fortress of Aphumon.

show you certain places which are particularly impregnable because they are supported by their strong position. The course of good counsel enjoins that forts be built³¹. Such were the primary points of the barbarians' speech to the general. (10) Their words were not inconsistent with the general's intentions, for the director of the Roman camp was eager to acquire places of this very type, but had meantime out of uncertainty restrained the enterprise by delaying the investigation. (11) So when the general had received such tidings, as if he had chanced upon some godsend, with a ready enthusiasm he dispatched his second-in-command Heraclius, and sent along with him as well the guides to the strong point.

(8.1) And so he set out on his way; but the Kardarigan was marching against the Romans, having enrolled throngs, who were not soldiers but men inexperienced in martial clamour; he had in addition assembled a herd of baggage animals and camels, and was moving forwards. This was a show bereft of truth, a shadow of things that were otherwise, like a marvel contrived for stage deception. (2) Accordingly he encountered Heraclius' party, which was progressing on reconnaissance of the country; twenty men accompanied Heraclius. (3) They were unarmed because of their ignorance of what was to happen. No helmet protected their head, no breastplate their breast, steel to ward off steel, a bodily defence that escorts and accompanies the man it protects. For good fortune had enfeebled them, since victory does not know how to maintain the conqueror at the same fortitude. (4) And so when Heraclius observed the spectacle, he simulated boldness and pretended to continue his forward march. When his stratagem was revealed, as the enemy were approaching and were just about to come to grips with his men, he and his party made for a high ridge. (5) When the foe launched an onslaught against them, they moved again to another ridge, and from that one again to another, and by a succession of moves they evaded the enemies' schemes. By night he sent a messenger to Philippicus to inform him of the barbarian approach. (6) When the general had brought this envoy into his own tent and learned that the barbarians were intending to attack on the following day, he reassembled his army, which was dispersed hither and thither ravaging Arzanene, by commanding the trumpet to sound the recall. (7) And so it rang out, while they returned to camp in eager haste. A certain man who bore the appellation Zabertas (this man was invested with the responsibility for the garrison of Chlomaron in fact) secretly slipped out of the fort and silently followed behind the Roman force, moving noiselessly and carefully; when he had outflanked the Roman soldiery, he hurried off to join the Kardarigan's men. (8) Therefore the Persian fugitive guided his fellow countrymen, leading them up to confront the Roman throng, showing them a safe place that was a defence against attacks because of the calm of its strong position. For, like some respected intermediary, a great ravine lay in the middle and separated the two forces. For the barbarian was well aware that the Persians would not withstand their conqueror if he attacked directly and suddenly, since they could not bear the sight of the enemy because of the freshness of their misfortunes. (9) It was for this reason that Zabertas spread the Persians in opposition along the lip of the ravine. The ravine was interposed like a ready-made ditch, a good custodian which had both sides in its trust; there indeed the Romans and barbarians remained for some time. (10) The Romans in their eagerness for an engagement strove to leap across the ditch; but the Persians deflected the attack because the ravine was biased in their favour, and for a time the slaughter received deferment. (11) After this the Persians came to the rear of the Romans, cheating observation at night; for, circumventing the ravine secretly, they moved around and by a circular march came behind the

³¹ These sites for prospective forts were probably intended to command the routs across the Taurus and Hakkari mountains, which connected Arzanene with Persarmenia and lower Mesopotamia.



Romans. Hence the Persians gained the confidence to camp on the upper slopes of the mountain where Chlomaron was sited. (12) Accordingly, it came about that the Romans departed from there and fortified a camp in the foothills of the mountain. The forces were such close next-door neighbours to each other that they could discern each other's voices and clearly hear the neighing of the horses. It was for this reason that the Romans abandoned the siege of Chlomaron; for thereafter it was not possible for them to reduce the fortress.

(9. 1) On the following day, about the first watch of the night at the time of the deepest sleep, an uncontrollable terror deranged the general and drove him in a frenzy to inexplicable flight. (2) Therefore he was so terrified and, since he could not endure the onset of fear, he departed on his way without communicating his retreat to any of his attendant army. (3) Such was the intensity that his consternation had reached; and yet the Mede did not have the power to balance the Romans, and furthermore hunger was pressing the barbarians severely. (4) So the general reached Aphumon, which was at that time under Roman control. Therefore terror, panic, confusion and perplexity afflicted the Romans; the crisis was beyond control,³² for it was prolonged by the moonless night. (5) And so they fled, negotiating impassable tracks and effecting a perilous retreat, and the cause of the flight was not examined, while the barbarians were puzzled by the Roman manoeuvre and comprehension was unattainable. (6) Then the troops converged on the intervening ravine, and were encompassed by extraordinary troubles, since in the pitch darkness the baggage animals were virtually annihilated in the ditch by slippages. (7) As the Romans were massed together and whirled apart, pushing and being pushed by turns, it was impossible for them to find an escape from the confinement: such trouble did the general's folly engender. (8) And indeed by heaven, if a mere ten Persian slave-boys, I mean those who transport the equipment from the camp and serve the barbarians, if they had cried out on that day to the effect that the Persian army was pursuing them and was on the point of allocating slaughter, the whole Roman contingent would have perished, so as to endanger, I think, the survival of anyone to report the disaster. So great was the trouble which the womb of folly brought forth for them. (9) Therefore, as dawn's rays were dispersing the darkness, the Roman army was with difficulty extricating itself and crossing to Aphumon. Hence the forces abused the general and insulted him to his face. (10) The Persians followed unhurriedly and cautiously, for they did not have the courage to come to grips openly, since it had not become apparent to them that the enemy was panic-stricken. (11) Then they followed in the rear and struck the tail of the Roman force with arrows, and the Medes shot as if at a butt: such was the disorderly retreat of the Latins. (12) Accordingly, even one of the mules that carried the general's bedding was struck by a barbarian missile and confusion immediately arose: for the report was distorted to the effect that even the general's baggage had been taken by enemy hands. After this the missiles flew at random and transmitted to the Romans very grave wounds. (13) Nevertheless the barbarians did not harass the retreat overmuch, partly through fear, and partly because they suspected that the Romans were devising some plan and disguising under a cloak of retreat some cunning deceit against them. (14) At midday, when everyone had assembled by the general, the soldiers poured insults and abuse against Theodore: for this man had in fact undertaken the

³² Aphumon was situated on the opposite side of a valley, probably that of the Redwan river, from Chlomaron. The motive for Philippicus' withdrawal to Aphumon was perhaps less discernable than Theophylact's highly rhetorical account pretends: the Roman siege of Chlomaron had been thwarted (ii.8.12), since the Kardarigan had managed to bring up reinforcements, and so it was now essential for Philippicus to organize a new attack or to arrange a diversion so that the Roman army could retire in safety. It is possible that the elder Heraclius, who had been sent out on reconnaissance (ii.7.11-8.5), was in fact partly to blame for the Kardarigan's success in relieving Chlomaron, and that the fierce criticism of Philippicus reflects the desire to avoid criticizing the Heraclius family.

supervision of the watch but, surrendering himself to indolence, he had neglected his task, and the trouble had thereby gained ground.³³ (15) The Roman baggage was also captured by the Persians, and the Persians encountered a very great benefit, since the famine, which had sorely afflicted them like an implacable tyrant, was banished. (16) The general effected his retreat with great peril and forded the river Nymphius; such was his utterly shameful escape from Persia. On the following day he reached Amida, losing much of his force, since the Persians were harrying the rear of the Roman force. (17) The general, whose hopes had been dashed, restored forts below Mount Izala, and furthermore repaired the old forts which had been neglected and were gaping through the passage of time and the war; one of these forts was called Phathacon, the other Alaleisus, and he stationed garrisons in them, organizing the control of Mount Izala from there.³⁴ He gave part of the army to Heraclius, since he was himself overwhelmed by pain and unable to fight.

(10.1) Heraclius marshaled his soldiery and camped opposite the foothills of Izala, or rather the banks of the river Tigris. This begins its course from the northern regions of Persia, winds through the Roman territory, and circles, loops, and meanders, so that it virtually doubles its length through its circuitous detour; (2) it also encircles part of Mount Izala and, returning home, it enfolds the place called Thamanon;³⁵ then with a gentle course it flows out through the Melabason mountain, and wandering towards the south it comes to rest. (3) The Melabason mountain was native to Media, and beyond it one can see the Carduchian ranges jutting out, as the geographers plausibly declare in setting out for us their perception. (4) Accordingly Heraclius left Thamanon,³⁶ advanced towards the southern parts of Media, and ravaged the whole of that area. He even traversed the Tigris and urged the army forward, burning everything of importance in that part of Media. Then he re-entered the Roman state, circled past Theodosiopolis, and once again rejoined the men with Philippicus.³⁷ (5) After these particular things had been accomplished contrary to expectation, the general broke camp: for the season of winter was doubtless already present, and the annual monetary payment had been dispersed to the Roman army. (6) When spring-time seasons had engendered the terrestrial greenery³⁸ the general gave two-third of the entire Roman force to Heraclius, the father of the emperor Heraclius, but the other portion to Theodore, the man from Tur Abdin, and to Andrew: this man was indeed the intermediary for the Saracen tribe which was aiding the Romans.³⁹ (7) He instructed them to use the tactics of sallies and raids and to swoop down again on the Persian state. For the general was sick and unable to apply himself to military conflict.

³³ Theophylact's elaborate rhetoric has probably exaggerated the extent of the Roman mishap: at any rate, the army extracted itself from a difficult position, and during the rest of the year the Romans were able to construct fortresses (ii.9.17) and ravage extensively (ii.10.4) without encountering Persian opposition.

³⁴ The location of these forts is problematical. Alaleisus was probably sited in the Bitlis pass (the cleisoura)

³⁵ The Tigris 'returns home' because Thamanon was a district or settlement on the east bank of the river in Persian territory, so that the river has now come back to its native land.

³⁶ this is the first precise indication of Heraclius' position and suggests that his camp (ii.10.1) had been located on the east bank of the river.

³⁷ Since Heraclius' raid had begun at Thamanon to the east of the Tigris, he therefore crossed back to the west bank to ravage Beth Arabaye and continued westwards to Theodosiopolis (Ras el-Ain). It is improbable that Theophylact understood the geography of this raid.

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Book Two: ii.18.1-ii.18.26

(18.1) And so at this particular time Heraclius made another invasion into the Persian state, and trouble became endemic among the Medes.⁴⁰ (2) When he had arrived, he attacked a certain very strong fort; this was situated upon a lofty rock.⁴¹ The under-general arranged his siege-engines and machines. (3) The Persians also devised various counter-stratagems against his schemes, and wove things like robes: after collecting hairs and intertwining the warp and the weft, they produced long tunics and packed these densely with chaff; after making them solid, they hung them upon the wall and on these they received the bombardments, mitigating the hardness of the discharges through the softness of the countering preparation. (4) Many of the missiles flew right over the fort, but others were also brought down on the stronghold itself. Heraclius admitted no respite in the bombardment, alternating those engaged in the work day and night. (5) For those who had recently participated in the labours received relief from the succeeding force, while fellow labourers in turn replaced those, and others again together took over the toil from those. (6) It was for this reason that those protecting the stronghold grew weak and their strength grew faint. In this very way the fort was captured and came into Roman possession; after its capture the general installed a garrison in it. (7) The men under Theodore and Andrew restored Matzaron (this was also a fort) which had become antiquated in the course of time; this was in fact not far distant from Beïudaes.⁴² While Theodore was occupied in the construction, farmers came to him inciting him to invest Beïudaes and intimating that it was inadequately garrisoned. (8) At once the men with Theodore and Andrew decided to suit action to words, and they spent the night engaged in a forced march. (9) They had intended to attack Beïudaes by night. Being unable to accomplish their intention, they appeared before the fort with the dawn chorus of birdsong. The natives had prior knowledge of the Roman approach, and they remained unafraid because of the impregnability of the site; thereafter, confident in the rock, they showed their faces and opened proceedings with deterrent missiles. (10) There was in fact only one entry to the fort, and this was difficult to approach with hostile intent. For the entrance was entrusted to one tower placed in advance of the stronghold, as if it were founded on stones of adamant - or anything whose nature is more solid. (11) So the Romans dismounted from their horses, bombarded the rock, and the overtures of the conflict were effected by discharges of arrows; those in the fort defended themselves now with stones, now with catapults, and created a deluge as if from some unseen lofty vantage-point, banishing as it were the alien enemy by means of the heights. (12) While the Roman force was occupied, some brave Romans defended themselves with linked shields and, gradually moving step by step and enhancing their boldness with supreme heroism, led the way for the following troops; they moved forwards without regard for the deluge from the rock, and dislodged the barbarians from the rock. (13) The besieged abandoned their allied rock, retired into the fortress, and surrendered the entrance to the enemy. The Romans took possession of the fortifications on the rock and besieged for fort exceedingly strongly. (14) Those standing on the parapet were unable to scare off the opposition, since they could not endure the innumerable missiles, but forthwith were suddenly to be seen showing their

⁴⁰ A return to the narrative of ii.10.6-7, the campaign of 587.

⁴¹ The location of this fort is unknown, but it is likely that Heraclius was continuing the Roman assault on Arzanene.

⁴² Theodore and Andrew were operating in the 'Tur Abdin. Matzaron (modern Maserte) was located about 10 miles from Beïudaes (also known as Sina Judaeorum or Sinas; the modern Fafi), which was in fact a Roman fort that the Persians must have captured during the course of the war (perhaps in 573 during the siege of Dara).

backs instead of their faces. (15) A certain man Sapeir, who in physique was like the Tydeus celebrated by Homer, but in resolve far exceeded Tydeus (for he was a Heracles in courage, or any man who has ever been stronger than he; for I do not hesitate to place Heracles in the second rank for magnitude of courage, even though we lack a parallel), he rushed at the stronghold carrying sharp spikes, and walked on high. (16) He inserted one spike in the tower at the joints of the construction (for the fort was composed of dry stone), and mounted the spike with his foot. Next, ingrafting, as it were, the other spike in turn, he supported the remaining one of his two feet on it and, grasping the stones placed above, held fast with his hands, and thus devised his ascent. (17) While the besieged were unable to endure the sight of the missiles, that man Sapeir firmly gripped the parapet, and he would have captured the stronghold at that first assault, if one of the Persian division had not suddenly appeared at one of the battlements projecting out from the rampart, and pushed off that hero. (18) He slipped and was borne downwards together with the battlement, 'head foremost in the dust, on his forehead and shoulders' in a Homeric mishap. Nevertheless he did not perish, since his comrades caught him on their shields and saved the injured man: for the iron of the javelins had pierced him very slightly. (19) He resolutely went back to that task and yet again leapt up, clasped the parapet with his hands like an octopus with clinging tentacles, and held on to the parapet in a firm grip. (20) But the Persian foe effected a stratagem kindred to the other: since the parapet had recently been weakened by the Roman bombardment, he pushed over the hero along with it and let them fall downwards. (21) And then the danger-loving soldier was carried down with the parapet in his embrace, but at the dreadful spectacle his allies stretched out their earlier rescue for the daredevil. (22) But when the wounded man recovered from his fall, he gladly undertook a third attempt as well, as though some irresistible divine power was urging him to the labour. (23) After he had crept up and finally mounted the garland of the rampart, he drew his sword and slew that same Persian, that drone of his own courage; therefore he separated the head from the neck and sent it off to the besiegers. The Romans were encouraged by the sight of what had happened and were eager for dangers, (24) A certain brother of that Sapeir (this man was senior in age), after being a spectator of his courage, immediately also became an emulator of the undertaking and climbed up, himself devising a means akin to his kinsman's; next after him yet another followed and after this one many more. (25) For the first to seize the stronghold were now raised by ropes, they bombarded the gates, and the Roman army was finally able to enter. Having thus mastered the enemy, they reduced the fort; some they killed, others they spared and transferred to a captive fate. After pillaging the possessions, they put guards about the stronghold and withdrew from there, (26) Since the winter season was approaching,⁴³ Philippicus retired to the Constantinian city, leaving Heraclius as general. And so Heraclius inflicted penalties for desertion on the vagrants from the Roman force; and those who had bidden farewell to labour, and who were aimlessly wandering hither and thither, were converted to good sense by punishments.

Book Three: iii.1.1-iii.18.14

(1.1) And so Philippicus had learned during his journey that Priscus had been accredited as general by the emperor; on reaching Tarsus he composed messages to Heraclius which indicated

⁴³ Winter 587/8.



that, after leaving the army, he should return to his own city when he came to Armenia,⁴⁴ and surrender the army to Narses, the commander of the city of Constantina. (2) And through jealousy against Priscus he disclosed the emperor's decree which had recently reached him, and ordered that it also be revealed in public to the soldiers. The decree indeed diminished the soldiers' remuneration, and the reduction was in fact by one-quarter. And it happened as the general had commanded. (3) With the arrival of spring, the one was demoted while the other began his command. And so Priscus, after reaching Antioch, ordered the soldiers to assemble at Monocarton; on coming to Edessa he encountered Germanus, and greeted and embraced him courteously when he arrived from his residence (for this man graced the throne of Damascus);⁴⁵ he brought him to dinner and entertained him on the next day. (4) Then after four days the general left Edessa, took with him the luminary of the priestly seat, and went to the camp. For the day was at hand on which it is customary for Romans to celebrate that saving Passion, through which the only-begotten Son of God, he who is co-honoured equally with the Father in nature and dominion, took the world in his care.⁴⁶ (5) The general's feelings were as follows, namely that he ought not to celebrate the annual day of the Resurrection in a city, while the Roman army in the open might appear to keep a somewhat gloomier feast, being bereft, as it were, of a city's rejoicing. It was for this reason that he took the priest with him and moved to Monocarton. (6) Germanus went on ahead to make known to the soldiers the presence of the general. Then after two days the brigadiers and indeed the whole of the battle array met the general about three miles from the rampart. (7) An ancient custom was honoured in the camp, that the man who was about assume the reins of generalship should, when the soldiers came to meet him, dismount from his horse, walk through the middle of the soldiery, and favour the camp with his salutations. (8) When Priscus did not in fact do this, but even utterly vilified this particular ancient custom, the army did not bear the insult in moderation. On the first day of the festival the general remained untroubled. (9) But when the third day had passed and the reduction in the soldiers' remuneration was no longer in concealment, but became clear to the whole throng, extreme anarchy made its entry: the masses converged on the general's tent, some carrying stones, others swords, as the occasion served each man. (10) The general came to hear the commotion and enquired the cause. When they gave no answer to his enquiry except 'The unity of the whole array has been overthrown, the camp is leaderless', the commander Priscus was bathed in sweat and cowered in great fear, his mind being completely at a loss as to what exactly he should do. (11) And so he uncovered the image of God Incarnate, which Romans call 'not made by human hand', gave it to Eilifreda, and ordered him to go round the army, so that by respect for the holy object, the anger might be humbled, while the disorder take a change towards good sense. (12) When the multitude was not brought to its senses thereby, but even pelted the ineffable object with stones, the general, chancing upon a horse of one of the emperor's bodyguards, naturally abandoned himself to flight, and cheated the peril with an unexpected salvation. (13) Accordingly he encountered the grooms who were pasturing the soldiers' horses, and, escaping their clutches with the utmost danger, he reached the gates of the city of Constantina shortly after leaving the encampments at Monocarton. (14) Accordingly, turmoil also arrived in the city along with the general. And so the inhabitants of Constantina remained

⁴⁴ Heraclius probably held the post of *magister militum per Armeniam*, with headquarters at Theodosiopolis (Erzurum), presumably the city to which Philippicus directed him to return from the army's camp at Monocarton.

⁴⁵ Germanus, the leader elected by the mutineers (iii.2.4-5) was *dux* of Phoenice Libanensis. Theophylact has probably confused this Germanus with the unnamed bishop whom Priscus met at Edessa (probably the bishop of Edessa or Constantina), and wrongly assumed that Germanus was the religious, not the military, leader of Phoenice Libanensis.

⁴⁶ i.e. Easter 588 was approaching.

with hearts dismayed at events, but by means of couriers the general inscribed letters to the leaders of the cities and the commanders of the forts, that they should not deprive the soldiers of anything customary, or be cast down at heart by the sudden turn of events. (15) He also requested that medical expertise should present itself to him and apply dressings to the wounds on his calves; for he was in great pain from the bruises which the discharge of stones had dispensed to him.

(2.1) And so the revolt continued to rage in the camp; for the general's tent was torn apart, Priscus' possessions were also pillaged by the throng, the leaders of the contingents fled as well, and the anarchy increased to great evil. (2) Shortly afterwards the general sent the prelate of Constantina as ambassador to the camp, asseverating that he was assuaging the soldiers' grievance, that the emperor Maurice had changed his mind, and that he was bearing a royal letter which ordered that the soldiers' stipends be reinstated at the customary level. (3) The general Priscus blamed Philippicus, and rumoured that he had been the originator of the disorder, because he had advised Maurice to reduce the soldiers' stipends. These things Priscus compiled at random. (4) And so the priestly ambassador went on his way as he had been ordered; but the soldiers assembled and sanctioned the election of a general. It was for this reason that they summoned Germanus, introduced him into the council, and decided to entrust to him the reins of generalship. (5) But when he rejected the camp's demand, they insisted that he comply with the election, and added threats that the punishment for disobedience would even be death; the soldiers' resolution prevailed, and Germanus was proclaimed general after he had secured on oath matters of future expediency, that the Romans would refrain from pillaging the subjects, and that disorder would be banished; it was also agreed that they campaign against the foe. (6) The general, fortified by these agreements as if by impregnable breastplates, was content to lead the Romans. So the priestly ambassador came to the general and camp. (7) And so he urged the army to turn towards sense; but they were antagonized by the priest, and did not admit his words to their ears, but banished like a barbarian captive the proposals made to them by the ambassador; they even exhorted that Priscus be cast out of the city. (8) And so they attempted to tear down the royal statues (this in fact happened), and they also obliterated the pictorial representations which had by the art of painting been composed on panels and boards for the honour of the emperor; for they said that they would not endure to be ruled by a shopkeeper. (9) The prelate of Constantina made these things known to Priscus. Then Priscus also sent the leader of the clergy of Edessa as ambassador to the soldiers. But the priest, after coming to the army and expending many words, made his return without success. (10) The dreadful consequences of the disorder were surging over the east, and everywhere evil was underpinned by evil, so that I may also mention a poetic catastrophe; some squandered resources, others engaged in violent highway robbery, others plundered in the fields, while the mutiny flourished and provided an amnesty for the crimes. (11) And so Priscus made these events known to the emperor Maurice in letters, but the emperor instructed Philippicus again to preside over the east. (3.1) Accordingly those in the army elected delegates, forty-five in number, and sent a message that Priscus should withdraw from Edessa. (2) So these came before Priscus in the city of Edessa and conveyed to him the camp's resolution. (3) And so Priscus defended himself at length and persuaded the emissaries that he had not participated in the injustice of the enterprise. And so they proclaimed to Priscus that they would quench the raging beacons of the soldieranger; but Priscus took residence at Edessa, gaping at hopes. (4) Next the ambassadors arrived at the camp, recounted Priscus' defence, and also attempted to tame the revolutionary caprices of the mutiny. (5) This lifted them to the peak of danger. For they were condemned to be stripped of office and only just averted death; for this

was the pronouncement of wrath. They were then expelled from the camp, and the affair of the ambassadors was terminated with such outrages. (6) Accordingly the leaders of the disorder marched against Priscus and, marshalling a fighting force of five thousand men, sent it to Edessa. So at that time Theodore came to Edessa, promising the arrival of Philippicus; it was for this reason that Priscus left Edessa and came to Byzantium. (7) The Romans in the camp were still enmeshed in the disorder when they learned that Philippicus was about to reach Monocarton, and they agreed on oath that they would not tolerate his command of the army. (8) The Persians, reveling in the Roman misfortunes, poured over the Roman state and attacked Constantina, and there came upon the cities a double war, which was nurtured and enriched both by their own men and by their enemies. (9) So the concourse of the Romans remained without fighting, completely unconcerned, as if it were disposing its attention on events connected with someone else's business. Germanus equipped a thousand men from the fighting force, suddenly appeared at Constantina, and liberated it from the anticipated evils. (10) With difficulty the general spurred on and incited the Roman contingents with speeches, assembled four thousand men, and ordered them to invade Persia. (11) Aristobulus (this man in fact the head of the emperor's royal house called that of Antiochus) visited the soldiers on a mission from the emperor. Partly by bribery and partly by persuasion he mitigated the savagery of the mutiny. (4.1) So after the Romans were converted to peace, they moved camp to Martyropolis and a detachment from the camp again invaded Persia. And so Maruzas, the Persian general, appeared and provided a hindrance to the Roman attack. (2) Accordingly the Romans retreated homewards across Arzanene and the Nymphius river, while Maruzas also followed behind the Romans. Accordingly, the Romans converged with the opposing barbarian near Martyropolis, and a most famous battle took place between Romans and Persians; a magnificent and glorious victory was accorded to the Romans. (3) For the general of the Persians was killed, three thousand of the Persians were taken as captive, the leaders were made prisoners of war, and only about one thousand of the barbarian contingent reached Nisibis. (4) Then, since the slaughter was great and glorious for the Romans and the booty glittering, the assembled camp dissolved its hostility against Maurice, honouring the emperor with great booty and sending to him in addition the Persian standards, which Romans call banda in their ancestral utterance. (5) Philippicus was camped at the city called Holy,⁴⁷ cowering in fear at the disorder and awaiting the reversal of the anarchy.

(6) Accordingly, the winter season inherited the war in the ever-moving, alternating change of the solstices, and the Roman camp was disbanded. When spring arrived and provided the earth with a gentle, happy aspect,⁴⁸ the customary distribution of gold was dispatched to the soldiery by the emperor. (7) The war between Romans and Persians was flourishing and restive. As for the Getae, that is to say the herds of Sclavenes, they were fiercely ravaging the regions of Thrace; the Medes encountered the Roman generals and were squandered in slaughter; (8) the elder Rome withstood the incursions of the Lombards; in Libya the forces of the Maurusii were continually attenuated and declined towards abasement and exhaustion as a result of the multitude of Roman successes. (9) And so thus they laid down their reins as well as their shields and, bowing their necks to the Romans, embraced repose, while the Phasis was not clouded by bloodshed: for its peaceful stream was for the meantime encompassed by translucent quiet as it irrigated the Colchians, since it had nowhere acquired a Median colonist. And this broadly was the disposition and arrangement of Roman affairs.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ i.e. Hierapolis (modern Membij) in Syria.

⁴⁸ Spring 589.

⁴⁹ The mention of Phasis and Colchis is explained by the narrative of the following year's campaign (iii.6.7 -7.19).

(5.1) Now at this time deeds not unworthy of mention were accomplished against Media. But come then, let us also insert these adornments into the body of the history like a gem-studded necklace, an intellectual feast for the eyes, a delight and festival, so to speak, for the ears. (2) There is a fort (Giligerdon is its name) which is constructed in the interior of Media in the region known as Bizaë not far from the city of Bendosabora. Adjacent to this fort there is also a prison; the barbarians call this Lethe.⁵⁰ (3) The place is dedicated to royal wrath, like a fertile tract to a god, and it would not be inapposite if someone were to call the fort a precinct of hatred. Here, then, are enclosed all those caught in the nets of the king's displeasure, some of them his subjects, others prisoners of war. (4) So when Justin the younger was commanding the Roman state, the king of the Persians reduced the city which is called Daras;⁵¹ so the king made his decision and the people of Daras became inhabitants of this fort. (5) In it there were also Kadasenes (the tribe is a barbarous one from Media),⁵² and in truth others too whose fate had been to suffer misadventure, and the fort embraced a common congregation of men in distress. (6) So common misfortunes brought harmony to the different races and those divided by race, custom, and speech were trained in concord by their affinity in sufferings and were united with their brother in distress. (7) Then the men of Daras gave the lead in bravery and at the first shout, using the available tools of war, they slaughtered the guards; and after the killing flared up more fiercely (for there was a multitude of soldiery garrisoning the fort), the Romans were victorious and led out of the fort as well their fellow sufferers in adversities. They returned to the Roman land after many experiences and achievements. (8) After the Romans had experienced those notable triumphs, preparation were still being made for the battle at Martyropolis, which we spoke of beforehand, when Maruzas even, the general of the Persians, chanced to fall in the engagement, the brigadiers of the two wings were captured, and the head of the general Marazas came to Byzantium.⁵³ (9) Philippicus was still being rejected by the Roman force and was deprived of command: for the masses did not accept as guardian the man who had recently achieved success by the Arzamon. For the multitude is naturally easy to influence and hard to please, and it likes the ceaseless movement of change. (10) Then Philippicus, after being among the villages of the Cilicians,⁵⁴ returned again to Syria with imperial letters and was reluctantly received by the Romans after Gregory, who at that time controlled the high-priestly throne of Antioch, had reconciled the armies to the general. (11) Just at that time Martyropolis was captured by Persians, not by the laws of war, but through the wiles of treachery, which are wont to steal what cannot be gained from opponents in battles. (12) The author of the trick was in fact Sittas; this man, after deserting to the Persians, persuaded four hundred of the barbarians to arm themselves, pretend that they were about to come over to the Romans, and appear before the city. (13) When this had taken place, Sittas persuaded the townsmen to admit the barbarians as turncoats to the Romans. Then the evil swiftly took place and the barbarians appropriated the city. (14) When Philippicus had learned this, he moved camp and encircled the city with a rampart; for this reason the king of the Persians also launched an expedition and fitted out against him Mebodes, the son of Surenas; these titles are held in

⁵⁰ The castle of Lethe, i.e. Oblivion, was a famous place of detention situated in south-west Persia, in the region of Beth Huzaye (Bizaë), near the cities of Susa and Gundishapur (Bendosabora), where Roman prisoners had been settled in the 3rd c. AD.

⁵¹ In 573 (cf. iii.11.2).

⁵² The Kadasenes, or Cadusians, inhabited the mountains along the southern shore of the Caspian Sea.

⁵³ A switch of source for the story of the prisoners at Lethe has occasioned a minor dislocation of the narrative, so that Theophylact now refers for a second time to the Roman victory at Martyropolis in 588 (cf. iii.4.2-4).

⁵⁴ Philippicus was in fact at Tarsus.

honour among Persians.⁵⁵ (15) Since Mebodes did not have a sufficient force, the Persian king also dispatched Aphraates, who was allotted the general's reins of war against Armenia. Then after battle was joined, the Romans faltered and were not equal to their objective, while the barbarian camp was victorious.⁵⁶ (16) And so an additional force reached the Persian garrison in Martyropolis, and the city was strongly defended by the Persians, while Philippicus was at once dismissed and the emperor elevated Comentiolus as general.

(6.1) Accordingly, the general came to the forecourts of Persia itself and near Nisibis (this was of old called Antioch in Mygdonia), he engaged the Persians near the place known as Sisarbanon. (2) While the battle was in progress, Comentiolus turned his back on the engagement, and after his flight had become lengthy and his escape had culminated at Theodosiopolis, Heraclius the father of Heraclius the emperor, with exceptional courage won distinction for valorous deeds, and was conspicuous through his glorious achievements with the spear.⁵⁷ (3) So the general of the Persians was killed, whom the account revealed as Aphraates, since Mebodes too had already, I think, been killed by a Roman missile in the fight against Philippicus. After the Romans had carried off the glory on account of the flight of the Persians, the corpses of the barbarians were of course plundered and became the possessions of the victor. (4) On the next day, after the Romans had attacked the Persian camp and gained control of this, they sent proof of their trophies to the emperor, golden swords, Persian diadems, gem-studded belts which the barbarians illumine with pearls, and the standards of the engagement, which the Romans in their ancestral tongue are accustomed to call banda. (5) On receiving the general's missives announcing victory, the emperor was delighted and overjoyed; he decreed that chariot-races should be held and ordered the factions to dance in triumph as is the custom for Romans when they celebrate.

(6) Since in our narratives we have terminated the story about Aphraates, come then, come and let us plant in the meadows of the history the Roman actions in Suania. For indeed artists who have depicted the larger and more conspicuous elements do not lay aside their masterpiece before they have depicted on their tablets the smallest elements of the whole as well. (7) In the eighth year of the reign of the emperor Maurice, Baram the general of the Persians was dispatched with the barbarian forces against Suania by Hormisdas the king of the Persians.⁵⁸ Since the Persian attack came as a surprise, industry replaced indolence. (8) For Suania was ravaged most severely, and the trouble could not be checked: for she lacked a general, since Colchis was leaderless and orphaned of a guardian, because the war was flourishing in the east. (9) Accordingly, after the Huns, who dwell towards the north-east and whom it is customary for Persians to call Turks, had been outfought exceedingly mightily, so to speak, by Hormisdas the king of the Parthians, Baram transferred the war to Colchis. (10) For the Persian Kingdom raised its head so high that the Huns were subjected to tribute by the Babylonians, although formerly the Huns levied from the Medes forty thousand gold coins as cause for inactivity. (11) The Turkish realm, had been made very rich by the Persians, and this particular nation had turned to great extravagance; for they hammered out gold couches, tables, goblets, thrones, pedestals,

⁵⁵ The title Mebodes (Mahbodh) denoted a high priest; Suren was the name of one of the greatest families of the Parthian and Sassanian kingdoms; Mebodes' father was the Persian satrap of Armenia who was murdered in 572 (iii.9.9).

⁵⁶ Evagrius describes this as a Roman victory with heavy Persian casualties, although he admits that some Persians achieved their objective of entering the city.

⁵⁷ The length of Comentiolus' supposed flight to Theodosiopolis (Resaina), several days' journey to the west, is incredible, and it appears that Comentiolus' cowardice has been invented, or exaggerated, so as to magnify the achievements of Heraclius.

⁵⁸ i.e. 589/90. Early in 589, Maurice had organized an invasion of north-west Persia by Caucasian tribesmen, but this was repulsed by Baram, who had just concluded a successful campaign against the Turks on the Persian north-east frontier.

horse-trappings, suits of armour, and everything which has been devised by the inebriation of wealth. (12) Subsequently when the Turks broke the treaty and demanded that they be given more than the customary money and that there be a very heavy supplement, the Persians, intolerant of the burden of the imposed tribute, elected to make war. (13) When the Persians won a splendid victory, affairs together with fortune reversed their flow, and the Turks were subjected to tribute by the Persians and were also deprived in addition of the wealth which they had previously accumulated. (14) Persian affairs flourished again and distinguished triumphs were established for Hormisdas: for they took as booty the couches, tables, and thrones of gold, horse-trappings, jars, and everything which is marshaled for the honour of tyrants.⁵⁹

(15) When Turkish affairs had proceeded according to his intention, he stretched out his sword against Suania, since the Scythian array had been debilitated by the Persians. (16) Then Baram, who had distinguished himself in the Turkish campaign occupied himself with Suania, secured a conspicuous booty which he dispatched to Babylonia, and moved camp to the river Araxes, which the barbarians call Eras. (17) When the emperor had heard of these events, he appointed Romanus as guardian of the war. So when the general arrived in Colchis, which customary parlance has renamed Lazica he took counsel with the chief priest there, set out thence, and moved camp into Albania itself. (7.1) Baram, on learning of the presence of Romans, was overjoyed: for he longed for a confrontation with Romans, since he doubtless believed that fortune smiled on him always. (2) It was for this reason that he crossed the nearby river and made a withdrawal toward Canzacon, as if he were luring the Romans into the interior of Persia. (3) So when Romanus perceived this, he became eager to turn back, making expediency rather than zeal his business. Since the troops grumbled to themselves, and were indignant and eager to move forwards, with sensible arguments the general soothed the army's swollen boldness. (4) He had also sent out fifty soldiers to track the movements of the enemies; these encountered two Persian scouts who were wearing Roman dress. They deceived their captors and dismissed the idea of danger, since they were accredited as Romans. (5) They proffered as guarantee of their story that by means of an unfamiliar track they would reveal during the night the enemy lying unguarded on their pallets. (6) And so the Romans, welcoming destruction and misled by the promise, were captured by the Persians; after being taken prisoner, they gave response to interrogation under torture, and made everything clear to Baram, how Romanus had lacked the confidence to invade the Persian land and about the smallness of the fighting force with him. (7) So when these had been captured, three of their number were saved and announced the disaster to Romanus. And so Baram forded the river and again ravaged the Roman land, while the Roman leader moved back towards the rear. (8) On realizing this, the barbarians harried the Roman contingents, but the general collected an army from Colchis, and scrutinized the attitude of the Roman contingents, whether their hearts were courageous for confrontation. (9) Then, after the Roman multitude had been encouraged for battle, the Roman general separated the bravest from the weaker, took the fighting men with him, and arranged the rejects to guard the camp. (10) Then, as the fighting force approached ten thousand men, the general disposed two thousand to advance in front of the soldiery; they encountered the advance unit of the Persian army, all of which they nobly slaughtered, since a precipice was there and rendered flight unobtainable for the barbarians. (11) After the pursuit had become manifest and progressed as far as the barbarian camp, so that even Baram was disconcerted by the chain of events, the

⁵⁹ Sebeos and the Chronicle of Seert record that there was a quarrel between Hormisdas and Baram about the division of booty from the victory over the Turks, since Hormisdas suspected that he had not been sent his proper share.

advance force of the Roman multitude retreated. (12) When this was revealed to the Roman general, although the Roman formation was eager to come to grips with the Medes, Romanus welcomed the repose from battle, out of fear of the overwhelming gathering of the barbarians. But when he was unable to curb his subordinates, who were fired by the recent successes, he equipped his forces for engagement. The barbarians also assembled. (13) So the forces were camped in the plain of Albania; a steep-sided ravine that extended from the river Araxes kept them apart from engagement. And so the troops camped on the banks of this interposed stream and exchanged words with each other. (14) On the third day a messenger came from the Persian to Romanus with a demand for battle, that either the Romans should give ground to the Persians at the crossing or the barbarians to the Roman armies. (15) Therefore the man invested with the command of the Romans summoned an assembly of his whole army, and demanded to learn from the multitude what would be the best course for them with regard to battle. When they advised the general to permit the enemy to cross, on the next day the proposal was put into effect. (16) Shortly afterwards each force prepared to deploy and, when Baram tried to steal victory, Romanus marshaled artifices against cunning. (17) On the fifth day both Romanus and Medes equipped themselves for engagement, arranging the battle in three contingents. And so the central division of the barbarian force was worsted by the opposing armament; accordingly Baram, fearing the impact of the Roman charge, brought round a force from the left wing. (18) As a result the left contingent was debilitated by the force fighting against it, great slaughter surged around the Persians, Baram's affairs came to a crisis, the whole Parthian army took to flight, a great and glorious pursuit by the Romans ensued, and Baram's luck was extinguished together with his vanity. (19) And so flight mastered the one, while valour extended the other, as it were. The Persian dead were despoiled and deprived of burial, so that there was a ready feast for the passing wild beasts. (8.1) When Hormisdas learned of this, he did not tolerate the niceties of misfortunes and abused Baram with most shameful insults, by allotting him female attire as prize for the ignominy;⁶⁰ furthermore he dismissed him from command, enacting this in royal dispatches. (2) From this began the war between Mede and Mede, for in return the general humiliated Hormisdas even, the man whom events had recognized as king of the Persians. (3) The insult was symbolized in the dispatches, and in the counter-statement that very Hormisdas was abusively recorded as the daughter rather than the son of Chosroes. (4) A short time before this, the Armenians, who are neighbours of Persia, were subverted by certain Romans and organized a conspiracy to revolt; they undertook to desert to the Medes after they had murdered the man whom the emperor had made commander in Armenia, whose name was John.⁶¹ (5) Since affairs in Armenia had lapsed into turbulence, the emperor Maurice dispatched to Armenia Domentziolus, a distinguished and loyal man who held an illustrious position among the leaders of the senate.⁶² (6) And so he provided an impediment to the onset of the revolt, and he presented the instigator of the rebellion (his name was Sumbatius) in chains to the emperor. When the emperor had correctly organized the investigation of the accusation in a court of law, lest through the failure to examine the charge the course of punishment might be administered with unjust licence, the culprits confessed their crimes. (7) Next the judges presented their sentence and declared that men who had committed such acts should be

⁶⁰ The Chronicle of Seert records that Hormisdas sent Baram a red robe and a distaff.

⁶¹ Probably John Mystacon, who had been fighting in Thrace in 587 (ii.17.8), but who was the Roman commander in Armenia in 590 (iv.15.2).

⁶² Probably the same man as the Domitziolus, curator of the domus Hormisdæ, who, John of Ephesus records, had been sent by Tiberius to resolve discontent among the Roman troops in Armenia.

dispatched from human affairs by the punishment of being thrown to wild beasts; when the theatre was full and those who had committed the crimes were about to be consumed by beasts, upon the acclamations of the people the emperor displayed clemency. (8) He was separated from the beasts and reaped unforeseen salvation, while the spectators magnified the clemency of the emperor's unexpected pity.

(9) Since time renews, restamps, and transforms all things, moulding them now this way now that, and bringing change with the revolution of its perpetually moving circuit, tyrannizing the solidity of affairs through the axis of its rotation, constantly dissatisfied and sickened with security, having nowhere to say its wandering, possessing no fixed abode through the irregular movement of its ebbs and flows,⁶³ at the present time there befell the Persian kingdom quite incalculable sufferings, which possess a narrative exposition that is not unornamented. (10) For when Baram did not terminate the hostility with Hormisdas which had suddenly sprung up quite recently, the monarch of Media, whom the history has recorded as Hormisdas, ordered a certain leading Mede to go to Baram, dismiss him straight-way from office, bind him in fetters, and present him at once in disgrace at the palace. (11) And so Sarames (for this was the name of the man sent by the king) was overpowered by Baram, was handed over as victim to one of the largest elephants, and terminated his life in a most bitter death. (12) After Hormisdas had been outfought by Baram and deposed from kingship, and the younger Chosroes, Hormisdas' son, had been ousted at the time of his proclamation and had consequently approached the Romans, that age-old Persian war which had lasted for two decades of years was concluded.

(9.1) But before we describe in greater detail the accomplishments of Baram and the events connected with the approach of the younger Chosroes, let us return the narrative to the reign of the younger Justin, turning the account aside towards the past just a little: (2) for hence we will recount the causes of this ancient Persian war; for thus the pages of the history will be adorned by the completeness of the narrative.

(3) When the emperor Justinian had migrated to the inviolate sphere, after directing the Roman scepters for thirty-nine years, the younger Justin succeeded to the control of events;⁶⁴ this man was in fact a nephew of the emperor Justinian.

(4) Accordingly in the seventh year of the reign of the younger Justin,⁶⁵ the Romans broke the treaty through the levity of the king; the blessings of peace were shattered and rent asunder; there came upon Romans and Medes war, the receptacle of evils, the inn, so to speak, for all ill fortunes, the archetypal destroyer of life, which it would not be unfitting to call a putrefaction of human affairs. (5) The fifty-year agreement which had been concluded between Romans and Persians was destroyed and cut short by the great folly of the king,⁶⁶ and hence came the evil procession of Roman misfortunes. (6) The Romans blamed the Parthians and proclaimed that they were architects of the war, alleging that the Homerites (the race is Indian and is subject to the Romans) had been incited by them to revolt; and that next, when those people had not succumbed to these overtures, they had suffered irreparably from attacks by the Persians, since the peace between the Persians and the Roman state had been dissolved.⁶⁷ (7) As an additional

⁶³ This chapter marks the transition from the account of Baram's revolt to the flash-back to the early history of the war in iii.9-18.

⁶⁴ i.e. 565

⁶⁵ i.e. 571/2.

⁶⁶ This treaty was made in winter 561/2.

⁶⁷ The Homerites, who lived in the south-west of the Arabian peninsula, had been the object of Roman diplomatic activity earlier in the 6th c. They had been subject to the Axumites, who lived in Ethiopia and were Roman allies, but subsequently (c. 565-75) a Persian-supported pretender to the Homerite throne was installed and thereafter a Persian governor imposed.

cause of grievance they alleged that, on the occasion of the very first Turkish embassy to the Romans, the Persians had tried to corrupt the Alans by bribes, so that the ambassadors should be slaughtered as they passed through them and their passage be allotted impediment.⁶⁸ (8) The Romans, eager for a pretext, embraced warfare and from minor ephemeral beginnings they devised for themselves great processions of troubles: for bellicosity procured for them no profit. (9) The Medes, in proclaiming that the Romans were originators of the war, adduced the following causes, that the Romans had received the Armenians (who were in fact in the category of subjects to the Persians), after they had progressed to revolt, and slaughtered Surenas, whom the Persian king had made the regional commander of the Armenian state;⁶⁹ (10) furthermore, in addition to this, the Roman unwillingness to pay in accordance with custom the annual payment of 500 pounds of gold, which the emperor Justinian had conceded in the agreement, as if they thought it unworthy to be tributaries under the Persian king.⁷⁰ (11) But this was not the case, but the payments were made for the defence of the fortresses which were garrisoned for their joint preservation, so as to prevent the influx of the irresistible might of the innumerable neighbouring nations and the destruction of each kingdom.⁷¹

(10. 1) So when the peace had been dissipated and the treaties between Romans and Persians overturned, Justin the emperor of the Romans dispatched to the east as general Marcian, a distinguished man who was on the register of the patricians, and who was in fact not unrelated to the royal family. (2) Then Marcian crossed the Euphrates and came to Osrhoene when summer had already passed its youth and prime. Since the barbarians had no thought of conflict, Marcian equipped three thousand of the soldiery and dispatched them against the district whose name was Arzanene. (3) Then the force invaded and, since the attack came as a surprise to the Medes, the Persian empire suffered gravely during that time: for it was ravaged and plundered and a not inconsiderable booty was carried off.

(4) In the following year of the reign of the emperor Justin,⁷² Marcian collected his forces and made his advance from Daras, the barbarians encamped by Nisibis, the Romans and Persians came to grips near a place in Persia which is known as Sargathon, the Medes faltered, and the Romans won the fight. (5) For this reason they besieged and tried to capture Thebothon, which is a Persian fort; then, after they had warred against the fort for many days and affairs had not turned out according to their objective, they retired to the city of Daras.⁷³ Next they invaded enemy territory again and decided to invest Mygdonian Nisibis, since these were their orders from the emperor. (6) But the king of the Persians, Chosroes the elder, set out from Babylon with a Median army, crossed the Tigris, entered the desert region, and moved camp across it, so

⁶⁸ Menander records that Sarodius, the leader of the Caucasian tribe of the Alans, had warned the Roman ambassador Zemarchus, who was returning from an embassy to the Turks, that the Persians intended to ambush him on his journey through the land of the Mindimians. The Romans and Turks had probably already agreed to launch a concerted attack on Persia, and the possibility of such joint action would have been enough to persuade the Persians to try to interfere with the embassy.

⁶⁹ The Armenians' revolt against Persia and their appeal to Justin II are described by John of Ephesus, Evagrius, and Menander. The Armenians had been negotiating with Justin since 569/70, but were driven into open rebellion when the Persian satrap, Cihor-Wsnasp, a member of the Suren family, attempted to introduce Zoroastrian practices; he was murdered in Feb. 572.

⁷⁰ Payment for the first seven years had been made in advance by Justinian in 561/2, and for the next three by Justin II in 569. Menander records that Sebochthes was dispatched to Constantinople in 572 to request the next payment.

⁷¹ The fortresses were intended to control movement across the Caucasus through the Caspian Gates. During the 5th c. and intermittently in the 6th, the Romans had contributed to the cost of the Persian defence of these forts in recognition of the fact that both empires benefited from the maintenance of this barrier.

⁷² i.e. 573.

⁷³ These initial man űuvres in the 573 campaign suggest that the Romans were trying to isolate Nisibis, first defeating the Persians at Sargathon, 8 miles west of the city, and then attacking Thebothon, 30 miles south-east of Nisibis on the route to Singara. Marcian abandoned the siege of Thebothon after ten days and returned to Dara to celebrate Easter.

that his march would not be observed by the Romans; he came near Abbaron, a place in Persia which is five days' journey distant from the Roman city of Circesium. (7) The man named as Adormaanēs he dispatched as general across the river Euphrates to ravage Roman territory, and dispatched with him six thousand of the soldiery, while the Persian king himself marched along the river Aboras and executed a surprise attack on the Romans besieging Nisibis.⁷⁴

(8) And so Adormaanēs came near to Circesium, crossed the river Euphrates, and ravaged the Roman land; since the Persian presence was not opposed by any stratagem to curtail the progress of the barbarians' movements, Adormaanēs came to the vicinity of Antioch without effort, destroyed the magnificent buildings outside the city, since the opportunity was favourable, and came to Koile Syria. (9) He pitched camp near Apamea; and after the men of the city had sent an embassy with splendid gifts and agreed a ransom, the barbarian was deflected only to the extent of making a promise, but they were cheated and beguiled by barbarian tricks. On the third day Adormaanēs enslaved the city; subsequently he also consigned it to the flames and returned to his own country.⁷⁵

(11.1) Since the overtures of the war had been inauspicious for the Romans, the Roman monarch was thoroughly dismayed and disconcerted at the barbarian successes. Angered by the misfortunes which encompassed him because of bad counsel, he sent Acacius, the son of Archelaus, to Nisibis after dismissing Marcian from his command.⁷⁶ (2) And so Marcian gave way to the royal decree and departed from Nisibis; when the Romans had reached Mardes, the Persian king came to Daras like a hurricane and assailed the township for six months, circumscribing the city with mounds and ramparts. After diverting the town's water supply, constructing towers to oppose towers, and bringing up siege engines, he subdued the city, although it was exceedingly strong.⁷⁷ (3) When the emperor Justin heard of this, he was stricken by the impact of the disaster; shortly afterwards he was also afflicted by a sickness of derangement and, fearing the additional generation of subsequent troubles, he arranged with the Persians an armistice for the present year.⁷⁸ (4) But when the sickness attacked him exceedingly spiritedly, so to speak, he decorated Tiberius with adoption, made him partner in the empire, and proclaimed him Caesar. This man was in fact the commander of the emperor's bodyguards and shield-bearers, whom it is customary for Romans in normal parlance to call comes excubitorum. (5) But I will also present the emperor's advice which he gave in a public speech to Tiberius Caesar, on the occasion of the proclamation, not beautifying the ugliness of the diction, nor making any change to the inelegance of the expression; (6) but I will spread out nakedly, as it were, in my narrative the exposition of his words, so that the veracity of what follows may appear from the simplicity and authenticity of the nature of the diction. (7) Then, after the senate

⁷⁴ Chosroes would have crossed Tigris at Ctesiphon, marched to Perozshapur (also known as Abbaron or Ambar) on the Euphrates, and then up the Euphrates as far as its confluence with the Aboras (Khabour), where Circesium was situated (about 200 miles from Abbaron). At this point Adormaanēs set off across the Euphrates, while Chosroes continued up the Aboras and across the desert regions of Beth Arabaye to reach Nisibis by surprise.

⁷⁵ Adormaanēs' attack against the prosperous cities of the Orontes valley coincided with Chosroes' dispersal of the Roman army at Nisibis and his subsequent siege of Dara (iii.11.2), which inevitably prevented the Romans from halting Adormaanēs' depredations.

⁷⁶ The order of Theophylact's narrative wrongly suggests that Marcian was replaced because of the failure to oppose Adormaanēs, whereas it was in fact because of his failure to capture Thebothon and to besiege Nisibis with sufficient energy to satisfy the impatient Justin. According to Theopanes Byzantinus, Marcian was replaced by Theodore Tzirus; if this is true, Acacius may have been sent to Nisibis to announce the change of commander.

⁷⁷ The Romans in fact fled in panic from Nisibis, probably because they suddenly heard of Chosroes' surprise approach. The siege of Dara, which ended in Dec. 573, is narrated most fully by John of Ephesus.

⁷⁸ Menander records that the truce was arranged by the doctor Zacharias, a personal emissary of the empress Sophia. The truce began in spring 574.

had come together and the priestly hierarchy assembled along with their leader, the man who steered the rudder of the church,⁷⁹ the emperor, as if he had been standing on a rostrum, presented the following speech to Tiberius (8) ‘Behold, God magnifies you; God grants you this apparel, not I; honour him, that you may also be honoured by him. Honour your mother, who was once your queen;⁸⁰ you know that you were first her slave, but are now her son. (9) Do not delight in bloodshed; do not be party to murders; do not repay evil with evil; do not resemble me in hatred, for I have collected payment as a mortal (for indeed I was fallible), and I have been paid in accordance with my sins. But I will plead my case at the tribunal of Christ against those who have done this to me. (10) Do not let this apparel incite you as it did me. Attend thus to all men as you do to yourself. Recognize what you were and what you are now. Avoid arrogance and you will not go wrong. You know what I was, what I became, and what I am. All these are your children as well as your slaves. You know that I have honoured you above my own kin. You behold these men here, and you behold all those in the state. (11) Pay attention to your army; do not entertain informers. Do not let men say to you that your predecessor behaved thus; for I say this from what I have suffered. Let those who have possessions enjoy them, but give to those who have not.’ (12) After the Patriarch had made the prayer, and everyone had uttered the Amen, and the Caesar had fallen at the emperor's feet, the emperor said to him: (13) ‘If you are willing, I am; If you are unwilling, I am not; may God who made the heaven and the earth himself implant in your heart all that I have forgotten to say to you.’ This was spoken on the seventh of December, on the sixth day, in the ninth indiction.⁸¹

(12.1) When the emperor had terminated his discourse, the applause welled up from the audience and he received acclamations like the violent effusion of a shower. For, in truth, the election provided for the Caesar was not undistinguished. (2) And so the Caesar, fulfilling the procedure of an imperial proclamation, inscribed letters and dispatched these to the king of Persia. (3) At the start of spring, he sent ambassadors and renounced the war, since he was eager for a glorious achievement: for his request was for a truce, since nothing is more precious than peace, at least to men of intelligence who remember their mortal lot and their very brief passage in life. (4) He also recruited multitudes of soldiers and rendered the recruits' hearts eager for danger through a flowing distribution of gold, purchasing from them enthusiasm for death by respect for payment. (5) Then the Caesar's ambition for magnanimity quenched the outrage of the barbarians and the dangers were bridled, while the afflictions ceased to burn, the disasters which had flooded upon the cities were checked, and with a sudden providence it was recognized that evil was absent. (6) In this particular year Justinian, who was the son of Germanus and was numbered among the highest officials, was appointed general.⁸² (7) And so the general attentively corrected the former lack of military training in the armies, moulding the unformed and transforming the undisciplined into good order. (8) But the emperor was still gathering forces and collecting allies from the nations, importing with great outlay of money irresistible additions to the armament. For the influence of money when it is sensibly managed can effect a return to the better even for those who have previously failed. (9) But when the period of the truce had been spent and the limit of the armistice between Romans and Persians had been

⁷⁹ The Patriarch of Constantinople, John Scholasticus (565-77).

⁸⁰ i.e. the empress Sophia.

⁸¹ i.e. Friday (the sixth day of the week), 7 Dec. 574 (which was in fact the eighth indiction). Theophylact must have copied this date, which is the only precise date in the whole History, from the source (probably a chronicle) which provided him with the text of Justin's speech.

⁸² Theophylact now returns to John of Epiphania for information. This switch of sources may explain the double reference to Tiberius' recruitment (iii.12.4-5, 8).

extinguished, the Persians came near to Daras,⁸³ since this was the objective of Tamchosro, a high dignitary among the Persians who was guiding the reins of generalship. The Romans also encamped close beside it. (10) Neither force initiated the engagement, and after both sides had spent a long time staring at each other, the soldiery sought a negotiated agreement. Then a treaty was made on the terms that on the eastern front the war should keep peace and practise inaction for three years, but that in Armenia the conflict should be free from restraint.⁸⁴ (11) Therefore the Roman general marched past the city of Amida and camped in the districts of Armenia, while the Persian king also followed and crossed the Euphrates with a great multitude.⁸⁵ (12) When the Romans heard that the Persian king was conducting the campaign in person, the Romans' spirits failed them, and not without due cause: for the royal presence had granted the Persians considerable success in their earlier actions and had given the Romans the weaker weighting. It was for this reason that the Roman general climbed onto a mound, gathered the army round about on the plain, and began with these words:

(13. 1) 'The day now present, Romans, will be the beginning of great benefits for you, if you are persuaded by my words. Arm you spirits, I say, before your body; let your hearts do battle before your hands. Let each brave danger for another, and you are saved. (2) Philosophers (for I call you philosophers or soldiers, since you alone have death as your profession), demonstrate to the barbarian that your zeal is immortal. (3) Let your spirits be undaunted. Resolve to strike or be struck, receiving the opponents' missiles on your body as if it were another's. Let the falling enemy stand as witnesses to your courage; let their dead also narrate your triumphs. (4) Comrades - you are my comrades both in toils and tumults because of the war - the engagement is established as the test of courage and cowardice, and is the arbiter of souls: for this day will either convict us of effeminate cowardice, or with garlands and glorious triumphs will proclaim our manly bravery. (5) Do not, by turning your backs on the barbarians, let your soul be at all affected by love of body. Death, this sweet thing which we daily assay, is a kind of sleep, a sleep that is longer than this normal sleep, but is very brief in comparison with the day that is to come. (6) Men, be ashamed of dishonour combined with salvation: this is an undying death, and a coward's tomb never conceals the man who has been allotted disgrace. (7) Let not the Persian king disconcert you heroes because of his ownership of impotent hordes, his boasting, his raised eyebrows his stiff-necked arrogance, the conceit that he has acquired as far as words are concerned. Is not the nation haughty and pompous, procuring its power by bombastic grandiloquence? (8) Forget the former misfortunes by recalling the supplements of allied forces; forget the past failure which was brought forth by the general's folly, with the disorder of those under his command acting as an evil midwife. (9) Nothing is terrible for the brave; for these the steel is fodder, as it were, while the pains of blows are a stimulant that kindles them to grasp greater dangers. Therefore guard your backs undisclosed to the enemy; show that they are not initiated to your hinder parts. (10) I know that wounds are founts of triumphs. Flight leads to slavery, and not salvation: for a cowardly beginning cannot preserve a promise of safety. Cast off your bodies before your breastplates, life before shields. Fight with all your limbs, let there

⁸³ i.e. spring 575.

⁸⁴ Menander records the negotiations which led up to this truce, which was in fact arranged by ambassadors dispatched by Tiberius. When the Romans refused to accept some of the Persian conditions, Tamchosro was sent to ravage Roman territory between Dara and Constantina until the agreement was finalized. The three-year treaty was probably concluded in early summer 575.

⁸⁵ These events in fact occurred in the following year, 576, as can be deduced from Menander, since, following the conclusion of this treaty, there was time for a further embassy from Tiberius to Chosroes before the start of the Persian invasion, which arrived in Armenia in the spring.

be no limb that does not share the perils. (11) Fortify your line with interlocked weapons, barricade your ranks by the integration of cavalry, fence yourselves round in a harmonious stance, like a building of close-fitting stones. Do not let spears leap from your grasp, strike without being deprived of your weapons. (12) 'The Persians do not have an immortal nature; Median luck is not immovable; barbarian hands are not tireless; the Parthians do not have an advantage in limbs or possess double souls; their bodies are not adamantine. Even Persians are initiated into the mysteries of death. In this respect war is just, for it does not marshal immortals against mortals. (13) The Romans have hired Justice as an ally, since they have once again sought peace; the Medes have marshaled Justice in opposition to themselves, since they abhor peace virtually always and honour belligerence like an auspicious god. (14) Ours is not a false religion, nor have we set up spurious gods as leaders; we do not have a god who is scourged, since we do not elect a horse for worship; (15) we do not do obeisance to a god that turns to ashes, who is now ablaze but is soon not even visible; smoke and fuel do not constitute religion, but their fading proves their falsehood. (16) The barbarian exults in cheerful circumstances, but success is unaccustomed to remain stable when it ascends unjust altars. Injustice is often successful, but is also turned towards destruction. Accordingly, advance to war as befits your appellation, lest we damage our names as well as our affairs. (17) Let us not betray our allied shields, but let us embrace these like beloved girls in their prime, and fight on their behalf as if these were fatherlands which accompany our travels. Be Spartans in combat. Let each man be a Cynegeirus, even though he has not boarded ship. Nothing is more effeminate than flight, nothing is more abominable than capture. Therefore it is fitting either to die or to shape hopes of victory. (18) Contemplate the newly-sown recruitments of the Caesar. No reject has been implanted among the companies, and the array is undefiled: for thus was the emperor's ambition contented. (19) 'Then I, the orator, will be the first to take war in hand, and in my disdain at avoiding suffering I will eagerly engage the hands of all for suffering. The impulse of my words cuts a way forward, and the accomplishment is precursor of contemplation: for an inspired spirit can range itself even against the laws of nature. (20) Today angels are recruiting you and are recording the souls of the dead, providing for them not a corresponding recompense, but one that infinitely exceeds in the weight of the gift. (21) Let no one with a pleasure-loving soul wield a spear, let no one who loves the rites of luxury take part in battle, let no one who takes great pride in possessions share the undertaking: the battleground demands lovers of dangers. Come then, let us put an end to words with deeds, and let us divert contemplation towards engagement.'

(14.1) Then, after such words had re-echoed among the forces, the ranks were excited for engagement, glad to endure anything and eager to run risks for valour: for they had disposed their hearts in accordance with the general's exhortations. (2) When the Medes had heard of the valorous resolve of the Romans, they ordered themselves for battle; the horses were adorned with cheek-guards and breastplates, while the soldiery also armed themselves; they mounted their horses and with haughty march slowly advanced in close-packed formation against the Romans. (3) Then the Romans also formed up and raised their standards. Next the trumpets sounded forth, the dust was whirled aloft; the clamour poured forth and, inundating the place, surging with the din of whinnying, and eddying with the clashing of weapons, it naturally transformed every utterance to indistinctness. (4) And so the barbarians extended the length of their line, intending thereby to create an impression of a countless multitude on the forces contending in opposition. (5) But the Romans made a deep formation whose density gave it weight, so that the array appeared to be virtually solid and to stand steel-resistant, riveted and counterforged, like immovable statues which seemed only in posture to grasp at war. The

barbarians were dismayed at the sight, so that thereafter the Median spirits were seduced by the spectacle towards the weaker moves of cowardice. (6) And so the Babylonians fired arrows against the Roman companies, so that the sun's rays were hidden by the discharge of missiles, and on account of the furious outpouring of shafts a winged roof, improvised by the flight of darts, appeared to be spread in the air above their heads. (7) The Romans engaged in hand-to-hand combat, resisting the barbarians with spears and swords, and cutting short the assault of missiles' onslaught; hence they rendered the opponents devoid of stratagems and took the lead in warfare. (8) Accordingly, a most memorable battle between Romans and Parthians occurred, the Persian disposition was broken because their ranks were not organized in depth, the rearguard of the Babylonian armament was at a loss, and there was no counter-resistance; next, when the opposing force pressed heavily, the barbarians faced destruction and veered away in flight. (9) And the Persians were initiated into disappointed expectations, while they learned by the example not to take pride in their misdeeds. (10) And so the Babylonians were defeated and fled as fast as they could, while the Romans held the initiative and gave the Parthians an experience of evils. Furthermore, in addition to this they also looted the Persian camp, pillaged the king's tent, and carried off as glorious booty all their equipment. They captured the elephants and dispatched them to the Caesar along with the Persian spoils. (11) When the king of the Persians had been defeated and made his retreat homewards in shame, on coming on Melitene he burnt the beauty of the city, since he found that it was undefended and luxuriating in complete quiet. After crossing the Euphrates and withdrawing through Arzanene, he inscribed the disgrace of the failure in a law: for he decreed that in future it did not befit the Persian king to engage in expeditions to war.⁸⁶

(15.1) And so when the king of the Persians had thus paraded his misfortune in the law, he was at a loss as to what exactly he should do. But the Romans exploited the Persian failures and marched towards the interior of Babylonia, raved and pillaged everything in their path, and what they encountered became a victim of destruction. (2) Then they became marines on the Hyrcanian sea and, after great achievements and the infliction of misfortunes on the Parthians, they did not return to their own territory: for the winter season intervened on their actions and disaster waxed fat in Persia. With the arrival of spring the Romans retired, carrying off success too as traveling companion.⁸⁷ (3) And so, since the Medes could not endure the events, in their vexation they brazenly insulted their own king, for the attrition of the war and the prospect of future hardship distressed them exceedingly. (4) For, unlike Romans going on campaign, Persians do not receive payment from the treasury, not even when they are assembled in their villages and fields; but the customary distributions from the king constitute a law of self-sufficiency for them, they administer these provisions to obtain a subsistence, and hence are forced to support themselves together with their animals until such time as they invade a foreign land. (5) Therefore the king of the Persians, fearing the mutinies in his army, resolved to participate in discussions about peace with Tiberius the Caesar; on learning this, the Caesar

⁸⁶ John of Ephesus provides the best account of Chosroes' invasion of Armenia. He does not mention a Roman victory in pitched battle, an omission that would be surprising if there had really been such a triumph as Theophylact describes, and instead he records that the two armies faced each other without fighting, immediately after the Persians had sacked Melitene; thereafter the Persians attempted to flee across the Euphrates by night, but their retreat was disorganized by the Romans and many Persians were drowned; the royal Persian baggage had been captured much earlier in the campaign, when the Romans almost trapped Chosroes in the Armenian mountains. John's account for these events is more detailed and plausible than Theophylact's.

⁸⁷ The Roman expedition, which had ravaged through Azerbaijan as far as the Caspian (Hyrcanian) Sea, only returned to Roman territory in 577.

decided to enter into negotiations. (6) So he dispatched men empowered to settle the discussions concerning a concordat, having appointed as ambassadors John and Peter, who belonged to the highest rank of the senate (they were in fact patricians), and Theodore who was honoured and respected among Romans in his office as magister.⁸⁸ (7) And furthermore Chosroes dispatched Sarnachorganes, a man highly regarded in the Persian state on account of his rank, together with other most notable men, delivering through them respite to the war. (8) At that time then, a fierce battle was joined between Romans and Parthians for Armenia, with Tamchosro commanding the Babylonian force and Justinian leading the Roman throng; the Romans fell short of their former glory.⁸⁹ (9) It was for this reason that the Medes rejected the peace-treaty and their love of war was rekindled again, since they were incapable of moderation because of their recent successes. (10) And so the ambassadors, after accomplishing their objective to the extent of discussions, went homewards, abandoning the embassy bereft of peace. When events had turned out thus, Tiberius the Caesar appointed as his general Maurice, who was at that very time leader of the emperor's bodyguards, and dispatched him to the provinces of Armenia.⁹⁰ (11) While the treaty which had come into being between Romans and Medes in the east still had an abundance of time, the barbarians general Sarnachorganes contravened the treaty and rapidly sent men against Constantina and Theodosiopolis.⁹¹ (12) And so the general of the Chaldaeans took his force and ravaged the districts of Constantina and Theodosiopolis, while Tamchosro, who was invested with the command of the Persian armies in Armenia, on realizing that the assembled Roman forces now perhaps greatly outnumbered his own men, left Armenia, marched past the Roman fort of Citharizon, and, on coming near Amida, attacked the countryside and villages; next he returned home by way of Arzanene. (13) The Roman general Maurice, seeing that the barbarians had left Armenia and were engaged in ravaging on the eastern front, set out with his whole army and arrived in the land of the Persians; although his body was stricken by a fierce fever, he persisted in his labours in spite of his illness. (14) So the Romans invaded Arzanene and, since there was no resistance, they reduced the very strong fort whose name was Aphumon, razed some other forts, and administered great slaughter to the Persian state. (15) They took prisoner a total of one hundred thousand of the Persians, and the men of the army, by granting a third portion to Maurice the Roman general, made the wages of war not incurable. And so the general signified the presence of the captives to the Caesar, but the Caesar distributed the booty on Cyprus.

(16.1) Accordingly, after Arzanene had thus suffered harm from the Roman spear, the general changed course and summarily invaded the lands of Arabia situated not far from Nisibis.⁹² (2) Next, after laying waste as far as the river Tigris, he dispatched Curs and Romanus across to the other bank to ravage the entire enemy territory; but, after he himself had laid waste the fort of Singara, since the winter season was peeping in, he collected his forces and arrived among the Romans. (3) In this particular year Justin, the emperor of the Romans, withered away from disease, after encountering great punishments for his violent deeds.⁹³ (4) So when he was on the point of departing the present life, he co-opted as lord of the monarchy the emperor Tiberius, a

⁸⁸ The negotiations began in winter 576/7 and lasted for more than a year.

⁸⁹ During the remainder of 577 the Persians prolonged the peace negotiations in order to delay Roman preparations for the resumption of hostilities at the end of the three-year truce in spring 578.

⁹⁰ Maurice, who had succeeded Tiberius as comes excubitorum, was appointed supreme commander of the eastern armies during the winter of 577/8, after the death of the general Justinian had led to quarrelling between his subordinate commanders.

⁹¹ Menander records that the raid began forty days before the end of the truce, i.e. in spring 578.

⁹² i.e. Beth Arabaye

⁹³ Justin died on 4 Oct. 578.



man who was both kind and humane, superior to financial gain and without regard for money, whose sole idea of happiness was that his subjects should flourish and abound in great wealth, and who considered the common bliss of mankind as an excellent and inviolate treasury. (5) This man hated the pomp of tyranny and, in his eagerness for the affection of his fellow men, he preferred his subjects to rule jointly with him rather than that his charges should be tyrannically enslaved, wishing to be called father rather than master by his subjects. (6) Since he steered the ship of power like an honest trader, it was natural that along with events, the war also was granted a turn for the better. (7) At the start of spring, Chosroes, the king of the Persians, was ensnared by disease and terminated this present life, after appointing as successor his son Hormisdas,⁹⁴ a man who in wickedness had overshot the impious habits of his ancestors. (8) For he was a violent man, a most insatiate lover of gain, who gave no place to justice; he rejoiced in deceit and wallowed in falsehood, clinging to hostilities rather than peace. (9) He was most hostile towards his subjects, the most powerful of whom he subjected to eternal fetters and chains; others he cut apart with the sword, while some he consigned to the bowels of the Tigris, and the constituted an unclothed tomb for those consigned to death by the king (for it was not in fact kept hidden). (10) For it is said that Hormisdas had received from the magi a prophecy that he would discard power after being overthrown by his subjects, and that he would shamefully lay down the rudders of authority and kingship alike. (11) Those who believe these things are foolish in their impiety: for demons frequently make marvelous predictions which are probably not destined to come to pass in events, so that through terror at the prophecy of these things the wishes of the impious powers who provide the oracles may in fact somehow reach fulfillment by a most villainous stratagem of wickedness. (12) For hence Hormisdas inflicted the sword even on the common people themselves and, by destroying many thousands of the commons in his fear of the future, he stored up for himself among his subjects implacable enmity. (13) He also reduced military pay by a tenth, and compelled the army to face great dangers, so that through the destruction of the Babylonian force his royal throne might remain established free from revolt.⁹⁵

(17.1) So Hormisdas donned the tyrants' diadem; in his bragging and arrogance he cut short normal procedure, as though he did not deign to send the ratifications of his proclamation to the emperor Tiberius. (2) And so, the emperor proclaimed to Hormisdas an end to the war, asking for peace to be made on equal terms for both sides. But he insulted the embassy and demanded that the Romans should openly pay tribute, that the Armenians and Iberians should be among his subjects, the Romans making this provision for him, and that the Caesar should make no further requests for Daras, even though his father Chosroes had been willing to respond to discussions with the Caesar on equal terms, and had not rejected the restoration of Daras to the realm of the Romans.⁹⁶ (3) When Hormisdas' arrogance was made plain to the emperor Tiberius and summer had again arrived, Maurice collected his force and reached Persia, after sending Romanus, Theodoric, and furthermore Martin to the far side of the Tigris to lay waste the interior of Media. (4) And so they invaded with the mass of the army, and pillaged the fertile and most fruitful areas of the Persians; after spending the whole of the summer season in the slaughter of Persians, they ravaged Media, and wrought extensive destruction.⁹⁷ (5) With the arrival of winter, the

⁹⁴ Chosroes I died in Feb. or Mar. 579.

⁹⁵ The reduction in military pay presumably refers to a cut in the 'customary distributions' mentioned at iii.15.4.

⁹⁶ These lengthy negotiations probably dragged on throughout 579. Theophylact's account of the campaign of Tiberius' reign omits one year, and he probably failed to realize the slowness of this diplomacy.

⁹⁷ This campaign lasted throughout the summer of 580.

Roman leader came to Caesarea in Cappadocia, but as the summer came round again,⁹⁸ he arrived in the east with the whole Roman army at the city of Circesium. (6) Next, he subsequently hastened through the desert of Arabia to reach the land of Babylonia and then to steal a victory by the shrewdness of the enterprise. (7) In this he was accompanied by the leader of the nomadic barbarians (his name was Alamundarus) who, they say, revealed the Roman attack to the Persian king: for the Saracen tribe is known to be most unreliable and fickle, their mind is not steadfast, and their judgment is not firmly grounded in prudence.⁹⁹ (8) Therefore, as a result of this, the king of the Persians transplanted the war to the city of Callinicum, after electing Adormaanes as a not untalented custodian of the expedition.¹⁰⁰ (9) Then, after Alamundarus had like a drone destroyed the beehives, or in other words had ruined Maurice's enterprise, the manœuvres of the expedition against the Medes became unprofitable for the Romans: for they returned to quench the disasters at home. (10) Next the general consigned to burning flames the grain ships which had accompanied him down the river Euphrates; he himself, with the pick of the army, came with all speed to the city of Callinicum. (11) When the Parthian contingents came to grips, the Roman spear won supremacy; then flight came upon the Persians and their insolence received a check.¹⁰¹ (18.1) In the following year Tamchosro, the general of the Medes, assembled large Persian forces and came near Constantina. There was indeed knit in this year a great and most famous battle between Romans and Parthians.¹⁰² (2) And so the general of the Medians, who was in the forefront of the contest, lost his life by the spear, the barbarians faltered, and the Romans were victorious. The barbarians were persuaded to turn away to their own territory, appropriating ignominy as well as suffering. (3) Therefore the general, after fortifying the key strongholds, returned to Byzantium. When the common end befell the emperor Tiberius, the general assumed the royal and lawful power of the Roman realm, like a noble and glorious reward for success, and divested himself of the secondary lot.¹⁰³ (4) Now I have recorded in the earlier passages the subsequent actions of Romans and Persians. Therefore I must return to the continuity of the narrative, wheeling around the history, which is perhaps running a little off course, towards its subsequent and easily perceptible goal, from which in fact we briefly digressed after presenting in public the attendant events connected with Baram at that time. (5) But first let Baram's fatherland and lineage, the stages of his fortune, and his progressive achievements be described in a few words, so that the historical recital may be in all respects harmonious and comprehensive. (6) I heard a certain Babylonian, a sacred official who had gained very great experience in the composition of royal epistles,¹⁰⁴ say that Baram originated from the region whose name is Rhazakene, but that this Persian tyrant, who had initiated the overthrow of the tyrant Hormisdas, belonged to the house of Mirrames.¹⁰⁵ (7) For seven peoples among the Medes, allocated by ancient law, perform the sagacious and most honoured of their actions; and he stated that procedures could not be otherwise; (8) and they say that the people entitled Arsacid hold the kingship and these place the diadem on the king, another is in charge of the military disposition, another is invested with the cares of state, (9) another resolves the difference of those who have some dispute and need an arbitrator, the fifth

⁹⁸ i.e. 581.

⁹⁹ Maurice's intention was to sack Ctesiphon by a surprise march down the Euphrates.

¹⁰⁰ The Persians advanced to Callinicum on the Euphrates in order to cut the line of Maurice's retreat.

¹⁰¹ According to John of Ephesus, there was no battle and the Persians retreated with impunity.

¹⁰² In June 582; John of Ephesus describes the battle (his date is wrong by one year).

¹⁰³ In Aug. 582.

¹⁰⁴ This rare mention by Theophylact of an oral source may refer to a Persian ambassador to Constantinople during Heraclius' reign.

¹⁰⁵ Baram's family came from Rai (i.e. Rhazakene), near modern Tehran.

commands the cavalry, the next levies taxes on the subjects and is overseer of the royal treasuries, the seventh is appointed custodian of arms and military uniform; Darius the son of Hydaspes inscribed this very law in the royal precincts. (10) They say that Baram, who came from the house of Mirrames and the Arsacid people, was formerly enrolled among the bodyguards of the king, that shortly afterwards, as commander of a unit of soldiers, he joined in campaign with Chosroes the son of Kabadas, when the Babylonians reduced Daras while Justin the younger possessed charge of the Roman scepter. (11) And so Baram, together with the Persian king Chosroes the elder, invaded as far as Armenia itself, distinguished himself in the campaign, and soon after was even appointed general of the Persian company. (12) When fortune had thus gradually raised him up, so that he was even proclaimed *darigbedum* of the royal hearth (whom Romans indeed name *curopalates*), he continued into extreme folly: he was inflated greatly and uncontrollably as a result of his victories against the Turks, and felt the pangs of the embryo of tyranny. (13) And so like a spark in the ashes he concealed the motive for his grievance from Hormisdas the king, but whipped up the multitude by deceitfully contriving to make it appear indeed that the Persian king was angry against his army and had in addition even threatened death on the Babylonian soldiers because of their misfortunes in the engagement in Suania. (14) He also produced forged edicts of Hormisdas which curtailed the customary distributions to the contingents from the royal insubordination.

Book Four: iv.1.1-iv.16.28

(1.1) When the mutiny had been secured by oaths and the revolt founded upon agreements, Baram collected allies and the civil war among the Persians gained strength. The hatred for Hormisdas recruited for Baram an additional force of supporters; (2) for the Persians encamped at Nisibis, who had quite recently been defeated by the Romans in pitched battle,¹⁰⁶ were diverted towards revolt on hearing the unexpected news concerning Baram, and eagerly pursued enterprises akin to his. (3) When this was announced to Baram, he sent ambassadors to Nisibis from his own number, and through his seductive promises intestine strife was concocted more fiercely among the Medes. (4) And so they received the ambassadors and went towards the city of Nisibis, but when they were near the city gate they encountered Chubriadanes, who was a respected holder of office among the Persians and who had been appointed by Hormisdas as overseer of the conduct of the war. (5) They hurled this wretch from his horse, lopped off his extremities, cut his head from his neck vertebrae, and sent to Hormisdas these tokens of an irreconcilable revolt; after putting the man to cruel death, they entered the city and turned to pillaging his property. (6) At Nisibis as well then, strict oaths were exchanged that Hormisdas should be deposed and be created a commoner instead of king. So, when they had proceeded thus far in their actions, Persians went on embassies to Persians and leaders were sent to Baram, who was waiting at the crossing of the Zab.¹⁰⁷ (7) This river, whose course is small as it gushes forth from the towering mountains where it rises in the north, subsequently, as it is borne southwards and is watered by many torrents, becomes navigable and joins the Tigris. (8) Baram received the messengers and made a great show for them with a splendid welcome; he ordered that there should be patrols by armed troops and that all paths be secured so that Hormisdas

¹⁰⁶ Comentiolus' victory at Sisarbanon (iii.6.1).

¹⁰⁷ i.e. the Greater Zab; the river is normally difficult to cross, hence the strategic importance in the subsequent narrative of the crossing point, which was probably that on the road from Mosul to Arbela/Erbil.



should not even receive news of the misfortunes. (9) The king raged and glared furiously, bellowing and gnashing his teeth; since he could not find a passage for his reconnaissance, he was distraught with despair like those possessed.

(2.1) During this time the Roman general Comentiolus captured the fortress of Akbas and broke camp for winter,¹⁰⁸ while Baram gradually advanced against the territory of Media.¹⁰⁹ (2) But Hormisdas collected forces from the nearby districts and appointed the Persian Pherochanes as commander of the campaign; in the Roman tongue his name signifies the title of magister. (3) And so Pherochanes asked the king that Zadespras, whom Hormisdas had bound and put away in prison, should be released from his chains to join him on the campaign. (4) This man had in fact been condemned to prison by the Persian king because he had been caught appropriating a considerable sum of money from Martyropolis. Hormisdas was annoyed by the request, but Pherochanes persisted in his demand until the king's will was overcome and Zadespras was released from his fetters. (5) So Zadespras set out on campaign with Pherochanes, but as soon as he came close to the mutineers, in the vicinity of the river Zab, he at once deserted and went to Baram, measuring out for Hormisdas repayment for his injury in prison. (6) Then, after this had happened, Baram was greatly elated and expected that all the opposing army would also come over to him. Pherochanes sent ambassadors to Baram, asking him to change his mind and put a stop to the mutiny, and earnestly entreated him with royal gifts as well; for such were his instructions from the Persian king. (7) Pherochanes failed to buy off hostility and Baram instead financed the mutiny thereby. Then provisions ran short, since Pherochanes the Persian had previously page 105 occupied the crossing,¹¹⁰ and the usurper had spent a considerable time in that region. (8) And so Baram schemed to augment his outrage and suborned the troops arrayed against him with a memorable stratagem. (9) For he sent to the opposing force messengers who declared that the opposition was acting misguidedly in taking up arms against injured parties and reminded the Persians of Hormisdas' harshness, his cruel actions and unjust impiety; he laid bare Hormisdas' infidelity and, in short, marshaled an extensive and most compelling list of Hormisdas' crimes. (10) For enmity is ever fond of accusation and from small beginnings can fabricate great mountainous charges. (11) When Pherochanes' troops heard these claims, their minds were changed and they longed for revolution, despising the honourable and honouring the wicked. And thereafter they no longer made accusations of mutiny, but they regarded the enterprise as lawful, with justice as the source of the deeds. (3.1) Then Zoarab (this man was leader of the Dilimnite tribe), together with the younger Sarames, who at that time was enrolled in the general's guard but who subsequently became commander of the bodyguard of Chosroes the king, strove for different fortune, and conceived an extraordinary longing for a change of affairs; they formed a conspiracy and in a surprise attack murdered Pherochanes by night with absolutely no opposition. (2) After this had happened, everyone turned to pillaging the general's possessions. Then on the fifth day news reached the Persian king of the fate which had recently befallen the general. (3) Accordingly, Hormisdas, who was dismayed by the increase in his troubles, set out from Media, where he had been lingering, and approached Ctesiphon,¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Winter 589/90. Comentiolus had reorganized the siege of Martyropolis, which had been disrupted by Philippicus' defeat outside the city (iii.5.14-16). The capture of Akbas would have enabled him to hamper communications between the Persians inside the city and those in Arzanene across the Nymphius river.

¹⁰⁹ Theophylact normally uses Media as an imprecise synonym for Persian territory, not as a precise technical term to denote the region of Media on the Iranian plateau. However, neither sense would be appropriate here: Baram's troops remained north of the Zab (cf. iv.2.7), so that he was not advancing

¹¹⁰ i.e. the crossing of the Zab.

¹¹¹ Hormisdas was probably traveling between the royal summer palaces on the Iranian plateau and the winter residences in lower Mesopotamia

collecting his remaining forces and applying his attention as best he could to his own defence. (4) When the inhabitants of the royal cities came to know of these events, they were panic-stricken and in their utter amazement at the revolution in affairs were at a loss as to exactly what to do: for unexpected news is accustomed to create confusion in the soul and to import a complete overthrow of rational thought when it is thrust on the ears with sudden advent. (5) On the third day the prisoner Bindoes, the son of Aspabedes and a relation by birth to Chosroes the king of the Persians, who had resided in prison in chains being punished without reason by Hormisdas, was led away from detention by Bestam, who was in fact his brother, with no one present to prevent it.¹¹² (6) When Bindoes had found respite from his misfortunes, this mob from Pherochanes' army burst into the palace at about the third hour and encountered Hormisdas.¹¹³ (7) He was sitting on the royal throne, his attire that of a tyrant and very costly, the gold gem-studded tiara gleaming brightly with its inset of rubies around which ran an abundance of pearl. Glistening in his helmet and emerald green he amplified his splendour,¹¹⁴ so that the eye of the beholder was all but petrified by insatiable amazement. (8) His trousers were gold-decorated, costly products of the weaver's hand, and his apparel was as luxurious as his arrogant appetite desired. And so the king asked Bindoes how his removal from detention had occurred, about his bold manoeuvres, and what the improvisation of the attendant force meant. (9) But he, in full hearing of the king, railed and blasphemed against Hormisdas, since his tongue was no longer curbed because security for free speech ensued from the disorder. (10) Then, since no one hissed Bindoes down no was present to censure him and spare the royal dignity, Hormisdas asked the officials whether the state of affairs pleased them. (11) When everyone jeered at Hormisdas, Bindoes grasped Hormisdas by the hand, lifted him from the throne, stripped the diadem from his head, and handed him over to the bodyguard for detention.¹¹⁵ (12) And thus Bindoes' fortune was reversed and Hormisdas suffered for his deeds, learning that one should not injure those who have done no wrong. (13) When his son Chosroes heard that Hormisdas had been deposed from the kingship, he departed from his customary haunts and made his escape to Adrabiganon,¹¹⁶ in fear of the perils that had befallen Hormisdas, since he suspected that the misfortunes would perhaps transfer to him as well. (14) And so Bindoes tracked Chosroes' movements, but when in his quest events went according to his will and he had Chosroes in his grasp, he asked the boy to return to assume the royal throne. (15) And so, Chosroes returned to the palace after receiving a binding guarantee of good faith. On the next day Hormisdas sent a message from prison which indicated that he wished to make a speech to the advantage of the Persian state; he requested the attendance of the satraps, officials, dignitaries, and all of the royal bodyguard, since his subject was not concerned with trivial talk. (16) Accordingly, when this had been announced to the leading barbarians, an assembly took place at the palace and Hormisdas too was led from prison, so that his proclamation might be brought to fulfillment. Then after the gathering had been organized in the palace, Hormisdas stood up in the middle and began as follows:

¹¹² Bindoes and Bestam were maternal uncles of Chosroes II.

¹¹³ The movements of Pherochanes' army after the general's death have not been recorded; it appears that part had not joined Baram, but had retreated in disorder to Ctesiphon, where it was joined by Bindoes (cf. iv.9.1).

¹¹⁴ The text is suspect at this point and the reference of 'emerald green' is uncertain.

¹¹⁵ Using eastern sources, it is possible to calculate the date of Hormisdas' deposition as 6 Feb. 590.

¹¹⁶ i.e. towards the north-east. Tabari records that Chosroes had earlier fled to Azerbaijan (Adrabiganon)

because he feared that Hormisdas would suspect him of complicity in Baram's revolt; Chosroes only returned to Ctesiphon on learning that the Persian nobles had overthrown and killed his father. Tabari's account is more credible than Theophylact's, for there was insufficient time for Chosroes' flight between Hormisdas' deposition on 6 Feb. and his own proclamation at Ctesiphon on 15 Feb. (iv.7.1).



(4. 1) 'Spectators would that you had not been engineers of my royal misfortunes, for then you would not have acquired a king who was both orator and prisoner; men, you are now haughty enemies but were once subjects who obeyed in fear. (2) Spectators, would that you had not come forward this day as attendants and witnesses of such troubles. If weeping should recede, I shall utter words which will again invite weeping. (3) For I see you reveling in these misdeeds, clapping your two hands, gnashing your teeth, with lying sneers on your faces, immoderate in laughter, unbounded in insults and, if I am not mistaken, treating the venerable institution of kingship as an occasion for amusement. (4) For present among you, on display in your midst as a prisoner flogged by the masses, is the man who was recently revered as a god, the man who was swathed in purple now clad in rotten rags, the man who was daintily adorned with gold and pearl now afflicted and abused by an iron chain, (5) the man whose hair was well groomed and who was perfumed with myrrh now subjected to shameful discomfort, bestial in appearance from filth and dust, from running eyes and matted hair, the man who was enticed by countless varieties of foods now starving and almost deprived even of chance crusts, (6) the man who resided in gold-roofed chambers, lounged on golden couches, reveled in resplendent cloaks and wallowed in magnificent robes, now cooped up in prison and cast down on the earth with no scraps of cheap garments to wrap around him. (7) 'But I see that the fame of my ancestors too is besmirched this day by your impious actions against me, theirs who should be cherished with divine honours because of the godlike protection that is daily exercised over their descendants. (8) But although you have overthrown the law of nature, set at naught the institutions of power, trampled down the order of monarchy, obliterated the regulations of justice, and banished retribution for violence, I will not forget my royal excellence, but out of goodwill for the community of my race will describe what is advantageous for the Persian state. (9) Satraps and all you who are assembled at this royal place, mobilize a united policy against the mutiny; do not allow this lofty and most powerful monarchy, venerable and most fearful to the men who inhabit the world, to be further abused. (10) Otherwise you will destroy a great dominion, overturn the origin of many triumphs, cast down the summit of greatest glory, rend asunder an impregnable monarchy, and hence you Persians will be deprived of prosperity, when power has been removed from you and the institutions of kingship have been set at naught because of the tyranny. (11) For discord is the precursor to disorder, disorder is anarchy, anarchy which takes its origin from tyranny is the start of dissolution. This gives birth to multiple rule and disarrays previous advantages; through unstable authority and divisive discord it destroys the unity and harmony of the dominion, and compels the friends of tyranny to suffer rather than to do in all things. (12) A slight gust of wind has sunk the ship of monarchy when it is steered by many rudders, since its helm is divided between the contradictory designs of the many, as each one severally tries to steer the bark to his particular goal. (13) Assuredly, unless you winnow out the tyrants, you will lead the kingdom into servitude and be plaything for the nations when you have acquired vulnerability through the discordant conduct of life. (14) Baram is still at hand, he is still armed and dissembling, he still persists in his insolence as he wields his sword against Persia. Let him perish and become a prey for wild beasts, do not let this man's corpse be honoured with burial lest you implant the putrefaction of a vile spirit in the bowels of the earth. Let Chosroes too strip the diadem from his head; he does not possess a royal spirit, he is not adorned with a leader's intellect, his mind is not authoritative. (15) His impulses are uncontrolled, his temper is naturally furious, he is suffused with a look of inhumanity, he is unable to respect the practices of forethought, his manner is arrogant, his appetite naturally hedonistic, everything is subordinated to his wish, he does not wait for what is expedient, he does, not cherish good advice, he dismisses generosity, he is

enmeshed in avarice, a belligerent warmonger, who has no appetite for peace.¹¹⁷ (16) 'Today I will by my words appoint for you as king the youth, a son of mine who is innately good, a brother to Chosroes by birth but not a brother by inclination. (17) Did I not bring round Persian affairs to excellent good order while I guided the Babylonian state with the rudder of magnanimity? Proof of my words is that the Turks are paying tribute, the Dilimnites have surrendered their necks and weapons to us, the Romans have lost famous cities and bewail their new fortunes with the loss of the old. (18) I who accomplished all this have also suffered because of the mutability and instability of fate. It is in your power to maintain expediency as your objective or, spurning what is good, to reject second thoughts and, after repentance of your errors, to weep in despair over what exactly you should do about matters at hand.'

(5.1) Then, after Hormisdas had poured out this discourse of admonition, Bindoes the Persian contrived a sputtering laugh and cursed Hormisdas' exhibition of oratory; he stood up in the middle and addressed the assembly roughly as follows: (2) 'Fellow kinsmen, comrades, tyrant-haters-provided, that is, you do not tolerate tyrants continuing to make laws. Even now that he is a commoner the tyrant does wrong. (3) He still assumes the language of authority, undertakes to give orders, acts the king in oratory, ordains laws on the rostrum, denounces generals, rejects monarchy, and appoints the next ruler; (4) he has everything at his disposal, more even than the munificence of dreams could bestow on the deluded, and yet he is incapable of realizing this much, that those who in their actions have failure to arrange their own affairs skillfully are not naturally reckoned in the category of advisers. (5) How then will he deposit for us a truly sound and trustworthy guarantee for his proposal? Or did he not trick us by pledging his own fate as security, since he wished to see us as fellow prisoners and as participants in the same sufferings although we are innocent? For as subjects of tyranny we did not share his crimes. (6) How is it that he has stirred his voice against tyranny, that man who left no Persian custom free from tyranny, who ruled like a bandit, who adulterated his power with violence, who poured down a deluge of murders throughout the whole period of his rule, who with corpses almost made the Tigris dry land, the man who created an abundance in tombs, fattened the sword on blood, and procured a dearth of men, so that by fortifying wickedness through depopulation he might obtain immortality for tyranny? (7) The man who has not judged advantageously in his own affairs is an arbiter for children's intellect. Abandon this absurdity, Hormisdas! Tyrants do not lecture after their overthrow, men who have become subjects do not make laws, men condemned to death do not act as advisers. (8) Since, then, it is not open for you to tyrannize your subjects in the future, like a coward you have practiced an outrage against your children by choosing to wrong the elder through the younger, so that there may never be any respite for your wickedness. (9) "The Turks are made our tributaries."¹¹⁸ But this was not the product of your intelligence: Persian deaths and the courage of generals have gloriously constructed these achievements of forethought. (10) "The Romans have been stripped of cities and towns." But the Persians will not be persuaded, for the deeds do not correspond to the words: or are they not waiting at our threshold, toying at warfare and with a sudden swoop showering an endemic slaughter on the Persian army? And because of your bellicosity there is no hindrance. (11) Your treasuries are full of gold, but the cities, mansions, fields, valleys, and farmsteads are also full of lamentation: it has been the common fate to share the same misfortune so that you yourself, showered by wealth, may take your fill of a most ill-fated prosperity. (12) 'Depart from here, then, having

¹¹⁷ This tirade against Chosroes was clearly composed by Theophylact to reflect the Roman opinion of Chosroes after his invasions of the empire during Phocas' and Heraclius' reigns (cf. viii.15.7

¹¹⁸ Picking up Hormisdas' claims at iv.4.17.

paid the penalty for your crimes. Let the destruction of one man be a lesson in prudence and let this be a most equitable law, a salvation for those to come: for the proclamation of kingship does not herald a feast of pretension but an irreproachable superabundance of good management.' (6.1) And so the assembly jeered at Hormisdas, insulted him, disparaged his forthright speech, and were moved to extreme rage; infuriated, they glowered and reveled in the gusts of bravado. (2) In a great outburst of indignation, they brought to the middle Hormisdas' son, the unfortunate youth, then slaughtered him in full view of Hormisdas as gratification for their wrath. (3) But this was not the limit to the occasion they provided for malevolence, but they also placed Hormisdas' wife in the middle and sliced her in pieces from the bladder, the sword exacting a wicked judgement on her limbs. (4) And so such destruction of his wife's life in open audience, together with his wretched son's, constituted the material of tragedy. When Hormisdas had been an indubitable witness of that ill-fated story, he was allotted blindness, and this was for him the moral, as it were, of his misfortunes. (5) For after they had heated iron needles to glowing-point by placing them in closest contact with fire, they thrust them into the pupils of his eyes. Thus with a torture of molten eye-shadow they adorned Hormisdas and decreed on him permanent darkness for the future, since they suspected that he might perhaps escape and provide trouble for the Persian state: for they clearly remembered what Kabades had accomplished after laying down the Persian scepter. (6) For this Kabades had been the father of Chosroes the former king of Persia; but since he was a murderous man who exercised power violently and converted monarchy into tyranny, the Persians deprived him of office, shut him away in prison, and committed him to be nursed at the bosom of hardship.¹¹⁹ (7) His wife made frequent and regular visits to him each day, tended him with her ministrations, and by her advice persuaded him to endure with equanimity the acts of unfavourable fortune. (8) Now the commander of the prison, who was an officer and held authority over the company of soldiers, fell in love with the wife; so Kabades, when he heard this, urged his wife to share the governor's bed and endure every squall of fortune that befell her. (9) When this had happened the watch relaxed, the strict guard was slackened, and vigilance became slave to indolence. Hence Kabades procured a transformation of his troubles, dressed himself in his wife's clothing, and escaped from the prison, leaving behind his wife dressed in his clothes. (10) Then in the company of Seoses, a most trusted friend, he approached the Hun tribes whom history has almost universally recognized as Turks. He was then entertained most hospitably by the king of the Hephthalites and he acquired very considerable forces; he defeated his opponents in battle, returned to the palace, and regained power. (11) And so Kabades measured out for Seoses the recompense for the bond of friendship and decorated him with the most pre-eminent offices, while he savagely exacted punishment from those who had injured him. It was with these particular events in mind that the Persian satraps pecked out Hormisdas' eyes (7.1) So, when the assembly had fully vented its rage, Chosroes was led up to the royal throne and, standing in the golden apse, as is the custom at Persian proclamations, he received royal homage while acclamations washed around his ears.¹²⁰ (2) And so for a time he treated his father with kindness as consolation for his captivity, and gave him a share of the royal table, sending him on golden dishes savouries, joints from royal hunting, choice cuts of antelope, gazelle, and wild ass, fragrant wines and preparations of elaborate aperitifs, carefully baked bread, milk, cakes, and anything else that is preserved for the festive board of gluttonous tyrants. (3) But Hormisdas spurned the king's generosity and most boorishly

¹¹⁹ These events are narrated by Procopius, Wars i.5-6; Kabades was imprisoned in the famous Castle of Oblivion mentioned by Theophylact as the gaol of the Dara captives (iii.5.2).

¹²⁰ Chosroes was crowned on 15 Feb. 590.

insulted those who ministered to him, for he naturally condemned despicable pity and rejected insolence which feigned piety. It was this which finalized Hormisdas' death, for his flanks were beaten by cudgels, the vertebrae of his neck were crushed by clubs, and he ended his life most bitterly.¹²¹ (4) Chosroes, after defiling the prelude of his rule with such pollution, held a festival to celebrate the advent of his power, lavishing much gold on the most distinguished men in the Persian kingdom and leading the masses from prison, thereby pretending that he would not succeed to his father's inhumanity. (5) On the sixth day he summoned Baram to his presence by courier,¹²² pacified him with costly royal gifts to terminate the mutiny, and even promised to assign to him the position of second in power, to remit his previous offences, and to provide as guarantee of the agreement a mediating oath. (6) On receipt of the royal letter, Baram answered to Chosroes in the following words: for I will now set down Baram's actual composition, word for word. (7) 'Baram, beloved of the gods, conqueror, pre-eminent, enemy of tyrants, satrap of grandees, leader of the Persian force, prudent, commanding, god-fearing, irreproachable, noble, fortunate, shrewd, venerable, politic, provident, gentle, humane, to Chosroes the son of Hormisdas. (8) I have received what was written by your defective and minimal intelligence and I have accepted what was dispatched by your brazen enterprise: for you should not have used either royal letters or gifts in dealing with us, especially since your election has come upon the Persian state in such an irregular way and the noble and distinguished did not take part in the voting along with the unranked and lower-born. (9) So, lest you encounter your father's dangers, lay down the crown in the holy places and withdraw from the royal places, while those caught in the transgression, whose daring has been like your own, must again be put away in prison. (10) For it is not a prerogative of your power to release without investigation malefactors from the punishment appropriate to them under the laws. (11) When you have done this, come to us and you will at once become a regional commander of the Persian state. Farewell and think wisely of what is advantageous. Otherwise perish like your ancestor.'

(8.1) At full speed the letter-bearer soon reached the palace and conveyed to the king the tablet containing Baram's composition. On the following day,¹²³ the Persian king summoned everyone and revealed to the ears of the assembly Baram's haughty message. (2) The satraps and the others who were resplendent with positions of rank were enraged by Baram's extraordinary boldness; they roused the king to a frenzy of anger and publicly proscribed that same Baram as the tyrant of all Persia. (3) The Babylonian king, however, feared that by menacing words he would exasperate the tyrant to further disobedience. He kept his thoughts to himself and, as if with a false curtain of flattery, he evaded Baram's demand with a further demand that his opponent desist from pride,¹²⁴ inscribing to him in a letter the following words in effect. (4) I consider it not unimportant that the actual arrangement of wording should be set out, so that, by a precise exposition of the facts, those who are eager for strange and engaging narratives can draw off the truth unsullied. (5) 'Chosroes, king of kings, master of dynasts, lord of nations, prince of peace, saviour for mankind, among the gods a righteous immortal man, a god most manifest among men, exceedingly glorious victorious, who rises with the sun and bestows eyes on the

¹²¹ Both Sebeos, and Tabari recorded that Hormisdas was killed by Persian nobles before Chosroes' proclamation as king; according to Michael the Syrian as well, Chosroes was not implicated in his father's death. Theophylact had an interest in denigrating Chosroes, and his account is suspect, since the description of the delicacies from the royal table is clearly a piece of rhetorical invention; there were only two weeks between Chosroes' coronation (iv.7.1) and his flight from Baram (iv.9.9), a much shorter period than Theophylact's narrative might suggest.

¹²² i.e. 20 Feb., counting from Chosroes' proclamation.

¹²³ 21 Feb. 590.

¹²⁴ The text is defective but the sense is clear.

night, distinguished in his ancestry, a king who hates war, bounteous, who employs the Asones and preserves the monarchy for Persians, to Baram general of Persians and our friend. (6) We have received a reminder of your far-famed courage and were gladdened to know that you are in health. In your letter were set out certain words which did not spring from your heart. It was perhaps the drafter of the letter who, drunk on much wine and enfolded by unmeasured sleep, composed vain absurd dreams. (7) But since at the present time the trees have shed their raiment and dreams are powerless, therefore we were not perturbed. We received the royal throne rightfully, we did not over-turn Persian customs, and we do not attempt to imprison again those saved from prison;¹²⁵ for it is not fitting for a king's gift to be deprived of force. (8) Now, we are so firmly confident of not relinquishing the diadem that, even if there are other worlds, we expect to rule over those as well. We approach you as befits a king, either persuading with words or subjugating with arms. If you wish to prosper, take thought for what is needful. Good health to you who will be our best ally.'

(9.1) So after the king of the Medes had dispatched this to the usurper Baram, forces were gathered from every quarter. He assembled the army and collected as quickly as possible the men from the region of Adrabiganon, those stationed in the area of the river Zab, in addition to those encamped at Nisibis.¹²⁶ (2) Next, after he had marshaled in one place the forces which had been amassed for him and gratified them with money, he then appointed commanders: ordering Sarames to command the companies on the right, and page directing Zamerdes to lead the left side, he ordered Bindoes to take the central division and to hold the rearguard. (3) Then the Persian king set out from the royal capital and came to a certain plain where there ran a river flowing in the middle between the two forces.¹²⁷ (4) Then the two armies took up their position on the banks of the river, and many messages from Chosroes and Baram were ferried across from first light until the rising of the evening star, but their discourse was scattered on the air; when peaceful fortune had completely failed to grant a resolution, battle was knit and fighting gave birth to a visitation of great troubles. (5) Then sallies now occurred and skirmishes and those very actions which are the bellicose preludes of the engagement. So Baram surrounded himself with a ditch and made other dispositions for the safety of his fighting force, (6) but Chosroes lacked the courage to circumvallate himself on the plain: throughout the day his appearance suggested eagerness for battle, but when night fell he protected his forces by containing them within the city. Consequently a serious loss of morale befell Chosroes' contingents. (7) But when the cowardice of the opposing force had become clear, thereafter Baram was encouraged not to steal the victory: for he thought it wrong that those whom it was possible to coerce openly should make accusations of deceit and sully his triumph because of trickery. (8) But Chosroes put to death certain people whom he suspected of associating in the tyrant's undertakings. On the second day he observed that the spirits of his forces were downcast, and he therefore looked to flight and made advance preparations for the escape of his harem. (9) With matters standing thus, since Chosroes refused to meet him in an engagement, on the seventh day Baram organized a night attack when there was no moon and assaulted Chosroes' contingents.¹²⁸ (10) Accordingly, there was fearful consternation, and great confusion immediately arose; at first the enemy directed the slaughter against the baggage animals, but then

¹²⁵ The text is again defective but the sense is clear.

¹²⁶ Chosroes had no time for lengthy military preparation at Ctesiphon before Baram's arrival; he could merely have assembled the supporters whom he had collected during his flight to Azerbaijan (Adrabiganon), loyal remnants of Pherochanes' army that had been encamped by the Zab, and any fugitives from the rebellious Nisibis army.

¹²⁷ The river was probably the Nahrawan canal, which ran a few miles east of Ctesiphon.

¹²⁸ On 28 Feb. 590

the massacre switched to Chosroes' allies as well and, after many had been slain, the army changed its opinion, deserted to Baram, and united with his forces. (11) Now Chosroes was unable to endure the climax of his misfortunes, and with a handful of bodyguards he escaped from this great and most unexpected peril as fast as his feet would carry him.¹²⁹ (10.1) And having thus been ousted from his kingdom, he left Ctesiphon and crossed the river Tigris; he was in despair about exactly what to do; some advised him to approach the eastern Scythians, whom we are accustomed to call Turks, others to save himself in the mountains of Caucasia or Atrapaïca.¹³⁰ (2) Thus Chosroes was at a loss how to evaluate the advice. Accordingly he very properly entrusted the reins of his flight to the supreme God; after looking up to heaven, and turning his thoughts to the Creator, disregarding the false gods and placing none of his hope in Mithras, he naturally decreased the swift slide of his perils, and by changing faith he also changed fortune towards the better. (3) And so bidding farewell to the bridle and casting aside the guiding reins, he determined that he would be directed by his mare, and that by entrusting to God and the horse the determination of his escape, the rider should be steered towards an advantageous course by the mount: for thus the occasion consented to improvise for the world a mighty occasion for actions.¹³¹ (4) And so that royal mare carried its fugitive rider into the desert; after crossing this and going along the river Euphrates, he drew near to the forts of Abbaron and Anathon, which were subject to tribute under the Persian state.¹³² Setting out from there, Chosroes came to the vicinity of the city of Circesium. (5) He camped ten miles away and sent messengers to Circesium to make known his arrival, his changed fortune, and his flight to the Caesar; he asked to be returned to his own country and sought to win support from the Romans. So it was in the third watch of the night that his messengers approached the gates. (6) When the ambassadors had indicated to the gatekeepers the reason for their passage through the wall, those responsible for the gate-watch quickly came before the city's commander and with all haste reported the turn of affairs to the commander. The commandant of the fort was called Probus. (7) So at dawn Probus brought Chosroes into the city and entertained him with courtesy and hospitality; he accorded the utmost humanity to Chosroes' wives, who were carrying infants at their breasts, and with strict propriety he looked after the bodyguard and attendants, of whom in fact Chosroes had thirty. (8) On the second day Chosroes king of the Persians asked Probus to send a written embassy to the Caesar, and after composing a royal message he dispatched it to the emperor via Probus. (9) On the following day Probus made Chosroes' presence know to the general Comentiolus, who was residing at Hierapolis, and also sent to him Chosroes' written request to the Caesar. Comentiolus gave the couriers a report to carry to the emperor of the events which Probus had revealed to him at Hierapolis. (10) On hearing the news, the emperor Maurice was delighted and revelled in the improved prospects; removing the Persian seals, he sought to comprehend and discern precisely what was written on the tablets.¹³³ (11) The substance of the Persian king's request was in effect arranged as follows: for I will set out the

¹²⁹ On 1 Mar. 590.

¹³⁰ After Chosroes had crossed from Ctesiphon to the west bank of the Tigris, the direction of his flight was in fact virtually determined, since it would have been difficult to flee north-east, back across the Tigris and past Baram's army, to the Turks or to the Caucasus or Azerbaijan (Atrapaïca). Chosroes may already have made initial preparations for seeking Roman help against Baram.

¹³¹ This story of Chosroes' reliance on divine providence to determine the course of his flight is most implausible, since Chosroes was in fact hotly pursued by Baram's soldiers (see iv. 12. 1-2), and some preparations for a flight to the west may already have been made. Chosroes probably invented the story as part of the Christianizing propaganda that was designed to help him gain assistance from Maurice.

¹³² Chosroes follows the route of his grandfather's invasion of the Roman empire in 573.

¹³³ Maurice is likely to have received Chosroes' letter towards the end of Mar. 590.

petition word for word without adorning its phraseology, so that through its uncultivated diction we may see an undistorted reflection of the motivation for the request.

(11. 1) 'Chosroes king of Persians greets the most prudent king of the Romans, the beneficent, peaceful, masterful, lover of nobility and hater of tyranny, equitable, righteous, saviour of the injured, bountiful, forgiving. (2) God effected that the whole world should be illumined from the very beginning by two eyes, namely by the most powerful kingdom of the Romans and by the most prudent scepter of the Persian state. (3) For by these greatest powers the disobedient and bellicose tribes are winnowed and man's course is continually regulated and guided. And one can see that the sequence of events is consonant with our words. (4) Since, then, there are certain malignant and evil demons abounding in the world, who are eager to confound all God's excellent dispositions, even though their enterprise does not achieve its result, it is right for God-loving men of piety to take the field against these, having received from God a treasury of wisdom and the strong arm and weapons of justice. (5) 'Now in these days the most malicious demons have attacked the Persian state and accomplished terrible things, mobilizing slaves against masters, subjects against kingdom, disorder against order, and disadvantage against expediency, and supplying weapons to every opponent of goodness. (6) For Baram, that abominable slave who was exalted and glorified by our ancestors, failed to contain his great glory but has shied away towards destruction; wooing kingship for himself, he has confounded the whole Persian state; everything which he accomplishes and endeavours is in order that he may quench a great eye of power, (7) and that thereby the fierce, malevolent tribes may gain authority and power over the most meek kingdom of the Persians, and then subsequently thereby in the course of time gain irresistible might, which will not be without great injury to your tributary nations as well. (8) It is then fitting for your peaceful providence to give a saving hand to a kingdom that is ravaged and coerced by tyrants, to support a power that is on the point of dissolution, to establish in the Roman state the cause of salvation, as if it were a universal trophy, and to proclaim yourselves the founders, saviours, and physicians of the Persian state. (9) For the most powerful rulers ought continually to accomplish all that is in the interests of justice; thereby, even when they have departed the present world, they will have eternally incorruptible praise for their magnanimity, and will establish an example that servants ought not to take arms against their masters. (10) It is, then, right that you should guide the current irregularity of affairs in the Persian state; for thereby the Romans will receive through you a more glorious reputation. (11) These words which I write, do I, Chosroes, address to you as if I were in your presence, I, Chosroes your son and suppliant. For the chance course of events will not make you disregard what is proper to my rank and title. May the angels of God who grant blessings preserve the kingdom for you free from disgrace and tyranny.' (12.1) While the Caesar was reviewing this embassy, Baram bestowed favours on the satraps and Babylonian nobles and demanded their allegiance. He assumed all the royal accoutrements which Chosroes the Persian king had in his train and came to the palace. He selected from the army picked men for an expedition, and ordered them to track down Chosroes and bring him to his presence in chains.¹³⁴ (2) Now these failed to accomplish their orders from Baram, but encountered Bindoes, who was a staunch supporter of Chosroes the Persian king. They disgraced him with chains and brought him to Baram on the seventh day.¹³⁵ (3) Baram, although he was appropriating the Persian

¹³⁴ The statement that these events occurred while Maurice was considering Chosroes' appeal is incorrect, since Baram acted very quickly to organize a party to pursue Chosroes. It is possible that Theophylact was misled by the order of John of Epiphania's narrative, which perhaps reported in full Chosroes' appeal to Maurice before returning to describe Baram's contemporaneous actions.

¹³⁵ Tabari records that Bindoes accompanied Chosroes on his flight, but then donned the royal robes and

kingdom and was consumed by lust for it, did not openly exhibit the machinations of his heart, since he feared that he might meantime be discovered to have organized the whole course of his actions for this precise reason. (4) He desired his rule to be affixed by senatorial decree, and the proclamation of his power to be clothed in a certain legal force, thereby contriving for himself that his kingdom be beyond reproach and furthermore that his undertaking be unopposed. (5) But when, in spite of all this dissembling and manœuvring, the plotter of the scheme did not gain credence, he was angered at the magi whose opinions were contrary. Since, then, his ambition had totally failed to achieve its goal and objective, he came into the open. (6) Accordingly, during the course of the great and famous festival which the Persians are ordained by an ancient and venerable practice to hold in honour of the sky,¹³⁶ he seized the royal diadem, proclaimed himself king, and appeared resplendent on the golden couch; he ordered the barbarians resident in Martyropolis to maintain a strong guard and not to pay the least attention to Chosroes. (7) Then Baram's proclamation was revealed to the Romans who were besieging the city,¹³⁷ for they captured the man bearing the tyrant's orders. (8) So now Chosroes came to the city called Hierapolis, and indeed Comentiolus the general did not leave dishonoured the man who was temporarily deprived of his kingdom: for such was the emperor Maurice's decision, and his decree was translated into action. Therefore Comentiolus came to the place known as Bedamas to meet Chosroes, organized royal provision for him, and gave him a magnificent guard. (9) On the ninth day Chosroes dispatched a satrap known as Miragdun as messenger to the Persian garrison in Martyropolis to notify them of the change in fortune, and that it was wrong for them to be in possession of the city, since the magnanimity of the emperor had remoulded the Persians into non-combatants and friends. (10) From among the Persian notables he dispatched Bestam to Armenia,¹³⁸ ordering him to go to Adrabiganon and establish for him the allegiance of the Persians living there. (13.1) These were the actions which he thus performed in public, but, with his innately knavish disposition which placed all things second to deceit, he scorned the law of hospitality and cast underfoot the guarantees of friendship by sending on the fifth day a messenger to the Chaldaeans encamped at Martyropolis, ordering them to maintain their guard most strictly and to pay no attention to his public instructions: for the Persian nation is worthless and from the outset their life is one of treachery, humbug, and boasting. (2) Then, since he had encountered a temporary delay in returning to his kingdom,¹³⁹ Chosroes tried to approach the Roman emperor. Now, Maurice, when he realized Chosroes' objective, prevented him by a royal letter from coming in his presence, without regard for reputation but effecting for Chosroes the advancement of his interests: for he considered that Chosroes must not travel far from the Persian state, lest Baram might thereby establish his tyrannical enterprise more firmly. (3) At the start of spring Chosroes sent ambassadors to the emperor;¹⁴⁰ and so on the third day the emperor convened a royal assembly and received the open homage of the ambassadors. Then, when silence pervaded the meeting and the emperor had granted the Persians permission to deliver a

allowed himself to be captured in order to ensure that Chosroes escaped from the close pursuit by Baram's soldiers. The seventh day is calculated from the day of Chosroes' flight on 1 Mar. (iv.9.11), so that Bindoes returned in chains on 7 Mar.

¹³⁶ The Nauruz festival, 9 Mar.

¹³⁷ The blockade of Martyropolis was probably maintained throughout the winter of 589/90, although the main Roman army had retired to winter quarters (iv.2.1).

¹³⁸ It later emerges (see iv.15.3, 5) that Bestam did not reach Armenia until about mid-July, which suggests that he had not been dispatched by Chosroes before late June. Theophylact has not made clear, and probably did not realize, how long the initial negotiations between Chosroes and Maurice had lasted.

¹³⁹ There has been no suggestion of any delay in Theophylact's narrative.

¹⁴⁰ Spring 590. Since Bestam was sent to Armenia in June and Chosroes had experienced some delay (iv.13.2), these ambassadors can hardly have been dispatched at the start of spring. Spring may be an error by Theophylact for summer.

speech, the most distinguished of the ambassadors, giving his speech a preliminary enrichment of tears and thereby trying to capture the emperor's pity, began with these words:¹⁴¹ (4) 'Thrice-greatest king, if the request were from your closest friends, the occasion would possess propriety, the manner eloquence, the argument persuasion, the suffering mercy, the theme its justification, the necessity swift arrival of assistance, the embassy respect and, in a word, the sufferings would possess pity to match even the disasters with which they are identified. (5) But since all these things, along with everything else, have escaped Persia's grasp, it remains either for Chosroes to be bathed in benevolence through your virtue or for the Medes to destroy a great kingdom by tyranny. (6) I am well aware that one of those not initiated into the rites of good sense might say that it would benefit the Roman state for our Babylonian nation to lament long in perdition after casting aside its kingdom, power, and great strength, and for Roman power to wax fat in unmolested peace; he would be ill informed about what is disadvantageous to Roman might. (7) For it is impossible for a single monarchy to embrace the innumerable cares of the organization of the universe, and with one mind's rudder to direct a creation as great as that over which the sun watches. (8) For it is never possible for the earth to resemble the unity of the divine and primary rule, and to obtain a disposition corresponding to that of the upper order, since it is steered hither and thither towards the breakers by mankind, whose nature is unstable and whose judgement most worthless because of its tendency towards evil. (9) 'Therefore, even though the Persians were to be deprived of power, their power would immediately transfer to other men. For events will not tolerate lack of leadership, nor such great fortune lack of direction. For as thought will not be separated from reasoning, so the greatest posers in the world will never be, as it were, bereft of a helmsman. (10) Or did not the Medes possess prosperous Chaldaea after the Babylonians, the Persians after the Medes, and after these the Parthians, as if by some succession of inheritance? It is obvious to shepherds and goatherds alike that the whole flock does not act at a single pipe blowing a pastoral tune. Something similar is accustomed to happen in human affairs as well. (11) Sufficient proof is the insane, unreasonable ambition of a Macedonian stripling: for Alexander became an immature sport of fortune and, when she smiled on him a little in mockery, he swaggered in his mastery of Europe, undertook to master the sea, desired to hold the scepter of Babylon, yearned for Indian power, threatened to subjugate Libya, and constrained his kingdom to expand as far as the sky is spread and the sun's eye shines with sparkling rays. (12) He attempted to subjugate the temporal universe to a single unitary power. But, sooner than this, ambition was quenched along with power, and affairs proceeded once more divided up into leadership of multiple tyranny, so to speak. For concord has never come to unite the inharmonious. (13) 'Accordingly, what prosperity would events devolve upon the Romans if the Persians are deprived of power and transmit mastery to another nation? What mark of honour would the Roman race acquire if it rejects as suppliant a king who is the most famous and brave of all on earth? (14) Or what citadel of piety will you have if you have despised the unfortunate? When, O king, will you ever take up the contest on behalf of justice and mobilize for war if you forgo this opening? When will the beauty of worship ever bloom for you if not at the present opportunity? Now you may either confirm your title by your actions, or by your misdeeds acquire falsehood for your appellation. (15) What more kingly display than this will you make during the whole period of your rule? What other such occasion for exultation could be available for the Romans? What guarantee of your fairness, O king, will be more respected among the nations than this? (16) Now through a brief alliance you will derive eternal peace, and what the omans have utterly failed to accomplish by innumerable conflicts,

¹⁴¹ The speech is a rhetorical expansion of the themes of Chosroes' letter (iv.11).

unbounded cares, and a flood of financial outlay, this you will now carry off effortlessly through a virtuous spirit, which the occasion demands but the king disposes, and you will pluck a trouble-free peace without toil. What could be more advantageous to the Romans than this? (17) Let not any of Hormisdas' wickedness dwell in your heart. He has learned from his sufferings not to abominate peace. Chosroes has not inherited his father's misdeeds: sons do not inherit their father's inclinations in their entirety along with his possessions. (18) Hormisdas was ill disposed, Chosroes is now well disposed; he carries round your benefaction incarnate in his person, which he will be ashamed to forget since he has numerous witnesses to your piety. (19) 'Do not let usurpers prevail, lest you should share the precedent. Or is not evil the masses' great ambition, is not human nature disposed to desire the worse, its impulse hard to redirect towards the better? (20) We have heard that the usurper has also dispatched ambassadors to you, demanding to have as accomplice in crime the man who has done no wrong, and all but contriving that a ruler join in revolution with a fugitive. What could be more inglorious and abominable to the Romans than this? (21) What foundation of loyalty to you will he use to underpin his promises, that man whose premise is one of utmost ingratitude, who has organized a contingent against his benefactors, and embraced every form of evil in order to depose from his kingdom a ruler who has done nothing wrong? A premise of evil does not usually protect a promise of friendship. (22) An imprudent beginning will also have a totally inexpedient conclusion: for the sprout does not progress in contradiction to the seed. Baram may perhaps attempt to angle for injustice with gifts; but I have heard it said by one of your nation, who is wise in subtleties, that from wicked men "gifts are no gifts and are not beneficial". (23) The wages of debauchery are unable to bring a harvest of enjoyment, and the profits of crime to possess an unrepented crop growing in the furrows; for before pleasure there is pain, and before gratification a diversion to grief, since fine objectives have been surrendered and even righteous acquisitions are removed in addition. (24) 'In exchange we give back Martyropolis, we will offer Daras as a gift, without payment we will lay war in the tomb and build a house of peace by bidding farewell to Armenia, on whose account war ill-fatedly gained free rein among men. (25) Even if the gifts do not befit the necessity, still this is our highest principle, to exercise moderation in promises rather than to grease the ears with great offers and incur undying enmity when we fail to accomplish their realization, wickedly storing up against the future health of peace great occasions for evil. (26) I have made sufficient defence of the profitable course for Romans and Persians. But if I have disregarded any element of a more complete treatment, then O king, supply the omission: for it often happens that reason abandons the contest, since necessity is incapable of tolerating discipline or obeying the dictates of reflection when concomitant circumstances are constantly ferrying the mind back and forth in confusion.'

(14.1) When the ambassadors had thus completed this discourse and their request won persuasion and favour from the fluency of the speech, the senate and emperor decreed that the Romans would help Chosroes and prepare most energetically for war against Baram,¹⁴² (2) since the emperor thought it unworthy for the Latin realm to provide arms for criminals and brave danger for injustice because of a substantial promise,¹⁴³ or for the Romans to be eternally branded with undying reproaches because they had undertaken a most shameful policy. (3) So on that day the decree was proclaimed and publicized throughout the royal city, while on the

¹⁴² John of Nikiu and Sebeos record that Maurice, with the support of Domitianus of Melitene, overruled the opposition of his council and in particular of the Patriarch John Nesteutes, who preferred to allow the Persians to weaken themselves in civil war.

¹⁴³ Baram's offers are recorded at iv.14.8.



fifth day the ambassadors were admitted to the Caesar's presence, were honoured with royal gifts, and obtained the emperor's decree in writing. (4) Furthermore the emperor dispatched to Chosroes, together with the ambassadors, Samen, Chosroperozes, and the others whom the Romans had already captured earlier in the course of the war. (5) And so when Chosroes had perused the contents of the Caesar's missive and rejoiced at the Romans' virtue, he left Hierapolis together with Comentiolus and came to the city of Constantina. Shortly afterwards the bishop of Melitene, who was in fact Domitianus, also came to Chosroes on the emperor's instructions; this man, who was connected by birth to the emperor Maurice, was a priest by office but more than priestly in the ordering of his life, pleasant in speech, quick in action, most shrewd in counsel. (6) He was accompanied by Gregory, the leader of the priesthood of Antioch, for this too was the emperor's decision and his word was translated into deed. So, when the priests had reached Constantina itself, they consoled Chosroes with words and gifts, arranging for him in his despondency the attainment of his hopes. (7) And so Chosroes dispatched ambassadors to Nisibis, reminded the Persians of their goodwill for the royal family, and urged them with gentle exhortation that they should not tolerate the rule of tyrants and scorn the ancient and ancestral law, which had grown venerable in the Persian kingdom and which had never been invalidated by the recent coup. (8) But when Baram was informed that Chosroes was safe, that he had been hospitably received by the Romans, and that this had also been sanctioned by the emperor through the ambassadors, he sent ambassadors to ask the emperor not to provide any assistance to the fortunes of Chosroes, and promised to surrender to the Romans the city of Nisibis and the territory as far as the river Tigris. (9) Now Baram's deceit was to no avail, for he could not corrupt the emperor's sanctity. A few days later, he was revealed in his swollen pride to be cheating his allies, a burden on Persia, and insatiate in his enterprises as he exacerbated the savagery of his tyranny. (10) And so the most eminent satraps in his force secretly united in a plot¹⁴⁴ to assassinate Baram and to restore the affairs of the Medes to tranquility. (11) Now the leaders of the plot against Baram were Zamerdes and Zoanambes the Persian: these same men also selected as many other associates as possible from the Babylonian army, and fomented their conspiracy. (12) They surmised that it would be to their advantage to have as a collaborator Bindoes as well, who was confined in custody by Baram, and they accomplished their desire in action: they suddenly burst into the prison, released Bindoes from his bonds, chose him as leader of the plot and, during the night, attacked Baram in the palace.¹⁴⁵ (13) Now in the second watch of the night Baram became aware of the conspiracy, arrayed his guards and ordered them to arm, prepared the troops which had recently reached him from foreign nations, and stoutly resisted his assailants. (14) A fierce night battle took place, Baram gained the upper hand and captured the originators of the enterprise; once day had grown bright, he chopped off the functional parts of their limbs and then, after spreading out the remainder of their bodies, he allowed them to be trampled by the elephants and to obtain this all-consuming death. (15.1) Now Bindoes together with his companions unexpectedly escaped the disastrous peril and came as quickly as possibly to Adrabiliganon. So he encamped there, collected a large number of Persians and, as it were, tamed the rebels to espouse Chosroes' cause. (2) On the tenth day he sent a messenger to John, whom the Romans were accustomed to call Mystacon, informing him of the recent actions and seeking to learn how Chosroes' attempted rapprochement with the emperor had fared. (3) And so John conveyed the news by letter to the emperor and detained

¹⁴⁴ The text may be defective but the sense is clear.

¹⁴⁵ According to eastern sources, Bindoes remained in prison for seventy days, or for three to four months, which would place this revolt against Baram in June 590.

Bindoes' ambassadors while he awaited the outcome of his report to the emperor.¹⁴⁶ (4) The emperor Maurice commanded John to ally himself whole-heartedly with the supporters of Chosroes' cause, and to give them complete assurance of proper behaviour so that Baram's tyranny might tend to lose strength. (5) On the previous day Bestam, whom Chosroes had sent to Armenia, reached John;¹⁴⁷ and so John revealed Bindoes' presence to Bestam and with the greatest joy imparted the significance of what had befallen Baram. (6) And so Bestam was overjoyed at the news and sent a messenger to Chosroes to inform him of these facts. Bindoes acquired great courage when he saw that circumstances were again smiling on Chosroes, and on receiving the emperor's money he distributed it to his company, according to the strength of their individual support. (7) When those stationed at Nisibis learned that the emperor was friendly to Chosroes and was deluging him with great forces of allies, they revised their opinion and came to Constantina. The city-protector was lubricated with promises by Chosroes, and virtually transferred to Chosroes the whole of Arabia and the lands as far as the river Tigris in full gratification of his hopes.¹⁴⁸ (8) But those in possession of Martyropolis, although they were beset by the Roman siege, complying in effect with Chosroes' secret injunctions did not surrender the city to the Romans, but even put up a very stout resistance. (9) Accordingly, when Chosroes' villainy became apparent, with shrewd calculation Domitianus counter-marshalled irresistible counsel and dispersed the festering sore of the Persian deceit like an excrescence of blisters. (10) For he summoned to his presence the most prominent members of the city garrison and won over some with words, while others he bribed with gifts; he reminded them of the Roman siege which confronted the city, of Chosroes' request for the emperor's assistance, and of the uncertain fortune which beset Baram. (11) So great was the power of his speech that those holding Martyropolis were divided in their opinions, ... 'willing but with reluctant heart'; for let me now use the Homeric tongue to portray his thoughts. (12) Next he dispatched to Martyropolis the chief eunuch, whom Romans are accustomed to call *praepositus* and who had been seconded for his royal bodyguard,¹⁴⁹ with a recommendation to the Persians to leave the city and encamp near Nisibis. (13) And so, since Chosroes the king had changed his mind, the Persians arranged a truce with the besiegers and withdrew from the city. Then, after the leaders had arrived at Constantina, Sittas too was discovered in their midst, the man who had by trickery handed over Martyropolis to Hormisdas the Persian king.¹⁵⁰ (14) And so Domitianus indicated to Chosroes that he was engaged in impiety towards his Roman benefactors in trusting a traitor who had wrought great injury on the Romans; he reminded him that Sittas had also been a friend of Baram, (15) and that it was most inexpedient for him to esteem a faithless murderer, lest the massed Roman troops might perhaps do away with Chosroes himself as well as Sittas, and Baram gain respite from his struggle. (16) Chosroes concurred with this, bought off the immediate crisis with flattery, and delivered Sittas to Comentiolus. One the second day the general tortured him in full view of the army, handed him over to the fire, burnt him to ashes in

¹⁴⁶ Since John, the Roman commander in Armenia, was uncertain about how to receive Bindoes, it is clear that he did not yet know of Maurice's decision to give Chosroes full support. Bindoes could not have approached John before late June or early July, which suggests that it took longer for Maurice to decide to support Chosroes than Theophylact's narrative (iv.13.2-14. 6) implies.

¹⁴⁷ It must now be mid-July at the earliest, since John has had time to communicate with Maurice about Bindoes. This indicates that Bestam had probably been dispatched by Chosroes from Hierapolis (iv.12.10) in late June.

¹⁴⁸ Nisibis probably defected to Chosroes towards the end of 590, since Baram apparently did not yet know of the change of allegiance when he sent Zadesprates to take control there (probably in Dec., see v.1.2 with 13.5).

¹⁴⁹ The *praepositus sacri cubiculi*, the head of the imperial household, who had been dispatched to Chosroes in a military capacity.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. iii.5.11-13.

the flames, and exacted punishment from Sittas for his misdeeds.¹⁵¹ (17) And so Domitianus, in a manner befitting a priest busied himself to the greatest possible extent with matters connected with the recovery of the city, and he handed over to the general Comentiolus the Romans who had conspired with the barbarians for the capture of the city. (18) Then, after these had undergone punishment worthy of their crimes against their country, the priest inaugurated the festival for the city's salvation and arranged a feast for its gloriously victorious martyrs.¹⁵² Standing on the lofty pulpit in the church, he chanted a new victory-hymn to Christ, and addressed words such as these to the ears of the assembled people: (16.1) 'Not only in wars and engagements and battle-array does David sound the war-cry on his trumpets, but also on the famous day of feasting does he trumpet to the supreme God. For it is fitting for God to be hymned even on the instruments of war, since he is supreme commander of the battle-array and a strong and powerful champion in wars. And from where glory is born, it is no doubt essential that praise also should surely proceed. (2) Come, let us also sound the war-cry on spiritual trumpets, I mean on the trumpets of intellect, not of horn as was the Jewish custom: for we are not caused by density of intellect to be ordered to honour God with the limbs of unreasoning creatures. (3) So let us arrange a festival, not extending merely as far as the altar-rails, but unto the upper hierarchy of God himself, whose high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek exists and is honoured, being seated on the right hand of Majesty. (4) For in truth he has acted mightily with his arm, humbling peaks of arrogance, casting down the mighty from their seats, and once more inscribing against Babylon the greatness of the spirit. (5) For lions are enslaved, serpents choked, Bel and Mithras sold into slavery, and the fire mitigated, the fire which could not even conquer the clothing of the martyrs although it was liberally sprinkled with tar and pitch. (6) 'Once again the right hand of the Lord has acted powerfully by condemning the pride of the Chaldaeans, writing his proclamation not on a wall but in heaven. The scepters of Babylon are rent asunder, the throne of insolence is cast down, the wine-sodden kingdom abased, the humbled are once more honoured, and the conquered hold sway. (7) Once again the city made barren by war can be seen rejoicing like a mother in the blessing of children. Let no one don raiment unworthy of this royal festival. (8) Let us all wear white attire in purity of life, lest by dressing our souls in an apparel unworthy of the feast we may appear unworthy of transformation and receive the judgement consequent on failure. (9) Celebrate, celebrate, O city of exultation, for your light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. This the Holy Spirit declares to me, and I rejoice at the proclamation; and the present glory has surpassed its former brightness. (10) For in an cient, bygone times you had acquired companies of martyrs overflowing every path and highway of your vitals.¹⁵³ (11) Your return is more glorious than your capture: for what trickery stole, fear has now surrendered, what the villainy of a barbarian monarch wickedly despoiled, a most public slavery now excellently repays. (12) The slave has dispatched this as an offering to you, O martyrs, in his search to gain as allies those whom he had earlier godlessly disregarded, being taught piety by failure just as the Pharaoh of old was brought to honour God by beatings and admonitions. (13) This, martyrs, is your offering from the Babylonian tyrant and foreigner, the fugitive from his own kingdom who is now obedient to the Romans rather than hostile: for such great deeds have you executed against your enemies. (14) The tyrant was confounded at these things, and fear and trembling came upon the earth. For he

¹⁵¹ According to Evagrius Sittas was stoned to death at Martyropolis.

¹⁵² The festival might have been held on 16 Feb., the day of commemoration for the Persian martyrs whose relics were enshrined in the city.

¹⁵³ Marutha, founder and first bishop of the city, had collected relics of Persian martyrs and enshrined them in his new city.

who was from the beginning has punished the heathens, and this is the transformation of his right hand. From the very peak of heaven is its going forth and its end is as far as the bounds of the earth, and we have beheld its glory full of grace and power. (15) 'As the prophet says, let the neighbouring "rivers clap their hands", now let the Euphrates in accordance with its name rejoice at the splendours of its Creator and let the Tigris transform its ferocity into benevolence, for it has been liberated from the debauchery of slaughter. (16) Let us sing a song of salvation to the Lord, let us sing to him together with his martyrs a victory hymn. Let us proclaim his glory by the rivers of Babylon as we exult in the spirit, for we have not been condemned to Jewish lamentation, nor been reproached by the shame of captivity at the hands of these brigands. (17) Let us appoint the Lord as leader of the festivity, lest we forget the upper Jerusalem and lest our tongue stick in our throat because it wickedly fails to magnify the wonders of God. Now is the daughter of Babylon wretched indeed in accordance with the Scripture, she who is mounted on arrogant scepters, and blessed is the piety of the emperor, which has not imposed on her the corresponding destruction nor returned the recompense that she has rendered to us. (18) For there is fulfilled this second covenant which enjoined on the spiritual Israel not to measure out the repayment for evil; this day the king is not rejected for pitying his enemy, nor has Samuel for this reason jealously skirmished with the all-powerful Lord. (19) For Jesus the Christ, the ancient of days and venerable, knows that mercy is more pious than sacrifice; he assigns his Father's kingdom to those who pity; motivated by love of humanity, he assumed the form even of a slave, went about among mankind, knew the manger, submitted to swaddling clothes, fled the tyrannical sword, went to Egypt, (20) then dwelt in Nazareth, and was proclaimed a Galilean; he excelled in wisdom, was abused by envy, was tested by Sadducees, associated with sinners, was handed over to suffering, received a cross, was reckoned among the unrighteous, welcomed a tomb, passed over to resurrection, and was glad to suffer all things, enjoying only one benefit from us, namely that we too are saved. (21) 'Let us sing to the Lord, but not a song of departure since this is a festival of advent: both city and church are restored, ancestral law is renewed, true faith is strengthened, and I behold Christ celebrating in the center of the church and bearing round on his shoulders the symbols of victory: the triumph is the cross through which the barbarian is expelled and the Roman admitted. (22) Let us sing to the Lord a hymn of departure as well: for like a boar from a thicket, from the city is banished the Babylonian tribe which had attempted to trample underfoot the holy things and raged to tear apart the pearls of faith with their nails. (23) Let us imitate those who are renowned in Babylon and become fellow revelers in their dance, for even now the fire of the Chaldeans has been made inefficacious to consume the city of the martyrs; let the heavens be glad, let the earth exult, and let the plains rejoice for the war-loving nations have been cast down. (24) In the words of the prophet, they have recognized that they are men, and now they have not failed to comprehend the nature of their construction; what they could not learn in their prosperity, it can be seen that they have learned in their distress. (25) Improvising these words for you in our joy, we have delivered to you an unrehearsed hymn, a banquet for angels, a simple and unadorned feast: for God likes to be honoured even with disordered words and to accept the modest offerings of his retinue, assessing the manifestations of thanksgiving according to the repentance of the heart not the weight of the gift. (26) Now let us not cease from praising the Father, nor rest from adoring the Son as God by nature, nor refrain from honouring the Spirit as being by nature one of the three persons: for God is the Trinity, to whom be glory without end from countless ages unto ages'. (27) After the priest had propounded his discourse of highest praise in such a manner, the congregation applauded the noble sentiments of the speech, and many tears mingled with joy flowed over the church because

of the compunction of his words; the festival was prone to tears although it had no cause of suffering, for thus did the occasion, which was free from sorrows and grief, summon up tears. (28) And so the priest, after offering the bread and consecrating the wine in the incarnate mysteries, blessed the congregation through their partaking. An in such a way the city celebrated with festivities for seven days.

Book Five: v.1.1-v.15.12

(1. 1) But Baram, after failing to win the goodwill of the Romans, gathered an assembly and held a discussion concerning matters at hand; from the more eminent, he appointed as generals those who possessed superiority in courage, so that with countering forethought he might, so to speak, set inviolability in the balance against Chosroes' affairs. (2) And so he positioned Miradurin with a large force at the fort of Anathon, which is built beside the Euphrates in the vicinity of Circesium,¹⁵⁴ and to Nisibis and neighbouring Arabia he also dispatched Zadesprates, who had quite recently been Pherochanes' fellow-campaigner.¹⁵⁵ (3) And so Zadesprates left Babylon and dispatched messengers to Solchanes to give notice of his arrival at Nisibis.¹⁵⁶ (4) Now when Solchanes had learned from the messengers about Zadesprates' overweening arrogance, on the following day he convened a meeting and ordered the messengers to expound in the assembly's hearing what their demand was, without curtailing it at all through fear. (5) And so they fully complied with the command, and detailed the message from the man who had sent them. Confusion then ensued in the assembly, everyone reviled Baran, Solchanes abused and dishonoured the messengers, and dispatched them to Chosroes afflicted with inescapable chains. (6) Chosroes solicited Solchanes with promises, urging him to make proper disposition of the visitations of fortune, but Chosroes himself was dispirited by despair and intimidated at the tyrant's attacks. (7) Then reverence for holy religion came upon him, and he again transported his mind to the supreme God; he supplicated Sergius, glorious among martyrs (whom the nomad tribes are also accustomed to revere), to assist him in his troubles.¹⁵⁷ (8) He solemnly promised to offer as first-fruits of victory the famous symbol of the Lord's Passion (this is designated a cross), to fashion it from beaten gold, and to cover it with pearls and radiant Indian stones: for in his necessity the occasion had made him implore more piously. (9) But Solchanes accomplished an extraordinary enterprise most worthy of narration, and killed the enemy commander through a courageous plan. For he equipped Rhosas, who was also called Hormisdas by the Persians, with a cavalry troop and dispatched him against the multitude arrayed in opposition; but he strictly ordered Rhosas to entrust the accomplishment of his enterprise to trickery. (10) And so Rhosas diligently followed Solchanes' orders and approached the enemy. On the second day¹⁵⁸ Zadesprates arrived in the district of Charcha, a village which is alike most productive and well-populated, and when night fell he camped near it. (11) He felt suspicion of an enemy sighting, in case they might perhaps come upon him suddenly, and he exercised forethought for the

¹⁵⁴ The fort of Anathon was in fact about 100 miles to the south-east of Circesium on the Euphrates

¹⁵⁵ See iv.2.3-5.

¹⁵⁶ Although there are no indications of dates in this section, it can be calculated that Zadesprates must have left Ctesiphon (Babylon) in Dec. 590, since the date of Chosroes' prayer to Sergius is known

¹⁵⁷ Sergius, whose major shrine was located at Sergiopolis/Resafa, was the favourite saint of the Monophysite Arab tribes of upper Mesopotamia. Chosroes probably hoped that an appeal to Sergius would encourage the Arabs to support his cause. Chosroes' vow was made on 7 Jan. 591 (v.13.5).

¹⁵⁸ This should probably be the second day counting from Rhosas' departure from Nisibis.

protection of his body. Therefore, divorced from fear he apparently passed the night reveling in the tower located in the place, whose structure consisted of unhewn stone. (12) Then Rhosas came up close to the general and, when he had discovered the place where in fact this man was resting for the night, he took a guide and advanced. After approaching the fortification, he ordered one of his force to run ahead to tell the general that there was a messenger from Baram bringing him reinforcements. (13) And so in the middle of the night he came to the makeshift fort and, deceiving the guards in their native tongue, he demanded that they proclaim the news to their general. Then those wretches received the message with joy and transmitted the word to Zadesprates, as if they were hurrying over some favourable matter that merited urgency. (14) Zadesprates, who was still wine-soaked and half-drunk, had his sleep interrupted; carelessly accepting the report, he told the Persians to take courage and ordered them to open the gate of the fort. This indeed became an extemporary and self-chosen death for him, which had folly as the origin of peril. (15) And so Rhosas' troops streamed into the fort and made free with their swords. On seeing the unexpected calamity, the general went to the roof of the turret and sought to elicit security from his captors; but when they threatened to destroy the building by fire, he came to the enemy. (16) Then his opponents executed him, pillaged everything in the fort, and returned to Solchanes carry Zadesprates' head and all that chance had allowed them to appropriate by trickery.

(2.1) And so Solchanes, taking pride in these preliminary duties, dispatched to Chosroes at Constantina the head of the opposing general and riches which his good counsel had effortlessly looted.¹⁵⁹ (2) And so Chosroes abandoned his ill-omened expectations, divorced despair, and converted his prospects to a more favourable outcome. (3) At about this time the soldiers dispatched by Baram to Anathon also rebelled, killed their commander, and sent his head to Chosroes. (4) So Chosroes, on seeing that he was being crowned by the concurrence of these particular successes, derived a guarantee for the future from what had already occurred, and, confessing that the Christ who is revered and honoured among the Romans is the greatest God of all, repudiated his former religion and unrestrained tongue.¹⁶⁰ (5) On the tenth day he sent some of his leading followers to the emperor Maurice, and indicated the transformation in his attendant circumstances; he asked him to put a stop to delay among the allied forces and to assist with all speed, and that he be provided by the emperor with a financial endowment, guaranteeing to return the loan to the Romans once he had recovered his own kingdom. (6) The Roman emperor bestowed on him the massive sum of money in addition to the military alliance. Then Chosroes wrote a receipt for the loan, dispatched it to Maurice, and received the abundant financial wealth; this he divided up and distributed among the attendant Persian forces. (7) Now Gregory, the leader of the eastern priesthood, left Constantina and moved to Antioch. Shortly afterwards, Chosroes ordered Sarames to go to the emperor with an appeal that the Caesar remove Comentiolus from his command as general, alleging that Comentiolus had insulted him and had vitiated the recruitment of allies by delays. (8) Then Sarames came to Byzantium in accordance with his instructions, and recounted his mission to the emperor. And so the Roman emperor demoted Comentiolus from the leadership of the return to Persia, and gave the command to Narses, who was in fact the general's bodyguard.

¹⁵⁹ Chosroes received Zadesprates' head on 9 Feb. 591 (v.13.6).

¹⁶⁰ Chosroes suggested that he might accept Christianity as an inducement for the Romans to support him. Although exaggerated reports of the Persian king's conversion circulated in the west and Chosroes did maintain good relations with Persian Christians for most of his reign, he never repudiated the Zoroastrian religion.

(3.1) Then at the beginning of spring¹⁶¹ the new general, taking with him Chosroes and accompanied by the man who was at that time bishop in Melitene, whom report has revealed as Domitianus, moved to Mardes, a fort three parasangs distant from the city of Daras.¹⁶² (2) And so the men of Nisibis in Arabia, all the other potentates, and the commanders of the contingents proclaimed Chosroes king; they handed over kinsmen to guarantee their oath, and made advance preparations for Chosroes' return to his kingdom. (3) And so the Persian king arranged for these to be guarded by Romans; then the general set out from there for Daras and encamped. When Chosroes beheld his allied Roman forces glorying in might and equipped with arms in wondrous array, he gave no place at all in his calculations to his former suffering, and migrated to new hopes. (4) Accordingly the barbarian king entered the city, and installed himself in the walled precinct¹⁶³ at the notable shrine of the city, where the Romans performed the mysteries of religion; this was an excessively boorish and insolent action, since he was still labouring under necessity, and his affairs lay on the sea of chance. (5) Now the inhabitants of Daras were enraged by his move, since the elder Chosroes had made no move to insult their religion after he had captured the city. (6) Therefore Domitianus, unable to endure the insolence of the barbarian, threatened to take the forces and return to Constantina. Then Chosroes, being dishonoured thereby and regretting his rashness, dispatched some of his most distinguished followers to Domitianus, and begged him to show mercy on repentance. (7) And so the priest, after inflicting a suitable insult on the barbarian, returned to Daras, having expelled Chosroes from the precinct. On the sixth day the emperor sent to Chosroes at Daras a gem-studded belt, a royal crown, and golden couches and tables; he organized a royal escort for him from his own guardsmen, and generously handed it over, lest he should appear contemptible to the Romans and Persians though lack of kingly retinue. (8) So Chosroes was encircled on every side by a royal bodyguard equal to that with which Romans are accustomed to honour imperial sceptres. So when the Medes saw the great strength lavished on Chosroes by the emperor, they changed their views, bade farewell to the tyranny, and came over to Chosroes. (9) Baram's support weakened day by day, while for Chosroes events proceeded according to his wishes as his forces were swelled. So Chosroes at once proposed to exhibit an act of great goodwill to the emperor Maurice. (10) Therefore he voluntarily inscribed in a royal epistle that the city of Daras was subject to the emperor Maurice, and sent to Byzantium the satrap Dolabzas, a man of distinction,¹⁶⁴ to convey the keys of the city and the record of the gift. (11) And so the ambassador came to the royal town, surrendered the city to the Romans, and had an audience with the emperor. The Roman emperor exalted Dolabzas with royal gifts and, calling Chosroes his son, once more confirmed the promise of his earlier proclamations.

(4.1) Chosroes safeguarded his wives and children in the Median city of Singara, since the city was very strongly fortified because of the conflict and was most difficult for the enemy to capture, as it was rendered naturally unapproachable by siege because of the dearth of water supply.¹⁶⁵ (2) After this he issued orders to Mebodes and, giving him a guard of two thousand men from his army, decreed that he march via Singara on the royal cities and destroy the palace guards created by Baram. (3) But the tyrant, on learning that Chosroes was advancing with the Roman contingents, gathered his army and brought it out on campaign. And so Mebodes, afraid

¹⁶¹ Spring 591.

¹⁶² The standard parasang is about $3\frac{3}{4}$ miles; the actual distance between Dara and Mardin is about 15 miles, or 4 parasangs.

¹⁶³ The precise sense of the Greek is unclear; Chosroes had probably appropriated part of the complex of ecclesiastical buildings attached to the Great Church at Dara.

¹⁶⁴ Dolabzas may well be the same man as the Persian ambassador Dalauzas who arrived at Constantinople in Oct. 590 (v.16.9).

¹⁶⁵ Singara had in fact been captured by Maurice in 578 (iii.16.2).

of the king's command, went on his mission. At the beginning of summer¹⁶⁶ when the corn was swelling in ripeness, Chosroes left Daras with his allied army and moved forwards. (4) When they reached Ammodius, fourteen measures distant from Daras,¹⁶⁷ Domitianus assembled the Roman army and its commanders, went up on a mound, and instructed the forces with the following words: (5) 'Men, the moment devises for you an occasion for great deeds and the circumstances a just purpose. The location requires daring; the cause proclaims piety and rejects tyrant-loving outrage. So, he allies worthy of the fight, for you are returning to enemy territory where victory is exceedingly glorious and the weight of the other fortune is also told. (6) Further, the engagement is the occasion for great glory and is the beginning of famous action, since all the nations of the world are inscribing your story in their minds. The enterprise is renowned, the campaign memorable, the contests immortal: trophies are not escorted to tombs of oblivion. (7) Therefore it is advantageous to contend in suffering everything or to throw away your bodies with glory. If you are victorious, this will be the limit of your labours, this will be the entry of peace. Do not be robbed of wounds, lest as punishment you lose salvation. Draw blows to your breasts, so that you may also embrace triumphs. (8) Let no one receive a scar on his back: the back is incapable of seeing victory. In the contest be united in spirit more than in body, comrades in toils but not in cowardice. Let him who has not taken up the inheritance of danger be disowned. In death reach out for victory. Trophies are bought with wounds and blows. Sloth provides no glory. (9) There is nothing sweeter than death in war, for if there is no advantage in growing old and being struck down by wasting disease, assuredly it is more appropriate for you heroes to die in the battle-line while you are young, reaping glory for your tombs. For nature is unable to make fugitives immortal. (10) Let the body not fear to be stripped of life. Life has not found a place free from destruction. Nothing in the present world is a stranger to sorrow. Everything is mingled with grief. A most tyrannical necessity governs human life. (11) Do not be amazed that a brief allotted time enriches life's boundary, and that great scope is provided by it, which gives authority to ease while men stray after pleasures. (12) 'Be brave in spirit, rejoicing at the change of events. For the king of Babylon has come among us, led in slavery together with Persia's fortune, and along with his body he has all but handed over to us his power as well, making religious piety the summit of his hopes. (13) The Persians do not welcome the tyranny. Baram is seated on faithless altars, for he is not endowed with royal birth. Therefore, since he has encompassed the foundation of his power with laws of insolence, he will soon be overthrown. For violence is incapable of existence without contention. (14) Lay up these things, recorded in unformed letters, in the storehouses of your heart, and let not the purport of my speech be poured away and scattered to the winds, lest you may be assigned shame which is more grievous than failure. (15) May you have as guide of your campaign the Chief General of the Host of the Lord, the only-begotten Son of God, the God before the ages who grants you conclusions more auspicious than your hopes.'

(5.1) So, when he had cast these words upon the ears of the forces, the Roman throng was filled with a divine inspiration; fortifying their eagerness with irresistible strength, they were in a frenzy to proceed thereafter to the decisive action itself, being whipped up for combat by a prudent madness. For even the power of words can scorn death. (2) Then they departed from there and moved forward. Chosroes' bodyguard was drawn from the Romans, since the

¹⁶⁶ Summer 591.

¹⁶⁷ There is no word for 'measures' in Greek, and it is difficult to see what unit of length has been omitted, since Ammodius is about 5 miles, 1 parasangs, or 40 stades, to the south of Dara. A possible solution to the problem is that Theophylact, or his source John of Epiphania, carelessly substituted '14' for '40' and omitted 'stades'.

protection of his fellow countrymen did not gain his confidence. (3) And so Domitianus returned to the Roman empire, after confirming Narses as commander of the campaign; the army pitched camp near the river Mygdon. (4) Sarames preceded the army, gathered stores of provisions, and prepared sufficient food for the requirements of the allies. On the third day the Romans reached the Tigris itself and for the time being delayed any further advance, while they awaited the Roman forces in Armenia.¹⁶⁸ (5) But Chosroes, after marshalling in good order one thousand of his personal guards, commanded them to cross the river and seek out what was the strength of the opposing force. (6) And so these forded the river and came to the river Zab; on hearing that Bryzakios, who had been sent by Baram with a considerable force to spy on the Roman approach, was camped in the vicinity, they marched on him, attacked suddenly in the first watch of the night, won the battle, and captured Bryzakios, whose ears and nose they chopped off with a cleaver and sent to Chosroes the king. (7) Chosroes was greatly elated at the good fortune of his attack; after discovering the intentions of the enemy, he incited the commander of the Roman force not to squander the opportunity which was offering them invincible success. (8) For this reason, the forces crossed the stream¹⁶⁹ and entrenched their camp at the place known as Dinabadon, where Chosroes feasted the Roman and Median leaders. When the dinner was already in progress, Bryzakios was led in chains into the middle, with his nose and ears mutilated. (9) After he had been the victim of the diners' jests, the king, as though favouring the banqueters with a memorable dinner-time spectacle, in an unspoken injunction commanded his attendant bodyguard with a gesture of the hand, and put this man to death: for it is not the custom for Persians to speak while feasting. (10) And so they stabbed Bryzakios and killed him as they had been ordered. Then, after bloodshed too had been blended with the meal, Chosroes gave a concluding pleasure to those at table: for after drenching them with perfume, he wreathed them with flowery crowns, and ordered them to drink to victory. (11) And so those who had been entertained at the banquet departed to their own tents, describing everything which had befallen them during the feast; and Bryzakios was the centerpiece of the articulation of their story.

(6.1) On the morrow Chosroes the king and the allies crossed the river Zab. But Mebodes the Persian, who had been sent Singara, advanced on Babylonia; on approaching the royal cities, he sent to the overseer of the royal treasury a message that he should prepare a great supply of food and set aside a suitable grant of money, since the allied forces were converging on him in large numbers; and that death would be the punishment for sloth. (2) And so the man invested with care of the treasury showed Mebodes' letter to the comptroller of the royal treasures, who had been left by Baram at the capital. (3) But the latter's spirits were dismayed, and in the middle of the night he collected his soldiers, left Seleucia, and went to Ctesiphon. (4) It is said that the Seleucus called Nicator constructed Seleucia between the two rivers,¹⁷⁰ one of which, the Tigris, discharges its full flow into the Persian sea, while the Euphrates is divided into three on reaching this region and, losing its own name, is called by different appellations. (5) One of its offshoots disappears after being dissected, as it were, into great channels and ditches: this is also what makes that particular region very fruitful. The second branch flows on into Babylonia and spreads over the Assyrian marshes to form a lake. (6) The third flows through the vicinity of Seleucia and empties into the Tigris, providing impregnable security for the town, since it

¹⁶⁸ The army would have reached the Tigris in the vicinity of the modern Fechkhabour, 60 miles east of Nisibis. The contingent from Armenia (cf. v.8.6-7) was probably meant to march through Azerbaijan, where more support could be collected, and then across the Zagros mountains, so that Baram would have to turn his attention to two different threats.

¹⁶⁹ i.e. to the east bank of the Tigris.

¹⁷⁰ Theophylact's Seleucia is probably Veh Ardashir.

fortifies the city with pools of water, as if with a rampart's garland.¹⁷¹ (7) On the second day, after Mebodes had heard that Seleucia was unguarded, he approached it by night, ordering the Romans to give the battle-cry and talk in their native tongue, and to strike with the sword indiscriminately and at random anyone they encountered. (8) And so the inhabitants of Seleucia were stricken by irresistible fear and willingly surrendered the city to Mebodes. As a result, extraordinary confusion prevailed, so that even Ctesiphon was affected by the panic, and a rumour reached the barbarians living in the adjoining city that Seleucia had been captured by a Roman army. (9) Then, in their terror they held a mass assembly, and without argument determined to surrender to the Romans. And so he left his refuge in that place and came to nearby Antioch,¹⁷² which Chosroes son of Kabades had constructed after capturing Syrian Antioch, and to which he apparently transplanted the latter's population. (10) After occupying Ctesiphon, Mebodes took charge of the royal treasures, and proclaimed and heralded Chosroes as king, as if he were present. Ctesiphon is the greatest royal capital in Persia. It is said that the emperor Justinian provided Chosroes son of Kabades with Greek marble, building experts, and craftsmen skilled in ceilings, and that a palace situated close to Ctesiphon was constructed for Chosroes with Roman expertise. (11) And so the barbarians who inhabited Babylonia, eager for change, preferred Chosroes' cause. But Mebodes sent a message to Persian Antioch written in Roman script. The letter ran as follows, word for word: for I consider it right that the exposition of the actual arrangement of the words should be set forth exactly as it was.

(7.1) 'Romans, believers in Christ Jesus our Lord, send greetings to the inhabitants of Persian Antioch. We have not accepted this labour either in obedience to the emperor's commands or swayed by Chosroes' promises, but we have come to this land in order to rescue from the entrails of Persia you who have grown old in misery. (2) Therefore, so that our objective may achieve fulfillment and your yearning, brothers, may result in joy, surrender to us those who have fled to your city of Antioch and those who support Baram's cause. For we wish you to know that if you disregard this point you will not have occasion to bless the outcome.' (3) So, when this letter had been delivered to the inhabitants of Antioch and had become public knowledge, the people of the city came together, arrested the man,¹⁷³ and handed him over to the man sent by Mebodes, along with those who had gladly accepted Baram's cause. (4) But Mebodes, after learning in detail about his opponents' affairs from the prisoners, tortured their commander and mutilated him by cutting off his nose and ears; he sent him to Chosroes, while he consigned the others to the jaws of the sword. (5) On the sixth day he condemned to death and killed with the sword many Jews who had been closely involved in Baram's revolution. (6) For the support which Baram had received from the Jews for his usurpation had not been inconsiderable. For at that time there was living in Persia a large number of the said race, who had abundant wealth. (7) For after the capture of Jerusalem by the emperor Vespasian and the burning of the temple, many of the Jews, shrinking from Roman might, migrated from Palestine to the Medes and returned to their primal nurse, whence their forefather Abraham had in fact come. (8) Then these people, by trading in valuables and journeying across the Red Sea, had through financial transactions invested

¹⁷¹ For a map which marks the major canals in this area, see J. Newman, *The Agricultural Life of the Jews of Babylonia* (London, 1932), frontispiece. The third of Theophylact's offshoots of the Euphrates is the Nahr Malka canal, which emptied into the Tigris a few miles below Veh Ardashir. In this part of Theophylact's narrative, there are several short digressions on points of antiquarian interest, geography, and ethnography (cf. v.6.10-11, 7.7-9). These were no doubt intended to suggest that Theophylact had conducted special research to enhance his narrative, but it is perhaps more likely that the information was merely lifted from John of Epiphania, whose participation in an embassy to Ctesiphon would have given him some experience of conditions in lower Mesopotamia.

¹⁷² This must refer to Baram's treasurer, who had crossed to the east of the Tigris on hearing of Mebodes' approach. (v.6.2-3)

¹⁷³ This again (cf. v.6.9) must refer to Baram's treasurer.



themselves with great wealth. Hence they were most ready to slide towards the revolts and conflagrations of the people of Babylonia. (9) For they are a wicked and most untrustworthy race, trouble-loving and tyrannical, utterly forgetful of friendship, jealous and envious, most immutable and implacable in enmity. (10) So Mebodes subdued these and handed them over to a variety of deaths. So, when he had gained control of the capitals, he made a selection of the more valuable adornments and dispatched the choicest to Chosroes. And so the Romans and Persians with Chores arrived at the place called Alexandriana in four days. (11) The place had obtained its name from the actions of Alexander of Macedon, for the son of Philip had gone there with his Macedonian force and Greek allies, razed a very strong fortress, and slaughtered the barbarians in it.¹⁷⁴

(8.1) Then, moving from there, the Romans and Persians on the second day invaded the region called Chnaithas.¹⁷⁵ At first light on the next day Narses, the commander of the eastern contingents, dispatched Comentiolus, brigadier of the right wing of the army, with one thousand horse to secure in advance the crossing of the second river Zab.¹⁷⁶ (2) When this had happened, those sent out on reconnaissance by Baram learned of the deed, returned to Baram, and reported these facts to him. But Baram tried to secure prior control of the next bridge.¹⁷⁷ (3) He fostered his hopes with the encouragement that the Roman contingent in Armenia would not be able to join up with the Roman eastern forces on account of the difficulty of the terrain.¹⁷⁸ (4) On the fourth day Narses captured men dispatched on reconnaissance by Baram and, after interrogating them to the utmost under the lash, discovered the nature of the enemy's intentions. Next, he gave an adequate force to Rufinus, son of Timostratus, and then ordered him to appropriate the other crossings. (5) On the following day, in the first watch after nightfall, the general set out, took possession of the crossings,¹⁷⁹ and suddenly invaded the territory of the Nanisenes.¹⁸⁰ At midday Baram's men, who had seen these events, reported them to the tyrant. (6) But he, now that he had failed in his objective, separated his forces towards the north and east in order to cut off the amalgamation with the Roman force expected from Armenia.¹⁸¹ Baram was already accomplishing the journey with some alacrity and had arrived at a certain lake on his route,¹⁸² when it happened that the contingent from Armenia appeared in close proximity. (7) When the Roman scouts espied Baram's army, they sent a message to the general John that Persian cavalry squadrons were apparently moving against them. And so John arranged his forces in battle-array, while Bindoes took charge of the Persian phalanx; the Roman disposition was commanded by the general John. (8) A river separated Baram from the Roman and Persian forces with John, and prevented them from engagement. On the second day the Roman troops along with Bindoes

¹⁷⁴ Alexandriana should most probably be identified with Arbela, where Alexander captured the royal Persian treasures after the battle of Gaugamela in 331 BC.

¹⁷⁵ The army was continuing to move in a south-easterly direction.

¹⁷⁶ i.e. the Lesser Zab; Narses was probably now advancing east towards the modern Koi Sanjaq, which is situated on the Lesser Zab.

¹⁷⁷ This bridge probably crossed one of the tributaries of the Lesser Zab in the vicinity of Koi Sanjaq.

¹⁷⁸ The two Roman armies were separated by the Zagros mountains.

¹⁷⁹ The various 'crossings' referred to in this passage are rather confusing, and Theophylact himself is most unlikely to have known exactly what was happening. It appears that Baram had been trying to encircle Narses' army somewhere in the area drained by the Lesser Zab and its tributaries; this decisive action by Rufinus enabled Narses to extricate himself from the trap.

¹⁸⁰ If the territory of the Nanisenes is to be located in the vicinity of Rowanduz, as is probable, this would indicate that Narses had abandoned his southward march and returned north to cross the Zagros range by the route that ran from Rowanduz across the Keli Shin pass.

¹⁸¹ Although the Greek would suggest that Baram disengaged his troops separately towards both north and east, it emerges from the subsequent narrative that he moved his whole army north-east from the Lesser Zab to Azerbaijan.

¹⁸² Lake Urmiah in Azerbaijan.

turned away towards the south.¹⁸³ (9) And so Narses and Chosroes set out from the territory of the Nanisenes and, moving forwards, reached the vicinity of a certain village called Siraganon by its inhabitants.¹⁸⁴ On the fifth day Narses discovered that the Roman reinforcements from Armenia were nearby. (10) For this reason he dispatched couriers to John, and instructed the general that he must not engage the Persians until the two forces had joined up together and made their strength invincible. (9.1) While Chosroes was encamped at this very place, the messengers sent by Mebodes came before the king with their announcement of glad tidings. (2) And so, after he had learned of Mebodes' actions in Babylonia and had received the royal trappings sent to him from Ctesiphon, he joyfully exulted in the restoration of his affairs and publicized his success to Narses and the Roman forces. (3) On the fifth day, and after three encampments, the Roman army united with John's divisions.¹⁸⁵ And so the forces, by coming together in one body, mutually gave themselves and received in return great strength. (4) It is said that Chosroes brought with him more than sixty thousand soldiers, including the allies, whereas the battle was knit by Baram with forty thousand men. (5) Now indeed Baram planned to steal the victory and to burst upon the Roman force by night, but the difficulty of the terrain provided an impediment to his attack, at sunrise he became visible to the Romans, and his trick was brought into the open. (6) At the third hour Baram's troops, eager for battle, advanced with shouting and clamour, while the Romans were directed to the engagement in disciplined silence and without noise. Narses was angry with the generals Bindoes and Sarames, who were unable to calm their barbarian forces into untroubled quiet. (7) Then the Romans also shared their own discipline with the barbarian allied forces, and persuaded them to arrange their formation in order and refrain from foolish clamour. (8) Accordingly the Roman army was arranged in three divisions; the central section was controlled by Chosroes and Narses, the right by the Persians Mebodes and Sarames,¹⁸⁶ who led the Median phalanx, and the other by the general John, the commander of the troops from Armenia. Their opponents too were in fact drawn up in the same way, and were likewise arranged in three divisions. (9) Now the Roman army was restless in its resolve and unrestrained in aggression, whereas their opponents were dismayed by the strength, number, and order of the Romans, and withdrew to the mountain slopes. For this reason five hundred of Baram's company laid down their arms and went over to the Romans. (10) And so Chosroes, who was by nature fiery in action, urged the Romans to advance towards the hillsides. But in their prudence the Romans consigned this very idea to the bosom of folly, they did not disperse at all from their ordered cohesion, and by other means they deferred the advance towards the mountain heights. (11) But the barbarians were compelled by their own king to grapple with the foolish risks, and were soundly routed by their opponents when they dared to climb the mountain. The enterprise would have been punished with severe losses if the Romans had not checked the barbarian pursuit by deploying themselves to confront them.¹⁸⁷ (12) The sun had already declined towards its setting when Baram retired to his camp with his allied force, gratified by these achievements, while the Romans, on coming to their camp, denounced Chosroes' folly. (10.1) When Baram realized that the Romans were extremely aggrieved at

¹⁸³ The two armies probably faced each other across the river Tatavi, which flows into the southern end of Lake Urmiah, with John's army on the east bank and Baram's on the west. Thereafter John would have moved south to outflank Baram in an attempt to advance towards Narses and Chosroes.

¹⁸⁴ This march brought Narses and Chosroes to the vicinity of Lake Urmiah.

¹⁸⁵ The armies probably united a short distance to the south of Lake Urmiah.

¹⁸⁶ Mebodes was still in lower Mesopotamia, and the name must be a mistake for Bindoes.

¹⁸⁷ In this section Theophylact uses 'barbarian' first to denote the Romans' Persian allies and then their Persian opponents, which causes some confusion.

Chosroes' recent interfering orders to them while they were at a peak of eagerness for confrontation, he broke camp at daybreak and retired towards difficult country, which was steep and unsuitable for cavalry. (2) So, after this, he came to the plain which extended nearby, where the city of Canzacon is situated;¹⁸⁸ Baram moved camp and from there led his forces elsewhere, planning thereby to shake off Roman aggression. (3) But on discovering Baram's move, the Romans moved camp very close to the enemy by forced marching; then they approached the river Blarathos,¹⁸⁹ where they encamped for the night, and when day came they reached a broad plain. (4) And so the Roman generals marshaled their troops, instilled in the soldiers many good instructions, and prepared for battle in triple formation. The Romans provided a password for their barbarian allies as well, teaching them the name of the Virgin Mother of God, lest they might kill their allies as enemies because of the difference in race, since in the confusion of battle those on their own side would present an indistinguishable aspect. (5) And a strange event occurred, for the saving name of Mary came to the Chaldaeans as well.¹⁹⁰ Baram arranged his own strength in three contingents, the tyrant controlling the center of the line, while the commanders of the allies held the force on either side. (6) Then indeed he arranged for elephants, the Indian beasts, to be led forward as a sort of bulwark for the cavalry, and he mounted the bravest of his fighting force on the beasts and prepared to fight. Neither side was without its share of these beasts as allies.¹⁹¹ (7) Now Chosroes reviewed the ranks, protected by a guard of five hundred men. But when the two forces had gazed at one another and been gazed at in turn, the standards were raised and were gently upheld by the breeze, the trumpets whirled and whipped up the engagements as they boomed abroad these mysteries of war; finally, the middle ground was cut anew and bereft of its proper bounds. (8) Then when the engagement came to close quarters, Baram forsook the center of his force and moved to the left. Then he contributed great strength to those who received him, and, as one might expect, devastated the opposing division in a sudden thrust with a massed array. (9) And so the Romans on this side were scattered and turned to flight, since they could not endure the weight of the opposing force. Therefore, when Narses saw this, he ordered troops to commingle quietly with the weakened men and stopped the flight of the enfeebled force. (10) And so Baram attacked the center of the Roman might and tried to turn Narses to flight. Then Narses, without being in the least concerned about the elephants, stoutly resisted Baram, charged the middle of the opposing force, and completely disrupted the cohesion of the Median formation. (11) After this action, the rest of Baram's forces faltered, while with victorious strength Narses cast the cavalry from their mounts and felled the infantry with the spear. (12) Then, as the pursuit became fierce and slaughter blossomed on the field, six thousand Babylonian fugitives came to a certain hillock in a bid for salvation; but the Romans encompassed the hillock and overpowered the fleeing force. Then they took many prisoners and led them in chains to Chosroes. (13) And so the Persian king handed over some to the jaws of the sword, while others he presented as toys for the feet of the beasts.¹⁹² When he had learned that some of the captives were of the Turkish race, he sent them to the emperor Maurice to publicize Roman strength and offer the emperor first-fruits of victory. (14) On their foreheads was inscribed the sign of the Lord's passion, which is called a cross by

¹⁸⁸ Baram has now retreated about 60 miles south-east of Lake Urmiah.

¹⁸⁹ Baram has continued south from the plain of Canzacon to the valley of the river Saruk (Blarathos).

¹⁹⁰ The Roman battle-cry was probably 'Ave Maria'.

¹⁹¹ This sentence probably means that both flanks of Baram's army were protected by elephants, rather than that both armies had elephants, since the Romans are unlikely to have been able to provide Chosroes with fighting elephants.

¹⁹² i.e. of elephants, probably those captured from Baram (v.11.2).

the ministers of the Christian religion. So the emperor enquired what was the meaning of this mark on the barbarians. (15) And so they declared that they had been assigned this by their mothers: for when a fierce plague was endemic among the eastern Scythians, it was fated that some Christians¹⁹³ advised that the foreheads of the young be tattooed with this very sign. The barbarians in no way rejected the advice, and they obtained salvation from the counsel.

(11.1) But the Romans (for I would redirect my account towards its goal), took as booty the tyrant's tent, wives, children, gold ornaments, and royal trappings. And so they gave the more valuable items to Chosroes, but he gloried in the spoils and proceeded to greater arrogance. (2) When the sun declined, the Romans observed that the barbarians seated on the elephants were hurling missiles and using their bows. Therefore they encircled these, won a second battle, captured the beasts, and handed them over to Chosroes. (3) Then, after the battle had been brought to such a conclusion, the Romans returned to their own camp, as night was apparently already rising over them. On the next day, the Roman army assembled at dawn and despoiled the corpses of the slain. (4) Then, after acquiring great riches, they went to Chosroes' royal tent. The commanders of the Roman army marshaled ten thousand men to track down Baram, appointing as their brigadier the commander of the divisions from Chalcis;¹⁹⁴ they gave the barbarian allies to Bestam. (5) Then, after camping on the battlefield for three days, Chosroes and the Romans withdrew on the fourth, because they could smell the corpses and were unable to endure the choking stench. So they came to the vicinity of the city of Canzacoon. (6) Chosroes the king, priding himself on these felicitous events, held a victory-feast for the Romans; he remained on his couch, enjoying the music of strings and flutes, as is the custom in Persian victory celebrations. (7) He lingered in the place until the tenth day; when he learned that Marinus and Bestam had returned to him from the pursuit of Baram, and he realized that the rout of his enemies was unmistakable, he directed the Romans back to their country, while he gathered the Persian contingent and entered Babylonia, having shown utter disrespect to his Roman allies. (8) And so the Roman generals expounded a spoken moral to the barbarian, that he should not forget the kindness and salvation which he had received from the Romans. Then, after depositing such words with him, the Romans returned homewards. (9) But Chosroes, in fear that an assassination might perhaps be organized against him by his countrymen, asked the emperor Maurice to send a thousand of the army for the protection of his person. (12.1) A story has reached us that Golinduch came to Hierapolis at that time, during the return of Chosroes to his kingdom. But let it be declared of the woman, in the poet's words, 'who and whence'; for indeed let us not exclude the story about her which is adorned with the greatest glories. (2) Now this woman was born in Babylonia of the race of the magi; her father was a distinguished satrap who levied Persian taxes. When she reached her prime, of the age which is bright for marriage, he gave her away to a prominent man. (3) Once, when she was dining with her husband, it seemed that she suddenly became paralyzed, next her body remained motionless, and sensation somehow returned to her much later. When the witnesses of the suffering, if indeed this divine ecstasy should be represented as suffering, enquired what it was that had befallen the young woman, she replied as follows: (4) 'Great indeed are the punishments I have seen stored up on our threshold, and a luxuriance of great blessings ministered to those who adore the greatest God, whose worship by the Christians is established as a subject for mockery among the

¹⁹³ These Christians were probably Nestorian missionaries, whose activities in this period extended from Persia along the trade routes to China.

¹⁹⁴ The sentence may be defective; the commander of the Chalcis troops is probably the Marinus who is mentioned below (v.11.7), and his name should perhaps be inserted at this point.

Persians.' (5) Now her husband derided his wife's words, but when indeed he realized that her resolve to change her religion was unshakeable, he decided to thrash her to her senses; he even threatened that she would be punished with death, as it is customary for the Persians to do to those who reject the doctrines of the magi.¹⁹⁵ (6) And so divine love gave wings to her mind, she sealed her ears as it were, and let his words be scattered on the winds. Then, there also came to the woman an illumination of another and greater divine manifestation; (7) for an angel, brighter than radiance in form and raiment, stood before her, once again revealed to her the vision of the future, and predicted her husband's imminent death. (8) And so the woman's husband laid down his life in accordance with the angel's prophecy, while the woman departed from Babylonia and came to Nisibis, where she encountered the Christian priests and confessed the greatness of the Spirit.¹⁹⁶ (9) So they initiated her into these truly divine and ineffable doctrines of the Christians; when this was revealed to the magi, they went in search of the woman. (10) So they came to Nisibis and in flattery made preparations more elevated than her rank, attempting thereby to lead the female astray; but when they were defeated and their speech was ineffectual, they locked up the woman for a long time in a harsh prison.¹⁹⁷ (11) Then, since God oversees all things and at no time leaves himself without a witness, with the assistance of the guardian angel she departed from the prison and came to the land of the Romans. (12) And so, journeying as far as Jerusalem, she proclaimed the manifest and indescribable greatness of God; after offering up prayers at the most holy tomb of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ, and venerating with adoration the cross of the passion, she returned to Hierapolis. (13) She made many predictions about what would befall Chosroes, and revealed his approach to the Romans before the commencement of the events.¹⁹⁸ After conducting her life like an angel and arranging the considerations of soul and body as befits the saints, she departed from this world,¹⁹⁹ binding on with undefiled triumphs the crown of endurance.

(13.1) page 149 The Roman emperor dispatched bodyguards to Chosroes. Then the Persian king called to mind the decisive assistance which he had received from above,²⁰⁰ and he dispatched as a gift to Sergius,²⁰¹ most glorious among martyrs, gem-studded cross made of gold, (2) the one which Chosroes the son of Kabades, when he reduced the city, had taken as booty and deposited in the palace of the Persians, while the emperor Justinian was still in control of the Roman scepters.²⁰² So on this cross, Chosroes fashioned at its head another cross of pure gold and inscribed on it reason for the offering. (3) He sent a letter written in Greek characters to the Barbaricon, as it is called,²⁰³ along with the treasure, and the letter was also signed with the royal seal. The contents of the letter were in fact in the following terms, for I will not alter the original wording: (4) 'This cross I, Chosroes, king of kings, son of Chosroes, when we departed to Romanià on account of the devilish operations and wickedness of the most ill-starred Baram son

¹⁹⁵ Although Christianity was generally tolerated in Persia, proselytism was forbidden.

¹⁹⁶ The presence of the Nestorian theological school made Nisibis one of the most important centers for Christianity in Persia.

¹⁹⁷ In the castle of Oblivion.

¹⁹⁸ At Hierapolis, Golinduch met Domitianus, when he was preparing for an embassy to Persia before Hormisdas' death (this embassy is not mentioned by Theophylact), and predicted the imminent overthrow of Hormisdas and the flight to the Romans of Chosroes; subsequently she met both Domitianus and Chosroes, during the latter's flight, and made various predictions.

¹⁹⁹ On 13 July 591.

²⁰⁰ Cf. v.1.7-2.1.

²⁰¹ Evagrius states that the offerings were first sent to Gregory of Antioch, who dedicated them to Sergius only after Maurice had been consulted.

²⁰² This cross must have been among the treasures which the inhabitants of Sergiopolis had given Chosroes in 542 in their attempt to buy off his attack; Chosroes had still attacked the city but, contra Theophylact, failed to capture it.

²⁰³ This must be part of the shrine of Sergius.



of Bargusnas²⁰⁴ and of his associate cavaliers, and on account of the coming of the ill-starred Zadesprates from the army towards Nisibis for the seduction of the cavaliers of the district of Nisibis to rebellion and complicity in revolution, we also sent cavaliers with an officer to Charcha, (5) and through the fortune of the most holy and renowned St Sergius, when we heard that he was the granter of petitions, in the first year of our reign, on the seventh of January, we petitioned that if our cavaliers should kill or defeat Zadesprates, we would send a gold-bejewelled cross to his shrine because of his most holy name. (6) And on the ninth of February they brought before us the head of Zadesprates. So, since we were successful in our petition, because each part was unambiguous, to his most holy name the cross which came from us, together with the cross sent to his shrine by Justinian, emperor of the Romans, which was brought here in time of estrangement between the two states by Chosroes our father, king of kings, son of Koades,²⁰⁵ and which was discovered in our treasuries, we have sent to the shrine of the most holy Sergius.' (7) And so the satrap delivered the cross and the king's letter according to his instructions. In the following year the Persian king proclaimed as queen Seirem, who was of Roman birth and Christian religion,²⁰⁶ and of an age blossoming for marriage, slept with her, and thereby debased the customs of the Babylonians.

(14.1) In the third year he entreated Sergius,²⁰⁷ the most efficacious in Persia, that a child by Seirem be granted to him. Shortly afterwards this came to pass for him,²⁰⁸ and once again he naturally honoured his benefactor with gifts. Using Greek expression he dispatched a letter; the letter was as follows, word for word: (2) "To the great martyr Sergius, Chosroes, king of kings. I, Chosroes, king of kings, son of Chosroes, have dispatched the gifts accompanying the pattern not for the sight of men, nor so that the greatness of your holy name may be known from my words, but because the truth about events has been recognized as well as the many favours and benefactions which I had from you: for it is my good fortune that my name should be carried on your holy vessels. (3) During the time when I was in Berthamaïs,²⁰⁹ I petitioned of you, holy one, to come to my aid and that Seirem conceive in her womb. And since Seirem is a Christian and I a pagan, our law does not grant us freedom to have a Christian wife. (4) So on account of my gratitude to you, for this reason I disregarded the law, and I held and hold from day to day this one among my wives as legitimate, and thus I resolved now to beseech your goodness that she conceive in her womb. (5) And I petitioned and ordained that if Seirem should conceive in her womb, I would send to your most holy shrine the cross that she wears. And with regard to this both I and Seirem have this purpose, that we should have possession of this cross in remembrance of your name, holy one. (6) And we have resolved that for its value, although this does not extend beyond four thousand three hundred standard miliarsia, five thousand standard coins should be displaced in its place.²¹⁰ (7) And from the time when I had the said petition in my mind and made these calculations until the time we came to Rhesonchosron, ten more days did not elapse and you, holy one, not because I am worthy but because of your goodness, you appeared to me in a dream at night and thrice declared to me that Seirem had conceived in her

²⁰⁴ Baram was son of Bahram-Gušnasp.

²⁰⁵ i.e. Kabadēs. Although Chosroes' message states that Justinian had dedicated the cross, Evagrius observed that it had in fact been dedicated by Justinian's wife Theodora.

²⁰⁶ Seirem was in fact Aramaic by race, a Christian from Huzistan, who was one of the most influential supporters of the Monophysites in Persia. Chosroes had a second Christian wife called Maria the Roman.

²⁰⁷ In the third year after Chosroes' return, i.e. in 593/4.

²⁰⁸ Shirin (Seirem) conceived and gave birth to a son, Merdānshah.

²⁰⁹ The area of Beth Aramaye in lower Mesopotamia.

²¹⁰ The miliarsis was a Roman silver coin that had fallen out of use in the fifth century AD. It is used as a convenient synonym for the standard Persian silver coin, the dirham.

womb. (8) And in the dream itself, I thrice answered you in return and said, "Thank you, thank you". And because of your holiness and charity, and because of your most holy name, and because you the granter of petitions, from that day Seirem did not know what is customary for women. (9) I was in no doubt of this, but trusted in your words, even because you are holy and a true granter of petitions. After she did not experience womanly ways, from this I recognized the power of the vision and the truth of what you had spoken. (10) So straightway I sent the same cross and its value to your most holy shrine, giving orders that from its value one patten and one cup should be made for the sake of the divine mysteries, but indeed also that a cross, which is owed, be fixed on the honoured altar, and a solid gold censer and a Hunnic curtain adorned with gold;²¹¹ (11) and that the remaining miliaresia are for your holy shrine, so that through your fortune, holy one, in all things, but especially in this petition, you may come to the assistance of myself and Seirem. And what has come to us through your intercession by the mercy of your goodness, may it also advance to completion at the wish of myself and Seirem, so that both I and Seirem and everyone in the world may have hope in your power and still trust in you.' (12) Accordingly, the emissary quickly came to the shrine and placed the king's gift along with his message on the holy altar.

(15.1) But Baram, who had not been subdued by Chosroes, shook off extreme peril. Therefore the Persian king committed to death all who had associated in the usurpation, and Bindoes himself he buried in the bowels of the Tigris, on the grounds that he had stretched forth his hands against the king.²¹² (2) The treaty between Romans and Persians was made on equal terms,²¹³ and thus indeed that great Persian war was brought to a glorious conclusion for the Romans. (3) But I will not overlook what Chosroes, who was well versed in the burdensome folly of the Chaldaeans concerning the stars, is said to have prophesied at the height of the war. (4) For when the renowned John, the general of the Armenian force, jeered at him on account of his lack of order,²¹⁴ and said that it was wrong for a king to be perverse in his ways and outlandish in the impulses of his heart, they say that the barbarian said to the general: (5) 'If we were not subject to the tyranny of the occasion, you would not have dared, general, to strike with insults the king who is great among mortals. But since you are proud in present circumstances, you shall hear what indeed the gods have provided for the future. (6) Be assured that troubles will flow back in turn against you Romans. The Babylonian race will hold the Roman state in its power for a threefold cyclic hebdomad of years. Thereafter you Romans will enslave Persians for a fifth hebdomad hebdomad of years. Thereafter you Romans will enslave Persians for a fifth hebdomadof years.²¹⁵ (7) When these very things have been accomplished, the day without evening will dwell among mortals and the expected fate will achieve power, when the forces of destruction will be handed over to dissolution and those of the better life hold sway. (8) Not long afterwards Probus was invested with the high-priestly care of the city of the Chalcedonians, and apparently heard extraordinary things from Chosroes. (9) For when the emperor Maurice

²¹¹ Chosroes letter now suggests that Seirem's cross was after all dispatched (contrary to § 5 above).

²¹² Baram was soon murdered in eastern Iran while trying to collect fresh forces. Bestam, who had been sent to oppose him, subsequently assumed the leadership of his troops on learning of Bindoes' death, and maintained a serious rebellion for ten years. Bindoes was crucified at Beth Lapat, after having his right arm and leg amputated.

²¹³ This is not strictly true, since the Romans, apart from regaining their lost cities of Dara and Martyropolis, also received a large part of Persian Armenia. The treaty was equal in the sense that there were no financial payments by either side

²¹⁴ This probably refers to the occasion described at v.9.10-10.1.

²¹⁵ This prediction refers to the events of the early 7th c., when the Persians defeated the Romans for approximately twenty-one years (a threefold cyclic hebdomad) and were then defeated by Heraclius in a campaign which lasted six years (until 628). The Roman victory is placed in the fifth hebdomad, presumably because the prophecy was reckoned to include one hebdomad of peace, which is not mentioned, but which preceded the three hebdomads of Persian conquests.

dispatched this man to Chosroes at Ctesiphon, at high noon one day Chosroes had him summoned to the palace where, bathed in sweat, he demanded of the priest to see an image of the Mother of God. (10) So the priest, who carried with him her likeness on a tablet, granted a view of it to the Persian king. He worshipped the panel, and declared that its archetype had stood beside him and told him that the victories of Alexander of Macedon would be bestowed on him; and yet already Chosroes had received the return to his kingdom and overpowered the tyrants through the strength and power of the emperor.²¹⁶ (11) Probus also recounted with respect to Nineveh that there existed certain remnants of the tower whose construction men had undertaken in Babylon, and that its brickwork, in accordance with the account of the high priest Moses, was baked exceedingly carefully by fire. (12) But since in the construction of our narrative we have terminated as far as possible the theme of the Persian war, let the pen which navigates the books with ink again proceed to events in Europe, so that, anchoring in the harbour of its goal and carrying as cargo spectacular actions, it may complete the reports which are worthy of record.

Book Eight: viii.1.1-viii.1.8

(1.1) In these very times Chosroes, the king of the Persians tried to defile the peace.²¹⁷ The barbarian's reason was in fact roughly this: many different nations are native to Arabia, whom the masses are accustomed to call Saracens; (2) some of these particular nations were Roman allies; a subdivision of these went into Persia during the time of the peace, and in their sally ravaged certain parts of Babylonia. Hence Chosroes decided to be aggrieved. (3) For this reason the emperor Maurice dispatched to Persia as ambassador George who held responsibility for the tax-collection of the eastern cities; Romans call this man praetorian prefect. (4) And so Chosroes, in indignation at what had happened, affronted the ambassador and engineered for him a long delay in the barbarian country; so George spent many uncomfortable days in Persia without gaining any access to the king. (5) Then, since Chosroes' affairs were still subject to strife,²¹⁸ the barbarian sensibly took the view that he should not in the meantime initiate a war against the Romans; then the Babylonian king admitted George into the palace. (6) And so George, having the moment as his ally, persuaded the barbarian not to dissolve the peace treaty. And so, in this way, Chosroes 'willingly but with reluctant heart', as the poet says, welcomed quiet. (7) And so the ambassador reported in detail to the emperor all that had occurred, but his exposition of the conversation did not gain a beneficial outcome, because in addressing the emperor George said: 'The king of the Persians spoke as follows in the hearing of the satraps: "On account of the ambassador's excellence, I am putting a stop to the war."' (8) On hearing this the emperor grew angry with the ambassador, and the success of his mission was perilous for George. For, in truth, speech that is not regulated by moderation can provide great misfortunes for its practitioners.

²¹⁶ Theophylact interprets the prophecy as foreshadowing the conquest of the east from the west (the exact replica of Alexander's victories), a success which Chosroes had already achieved with Maurice's help. Chosroes, however, perhaps intended the prophecy to convey a more general promise of extensive conquests, possibly in particular conquests of Egypt, Palestine, and Asia Minor (areas conquered by Alexander): hence, he may have publicized the prophecy to justify and corroborate his Near Eastern conquests in the early 7th c.

²¹⁷ The date of these events is unknown. Theophylact has connected them with the Balkan campaign of 598, but his Balkan chronology is so confused that this synchronism is worthless. A date toward the end of Maurice's reign is probable.

²¹⁸ This strife probably denoted the revolt of Bestam, which continued in the eastern provinces for about a decade.



viii.9.11-12

(11) The Maurice dispatched Theodosius to go to Chosroes, beg the barbarian for an alliance, remind him of everything that Maurice had discharged for him in his misfortune, and request that the reciprocal favour be weighed out in return, since his whole house together had fallen into greatest danger. (12) Maurice also showed him his ring, and committed him not to effect his return on any account unless perchance he should again behold the ring. And so Theodosius thus came to Nicaea; but Constantine, whom the masses call Lardys, was also his traveling-companion.

viii,12.8-13

(8) And so Lilius (for this man had been entrusted by the tyrant with the emperor's murder) ferried across to the tyrant the heads of the slain. Then, on the plain which extends at the place called Hebdomon, and which Romans name Campus, he publicly displayed the emperor's slaughter to the tyrant's armies. (9) For it was necessary that the inhumane army also share in the pollution through observation, so that the evil-hating and impartial judgment of God might also net in the toils of retribution all those who had raged in this cause: for all members of those murderous camps departed this life after falling into manifold grave troubles. (10) For, when the Persian war gained free rein, they received their allotted retribution for those wicked enterprises by divinely ordained threats, now being struck down by fire from heaven at the hour of the engagement, at other times being wasted by famine and ravaging; (11) but the majority perished as they surrendered this sinful life in the jaws of cutlass and sword, and victory did not desert the Persians until that tyrant-loving and most impious mob had been utterly destroyed. (12) The following statement is sufficient proof for anyone: for to confirm our account, we will briefly disregard continuity of successive events. When the emperor Heraclius was making war against Rhazates, he inspected his army in review and discovered that there were two soldiers alone left from the tyrant-loving mob, even though the intervening years had not been numerous.²¹⁹ (13) When time had created afresh different forces and the evil had been consumed, success migrated from the Persians, the Babylonian dragon, Chosroes the son of Hormisdas, was slain, and the Persian war was concluded.²²⁰

viii.15.2-7

(15.2) In the fifth month, the tyrant set out his own proclamation in writing, and dispatched Lilius to Chosroes, appointing him the messenger of his tyrannical election: for it was customary for Romans and Persians to do this whenever they ascended to the royal might.²²¹ (3) Lilius came to

²¹⁹ This was in fact the final battle in Heraclius' campaign against the Persians, and was fought at Nineveh on 12 Dec. 627, twenty-five years after Maurice's overthrow. In view of the lapse of time and the constant fighting in the intervening period, it is less surprising than Theophylact claims that few troops had survived from the mutiny in 602.

²²⁰ In 628.

²²¹ The fifth month of Phocas' reign was Apr. 603.

Daras, carrying regal gifts. He was received with exceptional splendour by Germanus, who was adorned with the rank of the consuls and had been allotted the charge of the camp arrayed there. (4) For, shortly before the time of the tyranny, when Chosroes king of the Persians was angry with the commanded Narses, the emperor Maurice had relieved the leader Narses of custody of Daras and had elevated Germanus instead; Maurice intended thereby to soothe the Babylonian anger.²²² (5) Now, while Germanus and Lilius were out riding, forming a pair, at the third hour a military man struck the mounted Germanus with a sword. (6) And so Germanus dismounted from his horse and arrived home carried on a litter; but since the consequences of the sword-thrust did not gain influence in a vital place, Germanus was cured of the blow in a few days. Then, after he had been made better by medicines, he gave an exceedingly distinguished feast for Lilius, and sent him on to Chosroes. (7) And so Chosroes exploited the tyranny as a pretext for war, and mobilized that world-destroying trumpet: for this became the undoing of the prosperity of Romans and Persians. For Chosroes feigned a pretence of upholding the pious memory of the emperor Maurice.²²³ And so in this way the Persian war was allotted its birth, and Lilius remained among the Persians in great hardship.

²²² The cause of Chosroes' anger against Narses is not known. One possibility is that he may have been suspected of intriguing with the citizens of Nisibis, who revolted against Chosroes in May 602.

²²³ Chosroes first gave military support to the supposed Theodosius, the son of Maurice, and then invaded in Person after Theodosius had been defeated.

