

The African Policy of Justinian I

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Acknowledgements

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Abstract

In 533, Justinian I ordered the conquest of the former Roman provinces of Africa, which had been lost to the Vandals a century earlier. The 'reconquest' has been regarded, by contemporaries and modern scholars alike, as one of the defining successes of the reign. However, despite the evident achievements of the campaign, Roman victory over the Vandals marked little more than the beginning of the Eastern Roman Empire's attempt to consolidate its position in Africa. The unanticipated threat posed by hostilities from the Berber tribes would continue until 548.

Roman-Berber relations, unlike other aspects of Justinian's foreign relations, have received comparatively little attention, and this study aims to reassess the establishment of Roman authority in Africa and the Eastern Roman Empire's response to the Berber threat. In particular, it considers whether this response should be seen as a series of *ad hoc* reactions to immediate circumstances, or whether it is possible to identify a coherent Roman policy *vis-à-vis* the Berbers.

The major conclusions of this study fall in two areas. First, it argues that Roman objectives in Africa were far more limited than has generally been supposed, with the empire's territorial ambitions not extending beyond key coastal positions which offered strategic and commercial advantages, and from which the empire could project its limited authority into the interior. Second, this study concludes that the Eastern Roman Empire's actions with respect to the Berber tribes lacked coherence. Attempts to implement a system of client rulers were unsuccessful, partly as a result of the competition between individual Berber leaders as they sought to establish independent polities within the frontiers of the former Roman Empire; and partly as a result of an increasing lack of resources, as well as the instability caused by constantly changing leadership within the African civil and military administrations, which prevented the development of coherent long term strategies for addressing the Berber threat.

Long Abstract

In 533, the emperor Justinian I (527-565 CE) ordered the reconquest of the former Roman provinces of Africa, which had been lost to the Vandals a century earlier. The 'reconquest', declared complete within a matter of months, has been regarded, by contemporaries and modern scholars alike, as one of the defining successes of the reign. However, despite the successes of the campaign, Roman victory over the Vandals marked little more than the beginning of the Eastern Roman Empire's attempt to consolidate its position in Africa, as it sought to counter the ongoing threat posed by the Berber tribes.

Roman-Berber relations, unlike other aspects of Justinian's foreign relations, have received comparatively little attention, and attempts to understand Roman policy *vis-à-vis* the Berbers have been dominated by the view that the Roman imperial government, and its military commanders, acted out of complete ignorance concerning the conditions of Africa in the 6th century, and thus completely failed to recognize the Berbers as a threat – a view most recently set out by Yves Modéran, in *Les Maures et l'Afrique romaine (VIe-VIIe siècle)* (2003).

This study aims to reassess the Roman response to the Berber threat in Africa. In particular, it considers whether this response should be seen as a series of *ad hoc* reactions to immediate circumstances, or whether it is possible to identify a coherent Roman 'policy' *vis-à-vis* the Berbers – a policy specifically formulated to address the threat posed by a decentralised, tribal society, often affected by inter-tribal rivalries, as opposed to its more established policies for addressing the threat posed by a centralized state, such as Sasanian Persia.

An assessment of Roman policy, or lack thereof, in Africa is important to the more general understanding of the development of imperial policy during Justinian's reign. The longstanding view has been that all imperial decision making could be explained by an ideological 'policy' of *renovatio imperii*. Although this view has now been challenged, no

alternative has yet been proposed. However, the assessment of any broader, empire-wide, approach to foreign relations is dependent on detailed studies of the various Roman frontier regions during Justinian's reign being available.

While the histories of the frontier regions of Italy, the East, and the Caucasus during the 6th century have all seen recent re-assessment, in relation to Africa, general studies of the period remain heavily dependent on Charles Diehl's *L'Afrique byzantine: histoire de la domination byzantine en Afrique (533-709)*, first published in 1896, and for the early part of Justinian's reign, Christian Courtois's *Les Vandales et l'Afrique* (1955), and supplemented, on archaeological matters, by the second edition of Denys Pringle's *The Defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab Conquest* (2001). A detailed re-assessment of the history of Africa in the 6th century, based on the written sources, is long overdue.

It cannot be denied that the written sources for Africa in the 6th century are extremely limited, and, like earlier studies, this thesis rests heavily on the works of Procopius, in particular, books III and IV of the *Bella*. In relation to Africa, any reassessment of the information provided by the *Bella* is complicated by the fact that it is, more often than not, the only source of information available. Thus, the major overviews of the reign of Justinian, most notably John Bury's *History of the Later Roman Empire: From the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian (A.D. 395 to A.D. 565)* (1923) and Ernest Stein's *Histoire du Bas-Empire: De la disparition de l'empire d'occident à la mort de Justinien* (1949), offer little more than a paraphrase of Procopius' narrative of the African campaign. While no new written source material has come to light, much previous scholarship has been excessively trusting of Procopius' versions of events, as a result of its ostensibly classicizing nature, and books III and IV of the *Bella*, as much as any other portion of Procopius' *corpus*, merit reassessment in light of more recent critical studies of Procopius and his works.

In the area of Roman-Berber relations there is also the opportunity to reassess some of the information provided by Procopius through the examination of Corippus' epic poem, the *Iohannis*, a work which, despite receiving some attention as a work of debatable literary merit, remains underappreciated and understudied as a historical source.

This study therefore provides a reassessment of the Eastern Roman Empire's involvement in Africa during the reign of the emperor Justinian I, with a particular focus on the Roman administration's relations with the Berber tribes.

An introductory Prologue provides an overview of the key events and chronology of the initial Roman military campaign in Africa, from the departure of the Roman expeditionary force from Constantinople in June 533, until the formal surrender of the Vandal king in March 534. While this campaign is not the primary focus of the thesis, the Prologue provides the essential context for what follows.

Chapter 1: The Sources considers the major written sources for the history of Africa in the 6th century – namely Procopius' *Bella* and *De Aedificiis*; and Corippus' epic poem, the *Iohannis*. It provides an assessment of the backgrounds of the two writers, and the context in which their works were produced. In particular, it focuses on the individual authors' access to information concerning Africa, and their perceptions of imperial policy in the region. The chapter also provides an overview of the value of the chronicle traditions in Greek, Latin and Syriac for the study of the history of Africa in the 6th century.

Chapter 2: The Roman Invasion of Africa and its Motivations sets out the background to the Roman invasion of Africa in 533, and its motivations, both real and advertised. It begins by considering the domestic politics of the Vandal kingdom prior to the Roman invasion, and the manner in which this facilitated the invasion itself. It then discusses the Roman imperial government's representation of the invasion, and, in particular, the presentation of the emperor as defender of legitimate rule in Vandal Africa and presentation of the invasion

as religiously motivated. It also considers the role of groups at Constantinople in encouraging Roman intervention in Africa in 533. Finally, provides an assessment of the strategic concerns of the Eastern Roman Empire at the time of its invasion of Africa.

Chapter 3: Establishment of Civil and Military Administration provides a detailed assessment of the establishment of the Roman civil and military administration in Africa, based on the administrative legislation (*Codex Justinianus* 1.27.1 and 1.27.2) which was promulgated in 534, as well as considering the initial commitment of military resources to Africa and the role of imperially sponsored building programs. The legislation has previously been used as a basis for understanding the longer term objectives of the Roman imperial government in Africa, and this chapter provides a reinterpretation of its significance, arguing that the propaganda value of the legislation has been underestimated, and that effective Roman control in Africa, in 534, was less extensive than has generally been supposed.

Chapter 4: Romans, Vandals and Berbers to 534 begins by providing a brief outline of what is known concerning relations between the Vandals and the Berber tribes, prior to the Roman invasion of Africa in 533. In particular, it draws attention to the development of independent Berber polities within the boundaries of the former Roman *limes* in the late 5th and early 6th century, as a result of the breakdown of Vandal authority within the region. The chapter then considers the initial contact between the Roman administration and the Berber tribes – the Berber embassies to the general Belisarius in 533 – which have generally been regarded as the basis for understanding Roman strategy *vis-à-vis* the Berbers. It argues that, in interpreting the agreement reached by the embassies, the role of inter-tribal politics has been understated. Furthermore, previous studies have both underestimated the Berber position, and overestimated the Roman position in the negotiations which occurred.

Chapter 5: An Overview of Military Campaigns in Africa (534 to 548) provides the background information for the subsequent analysis presented in Chapter 6, offering a chronological overview of the Roman military campaigns undertaken in Africa between the outbreak of Berber hostilities against the Romano-African population in 534, and the Roman victory at the battle of the Plains of Cato, in 548, as well as some discussion of the key issues which significantly compromised any imperial intention of territorial expansion in Africa during this period – namely personnel decisions and the repeated outbreak of mutinies in the African army. In particular, the chapter focuses on the change in the balance of power between the Berber tribes and the Roman administration during this period, and concludes that effective Roman control in Africa during this period was minimal, and that both maladministration and extraneous factors had contributed to a decentralisation of authority in the region.

Chapter 6: Roman-Berber Relations (543 to 548) provides an outline of what is known concerning the five Berber leaders who emerge as key to the security of the Roman administration in Africa – Cusina, Iaudas, Antalas, Ierna and Carcasan – and the tribes which they represented – some enemies and some allies. It considers the manner in which the Eastern Roman Empire sought to both manage and exploit its relationships with these individuals and groups. In conclusion, it assesses whether it is possible to identify a coherent Roman strategy vis-à-vis the Berbers after the initial campaign of conquest in Africa. It concludes that, while the Roman campaign of conquest in Africa was well planned, and well-resourced, the subsequent response to the Berber threat lacked coherence, as a result of both the multiplicity of Berber responses to the Roman presence in Africa, and the instability and continually changing leadership of the Roman administration.

Finally, the Epilogue provides a summary of what little is known of the Roman administration of Africa from the Roman victory at the battle of the Plains of Cato, in 548, until Justinian's

death in 565, considering, in particular, the last known Berber revolt of Justinian's reign, in 563.

The conclusions of this study fall in two major areas. First, it challenges the view that the Roman conquest of Africa must have been motivated by the desire to reclaim the former Roman provinces of Africa in their entirety. Instead, it argues that the initial Roman objective was to secure key coastal positions, which would provide strategic and commercial advantages and, while imperial authorities wanted to consolidate their position, to judge by the resources subsequently allocated and the actions taken, they made no serious attempt to greatly extend the area of Roman direct rule. Rather, the empire sought to project its limited power into the interior from the coast.

Second, this study concludes that there was no coherent Roman strategy *vis-à-vis* the Berber tribes across the period of time considered. While the length of the African frontier, and the severely limited Roman military resources in the region would have made the establishment of Berber client rulers an obvious strategy to secure the stability of the region, attempts to implement such a strategy were unsuccessful. This was in part a result of the high level of competition between individual Berber leaders as they sought to establish and maintain independent polities within the frontiers of the former Roman Empire. Equally, an increasing lack of willingness, on the part of the Roman imperial government, to commit resources to Africa, as well as the instability caused by constantly changing leadership, and distrust, within the African civil and military administrations prevented the development of coherent long term strategies for addressing the Berber threat.

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Abbreviations

Primary Sources

The editions of the primary sources cited are given in the Bibliography.

<i>Aed.</i>	Procopius, <i>De Aedificiis</i>
Agathias, <i>Hist.</i>	Agathias, <i>Historiae</i>
Ammianus Marcellinus	Ammianus Marcellinus, <i>Historiae</i>
<i>AL</i>	<i>Anthologia Latina</i>
<i>AP</i>	<i>Anthologia Palatina</i>
<i>Anec.</i>	Procopius, <i>Anecdota</i>
<i>Bella</i>	Procopius, <i>Bella</i> (Books of the <i>Bella</i> are numbered continuously I-VIII)
<i>CJ</i>	<i>Codex Justinianus</i>
<i>Chron. Pasch.</i>	<i>Chronicon Paschale</i>
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
<i>Coll. Avell.</i>	<i>Collectio Avellana</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>Digesta Justiniani</i>
Pseudo-Dionysius	Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, <i>Chronicle</i> (All references to the English translation of W. Witakowski <i>Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre: Chronicle: Part III</i> (Liverpool, 1996))
Evagrius, <i>HE</i>	Evagrius Scholasticus, <i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
Gregory of Tours, <i>Hist.</i>	Gregory of Tours, <i>Historia Francorum</i>
Hydatius	Hydatius, <i>Chronicon</i>
<i>In laudem</i>	Corippus, <i>In laudem Justiniani augusti minoris</i>
<i>I</i>	<i>Institutiones Justiniani</i>
<i>Ioh.</i>	Corippus, <i>Iohannis</i>
<i>IRT</i>	<i>Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania</i>
<i>J. Edict.</i>	<i>Edictae Justiniani</i>
<i>J. Nov.</i>	<i>Novellae Justiniani</i>
John of Nikiu	John of Nikiu, <i>Chronicle</i> (All references are to the English translation of R. H. Charles, <i>The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu</i> (London, 1916))
Jordanes, <i>Rom.</i>	Jordanes, <i>Romana</i>
John of Biclar	John of Biclar, <i>Chronicon continuans Victorem Tunnunensem</i>

John Lydus, <i>De mag.</i>	John Lydus, <i>De magistratibus</i>
Malalas	John Malalas, <i>Chronographia</i>
<i>Marc. Com. Addit.</i>	<i>Marcellini Comitis Chronicae Additamentum</i>
Marcellinus Comes	Marcellinus Comes, <i>Chronicon</i>
Paul the Deacon, <i>Hist. Lang.</i>	Paul the Deacon, <i>Historia Langobardorum</i>
Paul the Deacon, <i>Hist. Rom.</i>	Paul the Deacon, <i>Historia Romana</i>
Paul the Silentary	Paul the Silentary, <i>Descriptio Sanctae Sophiae</i>
Priscus	Priscus, <i>Historia Byzantina</i>
Prosper	Prosper of Aquitaine, <i>Epitoma chronicon</i>
Theophanes	Theophanes, <i>Chronographia</i>
Thucydides	Thucydides, <i>Historiae</i>
Victor of Tunnuna	Victor of Tunnuna, <i>Chronicon</i>
Victor of Vita	Victor of Vita, <i>Historia persecutionis Africanae provinciae sub Geiserico et Hunrico regibus Wandalorum</i>
Ps. Zachariah	Ps. Zachariah of Mitylene, <i>Chronicle</i> (All references to the English translation of F. J. Hamilton and E. W. Brooks <i>The Syriac Chronicle Known as that of Zachariah of Mitylene</i> (London, 1899))

Secondary Literature

Secondary works have been referenced in full the first time they are cited in the text. Subsequent references have been abbreviated to author's surname and shortened title. The abbreviations for frequently cited works and periodicals are given below:

<i>ActaAnthung</i>	<i>Acta Antiquae Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae</i>
<i>AJ</i>	<i>The Antiquaries Journal</i>
<i>AJAH</i>	<i>American Journal of Ancient History</i>
<i>Annales (HSS)</i>	<i>Annales. Histoire, sciences sociales</i>
<i>AntAfr</i>	<i>Antiquités Africaines</i>
<i>AnTard</i>	<i>Antiquité Tardive</i>
<i>BCTH</i>	<i>Bulletin archéologique du comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques</i>
<i>BMGS</i>	<i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i>
<i>BSC Abstracts</i>	<i>Byzantine Studies Conference: Abstracts of Papers</i>
<i>BSNAF</i>	<i>Bulletin de la société nationale des antiquaires de France</i>
<i>Bury, History</i>	J. B. Bury, <i>History of the Later Roman Empire: From the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian (A.D. 395 to A.D. 565)</i> (2 vols., London, 1923)
<i>ByzF</i>	<i>Byzantinische Forschungen</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CAH</i>	<i>The Cambridge Ancient History</i> (14 vols., Cambridge, 1970-2000)
<i>CCC</i>	<i>Civiltà Classica e Cristiane</i>
<i>CCSL</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum – Series Latina</i>
<i>CFHB</i>	<i>Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae</i>
<i>CHR</i>	<i>The Catholic Historical Review</i>
<i>Courtois, Les Vandales</i>	C. Courtois, <i>Les Vandales et l'Afrique</i> (Paris, 1955)
<i>CP</i>	<i>Classical Philology</i>
<i>CRAI</i>	<i>Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres</i>
<i>CT</i>	<i>Les Cahiers de Tunisie</i>
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>Diehl, L'Afrique byzantine</i>	C. Diehl, <i>L'Afrique byzantine: histoire de la domination byzantine en Afrique (533-709)</i> (New York, 1896)
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
<i>Durliat, Les dédicaces</i>	J. Durliat, <i>Les dédicaces d'ouvrages de defense dans l'Afrique byzantine</i> (Rome, 1981)

<i>EB</i>	<i>Encyclopédie Berbère</i>
<i>EncVirg</i>	<i>Enciclopedia Virgiliana</i> (5 vols., Rome, 1984–)
<i>EME</i>	<i>Early Medieval Europe</i>
<i>FelRav</i>	<i>Felix Ravenna: Rivista di Antichità Ravennati, Cristiane e Bizantine</i>
<i>GRBS</i>	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i>
<i>JbAChr</i>	<i>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>JÖB</i>	<i>Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>
<i>Jones, LRE</i>	A. H. M. Jones, <i>The Later Roman Empire, 284–602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey</i> (Oxford, 1964)
<i>JRA</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>LibStud</i>	<i>Libyan Studies</i>
<i>MA</i>	<i>Le Moyen Age</i>
<i>MBAH</i>	<i>Münstersche Beiträge zur antiken Handelsgeschichte</i>
<i>MEFRA</i>	<i>Mélanges de l'école française de Rome: Antiquité</i>
<i>MGH</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i>
<i>Modéran, Les Maures</i>	Y. Modéran, <i>Les Maures et l'Afrique romaine (Ive–VIIe siècle)</i> (Rome, 2003)
<i>NC</i>	<i>The Numismatic Chronicle</i>
<i>NRS</i>	<i>Nuova Rivista Storica</i>
<i>ODB</i>	<i>The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium</i> , ed. A. P. Khazhdan (3 vols., Oxford, 1991)
<i>PLRE</i>	A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale and J. Morris, <i>The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i> (3 vols., Cambridge, 1971–1992)
<i>Pringle, Defence</i>	D. Pringle, <i>The Defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab Conquest</i> , revised edn. (Oxford, 2001)
<i>RLAC</i>	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i> (16 vols., Stuttgart, 1957–1994)
<i>REA</i>	<i>Revue des études anciennes</i>
<i>REAug</i>	<i>Revue des études augustiniennes</i>
<i>REL</i>	<i>Revue des études latines</i>
<i>SIFC</i>	<i>Studi Italiani di Filologia Classica</i>
<i>Stein, Histoire</i>	E. Stein, <i>Histoire du Bas-Empire: De la disparition de l'empire d'occident à la mort de Justinien</i> (2 vols., Paris, 1949)
<i>StudMagr</i>	<i>Studi Magrebini</i>

TAPA *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*

TRAC *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference*

VigChr *Vigiliae Christianae*

Other

mod. Indicating a modern day place name

Introduction

In 533,¹ Justinian I ordered the conquest of the former Roman provinces of Africa, which had been lost to the Vandals a century earlier. The military campaign, declared complete within a matter of months, has been regarded, by contemporaries and modern scholars alike, as one of the defining achievements of Justinian's reign. However, despite the evident successes, Roman victory over the Vandals marked little more than the beginning of the Eastern Roman Empire's attempt to consolidate its position in Africa, as it sought to counter an ongoing threat posed by Berber tribes.²

The two major narrative sources for events in Africa during Justinian's reign are books III and IV of Procopius' *Bella*, and Corippus' *Iohannis*, both of which conclude (in their extant forms) with the Roman victory over the Berber tribes at the battle of the Plains of Cato in 548.³ These texts provide a chronological focus. Consequently, this study is concerned with the period between the Roman conquest in 533, and victory over the Berbers in 548. It is, however, impossible to understand the events of this period without placing them in a broader context – within the domestic and foreign policy objectives of Justinian's reign and as a continuation of events which had their beginnings during the period of Vandal rule in Africa (429 to 533). This study provides a comprehensive history of the African policy of Justinian's reign (527 to 565), commencing, in Chapter 2, with the conditions in the Vandal kingdom in the early 6th century, which were seen as justifying Roman intervention in Africa in 533. However, no attempt has been made to provide a comprehensive treatment of the history of the Vandal kingdom, or of

¹ All dates are CE.

² On the use of the term 'Berber' in this study see p. 28.

³ Books III and IV of Procopius' *Bella*, as they have survived, may reasonably be assumed to be complete, since additional information concerning events in Africa is subsequently provided in book VIII (see n. 194). Corippus' *Iohannis*, on the other hand, breaks off mid-line, and the last fifty lines contain a number of *lacunae*. At 656 lines, the final book of the *Iohannis* (book VIII) is of a comparable length to the other books of the poem, so is probably close to complete, but it is conceivable that there were additional books. On the date of the battle of the Plains of Cato see n. 1191.

its relations with the Berber tribes, which have been discussed in detail by others.⁴ Subsequent chapters examine Berber tribal politics, which, while they were undoubtedly influenced by the ruling power at Carthage, be it Vandal or Roman, were also shaped by factors independent of either administration, and having their origins in the 5th century. An Epilogue summarizes what little is known of events in Africa between 548 and 565.

The context of the study is the Eastern Roman Empire of the 6th century. References to the Western Roman Empire are to the western part of the earlier Roman Empire. The Western Roman Empire was administered separately from the Eastern Roman Empire from approximately 285 until 476, although there were intermittent reunifications during this period. References to the Roman Empire are generally to the earlier unified empire; and, in the ideology of Justinian's regime, largely to the principate. The adjective 'Roman' is used in reference to the Roman Empire, and each of its eastern and western successors.

More specifically, the study focuses on events in a geographical area which covers parts of the modern Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.⁵ The modern geographical designation 'North Africa' is often employed in this context, but has been rejected here, on the basis that it is generally assumed to include modern Egypt and Sudan. While 'the Maghreb' more accurately reflects the geographical area under discussion, the term is anachronistic to the 6th century, being of Arabic origin. 'Africa' has therefore been adopted as the generic term for the geographical region being discussed. While, in the modern context, the term 'Africa' generally refers to the entire continent, it is here employed in its original Roman sense, referring to those

⁴ For a recent survey of Vandal history see A. Merrills & R. Miles, *The Vandals* (Oxford, 2010). On the specific question of Vandal-Berber relations see also Y. Modéran, '«Le plus délicat des peuples et le plus malheureux» Vandales et Maures en Afrique,' in G. Berndt & R. Steinacher, eds., *Das Reich der Vandalen und seine (Vor-) Geschichten* (Vienna, 2008), 213–25.

⁵ Henceforth, references to Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco may be assumed to refer to the political entities of the present day. Libya, as a geographical term which was also used throughout antiquity, will be used in its late antique sense, in reference to the provinces of Libya Pentapolis and Libya Inferior, unless preceded by 'modern' (mod.). The term 'Libya' is also sometimes used by the contemporary sources as a synonym for Africa, and will be retained in this sense where it appears in direct quotation.

areas which had previously been Roman possessions, and, which were, in the period under discussion, deemed to belong to the Praetorian Prefecture of Africa.⁶

This study is concerned with the *African* policy of Justinian I and thus with events which occurred in Africa. However, the Roman conquest in 533 and the administration of the region in the years immediately following were the results of a strategy developed in Constantinople. Although there was a progressive divergence of imperial expectations concerning Africa and the 'reality on the ground' during Justinian's reign, the administration of Africa continued to be shaped, albeit indirectly, by the policies of the imperial centre. Both the changing significance of Africa, in comparison to the empire's other disparate frontiers, as well as domestic policy, dictated the level of resources and imperial intervention which could be expected in the region. The geographical distance between Constantinople and Carthage is not a reason for events in Africa to be interpreted in isolation.

The title of the study 'The African Policy of Justinian I' is perhaps somewhat contentious. Is it legitimate to speak of the 'policy' of a pre-modern state? This study takes the view that, irrespective of the level of sophistication of a government, consistency may (or may not) be identified in the actions of that government over a specified period of time. This consistency may be assessed with respect to stated intentions; and/or with respect to the internal coherence of the actions themselves. Where consistency is identified it is referred to as 'policy'. Thus, the study considers the Roman imperial government's intentions in respect of Africa prior to, and immediately following, the initial campaign of conquest in 533; and then evaluates the consistency of its actions in Africa and its responses to the circumstances which developed - in particular, its responses to an emerging threat posed by Berber tribes, the major extraneous influence on Roman rule in Africa in the 6th century. Ultimately, the study aims to assess whether a coherent Roman policy *vis-à-vis* the Berber tribes can be identified (or whether the

⁶ On the creation of the Praetorian Prefecture of Africa under Justinian see section 3.2.

actions of the Eastern Roman Empire in Africa were no more than a series of *ad hoc* responses to immediate circumstances), and whether this fits within a broader understanding of Roman frontier policy during Justinian's reign.

In order to evaluate the actions of the Eastern Roman Empire in Africa during Justinian's reign, consideration must be given, in the first instance, to the military campaigns against the Berber tribes between 534 and 548. This focus is, at least in part, unavoidable, given that both Procopius' *Bella* and Corippus' *Iohannis* are literary works about the campaigns. Nevertheless, this study is by no means a military history. The relationship between the Roman administration and the Berber tribes was undoubtedly more complex than simply being one of continuous hostility. The study takes a broad view of the Eastern Roman Empire's actions in Africa, incorporating a discussion of the military campaigns (albeit at the strategic, rather than tactical, level) (Chapter 5), but focusing on civil and military administration (Chapter 3), diplomacy (Chapter 4), and attempts at client management (Chapter 6). It examines the factors, both intra- and extra-African, which affected those actions; and the changing interplay between those factors over the course of Justinian's reign.

The initial Roman conquest, in 533, is not discussed in detail, with only a summary being offered in the Prologue, in order to provide context. There are two reasons for this. First, while the historical geography of the campaign merits some greater consideration, given that the only detailed source of information on the campaign is Procopius' *Bella*, little can be added to the paraphrases offered by the major overviews of late antique history, namely J. B. Bury's *History of the Later Roman Empire: From the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian (A.D. 395 to A.D. 565)* and Ernst Stein's *Histoire du Bas-Empire: De la disparition de l'empire d'occident à la mort de Justinien*; and by studies focused more specifically on late antique Africa, such as Charles Diehl's *L'Afrique byzantine: histoire de la domination byzantine en Afrique (533-709)*, and, more recently, Denys Pringle's *The Defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab*

Conquest.⁷ Second, this is not a study of Justinian's so-called 'Vandalic War'. Rather, it is a study of the processes by which the Eastern Roman Empire sought to establish and maintain its authority in Africa after overthrowing Vandal rule. Thus, the tactics employed by the Roman army, prior to the capture of Carthage in mid-September 533, are of minimal significance.⁸

Unlike other aspects of Justinian's foreign relations, Roman-Berber relations have received comparatively little attention. This is not to say that the Berbers themselves have not been a subject of interest. But work on the subject, notably that of David Mattingly and Yves Modéran, has focused on rehabilitating the Berber tribes as significant late antique communities in their own rights, independent of their relations with the Eastern Roman Empire.⁹ Previous attempts to understand Roman policy *vis-à-vis* the Berbers have been dominated by the view that the imperial government, and its military commanders, acted out of ignorance concerning the conditions of Africa in the 6th century, and thus failed to recognise the Berber threat – a view most recently set out by Modéran, in his study of the Berber tribes from the 4th century until the Islamic conquest of Africa, *Les Maures et l'Afrique romaine (IVe–VIIe siècle)*. Modéran's work on the Berber tribes, their structures, localities, and relationships with one another is comprehensive. However, in his presentation of the Berbers as being other than the primitive barbarians of Roman sources, Modéran simplifies Roman understanding and motivations. This study carefully examines that understanding and these motivations and the implications for

⁷ J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire: From the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian (A.D. 395 to A.D. 565)* (London, 1923), II, 124–39; E. Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire: De la disparition de l'empire d'occident à la mort de Justinien* (Paris, 1949), II, 311–18; C. Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine: histoire de la domination byzantine en Afrique (533–709)* (Paris, 1896), 15–33; and D. Pringle, *The Defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab Conquest*, revised edn. (Oxford, 2001), 16–22.

⁸ For the date of the capture of Carthage see n. 49.

⁹ D. Mattingly, 'Libyans and the 'limes': culture and society in Roman Tripolitania,' *AntAfr* 23 (1987), 71–94; idem, 'The Laguatan: A Libyan tribal confederation in the Late Roman Empire,' *LibStud* 14 (1983), 96–108; Y. Modéran, 'Des Maures aux Berbères en Afrique du Nord dans l'Antiquité tardive,' in V. Gazeau *et al.*, eds., *Identité et ethnicité: concepts débats historiographiques, exemples (IIIe–XIIe siècle)* (Caen, 2008), 91–134; idem, 'Les Maures de l'Afrique romaine dans l'antiquité tardive,' *REL* 82 (2004), 249–69; idem, *Les Maures et l'Afrique romaine (IVe–VIIe siècle)* (Rome, 2003); idem, 'Koutzinas-Cusina: recherches sur un Maure du VIe siècle,' *L'Africa romana* 7 (1990), 393–407. See also P. von Rummel, 'The Frexes: Late Roman barbarians in the shadow of the Vandal kingdom,' in F. Curta, ed., *Neglected Barbarians* (Turnhout, 2010), 571–603.

the Roman administration of Africa during Justinian's reign, recognising the complex Berber society of 6th century Africa which Modéran has reconstructed.

In the broader context of the history of the 6th century, an assessment of Roman policy in Africa is important to the understanding of imperial policy during Justinian's reign. The longstanding view has been that many imperial decisions, and, in particular, decisions relating to foreign relations, could be explained by an ideological 'policy' of *renovatio imperii*.¹⁰ Although this view is no longer current, no alternative has yet been proposed. The formulation of such an alternative view of imperial foreign relations is dependent on detailed studies, such as the study reported in the pages which follow, of the various Roman frontier regions during Justinian's reign being available.

The histories of the frontier regions of Italy, the East, and the Balkans during the 6th century have all seen re-assessment in the last two decades.¹¹ While the study of late antique Africa has not been entirely neglected, in relation to the political and administrative history of the region,¹² the principal studies remain Charles Diehl's *L'Afrique byzantine* (1896), and, for the early period of Justinian's reign, Christian Courtois's *Les Vandales et l'Afrique*.¹³ The historical overview which prefaces the archaeological gazetteer of Denys Pringle's *The Defence of Byzantine Africa* is frequently cited but is relatively uncritical in its treatment of the written

¹⁰ Eg. Bury, *History*, II, 134; A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey* (Oxford, 1964), 270.

¹¹ Eg. Italy: M. Kouroumalis, 'Procopius and the Gothic War' (Oxford University DPhil. thesis, 2006); the East: G. Greatrex, *Rome and Persia at War, 502–532* (Aldershot, 1998); G. Fisher, *Between Empires: Arabs, Romans, and Sasanians in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2011); the Balkans: A. Sarantis, 'The Balkans in the reign of Justinian: Barbarian invasions and imperial responses' (Oxford University DPhil. thesis, 2006); idem, 'War and diplomacy in Pannonia and the north-west Balkans during the reign of Justinian: The Gepid threat and imperial responses,' *DOP* 63 (2009), 15–40; F. Curta, *The Making of the Slavs: History and Archaeology in the Lower Danube Region, c. 500–700* (Cambridge, 2001).

¹² See, for example, the most recent monograph on the subject, J. Conant, *Staying Roman: Conquest and Identity in Africa and the Mediterranean, 439–700* (New York, 2012), which focuses on the question of identity in Africa between the Vandal and Islamic conquests.

¹³ C. Courtois, *Les Vandales et l'Afrique* (Paris, 1955); with n. 7.

sources (which are not Pringle's focus).¹⁴ A detailed re-assessment of the history of Africa in the 6th century, based on the written sources, is long overdue.

Any study of the Roman provinces of Africa during the 6th century is limited by the scarcity of written sources, which leads to the problem of assessing a prime source when there is often nothing with which to compare it. Thus, Bury's *History of the Later Roman Empire*, while certainly comprehensive in its coverage of events, offers little more than a paraphrase of Procopius' narrative.¹⁵ And it seems to have been assumed that this cannot be much improved upon. Subsequent treatments of the reign of Justinian, such as Stein's *Histoire du Bas-Empire*, and, more recently, John Moorhead's *Justinian* and J. A. S. Evans's *The Age of Justinian: The Circumstances of Imperial Power*, have largely followed suit, albeit with greater attempts to include additional sources of information, where they exist, and to reconstruct the chronology.¹⁶ It is, therefore, legitimate to ask what value a re-assessment of the existing material might have.

Outside the field of archaeology, no new source material has come to light, and archaeological evidence does not necessarily clarify the picture. On the archaeology of 6th century fortifications in Africa, the revised edition of Pringle's *The Defence of Byzantine Africa* (2001) remains the standard work. In the bibliographic review to this edition, Pringle noted the lack of work which had been done on late Roman fortifications in Africa since the publication of the first edition in 1981,¹⁷ and the state of archaeological research on 6th century Africa, on fortifications and otherwise, remains fragmentary.¹⁸ Some regions and sites are far better

¹⁴ See n. 7.

¹⁵ See n. 7.

¹⁶ J. Moorhead, *Justinian* (London, 1994); J. A. S. Evans, *The Age of Justinian: The Circumstances of Imperial Power* (London, 2000).

¹⁷ Pringle, *Defence*, 693.

¹⁸ A recent survey of the literature on the archaeology of 6th century fortifications in Africa may be found in A. Sarantis, 'Fortifications in Africa: A bibliographic essay,' in idem & N. Christie, eds., *War and Warfare in Late Antiquity* (Leiden, 2013), I, 305–10.

documented than others,¹⁹ and existing studies are primarily based on surveys, aerial photography and epigraphy, rather than on excavation.²⁰ Furthermore, in many cases, interpretation of the archaeological evidence is heavily dependent on the written sources, in this context namely Procopius' *De Aedificiis*, the significance of which remains debated.²¹

Indeed, much previous scholarship has been excessively trusting of Procopius' versions of events, not least because of the perception that the ostensibly classicizing nature of Procopius' work is an indication of historical reliability. Averil Cameron, in *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (1985), advocated a more critical reading of the *Bella* and, in the thirty years since that influential study was published, scholarship on Procopius has flourished.²² However, despite the significance attached to books III and IV of the *Bella* for the reconstruction of the history of 6th century Africa, no comprehensive study has as yet been devoted to them, and these books merit reassessment in light of more recent critical studies of Procopius and his works.

In relation to events in Africa in the 540s, and, in particular, in the area of Roman-Berber relations there is also the opportunity to reassess some of the information provided by Procopius through the examination of Corippus' epic poem, the *Iohannis*. The last two decades have seen a resurgence in interest in the literary merits of the *Iohannis*.²³ But discussion of the

¹⁹ One of the few recent monographs, A. Leone, *Changing Townscapes in North Africa from Late Antiquity to the Arab Conquest* (Bari, 2007), for example, considers only the provinces of Zeugitana, Byzacena and Tripolitania.

²⁰ Sarantis, 'Fortifications in Africa,' 298–300.

²¹ Thus, for example, the debate between P. Troussset ('Les limites sud de la réoccupation byzantine,' *AnTard* 10 (2002), 143–50; 'Les fines antiquae et la reconquête byzantine en Afrique,' *BCTH* 19B (1985), 361–76) and P. Morizot ('À propos des limites méridionales de la Numidie byzantine,' *AntAfr* 35 (1999), 141–67; *Archéologie aérienne de l'Aurès*; 'Recherches sur les campagnes de Solomon en Numidie méridionales,' *CRAI* 137.1 (1993), 83–106) over the interpretation of the archaeological evidence for a Roman presence south of the Aurès massif in the 6th century.

²² The recent review article, G. Greatrex, 'Perceptions of Procopius in recent scholarship,' *Histos* 8 (2014), 76–121, offers an impression of the current state of Procopian research. There is, of course, a huge body of secondary literature, which will be further discussed in section 1.2.

²³ V. Zarini: 'La préface de la Johannide de Corippe, certitudes et hypothèses,' *REAug* 32 (1986), 74–91; 'Goétique, poétique, politique: réflexions sur un passage de la Johannide de Corippe (3, 79–155),' in J. Dion, ed., *Culture antique et fanatisme* (Nancy, 1996), 113–40; 'Poésie officielle et arts figurés au siècle de Justinien: images de pouvoir dans la Johannide de Corippe,' *REL* 75 (1997), 219–40; 'Images de guerre dans la poésie officielle de l'antiquité tardive: l'exemple de la Johannide de Corippe,' in C. Auvray-Assayas, ed., *Images romaines* (Paris, 1998), 161–73; *Rhétorique, poétique, spiritualité: la*

text as a historical source has been largely limited to the catalogue of Berber tribes in book II, which forms the basis of Vincent Zarini's study, *Berbères ou barbares? Recherches sur le livre second de la Johannide de Corippe*, as well as Yves Modéran's work on the localisation of the individual Berber tribes in *Les Maures et l'Afrique romaine*.²⁴ Modéran's study has begun the process of reintegrating the *Iohannis* into historical scholarship, but, as result of the perception that a text written in verse is inherently literary, rather than historical, the *Iohannis* remains underappreciated and understudied as a historical source, particularly in the context of Roman, rather than Berber, actions in Africa.

Furthermore, given that Procopius' reliability as a historian has often been taken for granted, little effort has been made to reconcile his account of events in Africa with such alternative documentary sources as do exist. The Justinianic legislation, in particular, merits greater consideration, given that the decrees relating specifically to Africa offer information on both the Roman administration of the region, and the manner in which the Roman conquest was presented to audiences both in Africa and in Constantinople. The legislation has seen limited study as a *corpus*.²⁵ Attempts to integrate it into the study of the historiography of Justinian's

technique épique de Corippe dans le Johannide (Turnhout, 2003); 'Aspects et paradoxes du désert dans une épopée latine de l'Afrique chrétienne du VI^e siècle,' in G. Nauroy, *et al.*, eds., *Le désert, un espace paradoxal* (Bern, 2003), 143–57; 'Épopée et religion au VI^e siècle: Le paganisme chez Corippe,' *Connaissance des pères de l'église* 102 (2006), 52–61. C. Tommasi Moreschini: 'La Iohannis corippea: ricupero e riscrittura dei modelli classici e cristiani,' *Prometheus* 27 (2001), 250–76; 'Realtà della storia e retorica dell'impero nella Iohannis di Corippo,' *Athenaeum* 90.1 (2002), 165–85; 'Persistenze pagane nell'Africa del VI secolo: la Iohannis corippea e la questione dei dii mauri,' in M. Marin & C. Moreschini, eds., *Africa Cristiana: Storia, religione, letteratura* (Brescia, 2002), 269–301; 'Exegesis by distorting pagan myths in Corippus' epic poetry,' in W. Otten & K. Pollmann, eds., *Poetry and Exegesis in Premodern Latin Christianity: The Encounter Between Classical and Christian Strategies of Interpretation* (Leiden, 2007), 173–97.

²⁴ V. Zarini, *Berbères ou barbares? Recherches sur le livre second de la Johannide de Corippe* (Nancy, 1997); Modéran, *Les Maures*, chaps. 2 and 8.

²⁵ The only dedicated study of which I am aware is S. Puliatti, *Ricerche sulla legislazione «regionale» di Giustiniano* (Milan, 1980), which is concerned solely with the administrative legislation (*CJ* 1.27.1–2), and does not consider the *novellae* relating to Africa. The administrative legislation is also discussed, in a more limited context, by M. Cesa, 'La politica di Giustiniano verso l'occidente nel giudizio di Procopio,' *Athenaeum* n.s. 59 (1981), 389–409.

reign have tended to treat the legislation, an ‘official’ source, as a touchstone against which other sources might be tested, without recognising its inherent propaganda function.

Before proceeding further, some explanation is required regarding the terminology which will be employed in this study. The names for the peoples which inhabit Africa are problematic, particularly those for the indigenous populations of the region, which might today be termed ‘Berber’. In the introduction to their book, *The Berbers*, Brett and Fentress note that, in the modern context, the definition of the term ‘Berber’ is primarily linguistic. However, in a historical context, this definition is of little value, as the languages of the African tribes may not have been seen as linguistically unified by contemporary writers.²⁶ Cultural definitions are equally problematic, as they have often been derived from anthropological studies of modern Berber society, which have been inappropriately projected onto antiquity, on the basis of the mistaken view that Berber society is essentially unchanging.²⁷ Indeed, Brett and Fentress note that the term ‘Berber’ is somewhat arbitrary, being of external origin, and altogether absent from late antique sources.²⁸ As a result, they suggest that, when considering the history of Africa, the term must be used in its broadest possible sense – referring to all groups perceived to be composed of indigenous Africans.²⁹

Both Procopius’ *Bella* and Corippus’ *Iohannis* identify four distinct communities within the African population. For Procopius, these are Βανδίλοι, Ῥωμαῖοι, Λίβυες, and Μαυρούσιοι. The equivalent Latin terms, employed by Corippus, are Vandalici, Romani, Afri, and Mauri. The first two pairs of terms are relatively clear in meaning – Βανδίλοι/Vandalici are essentially self-explanatory, referring to the Vandal population (although it is, admittedly, unclear whether these terms include Romano-Africans integrated into the Vandal political class), while

²⁶ M. Brett & E. Fentress, *The Berbers* (Oxford, 1996), 3–5.

²⁷ Brett & Fentress, *The Berbers*, 5.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

Ῥωμαῖοι/Romani, when used in a specifically African context, refers to the Roman army and, later, to Roman administrators, in the region. The other terms are more difficult to define.

Both Λίβυες/Afri and Μαυρούσιοι/Mauri are used to refer to the indigenous population of Africa, and both legitimately fall within Brett and Fentress's definition of the term 'Berber'. However, in their 6th century context, the two pairs of terms are by no means synonymous - they do not so much reflect distinct ethnic, or even cultural, groups, as Roman perceptions (accurate or not) of the African population. Thus, Modéran has argued that the former terms were used to refer to the Romanized African population, which was likely to have been Latin speaking and Christian; while the latter terms were used to refer to those whom the Romans regarded as 'barbarians'.³⁰ This view will be followed in this study. Although the distinction which the sources create between the Λίβυες/Afri and the Μαυρούσιοι/Mauri is, in many respects, artificial, it has significance for the understanding of how contemporary writers viewed African society.

The term 'Romano-African' will be used in this study to refer to the population designated Λίβυες/Afri by the contemporary sources, while the term 'Berber' will be used to refer to the population designated Μαυρούσιοι/Mauri.³¹ Some studies of 6th century Africa have preferred the term 'Moor', on the basis that it is closer to the transliteration of the Greek and Latin terms (Μαυρούσιοι/Mauri); and have objected to the term 'Berber' as being anachronistic to the 6th century. However, in English, the term 'Moor' carries connotations of Islamic Spain, making it inappropriate in this context; and 'Berber', while admittedly being anachronistic, is more neutral to an English speaking audience.³²

³⁰ Modéran, *Les Maures*, 35-42.

³¹ In the case of direct quotations, the terms Μαυρούσιοι and Mauri have been replaced by the term 'Berbers' in the English translation.

³² The term 'Berber' is argued to post-date the Islamic conquest of Africa, and this is certainly true. However, it derives from the Greek and Latin terms βάρβαροι and barbari, which are, after all, frequently used interchangeably with the terms Μαυρούσιοι and Mauri. The phrase "autochthonous population", adopted by W. Kaegi, *Muslim Expansion and Byzantine Collapse in North Africa*

(Cambridge, 2010), while designed to avoid the problems of terminology outlined above, is equally problematic, as it is unclear that any of the groups to which this term refers were indeed autochthonous to the regions they inhabited in the 6th and 7th centuries.

Prologue

The Roman expeditionary force charged with the conquest of Africa sailed from Constantinople around 20 June 533.³³ It was under the overall command of the pre-eminent general of the day, the *magister militum per Orientem*, Belisarius,³⁴ and numbered ten thousand infantry – all *comitatenses* – and five thousand cavalry – composed of both *comitatenses* and *foederati*.³⁵ There were also a thousand additional non-Roman allied troops,³⁶ as well as Belisarius' *bucellarii*.³⁷ These men were transported in five hundred ships,³⁸ supported by a naval force of ninety-two *dromones*.³⁹ The expeditionary force committed to Africa has been seen as being unusually small for a campaign of conquest.⁴⁰ However, comparatively, a force of some 16 000 men was not an unusually small army for the time.⁴¹

Given that the only detailed narrative of military campaign is that provided by Procopius in the *Bella*, what follows below provides only an outline of events, from the departure of the expeditionary force from Constantinople, to the surrender of the Vandal king, Gelimer.⁴²

En route to Africa, the fleet made two strategic stopovers – at Heracleia (mod. Eregli, Turkey), and at Caucana, in Sicily.⁴³ The stopover at Heracleia was seemingly for the purpose of

³³ *Bella* III.12.1: The emperor Justinian, being in the seventh year of his reign, at around the summer solstice, ordered that the general's ship be anchored off the promontory which was before the royal palace [“Ἐβδομον ἤδη ἔτος τὴν αὐτοκράτορα ἀρχὴν ἔχων Ἰουστινιανὸς βασιλεὺς ἀμφὶ θερινὰς τροπὰς τὴν στρατηγίδα ἐκέλευσε ναῦν ὀρμίσασθαι ἐς τὴν ἀκτὴν ἢ πρὸ τῆς βασιλείως ἀύλης τυγχάνει οὖσα]. H. B. Dewing, *Procopius: History of the Wars: Books III–IV* (London, 1916), 111, translates θερινὰς τροπὰς as “spring equinox”, in which he is followed by A. Kaldellis, *The Wars of Justinian* (Indianapolis, 2014), 171, in his revision of Dewing's translation. But this is not the usual sense of the expression, and modern scholarship has almost universally interpreted it as referring to the summer solstice.

³⁴ *Bella* III.11.18, 20. On Belisarius see *PLRE* IIIA, 181–224.

³⁵ *Bella* III.11.2.

³⁶ *Bella* III.11.11.

³⁷ *Bella* III.11.11, 19.

³⁸ *Bella* III.11.13–4.

³⁹ *Bella* III.11.15–6.

⁴⁰ Bury, *History*, II, 123; Jones, *LRE*, 273.

⁴¹ See pp. 141–2.

⁴² *Bella* III.12–IV.7.

⁴³ *Bella* III.12.6; 3.14.4.

collecting mounts for the cavalry.⁴⁴ In Sicily, the immediate priority was to re-provision the fleet,⁴⁵ but equally important was the need to gather intelligence on the Vandals, and, in particular, to learn whether the Vandals were aware of the Roman expedition; and to establish where it would be safe to land the fleet in Africa.⁴⁶ There, the Romans learnt that the Vandals remained unaware of the expedition, the Vandal fleet was pre-occupied by a revolt in Sardinia, and Gelimer was not at Carthage, but at Hermione, in Byzacena, four days journey from the coast.⁴⁷ The Roman fleet was thus able to advance towards Africa with some feeling of security.⁴⁸

The initial landing was at Caput Vada, in early September 533.⁴⁹ From there, the Roman army marched on Carthage.⁵⁰ It advanced along the coast, capturing the cities of Sullectum (Σύλλεκτος, mod. Salakta, Tunisia), Leptis Minor (Λέπτης, near mod. Lamta, Tunisia), and Hadrumetum (Ἀδράμητος/Ἀδρέμυτος, mod. Sousse, Tunisia), until it reached Grassa.⁵¹ The

⁴⁴ *Bella* III.12.6.

⁴⁵ *Bella* III.14.5–6.

⁴⁶ *Bella* III.14.3.

⁴⁷ *Bella* III.14.7–11. Despite Procopius' rough indication of Hermione's location, the site of the town remains unidentified. See Courtois, *Les Vandales*, 250 n. 5; and Pringle, *Defence*, 350 n. 19. On the revolt at Sardinia see *Bella* III.10.25–34, 11.22–3.

⁴⁸ *Bella* III.14.10.

⁴⁹ *Bella* III.14.17 (Καπούτβαδα). Cf. *Ioh.* 1.369 (Caput Vadorum). This site has long been identified as Ras Kaboudia in Tunisia (see G. Hannezo, 'Chebba et Ras-Kapoudia. Notes historiques,' *Bulletin de la société archéologique de Sousse* (1906), 135), presumably on etymological grounds, given that the Arabic *r's* [رأس] means "head" or "point".

The primary sources do not offer any explicit date for the landing, which must be reconstructed from two pieces of chronological information provided by Procopius – that the fleet landed in Africa "about three months later than their departure from Byzantium" (*Bella* 3.15.31: [... τρισὶ μάλιστα μηνὶν ὕστερον ἢ αὐτοῖς ἐκ Βυζαντίου ὁ ἀπόπλους ἐγένετο]; *contra* Ps. Zachariah, 9.17); and that the expeditionary force entered Carthage of the day following the Feast of St Cyprian, which falls on 14 September (*Bella* III.21.23–5; cf. Evagrius, *HE* IV.16. *Acta Cypriani* (1st recension), 3). A date about three months after the fleet left Constantinople would fall in mid- to late September 533 (cf. n. 33). The Roman force is said to have entered Carthage on 15 September 533 – although this symbolic date should probably be treated with some caution, given how conveniently it fits Procopius' literary agenda (cf. *Bella* 3.21.17–25). Cf. Stein, *Histoire*, II, 325 (31 August 533); Courtois, *Les Vandales*, 353, 406 (30 August 533); and Pringle, *Defence*, 18 with 351 n. 20 (27 August 533).

⁵⁰ *Bella* III.17.1.

⁵¹ *Bella* III.17.6–9. Based on Procopius' claim that Grassa was 350 stades (c. 73.5 km) south of Carthage, it must have been somewhere in the vicinity of mod. Hammamet, Tunisia. See Courtois, *Les Vandales*, 250 n. 6; and Pringle, *Defence*, 353 n. 32. *Contra Contra* C. Tissot, *Géographie comparé de la province romaine d'Afrique*, ed. S. Reinach (Paris, 1888), II, 116; C. Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine: histoire de la domination byzantine en Afrique (533–709)* (New York, 1896), 401; and Bury, *History*, II, 131. See Map II.

army then crossing the Cap Bon peninsula,⁵² passed between the Lake of Tunis and Sabkhet Sijoumi (the salt lake to the west of the Lake of Tunis), and approached Carthage from the west.⁵³

Gelimer, still at Hermione, had become aware of the invasion, and had written to his brother, Ammatas, at Carthage, ordering that he prepare a Vandal force and confront the Romans at Decimum.⁵⁴ Gelimer's nephew, Gibamund, and Gelimer himself would march from Hermione with additional forces, in order that the Romans might be caught in a multi-pronged attack.⁵⁵ However, the coordinated Vandal attack never occurred. Ammatas, having departed from Carthage with only a few men (the remainder of the Vandal force being ordered to follow as soon as it was prepared), arrived at Decimum in advance of the agreed time,⁵⁶ and unexpectedly encountered an advance Roman force.⁵⁷ A battle ensued and Ammatas was killed.⁵⁸ The Vandals then withdrew to Carthage, pursued by the advance Roman force.⁵⁹ Simultaneously, Gelimer's advance force, under the command of Gibamund, encountered Belisarius' Hunnic allies near Sabkhet Sijoumi, and was entirely destroyed.⁶⁰

Meanwhile, Belisarius, having established a Roman camp 35 stades (c. 7.4 km) from Decimum, set out with the Roman cavalry, sending the federate cavalry in advance.⁶¹ When the federate

⁵² *Bella* III.17.15.

⁵³ From Grassa the Roman force could conceivably have approached Carthage either by continuing along the coast of the Gulf of Tunis, which would have required it to cross the narrow passage of water by which the Lake of Tunis enters the Gulf, and approaching Carthage from the south; or by passing between the Lake of Tunis and Sabkhet Sijoumi, and approaching Carthage from the east. The former route has the advantage of being somewhat shorter, but would have required further involvement from the Roman navy in order to ferry the army across the water. Given that there is no indication that this was the case, the longer, and arguably more secure, route, around the Lake of Tunis, appears to be the more likely.

⁵⁴ *Bella* III.17.11–13. On Ammatas see *PLRE* IIIA, 55. Based on its etymology, Decimum should refer to the tenth milestone from the city of Carthage. For the location of the site see n. 1354.

⁵⁵ *Bella* III.17.14, 18.1.

⁵⁶ *Bella* III.18.4–5.

⁵⁷ *Bella* III.18.5.

⁵⁸ *Bella* III.18.5–11.

⁵⁹ *Bella* III.18.7–10.

⁶⁰ *Bella* III.18.12.

⁶¹ *Bella* III.19.11–13.

cavalry reached Decimum, they realised that a battle had already occurred.⁶² Being uncertain what they ought to do, and seeing the Vandal cavalry, under the command of Gelimer, approaching, they decided to withdraw to the main Roman force.⁶³

Militarily, the Vandals should have held the advantage following the battle of Decimum.⁶⁴ However, they failed to capitalise on this. Gelimer, having arrived at Decimum and learnt of the death of his brother, insisted on burying him, rather than immediately launching an attack on the divided Roman forces.⁶⁵ He thus provided Belisarius with time to gather the full Roman force at Decimum.⁶⁶ The Vandals, by this time, were in disorder, and fled to the Plain of Boulla.⁶⁷ The following day, in mid-September 533, the Roman army entered Carthage unopposed.⁶⁸

From the Plain of Boulla, Gelimer attempted to regroup. He wrote to his brother, Tzazon, who had been sent to suppress an insurrection in Sardinia, informing him of what had occurred, and recalling Vandal troops from Sardinia.⁶⁹ Once these troops arrived, the Vandals effectively blockaded the city of Carthage, destroying a portion of the aqueduct which provided water to the city, and occupied the city's hinterland.⁷⁰ Gelimer also appears to have attempted to orchestrate a campaign of civil disobedience, offering money to Romano-African farmers and a payment in gold to any man who could demonstrate that he had killed a Roman;⁷¹ as well as appealing to religious differences within the Carthaginian population, in the hope that Arians in the Roman army or among the citizens would open the gates of the city.⁷² Furthermore, he

⁶² *Bella* III.19.14–15.

⁶³ *Bella* III.19.15–24.

⁶⁴ *Cf. Bella* III.19.25.

⁶⁵ *Bella* III.19.28.

⁶⁶ *Bella* III.19.30–31.

⁶⁷ *Bella* III.19.31–2. The location of the Plain of Boulla is located to the west of Carthage, in Numidia. For a more detailed discussion of its location see n. 972.

⁶⁸ *Bella* III.20.1–2. For the date see n. 49.

⁶⁹ *Bella* III.25.10–26. On the presence of Vandal troops in Sardinia see n. 47. On Tzazon see *PLRE* IIIB, 1347–8.

⁷⁰ *Bella* IV.1.1–3.

⁷¹ *Bella* III.23.1–2.

⁷² *Bella* IV.1.4.

attempted to elicit support from outside the Vandal kingdom calling, unsuccessfully, for the assistance of the Berber tribes;⁷³ and sought to subvert the leaders of the Huns serving as *foederati* with the Roman army, who were not well disposed towards the Roman administration.⁷⁴

Once Belisarius had secured Carthage, the Roman army moved out from the city, with the specific intention of removing the ongoing threat posed by the Vandals.⁷⁵ The Romans encountered the main Vandal army at Tricamarum.⁷⁶ On a third attempt, they broke the Vandal line, forcing the Vandals to take refuge within their encampment.⁷⁷ Belisarius then moved against the encampment,⁷⁸ only to find that the Vandals had fled.⁷⁹ The Romans pursued the fleeing Vandals, killing the men and enslaving the women and children.⁸⁰

Gelimer himself, together with some of his kinsmen, escaped along the road to Numidia,⁸¹ ultimately taking refuge among the Berbers of Mount Papua.⁸² There he remained for three months until, suffering from starvation and having witnessed the deaths of a number of his kinsmen, he surrendered to the Romans in the spring of 534.⁸³

⁷³ *Bella* IV.1.5., III.25.1–2.

⁷⁴ *Bella* IV.1.6, 10. Procopius elsewhere refers to the Huns as Massagetae [οἱ Μασσαγῆται]. Cf. *Bella* IV.1.9–11, 2.3.

⁷⁵ *Bella* IV.1.12, 14.

⁷⁶ *Bella* IV.3.2. Procopius (*Bella* IV.2.4) locates Tricamarum some 150 stades (c. 30km) from Carthage, and it was presumably along the road between Numida and Carthage, since this was the direction from which the Vandals had moved from the Plain of Boulla (see nn. 67 and 972), but the site has not been identified. Pringle, *Defence*, 21, suggests that Tricamarum must have been somewhere in the vicinity of mod. Mornaghia in Tunisia, but this is entirely speculative. Against this identification is the fact that Mornaghia is today not located near any water course. However, it is entirely possible that the geography has changed.

⁷⁷ *Bella* IV.3.10–18.

⁷⁸ *Bella* IV.3.19.

⁷⁹ *Bella* IV.3.23–4.

⁸⁰ *Bella* IV.3.24.

⁸¹ *Bella* IV.3.20.

⁸² *Bella* IV.4.26. The location of Mount Pappua remains uncertain, but it has generally been located in the Kroumirie, a mountainous region extending over the northern part of the modern-day Tunisia-Algeria border. J. Desanges, 'La dernière retraite de Gélimer,' *CT* 7 (1959), 429–35; Pringle, *Defence*, 22, 355 n. 62. A more sceptical view is, however, presented by Modéran, *Les Maures*, 432 n. 73.

⁸³ *Bella* IV.7.1–9; with n. 84.

The battle of Tricamarum took place in mid-December 533, and marked the effective destruction of the Hasding dynasty and the end of a century of Vandal rule in Africa.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, even before this, the Roman imperial government appears to have regarded the ‘reconquest’ of Africa as *fait accompli*. As has frequently been noted, in the prefatory constitution to Justinian’s handbook for legal students, the *Institutes*, which was promulgated on 12 December 533 – after the capture of Carthage, but well in advance of the surrender of the Vandal king – the emperor had already adopted the victor’s titles of *Africanus*, *Vandalicus* and *Alanicus*.⁸⁵ Moreover, the decree promulgating the *Digest*, Justinian’s collection of juristic writings, declares:

And a third part of the world was annexed by us (for after Europe and Asia, the whole of Libya was added to our empire).⁸⁶

⁸⁴ *Bella* IV.3.28.

⁸⁵ *I. Const. Imperatoriam* pref.; with Moorhead, *Justinian*, 69.

⁸⁶ *D. Const. Tanta/Δέδωκεν* 23 (=CJ 1.17.2.23): [et tertia pars mundi nobis adcrevit (post Europam enim et Asiam et tota Libya nostro imperio adiuncta est)/ ... καὶ πρὸς γε ἡ τρίτη τῆς οἰκουμένης μοῖρα, τὴν ὅλην Λιβύην φαμέν, τοῖς ἡμετέροις προστέθεται σκήπτροις...]

Chapter 1: The Sources

1.1 Introduction

As has been noted in the Introduction, the works of Procopius and Corippus provide by far the majority of information concerning events in Africa during the reign of Justinian, and thus form the basis around which this study has been developed. However, these works are not the only written sources and, in a field of history for which source material is extremely limited, it is essential to integrate as much of the available evidence as possible. Thus, two further, and distinct, categories of written source material, the Justinianic legislation and epigraphy, will be drawn on - the Justinianic legislation in Chapters 2 and 3, and epigraphy relating to the Justinianic building program and to the Berber tribes in Chapters 3 and 4 respectively. The value, and limitations, of each of these categories of source material for reconstructing the history of Africa in the 6th century will be discussed in detail in the relevant chapters.

In addition, events in Africa receive sporadic mentions in a number of other historical accounts - John Malalas' *Chronographia* and Evagrius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, both written in Greek; the *Romana* of Jordanes and chronicles of Marcellinus Comes and his *continuator*, and Victor of Tunnuna, all written in Latin; and the Syriac chronicle attributed to Zachariah of Mitylene - all of which were produced by individuals who lived during Justinian's reign.⁸⁷ These texts represent a diversity of literary genres - chronicles, histories, ecclesiastical histories - written in a variety of languages, by individuals with vastly different levels of personal interest in Africa, and access to information concerning the region. As a result, these texts vary in the scope and *foci* of their coverage of events in Africa.

Generally, their discussion of events in Africa is relatively limited, being primarily concerned, for a variety of reasons, with the launch of the initial campaign of conquest and its ultimate

⁸⁷ For the editions of these texts see the bibliography.

success. Thus, both the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Evagrius and the chronicle attributed to Zachariah of Mitylene focus on the campaign as an action against the Arian rulers of Vandal Africa, and thus do not continue to record events following the Roman capture of Carthage⁸⁸ – although the chronicle attributed to Zachariah of Mitylene does offer some otherwise unattested information about the campaign itself;⁸⁹ while the chronicle of Marcellinus Comes, as it was written by Marcellinus himself,⁹⁰ presents the victory in Africa as its dramatic conclusion,⁹¹ in tones reminiscent of the Justinianic legislation, suggesting that he was reproducing an official version of events.⁹² Similarly, John Malalas notes the circumstances in Africa which resulted in Roman intervention in the region and the outcome of the Roman military campaign, as well as one additional comment regarding a revolt in Africa in 563.⁹³

The Latin source tradition, in the form of the chronicle of Victor of Tunnuna and the *Additamentum* to the chronicle of Marcellinus Comes, as well as the *Romana* of Jordanes, perhaps offers a more coherent narrative of events in Africa, providing some information concerning the region in the late 530s and 540s. In the case of Victor of Tunnuna, a stronger focus on events in Africa during this period is undoubtedly to be explained by the author's personal connection with the region. As his name implies, Victor was bishop of Tunnuna (mod. Tunis, Tunisia), although he appears to have spent much of his life in Constantinople. The

⁸⁸ Ps. Zachariah, IX.17; Evagrius, *HE* IV.14–17. Evagrius explicitly states that his source of information for these events was Procopius, and he provides little additional information beyond what is provided by Procopius in the *Bella*. Evagrius is, however, highly selective in the information he reproduces from Procopius' *Bella*, focusing largely on the accounts of miracles which are consistent with the 'ecclesiastical' nature of his work (M. Whitby, *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus* (Liverpool, 2000), 218 n.47).

⁸⁹ See pp. 102–4. The chronicler's source for events in Africa, and for book IX more generally, is unknown. See G. Greatrex, *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor* (Liverpool, 2011), 55–6.

⁹⁰ The chronicle, as written by Marcellinus Comes himself, ends in 534. It was continued, in the form of the *Additamentum*, by an anonymous *continuator*. The *Additamentum* records events as far as 548, but probably continued beyond this date, as at least one folio of the manuscript is missing. See B. Croke, *Count Marcellinus and his Chronicle* (Oxford, 2001), 223.

⁹¹ Marcellinus Comes, *s.a.* 534. B. Croke, *The Chronicle of Marcellinus* (Sydney, 1995), 126, speculates that Marcellinus may have been witness to the African triumph celebrated in Constantinople in 534 (see pp. 75–6).

⁹² Marcellinus Comes, *s.a.* 534. *Cf. I. Const. Imperatoriam* pref.; *CJ* 1.27.1.1; and *D. Const. Tanta/Δέδωκεν* 23.

⁹³ Malalas, XVIII.57, 81, 145. On the revolt in 563 see the pp. 272–3.

chronicle is, however, inherently biased on matters concerning the church, which are a clear focus. Victor had been a vocal opponent of the Three Chapters, and after having been placed on trial in 556, was imprisoned, first in Egypt, and then, in 565, in Constantinople. The anonymous author of the *Additamentum* and Jordanes lacked such personal connections with Africa.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, the author of the *Additamentum* must have had access to a source of information for Africa, as there are entries for events in Africa for nearly every year, although the information provided is not extensive,⁹⁵ and the source was either unreliable, or the *continuator* was inaccurate in his reproduction of it, since many of the entries are placed under the wrong years.⁹⁶ The sources for the African material in Jordanes' *Romana* are unclear, although the inclusion of Africa within Jordanes' narrative fits well within the world view of the text, which concludes with the assessment that, through the text, the reader:

... will know whence it [the empire] arose, how it expanded, or in what manner it subjugated all lands to itself, and how it lost them again through ignorant leaders.⁹⁷

The 9th century Byzantine chronicler, Theophanes, also offers an extended account of events in Africa. He does not explicitly identify his source, but his account is reproduced almost *verbatim* from Procopius' *Bella*.⁹⁸ Given that Theophanes' main source for events in Africa during

⁹⁴ Given that little is known concerning Marcellinus Comes' *continuator*, the possibility that he himself was a Romano-African cannot be entirely dismissed. However, he is sufficiently inaccurate concerning events in Africa so as to make this unlikely. See Croke, *Count Marcellinus*, 231–2.

⁹⁵ In the extant text of the *Additamentum*, which covers events from 1 September 534 until 31 August 548, there are entries for every year except 537/8, 541/2, 543/4 and 547/8.

⁹⁶ Croke, *Count Marcellinus*, 231–2.

⁹⁷ Jordanes, *Rom.* 388: [scietque unde orta, quomodo aucta, qualiterue sibi cunctas terras subdiderit et quomodo iterum eas ab ignaris rectoribus amiserit.] B. Croke, 'Latin historiography and the barbarian kingdoms,' in G. Marasco, ed., *Greek and Roman Historiography in Late Antiquity: Fourth to Sixth Century AD* (Leiden, 2003), 372.

⁹⁸ Theophanes, *AM* 6026 (ed. De Boor, pp. 186–216). Unusually, Theophanes presents the entire narrative under the year 533/4, rather than breaking it up into his customary annalistic structure (C. Mango & R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History, A.D. 284–813* (Oxford, 1997), 307 n. 2). As far as the Roman victory at the Plains of Cato in 548, Theophanes' narrative differs from that of Procopius' *Bella* at only two points. He appears to derive the date of the initial campaign from Malalas (see Mango & Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, 306–7, nn. 1 and 2), and includes one addition to the text, from an unknown source (Mango & Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, 312 n. 104; with n. 1227). He subsequently includes reference to the Berber revolt of 563, which he appears to have derived from Malalas (See n. 1421).

Justinian's reign is clear, and he rarely interpolates additional material, this study will note references to his chronicle only where he offers information which differs from that of Procopius.

It is also necessary to provide some discussion of the late Vandal context of the 5th and early 6th centuries (Chapters 2 and 4), for which, in addition to the information provided by the sources noted above, many of which reflect back on the 5th century, the historical record is supplemented by contemporary African sources, including the sole narrative account devoted to events in Vandal Africa, the *Historia persecutionis Africanae provinciae sub Geiserico et Hunirico regibus Wandalorum* (henceforth *Historia*) of Victor of Vita, which was written c. 484 and details the persecution of Nicene Christians in Africa during the period of Vandal rule, and, in particular, during the reign of the Vandal king Huneric (477–484);⁹⁹ and the *Vita* of the Chalcedonian bishop Fulgentius of Ruspe, who was banished from Africa during the Vandal period, which is attributed to Ferrandus, deacon of Carthage, and was probably written c. 535.¹⁰⁰ While these texts were written by those who originated from Africa, they are inherently biased against the Vandal rulership on account of their authors' religious persuasions. Isolated references to events in Africa during the Vandal period may additionally be found in 5th century historiography produced outside of Africa – namely the western Latin chronicles of Hydatius and Prosper of Aquitaine – as well as the now fragmentary *Historia Byzantina* of Priscus of Panium, written in Greek.

The focus of this study is on the information provided either by contemporary sources, or by those sources which demonstrably drew upon contemporary sources. However, Justinian's conquest of Africa was also a source of interest to chroniclers of the later Byzantine period,

⁹⁹ J. Moorhead, *Victor of Vita: History of the Vandal Persecution* (Liverpool, 1992), xvi–xvii.

¹⁰⁰ On the identification of Ferrandus as the author of the *Vita* see R. B. Eno, *Fulgentius: Selected Works* (Washington, 1997), 3. On the date see G.-G. Lapeyre, *Saint Fulgence de Ruspe* (Paris, 1929), lxxvi; and Averil Cameron, 'Byzantine Africa – the literary evidence,' in J. H. Humphrey, ed., *Excavations at Carthage 1978 Conducted by the University of Michigan VII* (Ann Arbor, 1982), 30.

being noted by, among others, George Monachus in the 9th century, Symeon the Logothete in the 10th century, and John Zonaras, Michael Glycas, Constantine Manasses and John Tzetzes in the 12th century. However, while the value of the information these accounts contain, concerning both events in Africa in the 6th century and later perceptions of Justinian's reign, undoubtedly merits further consideration, these accounts have not been considered here, on the basis that their authors are far removed from the events concerned, and their sources of information are uncertain.

The outline above is by no means intended to provide a comprehensive discussion of all the sources which will be cited in the course of this study. The literature of the historiography of Justinian's reign is extensive, and it is not my intention to review it here. Rather, the above is intended to provide an indication of the extent of coverage of events in Africa, and any obvious biases, in literary sources other than the works of Procopius and Corippus. Issues pertaining to individual authors and texts will be discussed in greater detail as they arise.

This chapter will now turn to the two major writers on Africa in the 6th century – Procopius and Corippus, with sections 1.2 and 1.3 offering a discussion of the contexts of these writers, an overview of their literary production, and some general comments on their knowledge and perspectives on Africa.

1.2 Procopius

The key primary sources for events in Africa during the reign of Justinian are undoubtedly the works of Procopius. Of Procopius' *corpus* – the *Bella*, the *De Aedificiis* and the *Anecdota* – the texts dealing specifically with events in Africa are books III and IV of the *Bella* and book VI of the *De Aedificiis*, which are dedicated to the region. References to events in Africa may also be found in book VIII of the *Bella* and in the *Anecdota* – the majority of the latter employing Africa

as an *exemplum* of Justinian's destruction or pertaining to the maladministration of the Roman official Sergius.¹⁰¹

Concerning Procopius' background, what little is known must be extrapolated from his own writings, although personal interjections into the narrative are comparatively rare. He describes himself as a native of Caesarea in Palestine – a point corroborated by other sources;¹⁰² and subsequently notes that, following Belisarius' appointment as *dux* of Mesopotamia, he became Belisarius' *assessor* (an adviser),¹⁰³ and possibly also his personal secretary.¹⁰⁴ Procopius also served in this capacity during the campaign in Africa in 533–534;¹⁰⁵ and was still in Belisarius' service in 540, when he witnessed the Roman army enter Ravenna.¹⁰⁶ Procopius presumably returned to Constantinople with Belisarius when the latter was recalled from Italy, in order to be sent to the eastern frontier, passing the winter of 540/1 in the capital.¹⁰⁷ Whether Procopius subsequently accompanied Belisarius to the East in 541 is, however, unclear.¹⁰⁸ Certainly, he was present at Constantinople when plague struck the city in spring 542.¹⁰⁹

Procopius probably began writing both the *Bella* and the *Anecdota* in the early 540s, which, given the close relationship between the two texts, seem to have been composed in parallel.¹¹⁰

¹⁰¹ *Bella* VIII.17.20–22, 24.31–7; *Anec.* V.28, 29, 30–31, 33, 34–5; XVIII.10. On Sergius see section 5.5.

¹⁰² *Bella* I.1.1; *Anec.* 11.25. Cf. Agathias, *Hist. prooem.* 22; *Suda* Π 2479.

¹⁰³ *Bella* I.12.24. Cf. I.1.3.

¹⁰⁴ *Suda* Π 2479, in which Procopius is described as the “secretary of Belisarius” [ὑπογραφεὺς Βελισσαρίου]. As *PLRE* IIIB, 1060, notes, this may well be a reference to Procopius' role as *assessor*, although this is not the usual sense of the word ὑπογραφεύς.

¹⁰⁵ *Bella* III.14.3.

¹⁰⁶ *Bella* 6.29.32. It is generally assumed that Procopius was continually in Belisarius' service from 527 to 540. See J. A. S. Evans, *Procopius* (New York, 1972), 32–3; *PLRE* IIIB, 1060–62. Cf. J. Howard-Johnston, ‘The education and expertise of Procopius,’ *Antiquité Tardive* 8 (2000), 19, who suggests that there was a two year gap in Procopius' service, between 534 and 536, during which time he was present in Africa. Cf. pp. 50–51.

¹⁰⁷ Cameron, *Procopius*, 14; Evans, *Procopius*, 36; *PLRE* IIIB, 1062. On the date of Belisarius' recall from Italy see *PLRE* IIIA, 208.

¹⁰⁸ *Bella* II.14.8.

¹⁰⁹ *Bella* II.22.9.

¹¹⁰ The close relationship between the *Bella* and the *Anecdota* is underlined by the parallel wording of the prefaces to *Bella* VIII and the *Anecdota*, suggesting that these two texts were roughly contemporary. Cameron, *Procopius*, 9, 50; G. Greatrex, ‘Procopius the outsider?’, in D. C. Smythe, ed., *Strangers to Themselves: The Byzantine Outsider* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1998), 216. Contra J. A. S. Evans, ‘The dates of Procopius' works: A recapitulation of the evidence,’ *GRBS* 37 (1996), 311–12, who

Procopius' writing process can only be speculated upon, however, he appears to have begun by writing a chronological account of those events in which he had participated while in Belisarius' service, for which he had perhaps made drafts or notes during the 530s, and subsequently divided the material into the geographical divisions of the extant *Bella*, in the early 540s.¹¹¹ The work was clearly revised from 545 onwards.¹¹²

There is a general consensus that the first seven books of the *Bella* were completed in c. 551, with the invasions of the Slavs into the Balkans in early 551, discussed at the end of book VII,¹¹³ providing a *terminus post quem*,¹¹⁴ with the majority of the work having been completed in the preceding decade.¹¹⁵ A *terminus ante quem* appears to be provided by the victories in Italy in 552, of which Procopius seems to be unaware.¹¹⁶

The date of completion of book VIII, apparently written later, in order to update the information provided in books I–VII, is somewhat more contentious, being variously placed between 553 and 560. A *terminus post quem* is provided by the last dateable event of the *Bella*

suggests that the *Anecdota* must have been written after the composition of *Bella* VIII, interprets Procopius' reference to ecclesiastical history which he intended to write in *Bella* VIII.25.13 as a reference to the discussion of ecclesiastical matters in the *Anecdota*. However, *contra* Evans, there is no reason to suppose that Procopius did not genuinely intend to devote a separate work to ecclesiastical history, as *Bella* VIII.25.13 suggests.

¹¹¹ The evidence for the stages of composition of the *Bella* are outlined by G. Greatrex, 'The composition of Procopius' *Persian Wars* and John the Cappadocian,' *Prudentia* 27 (1995), 1–13.

¹¹² Cameron, *Procopius*, 236 and n. 66; *cf.* Evans, 'The dates of Procopius' works,' 301–2, who suggests that the *Bella* must have been close to complete by 545, and that Procopius may have expected a rapid end to the Italian campaigns and thus to be able to publish the *Bella* in 545.

¹¹³ *Bella* VII.40.

¹¹⁴ Bury, *History*, 422; B. Croke, 'Procopius' *Secret History*: Rethinking the date,' *GRBS* 45 (2005), 423; Evans, *Procopius*, 41; G. Greatrex, 'The dates of Procopius' works,' *BMGS* 18 (1994), 102; *idem*, 'Perceptions of Procopius in recent scholarship,' 97; A. Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea: Tyranny, History and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity* (Philadelphia, 2004), 46; *idem*, 'Procopius' *Persian War*: A thematic and literary analysis,' in R. Macrides, ed., *History as Literature in Byzantium* (Farnham, 2010), 253; W. Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians* (Basingstoke, 2007), 188–9. Stein, *Histoire*, 717, is still more specific, suggesting that books I–VII of the *Bella* were completed in the spring of 551. *Contra* Cameron, *Procopius*, 8, who favours a date in 550.

¹¹⁵ Cameron, *Procopius*, 8; Greatrex, 'The composition of Procopius' *Persian Wars*,' 4–9; Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians*, 185–7.

¹¹⁶ Evans, *Procopius*, 41.

– the battle of Mons Lactarius, in October 552.¹¹⁷ But the *crux* of the debate has been Procopius' claim, in *Bella VIII*, that:

For Khusro, having imposed an annual tribute of four *centenaria* upon the Romans, which he was clearly aiming for from the beginning, now, for 11 years and 6 months, he has plausibly received 46 *centenaria* on the pretext of a truce....¹¹⁸

The original truce was that agreed in April 545, which was to last for five years, and required a payment of twenty *centenaria* from the Romans.¹¹⁹ In the autumn of 551, a second truce of five years was agreed, in exchange for a payment of twenty-six *centenaria*.¹²⁰ Together, the two treaties cover a period of eleven and a half years, and would have ended in late 556. However, whether Procopius was writing at this point (that is, in late 556),¹²¹ or whether he was simply noting the ultimate duration of the two treaties in exchange for two lump sum payments, remains contested.¹²² The latter interpretation is to be preferred, especially given that it is difficult to explain why, if Procopius did not finish writing book VIII of the *Bella* until 557 or later, he did not include discussion of any events after 552.¹²³ Thus, Procopius probably composed book VIII of the *Bella c.* 553.¹²⁴

¹¹⁷ *Bella VIII*.35.20–38; with Greatrex 'Recent work on Procopius,' 54 and n. 28. *Contra* Bury, *History*, 422, who suggests that book VIII of the *Bella* covers military campaigns from 548 to 553.

¹¹⁸ *Bella VIII*.15.17: [τάξας γὰρ ὁ Χοσρόης Ῥωμαίοις κεντηναρίων ἐπέτειον τεσσάρων δασμόν, οὔπερ γλιχόμενος τὸ ἐξ ἀρχῆς διαφανῆς ἦν, ἐς ἕνδεκα ἔτη τανῦν καὶ μῆνας ἕξ εὐπρεπεῖ λόγῳ, ἕξ τεσσαράκοντα κεντηνάρια τῇ τῆς ἐκεχειρίας κεκόμισται σκήψει...]

¹¹⁹ *Bella II*.28.6–11, which dates the truce to the 19th years of Justinian's reign (April 545 to March 546 inclusive). *Cf.* *Marc. Com. Addit. s.a.* 546, who appears to place the entry a year too late. See B. Croke, *The Chronicle of Marcellinus: A Translation and Commentary* (Sydney, 1995), 137. For the precise date of the truce see Stein, *Histoire*, II, 502; and G. Greatrex, 'Recent work on Procopius and the composition of *Wars VIII*,' *BMGS* 27 (2003), 54–5.

¹²⁰ *Bella VIII*.15.1–6, 12. *Cf.* Agathias, *Hist.* 2.18.3. *Bella VIII*.15.12 places the treaty in the 25th year of Justinian's reign (April 551 to March 552 inclusive). For the precise date see Stein, *Histoire*, II, 510; and Greatrex, 'Recent work on Procopius,' 55.

¹²¹ Thus, Evans, 'The dates of Procopius' works,' 306–8, 312, who in fact suggests a date of 557 for the end of the truce; idem, *The Power Game in Byzantium* (London, 2011), 253.

¹²² Greatrex, 'The dates of Procopius' works,' 106–7; idem, 'Recent work on Procopius,' 52–7; Croke, 'Procopius' *Secret History*,' 425.

¹²³ Croke, 'Procopius' *Secret History*, 425. *Contra* E. Kislinger, 'Ein Angriff zu viel. Zur Verteidigung der Thermopylen in justinianischer Zeit,' *BZ* 91 (1998), 54–6, whose suggestion that *Bella II*.4.10–11 refers to the Cutrigur invasion of 558 or 559, and thus implies that the *Bella* was still being written at this point, has not won support.

¹²⁴ Bury, *History*, 422; Stein, *Histoire*, 717; Croke, 'Procopius' *Secret History*,' 425; Greatrex, 'Recent work on Procopius,' 57; idem, 'Perceptions of Procopius in recent scholarship,' 97; Howard-Johnston, 'The

As has already been noted, there is a close connection between the *Bella* and the *Anecdota*, and arguments that the views of the two works are completely incompatible with one another have now been dismissed.¹²⁵ The date of completion of the *Anecdota* has been inferred from four references within the text to a period of 32 years during which Justinian had inflicted various misfortunes upon the Eastern Roman Empire.¹²⁶ If this period were intended to refer to the length of Justinian's reign at the time Procopius was writing, the *Anecdota* would have been written c. 558/9, since Justinian had been appointed co-emperor to his uncle, Justin I, on 1 April 527.¹²⁷ Alternatively, the 32 years could be counted from the accession of Justin I, on the basis that the *Anecdota* treats Justinian as the power behind the throne during the reign of his uncle,¹²⁸ which would place the completion of the *Anecdota* c. 549/50.¹²⁹

The argument usually advanced in support of the latter interpretation is that there appear to be no clearly dateable references later than 550 in the *Anecdota*.¹³⁰ The counter to this argument is, of course, that, if the *Anecdota* were envisaged as the complement to *Bella* I–VII, it need only consider the period covered by that work, which concludes in 551, and that its contents therefore offer no indication of its date of completion.¹³¹ Procopius was, after all,

education and expertise of Procopius,' 20–21; Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians*, 189–90. Cf. Cameron, *Procopius*, 8.

¹²⁵ Greatrex, 'Procopius the outsider?,' 216–9.

¹²⁶ *Anec.* XVIII.33; XXIII.1; XXIV.29, 33.

¹²⁷ This view was originally advocated by F. Dahn, *Prokopios von Cäsarea* (Berlin, 1865), 485; and later revived by J. A. S. Evans, 'The dates of the *Anecdota* and *De Aedificiis* of Procopius,' *CP* 64 (1969), 29–30; and, more recently, M. R. Cataudella, 'Historiography in the East,' in G. Marasco, ed., *Greek and Roman Historiography in Late Antiquity* (Leiden, 2003), 400–4; and Croke, 'Procopius' *Secret History*,' 405–31. For the date of Justinian's accession see *PLRE* II, 647–8.

¹²⁸ *Anec.* VI.18, 26. Cf. *Bella* III.9.5 and *Aed.* I.3.3.

¹²⁹ This argument was originally presented by J. Haury, *Procopiana* (Augsburg, 1891), 9–27; and has been followed by much subsequent scholarship. See Bury, *History*, II, 422; Stein, *Histoire*, II, 720–21; Cameron, *Procopius*, 8–9.

¹³⁰ Haury, *Procopiana*, 18–19; Cameron, *Procopius*, 8–9; Greatrex, 'The dates of Procopius' works,' 105. Contra R. Scott, 'Justinian's coinage and the Easter Reforms, and the date of the *Secret History*,' *BMGS* 11 (1987), 215–21, who attempts to identify in the *Anecdota* two events after 550 – a debasement of the coinage, which he correlates with a debasement noted by Malalas (XVIII.117) in 553 (*Anec.* XXV.11–12); and Justinian requiring the Jews to postpone Passover if it fell before Easter, which would apparently have been the case in 553 (*Anec.* XXVIII.16–18). However, the dating of both events post-550 has been strongly contested. See Greatrex, 'The dates of Procopius' works,' 103–5; and Evans, 'The dates of Procopius' works,' 308–10.

¹³¹ Evans, 'The dates of Procopius' works,' 308.

perfectly aware of the point at which Justinian's reign began, since he dates other events by Justinian's regnal years. His decision to refer to periods of 32 years, without explicitly mentioning Justinian's personal reign, suggests that he was referring to Justinian's period of influence, rather than to his time as emperor.

The matter is further complicated by the fact that the preface to the *Anecdota* implies that the text was not completed until after *Bella* I–VII, which could not have been published before early 551.¹³²

Such things as have hitherto befallen the Roman people in their wars have been narrated by me....¹³³

This would appear to render the earlier date for the *Anecdota* (549/50) impossible. However, if the preface were a late addition, the sections referring to 32 years of Justinian's influence, could well have been written in 549/50, prior to the publication of *Bella* I–VII, and then completed after this, in late 551 or early 552.¹³⁴

The date of completion of the *De Aedificiis* is still more problematic, with scholarship split between an early and a late date. With the exception of the contentious reference to the bridge over the Sangarius River (see further below),¹³⁵ a *terminus post quem* for the work's completion is provided by the repairs to the defences of Topirus, which had recently [οὐ πολλῶ ἔμπροσθεν] fallen to the Slavs (in 550).¹³⁶ The completion of the *De Aedificiis* must also date to after the completion of *Bella* VIII, as it refers the reader to the discussion of the Euxine Sea in *Bella* VIII,¹³⁷

¹³² See p. 42.

¹³³ *Anec.* I.1: [ὅσα μὲν οὖν Ῥωμαίων τῶ γένει ἐν τοῖς πολέμοις ἄρχι δεῦρο ξυνηνέχθη γενέσθαι τῆδέ μοι δεδιήγηται...]

¹³⁴ *Contra* Evans, 'The dates of Procopius' works,' 308, who suggests that the preface to the *Anecdota* suggests that Procopius could not have begun writing the *Anecdota* until after *Bella* I–VII was published.

¹³⁵ *Bella* V.3.8–11.

¹³⁶ *Aed.* IV.11–14. The date of the Slavic invasion is known from a reference to the same event in *Bella* VII.38.9–18.

¹³⁷ *Aed.* VI.1.8 and *Bella* VIII.6.

and must thus be placed after 553.¹³⁸ As a result, the early date for the *De Aedificiis* has generally been placed at c. 553/4.¹³⁹

However, a date of c. 553/4 has been contested on the basis that Procopius notes the construction of the bridge over the Sangarius River.¹⁴⁰ The completion of the bridge is noted by both Paul the Silentiary, in his *ekphrasis* on Hagia Sophia, delivered at the re-dedication of the church in December 562; and in an epigram of Agathias, apparently engraved on the bridge itself, which appears to refer to the agreement of the peace treaty between the Eastern Roman Empire and Sasanian Persia in 560/1.¹⁴¹ The construction of the bridge is also noted by Theophanes, under the 33rd year of Justinian's reign (April 559 to March 560 inclusive).¹⁴² Construction of the bridge may therefore have begun in 559, and that year may be a *terminus post quem* for the completion of the *De Aedificiis*.¹⁴³ But there are strong reasons to doubt the reliability of Theophanes' text, for which his source is unclear.¹⁴⁴

Furthermore, there are convincing arguments in support of an earlier date. While arguments *ex silentio* should undoubtedly be treated with caution,¹⁴⁵ it is difficult to understand how Procopius could have described the 'floating' dome of Hagia Sophia, in Constantinople, in such glowing terms, attributing the ingenuity of the structure to the emperor himself, had he been

¹³⁸ See pp. 42–3.

¹³⁹ Cameron, *Procopius*, 9–10; Greatrex, 'The dates of Procopius' works,' 107–13.

¹⁴⁰ *Bella* V.3.8–11, esp. 10.

¹⁴¹ Paul the Silentiary, 928–33; Agathias, *APIX*.641. M. Whitby, 'Justinian's bridge over the Sangarius and the date of Procopius' *De Aedificiis*,' *JHS* 105 (1985), 136–7, stresses that it would not have been pertinent for Paul to mention the bridge were its completion not recent.

¹⁴² Theophanes, *AM* 6052 (ed. De Boor, p. 234).

¹⁴³ The major proponent of this view has been Whitby, 'Justinian's bridge over the Sangarius,' 136–47, who argues that the *De Aedificiis* could not have been completed until 562. But see also Cataudella, 'Historiography in the East,' 397–401. *Contra* Greatrex, 'The dates of Procopius' works,' 107–13.

¹⁴⁴ Whitby, 'Justinian's bridge over the Sangarius,' 137–40, argues that the information must be derived from Malalas, and should be regarded as accurate. However, this cannot be verified, as there is a *lacuna* in Malalas' text at this point. See Mango & Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, 344 n. 1.

¹⁴⁵ Whitby, 'Justinian's bridge over the Sangarius,' 142, is undoubtedly correct to stress that the objections to the late date raised by Stein, *Histoire*, II, 837, that the text does not mention the Samaritan revolt of 555 or the Tzani revolt of 557, are not significant, since such material could hardly have been included in a text which functioned as a panegyric.

writing the *De Aedificiis* in 560, in full knowledge of the collapse of the dome in 558.¹⁴⁶ While some have argued that mentioning the dome's collapse would have been impolitic, and that after its reconstruction, this would have ceased to be an issue,¹⁴⁷ the question remains as to why Procopius would not have exploited the encomiastic potential of the reconstructed dome. The earlier date for the *De Aedificiis* is therefore to be preferred, although the argument that book I of the *De Aedificiis* was completed before the collapse of the dome of Hagia Sophia, and the remaining books were completed later, cannot be entirely dismissed.¹⁴⁸

Debates concerning the date and nature of the *De Aedificiis* are also complicated by the transmission of the text, which is preserved in two different recensions – the short and the long. The standard edition of the text, that of Haury, is based on the long recension, since Haury regarded the short recension as lacunose, and thus does not acknowledge the differences between the two recensions in the *apparatus criticus*.¹⁴⁹ Traditionally, the long recension of the text has been regarded as the original, and the short recension as a later epitome.¹⁵⁰ However, Federico Montinaro has now argued that the short recension of the *De Aedificiis* represents the original, with the long recension representing a subsequent version re-edited by Procopius himself.¹⁵¹ Such a conclusion would have significant implications for the understanding of Procopius' writing process, implying, as it does, that he revised his own work after some years.

¹⁴⁶ *Aed.* I.1.45–50.

¹⁴⁷ Whitby, 'Justinian's bridge over the Sangarius,' 142–3.

¹⁴⁸ This view was originally advocated by G. Downey, 'The composition of Procopius' *De Aedificiis*,' *TAPA* 78 (1947), 171–83; and was subsequently adopted by Evans, 'The dates of Procopius' works,' 303–6, 312.

¹⁴⁹ *Procopii Caesariensis opera omnia* IV, ed. J. Haury (Leipzig, 1964), v.

¹⁵⁰ B. Flusin, 'L'établissement du text, sa nature et la forme littéraire: remarques sur la tradition manuscrite du *De Aedificiis*,' *Antiquité Tardive* 8 (2000), 9–17.

¹⁵¹ F. Montinaro, 'Byzantium and the Slavs in the reign of Justinian: Comparing the two recensions of Procopius's *Buildings*,' in V. Ivanišević and M. Kazanski, eds., *The Pontic-Danubian Realm in the Period of the Great Migration* (Paris-Beograd, 2012), 91–105. This view had previously been proposed by Downey, 'The composition of Procopius' *De Aedificiis*,' 171–83, albeit largely on stylistic grounds.

However, the evidence for the anteriority of the short recension drawn from book VI of the *De Aedificiis* is unconvincing. The long recension of the text, offered in the standard edition, includes the statement:

And in the interior, at the extremities of this land, where the barbarian Berbers dwell nearby, he [Justinian] had built the most powerful fortresses against them, on account of which they are no longer able to overrun the Roman Empire;

while the short recension of the text omits:

... on account of which they are no longer able to overrun the Roman Empire.¹⁵²

Montinaro argues that this last clause can only be a later addition to the text, added following the Roman victory over the Berbers at the battle of the Plains of Cato in 548.¹⁵³ However, there is no reason to believe that this was the case. Such claims concerning the security of Africa were disseminated by the Roman imperial government from the capture of Carthage in 533, irrespective of the reality of the situation.¹⁵⁴ And, if Procopius were including aspects of imperial propaganda within the *De Aedificiis*, the inclusion of such a statement prior to 548 would hardly be surprising.

Given that a synoptic edition of the two recensions of the *De Aedificiis* is yet to be published, reaching a definitive conclusion on which of the two recensions of the *De Aedificiis* was written first is difficult. However, when considering Procopius' writings on Africa, the relationship between the two recensions is of limited significance – there are fewer differences between book VI of the *De Aedificiis* in the long and short recensions than in most other books of the text¹⁵⁵ – and the issue will not be considered further here.

¹⁵² *Bella* VI.6.17: [κατὰ δὲ τὴν μεσόγειαν ἐς τῆς χώρας τὰ ἔσχατα, ἵνα δὴ αὐτὴν βάρβαροι προσοικοῦσι Μαυρούσιοι, ἐπιτειχίσματα κατ' αὐτῶν πεποιήται δυνατώτατα, ἐξ ὧν δὴ οὐκέτι οἰοί τέ εἰσι καταθεῖν τῆν Ῥωμαίων ἀρχήν]; with Montinaro, 'Byzantium and the Slavs in the reign of Justinian,' 97–8.

¹⁵³ Montinaro, 'Byzantium and the Slavs in the reign of Justinian,' 98.

¹⁵⁴ *Cf. J. Nov.* 1. pref.; with pp. 154–5.

¹⁵⁵ Montinaro, 'Byzantium and the Slavs in the reign of Justinian,' 93–4.

According to other writers, although not by his own admission, Procopius was a lawyer [ῥήτωρ],¹⁵⁶ and he is often thought to have received a legal education.¹⁵⁷ Certainly, his writings, particularly the *Anecdota*, suggest that he was familiar with Roman law,¹⁵⁸ and legal training was likely to have been an expectation for appointment as Belisarius' *assessor*.¹⁵⁹ But Procopius need not have practised as a lawyer (*advocatus*). He provides no information concerning his own legal practice,¹⁶⁰ and not everyone who undertook legal education ultimately practised as an *advocatus*.¹⁶¹

Procopius' evident level of education and his career path suggest that he may have belonged to a relatively well-to-do family.¹⁶² Later writers bestow upon him the rank of *illustris*.¹⁶³ This was, however, a rank relatively commonly bestowed during Justinian's reign, as the lower ranks ceased to have significance,¹⁶⁴ and the reason for Procopius' elevation, if indeed it occurred, is unknown.¹⁶⁵ There is no reason to view him as the voice of a disenfranchised senatorial class.¹⁶⁶

¹⁵⁶ Menander, frag. 27 (ed. Blockley); with *PLRE* IIIB, 1060, which notes that it is impossible to know whether Menander himself referred to Procopius as ῥήτωρ or whether this was the supposition of Menander's 10th century excerptor. Agathias, *Hist.* prooem. 22, 32; II.19.1; IV.15.1, 26.4; 29.5, 30.5; Evagrius, *HE* IV.12, 19; V.24; *Suda* Π 2479. It is notable that, of the nine references to Procopius made by Agathias, seven are to Προκόπιος ῥήτωρ.

¹⁵⁷ Cameron, *Procopius*, 6; G. Greatrex, 'Lawyers and historians in late antiquity,' in R. Mathisen, ed., *Law, Society, and Authority in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2001), 150; idem, 'Perceptions of Procopius in recent scholarship,' 77; T. Honoré, *Tribonian* (London, 1978), 6 n. 42, 243. Cf. Howard-Johnston, 'The education and expertise of Procopius,' 22, suggests that Procopius may be identified as a ῥήτωρ by Agathias and Menander simply on the basis that this was their own background, and it was thus assumed to be a suitable background for a historian. *Contra* G. Fatouros, 'Zur Prokop-Biographie,' *Klio* 62 (1980), 517–18, who suggests that the term ῥήτωρ, when used in reference to Procopius, was used generically to mean writer.

¹⁵⁸ *Anec.* XIX.17–25; XX.17, 20; XXVIII; XXIX.17–25; *Bella* I.19.26; III.3.3. H. F. Hitzig, *Die Assessoren der römischen Magistrate und Richter* (Munich, 1893), 169 n. 608; Greatrex, 'Lawyers and historians,' 150 and n. 11.

¹⁵⁹ Greatrex, 'Lawyers and historians,' 150

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Agathias (*Hist.* prooem. 14), who describes himself as employed in the law courts.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Menander (frag. 1 (ed. Blockley)), who notes that he completed his legal training, but decided not to pursue the profession.

¹⁶² Greatrex, 'Perceptions of Procopius in recent scholarship,' 79.

¹⁶³ *Suda* Π 2479.

¹⁶⁴ Jones, *LRE*, 528–30. *Contra* Evans, *Procopius*, 38, who claims that this rank placed Procopius "in the inner circle of the aristocracy".

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Greatrex, 'Lawyers and historians,' 159, who suggests that Procopius might have been granted the rank *illustris* for his literary works. However, this is entirely speculative.

¹⁶⁶ Greatrex, 'Procopius the outsider?,' 226. *Contra* B. Rubin, *Das Zeitalter Iustinians* (Berlin, 1960), I, 234–45.

According to the 7th century chronicle of John, bishop of Nikiu, Procopius was *praefectus urbi Constantinopolitanae*.¹⁶⁷ Certainly, a man named Procopius is otherwise attested as *praefectus urbi Constantinopolitanae* in 562/3,¹⁶⁸ and Procopius the historian has sometimes been identified with the prefect.¹⁶⁹ However, it is more likely that John of Nikiu, writing a century later, mistakenly conflated two different individuals called Procopius.¹⁷⁰

Procopius' date of death is unknown. The apparently unfinished state of the *De Aedificiis* suggests that Procopius may have died before he could finish revising the text.¹⁷¹ If an earlier date for the *De Aedificiis* is accepted,¹⁷² then Procopius' literary production had ceased by the mid-550s, and his death should probably be placed around this point. There is no indication that he outlived Justinian, which would have permitted more overt criticism of the emperor in the publicly available *Bella*, rather than simply in the *Anecdota*.¹⁷³

In the specific context of events in Africa, it is clear that Procopius was a member of the expeditionary force which landed at Caput Vada in September 533.¹⁷⁴ He does not specify how long he remained in Africa, but it has generally been assumed that he returned to Constantinople with Belisarius in 534.¹⁷⁵ However, Procopius was again in Africa at Easter 536, since he notes that he sailed for Syracuse with Solomon, following the mutiny,¹⁷⁶ and it is possible that he remained in Africa, after Belisarius' departure in 534, as an official in Solomon's administration.¹⁷⁷ This argument is perhaps supported by Procopius' evident interest in

¹⁶⁷ John of Nikiu, XCII.20 (trans. R. H. Charles, *The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu* (London, 1916), 233).

¹⁶⁸ John Malalas, XVIII.141; Theophanes, *AM* 6055 (ed. De Boor, pp. 238–9). See also *PLRE* IIIB, 1066 (Procopius 3).

¹⁶⁹ T. Honoré, *Tribonian* (London, 1978), 243.

¹⁷⁰ *PLRE* IIIB, 1066; Cameron, *Procopius*, 14–15; Howard-Johnston, 'The education and expertise of Procopius,' 22.

¹⁷¹ Cameron, *Procopius*, 14–15; Evans, 'The dates of Procopius' works,' 306.

¹⁷² See pp. 45–7.

¹⁷³ Greatrex, 'Procopius the outsider?,' 218–19.

¹⁷⁴ *Bella* 3.12.3.

¹⁷⁵ *PLRE* IIIB, 1061.

¹⁷⁶ *Bella* 4.14.39–41.

¹⁷⁷ *Contra PLRE* IIIB, 1061, which suggests that Procopius had accompanied Belisarius to Sicily in 535, and was on a mission to Carthage at the time of the mutiny in 536.

Solomon's campaigns between 534 and 536, concerning which he seems well informed,¹⁷⁸ and his determination to present Solomon in a positive light, despite his evident inadequacies as a commander.¹⁷⁹ Following his departure from Africa in 536, there is no evidence that Procopius ever returned.

In the style of classical historiography, Procopius establishes his authority as narrator by stressing his use of autopsy.¹⁸⁰ He notes at the opening of the *Bella*:

And he [Procopius] was aware that he, most of all, was able to write these things, on account of no other reason than that, since it came about that he was appointed adviser to the general Belisarius, he was present at almost all the events;¹⁸¹

and returns to this point when narrating the launch of the campaign against Vandal Africa:

And Procopius, who wrote this account, was also with them [Belisarius and his wife]. Previously, he had been very much afraid of the danger, but later he saw a vision in a dream, which caused him to take courage and encouraged him to join the expedition.¹⁸²

Procopius' presentation of himself as one of the sceptics won over to the virtues of the campaign by a vision reinforces the message that the campaign was undertaken by the will of God,¹⁸³ thus personalizing a repeated theme of imperial representations of the campaign.¹⁸⁴ In some respects, such comments are no more than a trope of classical historiography. However, in contrast to other sections of the *Bella*, Procopius' role as an eyewitness undoubtedly shaped his narrative of events in Africa, at least from the launch of the campaign of conquest until Belisarius' departure in 534.

¹⁷⁸ On Solomon's campaigns see *Bella* IV.11–13; against which should be contrasted Procopius' more minimalist treatment of the campaigns of John Troglita (*Bella* IV.28.45–51).

¹⁷⁹ See p. 201.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Thucydides, V.26.5.

¹⁸¹ *Bella* I.1.3: [καὶ οἱ ξυνηπίστατο πάντων μάλιστα δυνατὸς ὦν τάδε ξυγγράψαι κατ' ἄλλο μὲν οὐδὲν, ὅτι δὲ αὐτῷ ξυμβούλῳ ἡρημένῳ Βελισαρίῳ τῷ στρατηγῷ σχεδόν τι ἅπασι παραγενέσθαι τοῖς πεπραγμένοις ξυνέπεσε.]

¹⁸² *Bella* III.12.3: [ξυνηὴν δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ Προκόπιος, ὃς τάδε ξυνέγραψε, πρότερον μὲν καὶ μάλα κατορρωδήσας τὸν κίνδυνον, ὅψιν δὲ ὀνείρου ἰδὼν ὕστερον ἢ αὐτὸν θαρσῆσαι τε ἐποίησε καὶ ἐς τὸ στρατεύεσθαι ὥρμησεν.]

¹⁸³ Cameron, *Procopius*, 173.

¹⁸⁴ See section 2.4. Cf. *I. Const. Imperatoriam* pref.; *CJ* 1.27.1.1; and *D. Const. Tanta/Δέδωκεν* 23.

Certainly, Procopius' narrative of the Roman campaign against the Vandals is comparatively detailed. The campaign occupies by far the greatest part of books III and IV of the *Bella*, and is the most extensively worked section of the narrative, despite covering a period of less than a year.¹⁸⁵ And the campaign to capture Carthage is undoubtedly the high-point of the African narrative of the *Bella*, first reporting the Roman entry into Carthage, unopposed and welcomed by the local population,¹⁸⁶ and then culminating in Belisarius' triumph at Constantinople.¹⁸⁷

The African campaign is one of the few sections of the *Bella* in which Procopius' reliance on his own observations is explicitly evident, the march from Caput Vada to Carthage being the only section of the text narrated in the first person plural.¹⁸⁸ That said, it would have been impossible for any one individual to observe all that Procopius reports. His ability to narrate events from multiple perspectives, such as the events surrounding the battle of Decimum, in relation to which he presents a number of parallel narratives, suggests that Procopius must have had access to a variety of sources of information, in addition to his own observations.¹⁸⁹ His role as Belisarius' *assessor*, and then, perhaps, as an official in Solomon's administration, would have given him access to the military high command, which at this point in time was also the civil administration, and to its documents. Procopius may thus have been able to draw on the collective knowledge of the African administration in both oral and written form.

However, Procopius was, at best, present in Africa between 533 and 536, which represents only a small portion of the period covered by his narrative,¹⁹⁰ and he provides no explicit information on the sources upon which he must have drawn for information concerning those events which occurred after his departure from Africa. Writing in Constantinople in the 540s, Procopius may have had access to official archival material, but, since nothing is known

¹⁸⁵ *Bella* III.12–IV.8.

¹⁸⁶ *Bella* II.20.1–3, 21.

¹⁸⁷ *Bella* IV.9.

¹⁸⁸ *PLRE* IIIB, 1061.

¹⁸⁹ *Bella* III.18–19.

¹⁹⁰ See pp. 50–51.

concerning his position in the capital, this is entirely speculative. Alternatively, he may have been restricted to such information as was disseminated by the imperial government concerning events in Africa.

Procopius' narrative of events in Africa becomes progressively more compressed. Consistent with his composition of *Bella* I–VII as a whole,¹⁹¹ Procopius appears to have completed his original narrative of events in Africa by 545/6. His account of John Troglita's campaigns in Africa (546 to 548) is cursory, and creates the impression of an after-thought, perhaps prompted by a desire to report the final victory at the Plains of Cato.¹⁹² The impression that Procopius lost interest in events in Africa, either after his own departure from the region in 536, or after it became clear that the dramatic victory of 533/4 was only the beginning of a long and drawn-out process, is hard to avoid. His last African reference in book IV of the *Bella* is to the Roman victory at the battle of the Plains of Cato, in 548 – an event which is again noted in book VIII.¹⁹³ His latest dateable African reference in *Bella* VIII is to the dispatch of troops to Sardinia by John Troglita, the *magister militum per Africam*, in 551.¹⁹⁴

Procopius' *Bella* is the major narrative source for events in Africa during Justinian's reign, but, for events following the campaign against the Vandals, it is sparse in its presentation of anything other than the actions of the Roman military command, and it lacks any attempt to elucidate imperial intentions in the region. In order to understand Procopius' attitudes towards Justinianic policy in Africa, and thus his biases in presenting it, it is necessary to turn to the *De Aedificiis* and the *Anecdota*.

Procopius' sources of information about Africa in the *De Aedificiis* are uncertain. He concludes the text with the observation:

¹⁹¹ See p. 42.

¹⁹² *Bella* 4.28.45–52. On John Troglita's campaigns see section 5.6.

¹⁹³ *Bella* IV.28.47–52; VIII.17.20–22. On the battle of the Plains of Cato see p. 231.

¹⁹⁴ *Bella* VIII.24.31–7; with n. 1412.

Thus, as many of the constructions of Justinian as I have succeeded in learning, either having seen them myself or having heard about them from those who have seen them, I have set out in my account to the best of my ability.¹⁹⁵

However, Procopius' account of the African buildings cannot have been written largely from memory. The *De Aedificiis* cannot have been completed until at least 550,¹⁹⁶ some twenty years after he had left Africa. Procopius was unlikely to have remembered every detail of every site he had visited twenty years earlier, and some of the building work he reported must have been undertaken after his departure. Furthermore, there is little reason to suppose that Procopius was well travelled beyond the route from Caput Vada to Carthage, an impression supported by the fact that the only African cities, other than Carthage, for which Procopius offers information beyond generic references to fortification, are Leptis Magna, Hadrumetum and Caput Vada, the latter two being cities through which the expeditionary force passed.¹⁹⁷ The only African city with which Procopius was likely to have been really familiar was Carthage, and his personal knowledge of Africa should certainly not be overestimated.¹⁹⁸

Procopius may have compiled his list of sites in Africa from official lists of fortifications to which he might have had access when at Constantinople.¹⁹⁹ However, even if he had access to official lists, they may have been lists of planned projects, rather than lists of completed projects.²⁰⁰ Verification of Procopius' information through archaeological evidence is extremely difficult,²⁰¹ and the level of trust placed in book VI of the *De Aedificiis* is somewhat surprising given the scepticism with which other books have been treated, and the problematic

¹⁹⁵ *Aed.* 6.7.18: [ὄσα μὲν οὖν τῶν Ἰουστινιανοῦ οἰκοδομημάτων μαθεῖν ἴσχυσα ἢ αὐτόπτης γεγενημένος ἢ τῶν θεασαμένων αὐτήκοος, ὅση δύναμις τῷ λόγῳ ἐπῆλθον.]

¹⁹⁶ See p. 45.

¹⁹⁷ *Aed.* VI.4.2–11 (Leptis Magna); VI.6.1–7 (Hadrumetum); VI.6.8–16 (Caput Vada). Cf. *Aed.* VI.5.1–11 (Carthage). Cf. Cameron, *Procopius*, 182.

¹⁹⁸ This point is stressed by Cameron, 'Byzantine Africa,' 34; eadem, *Procopius*, 184.

¹⁹⁹ D. Roques, 'Les Contructions de Justinien de Procope de Césarée,' *AT* 8 (2000), 37. Contra Cameron, *Procopius*, 183, who argues that there are far too many omissions to accept that Procopius was working from a list of completed fortifications.

²⁰⁰ Cameron, *Procopius*, 183.

²⁰¹ See section 3.5.

manner in which the text has been transmitted.²⁰² The information provided has been interpreted as evidence for an imperially directed fortification program in Africa, and thus for a coherent defensive strategy in the region.²⁰³

Two major themes emerge from Procopius' account of a supposed fortification program in Africa. The first is that Justinian, through his restoration of the fortifications of the region, was restoring to the African population the security which it had enjoyed under the Roman Empire prior to Vandal rule. This point is most evident from Procopius' repeated claim that the Vandals had destroyed the walls of many formerly Roman cities lest the fortifications be used against the Vandals should the Romans attempt to retake the region.²⁰⁴ However, in many cases, Procopius' claims of the wilful Vandal destruction of earlier Roman fortifications, while certainly not impossible, cannot be verified, and could conceivably be seen as no more than a literary device intended to emphasize Justinian's role as restorer of empire – a repeated theme of the *De Aedificiis*, and one which had particular resonance in relation to the conquered provinces of Africa.²⁰⁵

The second theme which emerges from book VI of the *De Aedificiis* is the view that Justinian's fortification program was intended to create a clear and tangible demarcation between the Romano-African population and the Berbers, and a barrier which would prevent the Berbers from entering Roman territory. Procopius makes a direct statement of what he presents as imperial policy in this respect:

And our emperor had a care for it [Libya], watching over it, so that it might not suffer anything from the inroads of the Berbers living adjacent to it;²⁰⁶

and similarly:

²⁰² See pp. 47–8.

²⁰³ See n. 208; with section 3.5.

²⁰⁴ *Aed.* VI.5.2–4, 6.2. Similarly, *Bella* III.5.8, 15.9.

²⁰⁵ *Cf.* the theme of restoration in the Justinianic legislation relating to Africa. See p. 134.

²⁰⁶ *Aed.* VI.2.2: [καὶ αὐτῆς δὲ προεγρηγορώς ὁ καθ' ἡμᾶς βασιλεὺς προμηθεῖ γνώμη, ὡς μή τι αὐτῇ παθεῖν ἐξ ἐπιδρομῆς πρὸς Μαυρουσίων τῶν πλησιοχώρων ξυμβαίη...] Similarly, *Aed.* VI.2.21, 6.17, 7.13.

In the interior of this land [Byzacena], at its borders, where the barbarian Berbers lived nearby, he [the emperor] has built very strong fortresses against them, on account of which they [the Berbers] were no longer able to overrun the Roman Empire.²⁰⁷

Procopius' claim, that the Romans attempted to build defensive barriers along the frontiers of Roman Africa, in order to keep the Berbers from attacking the Romano-African population, has sometimes been accepted as a genuine statement of Roman strategy in Africa.²⁰⁸ However, such a defensive strategy would have been impractical. The hypothetical Roman provinces of Africa, as outlined in the legislation establishing the military administration of the prefecture,²⁰⁹ would have covered a vast area, and the distances between individual settlements would simply have been too great to provide an effective defensive barrier.²¹⁰ Furthermore, such a view of Roman strategy in Africa fails to take into account the porous nature of the Roman frontier and the degree of assimilation which had already occurred between the Romano-African and Berber populations.²¹¹ The idea of a clearly defined frontier 'line' is simply not applicable in this context.²¹²

Nevertheless, it is not altogether surprising that Procopius should choose to present the objectives of Roman strategy in Africa in such a manner— it is entirely consistent with his own presentation of the African population in the *Bella*. Procopius is remarkably unsophisticated in his treatment of the Berbers, entirely failing to distinguish between the various tribal groups,

²⁰⁷ *Aed.* VI.6.17; with n. 152. On the level of Roman control in the Aurès massif see pp. 213–6.

²⁰⁸ Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 139–44, 277–8. Diehl argued, based on perceived parallels with defensive strategy in the eastern provinces and on the *De Aedificiis*, that Justinian's strategy in Africa involved the construction of two lines of defense – an inner and an outer. He suggested that the outer line of defence would have been composed of a string of fortified towns, interspaced with forts, all of which would have had small garrisons, while the inner line of defence would have been composed of larger fortified citadels with larger garrisons. The purpose of the outer line was to act as the kind of barrier described by Procopius and to provide forward bases from which to launch punitive expeditions, while the purpose of the inner line was to provide support bases for the outer line and to provide places of refuge for the population, in the event the outer line was by-passed by invaders. This view was followed by S. Gsell, *Les monuments antiques de l'Algérie* (Paris, 1901), II, 344–8.

²⁰⁹ *CJ* 1.27.1.12; with pp. 122–8.

²¹⁰ Pringle, *Défence*, 96–7.

²¹¹ See section 4.3.

²¹² *Cf. Ioh.* VI.36–52, which has been read as evidence that John Troglita re-established the *limes* system in Africa. See Pringle, *Défence*, 367 n. 28.

and their differing objectives. Instead, he dismisses the tribes as βάρβαροι, and falls back on the *topos* of the barbarian in order to explain their actions. Throughout the *Bella*, the Berbers are characterised as being extremely untrustworthy and, in particular, as being faithless allies,²¹³ as well as having no concern for the well-being of their children,²¹⁴ and as being inclined to make covert attacks, which was apparently regarded as an additional form of dishonesty.²¹⁵ Indeed, this characterisation is not significantly different to Procopius' characterisation of other non-Roman peoples in the *Bella*, with the exception of the Persians.²¹⁶ For Procopius, Roman and Berber are entirely distinct, the civilized and the uncivilized, and this is reflected in his presentation of Roman strategy.²¹⁷ Neither the *Bella* nor the *De Aedificiis* demonstrates any conception of Roman-Berber assimilation or of a frontier 'zone'.

Furthermore, given that the *De Aedificiis* cannot have been written until at least 550,²¹⁸ Procopius' focus on fortification as a means of creating a barrier between the Romano-African population and the Berbers probably reflects a retrospective attempt to present Roman tactics in Africa immediately following the conquest as part of a coherent Roman strategy against the threat posed by the Berbers, which would have been far more evident following the raids of the 540s.²¹⁹ In this respect, book VI of the *De Aedificiis* functions not only as a panegyric, but also, in a sense, as an apology for imperial policy in Africa.

Indeed, the sense that the Eastern Roman Empire had been less than successful in Africa is yet more evident in the *Anecdota*. Procopius undoubtedly presents Justinian's conquest of Africa in the *Anecdota* as an example of the emperor's inclination towards destruction:

²¹³ Eg. *Bella* IV.8.9, 13.37, 17.10.

²¹⁴ *Bella* IV.8.10, 11.4.

²¹⁵ *Bella* IV.8.21.

²¹⁶ See Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea*, 131–2.

²¹⁷ Cameron, 'Byzantine Africa,' 34–5.

²¹⁸ See p. 45.

²¹⁹ See pp. 181–7, 190–96.

And since it was nothing to him to destroy the Roman empire, he succeeded in the conquest of Libya and Italy for no other reason than in order to destroy the men of these countries together with those previously under his power.²²⁰

Nevertheless, while his comments regarding Africa are expressed in terms similar to those used for his criticisms of other aspects of Justinian's regime, they should not necessarily be dismissed as invective. Procopius' claims that Justinian made little attempt to consolidate his territorial holdings in Africa following the Vandal defeat and that he made no attempt to win over the local population, which had good reason to be hostile to the Roman administration, appear to be borne out by the problems faced by the Roman administration in Africa in the 530s and 540s.²²¹ As will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters, Procopius' comments in the *Anecdota* appear to represent a legitimate retrospective critique of Justinian's policy in Africa and, while studies of 6th century Africa have legitimately focused on books III and IV of the *Bella*, these texts need to be read in the context of Procopius' *corpus*, rather than in isolation.

1.3 Corippus

Procopius' *Bella* is undoubtedly the best known literary source for Africa during the Justinianic period. However, its predominance rests as much on the fact that it is the only source of information for many events, as on its accuracy, which often simply cannot be assessed. However, for the Berber hostilities which occurred between 546 and 548, and for the Roman military response to them, as well as for some earlier events, an alternative account exists in Corippus' *Iohannis* – an eight book, hexameter poem, which appears to have been modelled on Vergil's *Aeneid*.²²² Given the limited documentation for Africa during the 6th century, Corippus' account might be expected to be regarded as providing a vitally important counter-check to

²²⁰ *Anec.* VI.25: [ἐπεὶ δὲ οὐδὲν ἦν αὐτῷ μόνην καταλῦσαι τὴν Ῥωμαίων ἀρχὴν, Λιβύης τε καὶ Ἰταλίας οὐκ ἄλλου τοῦ ἔνεκα πεποιῆσθαι τὴν ἐπικράτησιν ἴσχυσεν ἢ ὥστε ζῆν τοῖς πρότερον ὑφ' αὐτῷ οἴσι διολέσαι τοὺς ταύτη ἀνθρώπους.] Cf. *Anec.* XVIII.14.

²²¹ *Anec.* XVIII.9.

²²² On this point see J. Blänsdorf, "Aeneadas rursus cupiunt resonare Camenae": Vergils epische Form in der *Iohannis des Corippus*, in E. Lefèvre, ed., *Monumentum Chilonense (Festschrift E. Burck)* (Amsterdam, 1975), 524ff.

Procopius' version of events. And yet, there remains considerable doubt about the nature and value of the historical data which Corippus provides.

Three poems have been attributed to Corippus. Aside from the *Iohannis*, which will be discussed in greater detail below, Corippus was also the author of two panegyrics – the *In laudem Iustini augusti minoris* (henceforth, *In laudem*), to the emperor Justin II (565–578), and the *Panegyricus Anastasii*, to Anastasius, who was *magister officiorum* in 565/6 and *quaestor sacri palatii* from 565/6 to 571/2.²²³ The two panegyrics are preserved in full in a single 10th century Visigothic manuscript (*Matritensis* 10029), although excerpts from the *In laudem* are also preserved in four later manuscripts.²²⁴ The *Panegyricus Anastasii*, which comprises only 51 lines, is incorporated into the far longer *In laudem*, as a second preface.

The *In laudem* comprises of four books – the first three commemorating Justin's accession to the throne and coronation on 14 November 565, and the fourth describing the emperor's elevation to the consulship on 1 January 566.²²⁵ The final lines of book III suggest that the work was originally intended to comprise three books and was subsequently extended.²²⁶ A panegyric may be expected to be topical, and the first three books have generally been dated to 566, and the final book to late 566 or early 567.²²⁷ The *Panegyricus Anastasii* was composed slightly earlier than the *In laudem*, presumably in 565/6.²²⁸

²²³ Contra H. Hofmann, 'Überlegungen zu einer Theorie der nichtchristlichen Epik der lateinischen Spätantike,' *Philologus* 132.1 (1988), 112, who argues that the *Panegyricus Anastasii* is only the preface to a now lost panegyric which was preserved in the also lost *Codex Ovetensis*. On Anastasius see *PLRE* IIIA, 64–6.

²²⁴ For a more detailed discussion of the manuscript tradition see Averil Cameron, *Flavius Cresconius Corippus: In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris* (London, 1976), 20–4.

²²⁵ For the chronology of, and sources for, these events see *PLRE* IIIA, 755.

²²⁶ *Iust.* III.402–6.

²²⁷ These dates were originally proposed by Cameron, *Flavius Cresconius Corippus*, 2 and 110, and have been accepted by subsequent studies, with the exception of S. Antès, *Corippe: Éloge de l'empereur Justin II* (Paris, 1981), xvii–xix.

²²⁸ E. Stein, *Studien zur Geschichte des byzantinischen Reiches, vornehmlich unter den Kaisern Justinus II und Tiberius Constantinus* (Stuttgart, 1919), 28. This view is followed by R. Kastor, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1981), 261–2; and, more tentatively, by Cameron, *Flavius Cresconius Corippus*, 123. On Anastasius, the addressee of the *Panegyricus Anastasii*, see *PLRE* IIIB, 64–6.

Although rarely contested, the evidence for the *Iohannis* and the *In laudem* and *Panegyricus Anastasii* having the same author is limited. While secondary literature conventionally refers to the author of all three works as Flavius Cresconius Corippus, in the sole surviving manuscript of the *Iohannis*, the author of the poem is attested only as ‘Crestonius’.²²⁹ This has been corrected to ‘Cresconius’ on the basis of an earlier, but no longer extant, manuscript – the 11th century *Codex Casiensis* – which was headed the *Iohannis Cresconium de bellis Libicis*.²³⁰ The *Codex Matritensis*, on the other hand, attributes the *In laudem* and the *Panegyricus Anastasii* to ‘Corippus’.²³¹ The attribution of all three poems to the same author is based on the *Codex Budensis*, which has been lost since 1526, but is noted in the writings of the Austrian humanist, Cuspinian.²³² The *Codex Budensis* apparently attributed the *Iohannis* to ‘Fl. Cresconius Gorippus’.²³³

Given that all known manuscripts are comparatively late, and that the discrepancies between them can easily be explained as copying errors (neither the substitution of C for G, nor T for C, is particularly surprising), the established attribution of all three poems to the same author will not be challenged here. And, while Riedlberger has some grounds upon which to argue that the author of the *Iohannis* (and, indeed, the author of the *In laudem* and the *Panegyricus Anastasii*) should be referred to as ‘Gorippus’, the name ‘Corippus’ will be retained here, in reference to the author of all three poems, in the interests of clarity.

The precise dating of the *Iohannis* will be discussed in greater detail below, but it suffices to say here that the two panegyrics were written almost twenty years later. As a result, their relevance to any discussion of Corippus’ earlier work may be doubted. However, given the

²²⁹ Partsch, *Corippi africani grammatici libri*, xliii n.1.

²³⁰ Ibid, xlvii n.1.

²³¹ Ibid, xliii n.1.

²³² P. Riedlberger, *Philologischer, historischer und liturgischer Kommentar zum 8. Buch der Johannes der Gorippus nebst kritischer Edition und Übersetzung* (Groningen, 2010), 28-31.

²³³ Partsch, *Corippi africani grammatici libri*, xliii n.1; Riedlberger, *Philologischer, historischer und liturgischer Kommentar*, 29.

extreme paucity of information about Corippus himself, the meagre biographical information contained in the *In laudem* and the *Panegyricus Anastasii* is important for contextualizing the *Iohannis*.

A scribal note in the *Codex Matritensis* describes Corippus as *Africanus Grammaticus*,²³⁴ and discussions of Corippus' background have traditionally begun from the assumption that this description is accurate.²³⁵ However, the description is the supposition of a 10th century Visigothic scribe.²³⁶ While he may have had additional information concerning the author of the *Iohannis*, which has now been lost, it is equally possible that the description was simply his inference based on the contents of the text itself.

Nevertheless, the scribe of the *Codex Matritensis* was undoubtedly right to regard Corippus as a native of Africa. Aside from the general degree of knowledge of the region – both cultural and geographical – which the *Iohannis* appears to display, both the *Panegyricus Anastasii* and the *In laudem* show a continued interest in Africa.²³⁷ Furthermore, the *Iohannis* shows a good knowledge of the region surrounding Carthage.²³⁸ On the basis of his statement:

Shall I, ignorant as I am, having once recited in the countryside, speak my verses openly among the people of the city?²³⁹

Corippus has been assumed to have lived in one of the villages in Carthage's hinterland.²⁴⁰

However, the statement should probably not be taken literally. Such self-deprecating remarks

²³⁴ J. Partsch, *Corippi africani grammatici libri qui supersunt* (Berlin, 1879), xliii.

²³⁵ Thus, for example, the title of Partsch's edition, *Corippi africani grammatici libri qui supersunt*.

²³⁶ B. Baldwin, 'The career of Corippus,' *CQ* 28 (1978), 372.

²³⁷ *Pan. Anast.* 38–40.

Indeed, Stein, *Histoire*, II, 693, has argued that Corippus' focus on Africa at the time of writing the *Panegyricus Anastasii* and the *In laudem* might have stemmed from concern over the revolt of the sons of Cusina in 563. See pp. 273–4.

²³⁸ Zarini, 'La préface de la *Johannide*,' 79.

²³⁹ *Ioh.* pref. 25–6: [quid <quod ego> ignarus, quondam per rura locutus, /urbis per populos carmina mitto palam?]

²⁴⁰ H. Hofmann, 'Corippus as a patristic author?,' *VigChr* 43 (1989), 362; Kastor, *Guardians of Language*, 261; C. Schindler, *Per carmina laudes: Untersuchungen zur spätantiken Verspanegyrik von Claudien bis Coripp* (Berlin, 2009), 227.

and, in particular, the move from country to city, were a conventional literary opening.²⁴¹ Corippus was more likely to have been an inhabitant of Carthage itself,²⁴² not least because the city's established literary circles would have afforded him far more extensive opportunities.²⁴³

Whether or not Corippus was actually a *grammaticus* – a teacher within the classical education system – is difficult to answer. He was undoubtedly well educated. Whatever one's opinion of his poetic style, the *Iohannis* reveals a familiarity with the classical *corpus*, as well as with the works of various late antique writers.²⁴⁴ Furthermore, the *Iohannis* shows that Corippus had at least some familiarity with the technical requirements of classical Latin poetry. The poem consists of a preface in elegiac couplets, followed by eight books of hexameters. In its use of hexameters, the *Iohannis* is consistent with the technical requirements of Latin epic. While Corippus' use of metre has occasionally drawn criticism, and his adherence to its rules at times give his verse a feeling of monotony,²⁴⁵ his use of his chosen metre may not be especially inspired, but is for the most part correct.²⁴⁶

One may thus conclude that Corippus had the technical knowledge required to compose Latin verse in the classical tradition, but was not always entirely successful in applying it, perhaps as a result of inexperience, or the need to produce the *Iohannis* in a hurry, or simply through a

²⁴¹ Zarini, 'La préface de la *Johannide*,' 79.

²⁴² Thus, Blänsdorf, 'Aeneadas rursus cupiunt resonare Camenae,' 524; Zarini, 'La préface de la *Johannide*,' 79.

²⁴³ See G. Hays, "Romuleis Libicisque Litteris": Fulgentius and the 'Vandal Renaissance,'" in A. Merrills, ed., *Vandals, Romans and Berbers: New Perspectives on Late Antique North Africa* (Farnham, 2004), 125–7; and Y. Hen, *Roman Barbarians: The Royal Court and Culture in the Early Medieval West* (Basingstoke, 2007), 69–71, 92–3, on the cultural context in which literature was produced at Carthage during the late Vandal period. There is little reason to suppose that this context should have disappeared following the Roman conquest.

²⁴⁴ R. Amann, 'De Corippo priorum poetarum Latinorum imitatore particula altera,' in *Programm des grossherzoglichen Gymnasiums zu Oldenburg* (Oldenburg, 1888), 13–26, identified clear allusions to some thirty-three classical and late antique authors, as well as potential allusions to numerous others.

²⁴⁵ R. Dodi, 'La *Iohannis* di Corippo fonte storica dei fatti d'Africa del 546–548,' *NRS* 70 (1986), 116.

²⁴⁶ Dodi, 'La *Iohannis* di Corippo,' 112. Blänsdorf, 'Aeneadas rursus cupiunt resonare Camenae,' 526, equally stresses that Corippus' metre is largely correct.

lack of aptitude.²⁴⁷ In the absence of other 6th century Latin verse, it is impossible to know whether Corippus' prosody is any better or worse than that of his contemporaries.

Is it reasonable to assume that Corippus was a *grammaticus*? In many respects the question is unimportant. Corippus' work suggests that he had almost certainly been the recipient of a classical education, which would have permitted him to have worked as a *grammaticus*. But, equally, there is no conclusive evidence that he did. The entry of a *grammaticus* into the imperial bureaucracy seems to have been very unusual – only five cases (including Corippus) are known in the 5th and 6th centuries, and all except Corippus taught at significant centres of learning.²⁴⁸

Nevertheless, the assumption that Corippus was a *grammaticus*, together with his own claims of provincialism, have led to certain suppositions regarding his career – namely, that he should be identified with the so-called 'wandering poets' – itinerant, professional poets, many of whom were also *grammatici*.²⁴⁹ While such individuals undoubtedly existed, there is no clear evidence that Corippus belonged to an itinerant intellectual class, and his association with this group has created a somewhat romanticized view of his leap from provincial obscurity to being a member of the imperial court, based solely on his own initiative and literary merits. Rather, as is suggested below, Corippus' connection with the Roman administration in Africa must have predated the composition of the *Iohannis*, and undoubtedly aided his move to Constantinople.

The preface to the *Iohannis* implies that Corippus had previously written other poems,²⁵⁰ and, on the basis of his claim that he was inspired by a "rustic Muse" [Musa rustica], some have

²⁴⁷ P. Riedlberger, *Philologischer, historischer und liturgischer Kommentar zum 8. Buch der Johannis der Gorippus nebst kritischer Edition und Übersetzung* (Groningen, 2010), 89, suggests that Corippus' metre suggests that the poem was written in a hurry.

²⁴⁸ Kastor, *Guardians of Language*, 130; with prosopographical entries 21, 25, 85 and 114. Kaster accepts that Corippus was indeed a *grammaticus*.

²⁴⁹ Alan Cameron, 'Wandering poets: A literary movement in Byzantine Egypt,' *Historia* 14.4 (1965), 470–509.

²⁵⁰ *Ioh.* pref. 25–6; with n. 239.

suggested that Corippus' earlier works may have been bucolic;²⁵¹ or even that Corippus' claim to be "ignorant" [ignarus], suggests that his previous works could not have been epic, as this was a genre with which he was clearly unfamiliar.²⁵² However, it was customary for late antique writers to be self-deprecating and to profess themselves unworthy to the task before them.²⁵³ Furthermore, even if Corippus' origins were provincial, there is no reason to suppose that he should have written bucolic poetry. The assumption that bucolic poetry is the genre of inferior, or inexperienced, poets is simply unfounded. Nevertheless, the perception that Corippus was a literary unknown prior to the composition of the *Iohannis*, frequently colours our view of his work.

Indeed, Corippus may well have been an established poet. An early 9th century library catalogue, from the Abbey of Lorsch, in Germany, noted that the library contained three biblical epics:

- (459). *Metrum Cresconii in evangelia liber unus*
 (460). *Eiusdem de diis gentium luculentissimum Carmen*
 (461). *Eiusdem versus de principio mundi vel de die iudicii et resurrectione carnis,*²⁵⁴

while the mid-9th century catalogue of the nearby Abbey of Murbach, in France, notes:

- (288). *Metrum Cresconij.*²⁵⁵

Given that the poems are now lost, Cresconius cannot be conclusively identified with Corippus, and arguments in favour of this identification rest on the fact that Cresconius has not otherwise

²⁵¹ *Ioh.* pref. 28. G. Shea, *The Iohannis or De bellis Libycis of Flavius Cresconius Corippus* (Lewiston, 1998), 3.

²⁵² Dodi, 'La *Iohannis* di Corippo,' 112.

²⁵³ Averil Cameron, 'The career of Corippus again,' *CQ* 30 (1980), 535. Cf. p. 62.

²⁵⁴ G. Becker, *Catalogi bibliothecarum antiquae* (Bonn, 1885), 111, cited in Hofmann, 'Corippus as a patristic author?,' 376 n. 41.

²⁵⁵ W. Milde, *Der Bibliothekskatalog des Klosters Murbach aus dem 9. Jahrhundert* (Heidelberg, 1968), 47. Hofmann, 'Überlegungen zu einer Theorie der nichchristlichen Epik der lateinischen Spätantike,' 112; idem, 'Review of *Corippe: Éloge de l'empereur Justin II* by S. Antès,' *Mnemosyne* 40.1/2 (1987), 213; idem, 'Corippus as a patristic author?,' 372, is undoubtedly right to argue that the Murbach entry refers to the same text as the first of the Lorsch entries.

been identified.²⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the identification of Cresconius with Corippus has won considerable acceptance.²⁵⁷

The possibility that Corippus was the author of a *corpus* of works gives a different impression of the poet to that suggested by *Iohannis*.²⁵⁸ In the place of an inexperienced and unskilled provincial writer, Corippus would emerge as the author of a number of works, on diverse subjects, which won appreciation in the post-Roman West – an image which is far more consistent with that of a poet who was commissioned to write for the imperial administration in Africa (see further below) and later in Constantinople itself, and whose work was sufficiently well known among the Merovingians that, within a year of its composition, the *In laudem* was being imitated by Venantius Fortunatus.²⁵⁹ But this is entirely speculative.

The precise date of the composition of the *Iohannis* is unknown. However, a *terminus post quem* for its composition is provided by the final events narrated by the poem – the battle of the Plains of Cato in 548.²⁶⁰ And, certainly, 563 may serve as a *terminus ante quem*. The *Iohannis* was probably completed shortly following the events it describes. This is clear from Corippus' statement that: "Peace, having been returned to Libya, establishes itself, as the wars cease..."²⁶¹ This would hardly have been appropriate following January 563, at which time the Berber

²⁵⁶ Hofmann, 'Corippus as a patristic author?', 372.

²⁵⁷ B. Bischoff, *Lorsch im Spiegel seiner Handschriften* (Munich, 1974), 92 n. 61; Milde, *Der Bibliothekskatalog des Klosters Murbach*, 47. These arguments are followed by Hofmann, 'Corippus as a patristic author?', 371–2; and Schindler, *Per carmina laudes*, 227–8.

²⁵⁸ How many additional works the Lorsch and Murbach catalogues attribute to Corippus is not entirely clear. Hofmann, 'Corippus as a patristic author?', 372, argues that the catalogues refer to three unknown works, while Milde, *Der Bibliothekskatalog des Klosters Murbach*, 47, argues that *Metrum Cresonij* is a reference to the *Iohannis* and the *In laudem*.

²⁵⁹ Venantius Fortunatus, *Appendix 2.1–10*; with Averil Cameron, 'The early religious policies of Justin II,' 60–1. This argument is repeated by J. W. George, *Venantius Fortunatus: A Poet in Merovingian Gaul* (Oxford, 1992), 66 n. 20, albeit somewhat more tentatively. Cameron also argues that Fortunatus's *In laudem Mariae* may have been modelled on the prayer to the Virgin Mary spoken by the empress Sophia in book II of the *In laudem* (*Iust.* 2.52–69). However, the attribution of the *In laudem Mariae* to Fortunatus is uncertain. In his edition of Fortunatus' poems, F. Leo, *Venanti Honori Clemantiani Fortunati presbyteri Italici opera poetica* (Berlin, 1881), 370–81, classifies the work as spurious.

²⁶⁰ *Ioh.* VIII.378–656. On the battle of the Plains of Cato see p. 231.

²⁶¹ *Ioh.* I.9: [reddita pax Libyae bellis cessantibus astat...]

leader, Cusina, was murdered by the Roman official, John Rogathinus, resulting in a renewed period of hostilities between the Romans and the Berbers.²⁶²

The preface to the poem is addressed “to the *proceres* of Carthage” [ad *proceres* Carthaginenses], and it seems clear from the text that the *Iohannis* was presented at Carthage, and that this presentation included a recitation of the work.²⁶³ The poem is undoubtedly triumphal in tone, with Corippus claiming that his subject will be “the laurels of victory” [lauri victoris], and “songs of celebration in a time of peace” [tempore pacifico carmina festa].²⁶⁴ Its presentation was surely intended to coincide with the feeling of victory following the battle of the Plains of Cato.²⁶⁵ The obvious occasion for the presentation would have been a victory celebration following the Roman victory in 548. Certainly, the *Iohannis* must have been complete, in its entirety, by 549, at the latest, otherwise the poem would have lost its impact.²⁶⁶

The preface to the *Iohannis* suggests that Corippus hoped to profit from his work. He notes:

Surely glory ought to be granted for spoken praise: am I alone to be cheated of my reward, reciting nothing?²⁶⁷

A poet who was, twenty years later, present at Constantinople and commissioned to write a panegyric to the new emperor, must have secured some high level patronage. Thus, Averil Cameron has argued that Corippus’ first significant work (the *Iohannis*) was sufficiently

²⁶² Malalas, XVIII.145. Cf. Theophanes *AM* 6055 (ed. De Boor, pp. 238–9). See pp. 273–4.

²⁶³ *Ioh.* pref. 39–40.

²⁶⁴ *Ioh.* pref. 1–2. Cf. *Ioh.* pref. 35: If, amid so many triumphs, Carthage may so rejoice... [gaudeat in multis sic si Carthago triumphis...]

²⁶⁵ Zarini, ‘La préface de la *Johannide* de Corippe: certitudes et hypotheses,’ 81–2.

²⁶⁶ Cameron, ‘Byzantine Africa,’ 36; Y. Modéran, ‘Corippe et l’occupation byzantine de l’Afrique: pour une nouvelle lecture de la *Iohannide*,’ *AntAfr* 22 (1986), 197. Contra Zarini, ‘La préface de la *Johannide*,’ 84, who suggests that the *Iohannis* must have been composed in two parts – books I–V in 551, and books VI–VIII sometime before May 553, based on Corippus’ reference to a *sacerdos* in book VII (*Ioh.* 7.484), whom Zarini tentatively identifies as the bishop Verecundus of Iunci, who died on 14 May 553. There are, however, two significant difficulties with this interpretation. First, it does not seem particularly likely that the poem should have been broken between books V and VI. While Zarini is correct to note that book V concludes with a victory, the episode is really only concluded in book VI, with John Troglita’s triumphal entry into Carthage. Furthermore, assigning the poem to a period of calm following the Roman defeat of the Berbers, rather than the period of triumph itself, would deprive the poem of its impact.

²⁶⁷ *Ioh.* pref. 29–30: [nempe admittenda est dicendae Gloria laudi:/ fraudabor solus munere nulla canens?]

successful to win him the patronage of John Troglita, who secured the poet's *entrée* into the Constantinopolitan court.²⁶⁸ It is certainly reasonable to suppose that the patronage of John Troglita might have furthered Corippus' literary career. However, the *Iohannis* should be seen as more than simply the gesture of an ambitious and enterprising poet, who selected his subject matter based on what he hoped would win him the greatest favour. Rather, the very subject matter of the poem suggests that Corippus was commissioned to write the *Iohannis*.²⁶⁹

Corippus clearly states his primary subject matter to be:

... John's greatness in war, the deeds of a man destined to be read by a future generation.²⁷⁰

The 'John' to whom he refers is John Troglita, the Roman *magister militum per Africam* between 546 and 551/1.²⁷¹ While there is some novelty in Corippus' decision to write such a panegyric to a military leader, rather than to the emperor,²⁷² it is clear that the poem, at one level at least, was intended to be political panegyric, and subscribes to the conventions of this genre. John Troglita is the undisputed hero of the work, and it must certainly be read with the understanding that his actions always had to be presented in a positive light.

Corippus aligns himself with the tradition of classical epic, in particular, with Vergil. He notes that:

John surpasses Aeneas in valour, but I do not recite a poem worthy of Vergil,²⁷³

and John Troglita, like Aeneas, is clearly characterised by *pietas*.²⁷⁴ Thus, it is necessary to ask whether the 'historical' detail which Corippus includes in his work was selected merely to fit his classical model(s). Indeed, 19th century scholarship on Corippus was inclined to view the

²⁶⁸ Cameron, 'The career of Corippus again,' 534. *Contra* Baldwin, 'The career of Corippus,' 372.

²⁶⁹ Riedlberger, *Philologischer, historischer und liturgischer Kommentar*, 89.

²⁷⁰ *Ioh.* pref. 3-4: [scribere me libuit magnum per bella Iohannem,/uenturo generi facta legenda uiri.]

²⁷¹ On John Troglita see *PLRE IIIA*, 644-9 (Ioannes 36).

²⁷² Thus, Zarini, 'Poésie officielle,' 220.

²⁷³ *Ioh.* pref. 15-16: [Aeneam superat melior uirtute Iohannes,/ sed non Vergilio carmina digna cano.]

²⁷⁴ Cameron, 'Corippus' *Iohannis*,' 168-9.

Iohannis as little more than a collection of quotations from classical authors, calling into question its historical accuracy.²⁷⁵ More recent studies have been inclined to view Corippus' amalgamation of panegyric and epic as innovative, with that innovation manifesting itself more fully in Corippus' later work, the *In laudem*.²⁷⁶ Nevertheless, the degree to which Corippus was constrained by his models remains open to question.

Whatever the work's stylistic novelties, the *Iohannis* is far more than simply a poem praising the exploits of a military leader. The poem's ostensible subject – John Troglita's campaigns, which took place between 546 and 548 – does not actually become its focus until the second half of the *Iohannis*, with books V to VIII presenting John's campaigns in essentially chronological order.

In addition to offering this narrative, the *Iohannis* essentially functions as an apology for Roman policy in Africa.²⁷⁷ The Roman conquest had been presented to the African population as a liberation from oppression.²⁷⁸ However, for the inhabitants of the region, this was far from the truth. While Vandal rule had proven to be relatively stable, with the continuity of most Roman institutions,²⁷⁹ return to Roman rule marked the beginning of a period of considerable insecurity. While the Berber raids of the early 530s were addressed by 536, the 540s saw almost continuous conflict between the Romans and the Berbers, the beginning of the Three Chapters Controversy, the outbreak of plague and the imposition of heavier taxation. Roman rule may well have appeared less than attractive to the African population during this period. And it is certainly conceivable that the Roman imperial government wished to reinforce the benefits of

²⁷⁵ Thus, for example, M. Manitius, 'Zu spätlateinischen Dichtern,' *Zeitschrift für die österreichischen Gymnasien* 37 (1886), 83–101.

²⁷⁶ Zarini, 'Poésie officielle,' 220.

²⁷⁷ Averil Cameron, 'Corippus' *Iohannis*: Epic of Byzantine Africa,' *Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar* 4 (1984), 169. Similarly, Modéran, 'Corippe et l'occupation byzantine de l'Afrique,' 208.

²⁷⁸ See pp. 89–90.

²⁷⁹ On the continuity of Roman institutions see F. Clover, 'The symbiosis of Romans and Vandals in Africa,' in E. Chrysos & A. Schwarcz, eds., *Das Reich und die Barbaren* (Vienna/Köln, 1989), 57–73.

Roman policy in Africa to individuals who were otherwise being encouraged to align themselves with the various autonomous Berber polities developing during this period.²⁸⁰

Some of the insecurities of the African population are evident from Corippus' work, while others are not, and the reasons for this appear to be political. It is clear from Procopius' *Bella* that one of the Roman imperial government's first actions following the defeat of the Vandals was to attempt to re-incorporate Africa into the Roman taxation system, a move which does not appear to have been well received by the local population.²⁸¹ However, it is unsurprising that Corippus should make no mention of the taxation burden placed upon the people of Africa in a work intended to promote Roman policy.²⁸²

Equally, the Three Chapters Controversy is never explicitly mentioned, despite being a subject of concern for other African writers of the period.²⁸³ While Christianity is certainly not absent from Corippus' work, it is presented in fairly bland terms. John Troglita himself is characterised by *pietas*,²⁸⁴ but this is as much an allusion to Corippus' classical model than to anything else, and his army is generically pious - Roman success is certainly presented as being the result of divine favour.²⁸⁵

Corippus is, however, sensitive to the threat posed to the African population by the ongoing conflict between the Roman army and the Berbers. And this is the theme which he chooses to

²⁸⁰ See pp. 161–3.

²⁸¹ *Bella* IV.8.25. Cf. *Anec.* XVIII.10.

²⁸² Cameron, 'Corippus' *Iohannis*, 171.

²⁸³ See Cameron, 'Byzantine Africa,' 45–9.

²⁸⁴ Eg. *Ioh.* 1.282–5.

²⁸⁵ This is reinforced by Corippus' presentation of John Troglyta's triumphal entry into Carthage, following his victory over the forces of Antalas in Byzacena in late 546/early 547 (*Ioh.* VI.54–103). As part of his victory celebration, John proceeded through the city, to the church, where: He prayed to the Lord of heaven, and earth, and sea, and he made an offering which the bishop, as was the custom, placed on the altar in thanks for the return of the general and the defeat of the enemies, and he sanctified the offering to Christ [oravit dominum caeli terraeque marisque,/ obtulit et munus, summus quod more sacerdos/ pro redituque ducis pro uictisque hostibus arae/ imposuit, Christoque pater libamina sanxit] (*Ioh.* VI.100–103). On this note, Corippus concludes his description of John's triumph, implying that the Romans were being rewarded for their righteousness. See Cameron, 'Corippus' *Iohannis*, 173.

exploit. To cite but one of many examples, he describes John Troglita upon arriving in Africa, thus:

... he grieved for the cities deserted by their citizens, and the houses lying empty, and he groaned, lamenting the ruin of Libya...²⁸⁶

Such depictions of Africa destroyed would have resonated with Corippus' local audience, and encouraged them to believe that their plight was recognised by the Roman imperial government.

However, the *Iohannis* makes no mention of the way in which the Roman imperial government's policies in Africa might have contributed to this situation.²⁸⁷ The role which Corippus attributes to the Roman army in Africa is that which the imperial government attributed to itself following the defeat of the Vandals – liberator of the African people. Thus Corippus describes John's motivations in Africa as:

Not desiring gold, nor to acquire any profit, am I driven to go to Libya, but to break up the war and save wretched souls.²⁸⁸

All blame for the situation in Africa is placed on the Berbers and, in particular, on the figure of Antalas, who represents the barbarian who refuses to assimilate.²⁸⁹

That Corippus was commissioned to write the *Iohannis* is supported by the detailed information which appears to have been available to him. He may have received information directly from the Roman military command,²⁹⁰ possibly when the Roman army was quartered in one of the towns of Byzacena – perhaps Iunci, which features frequently in the poem.²⁹¹ This

²⁸⁶ *Ioh.* I.411–13: [...doluit desertas ciuibus urbes/ et uacuas iacuisse domos, Libycasque ruinas/ ingemuit miserans...].

²⁸⁷ Modéran, 'Corippe et l'occupation byzantine de l'Afrique,' 210.

²⁸⁸ *Ioh.* I.293–5: [non auri cupidus, non ullo munere lucre/ in Libyam compulsus eo, sed scindere bellum/ et miseris saluare animas.]

²⁸⁹ This issue is discussed in detail in section 6.3.

²⁹⁰ W. Ehlers, 'Epische Kunst in Coripps *Johannis*,' *Philologus* 124 (1980), 117. This argument is followed by Cameron, 'Corippus' *Iohannis*,' 169.

²⁹¹ Cameron, 'Corippus' *Iohannis*,' 169.

suggests that the poet made a proactive attempt to gather information with the support of the Roman military.

The timing of the composition of the *Iohannis* may offer further insight into its intended purpose. It is often assumed that the entire poem would have been recited before the *proceres*. But this is unlikely. The *Iohannis* is, after all, a lengthy work, and the final couplet of the preface to the poem implies that only the preface and first book were recited:

If it is pleasing [to you] that I should recite the words of my first book, then,
serving your commands, I shall recite the first verses.²⁹²

The entire eight books must have been handed over to John Troglita in written form,²⁹³ and Corippus may have subsequently recited sections of the work in literary settings.

Only the first book of the poem and the preface may have been complete at the time Corippus recited them at Carthage.²⁹⁴ Certainly, that Corippus should have written the *Iohannis*, in its entirety, between the victory at the battle of the Plains of Cato, and the victory celebrations, which could not have been more than a short time later, seems implausible.²⁹⁵ The far shorter, *In laudem* appears to have taken Corippus more than a year to write,²⁹⁶ although caution should be taken when comparing the *Iohannis* to the *In laudem* in this respect.²⁹⁷ The two works are stylistically distinct, and use of the *Aeneid* as an exemplar would have facilitated the *Iohannis*' composition. The *In laudem*, in contrast, had no obvious stylistic model, which called for greater originality on the part of the poet, and possibly a longer genesis.²⁹⁸ Nevertheless, in the

²⁹² *Ioh.* pref. 39–40: [si placet ut primi recitem mea dicta libelli/ tunc meritis iussis carmina prima cano.] Hofmann, 'Corippus as a patristic author?,' 373 n. 7; Riedlberger, *Philologischer, historischer und liturgischer Kommentar*, 83; Dodi, 'La *Iohannis* di Corippo,' 111.

²⁹³ Hofmann, 'Corippus as a patristic author?,' 373 n. 7.

²⁹⁴ L. Krestan & K. Winkler, 'Corippus,' *RLAC* 3 (1957), col. 424.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.* Cf. p. 66.

²⁹⁶ T. Tandoi, 'Note alla *Iohannis* di Corippo,' *SIFC* 54 (1982), 55–6, who accepts that the first three books of the *In laudem* were written in 566 and the final book in 567 (see p. 59).

²⁹⁷ *Contra* Tandoi, 'Note alla *Iohannis* di Corippo,' 55–6, who argues that, based on the speed at which the *In laudem* was composed, the *Iohannis* must have taken Corippus five years to write.

²⁹⁸ Cameron, 'Corippus' *Iohannis*,' 175.

Iohannis Corippus was writing about contemporary events, and still had to expend time gathering relevant information.

While the focus of Corippus' work is the campaigns of John Troglita between 546 and 548,²⁹⁹ he also provides background information concerning events in Africa from c. 500, with a particular emphasis on the role played by the Berber leader, Antalas.³⁰⁰ This background information is contained in the speech of Liberatus. The speech is a literary set-piece, in which the Roman tribune, Liberatus,³⁰¹ narrates the course of events in Africa, from the birth of Antalas, in c. 500,³⁰² to the death of the rebel, Guntarith, in 546,³⁰³ in response to a request from John Troglita.³⁰⁴ As a result, the speech of Liberatus is of vital importance when considering the *Iohannis* as a historical source, and its function within the text merits some consideration.

Liberatus' speech, which occupies the majority of books III and IV of the *Iohannis*, has a clear structural function within the poem. As has been noted above, the ostensible subject of the poem, John Troglita's campaigns, do not become the work's focus until book V. Books I to IV provide the background information necessary for the reader to interpret the second half of the poem. The use of direct speech, as in the speech of Liberatus, to narrate events prior to the main action of the poem is typical of classical epic poetry, and has obvious precedents in the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*.³⁰⁵ In the first half of the poem, the poet presents episodes, not always connected or in chronological order, through which to elucidate the character of John Troglita and to stress the themes of imperial propaganda – namely, the benefits of Roman rule.³⁰⁶

²⁹⁹ On John Troglita's campaigns see section 5.6.

³⁰⁰ On Corippus' focus on Antalas see pp. 245–7.

³⁰¹ The tribune is also referred to as Caecilides (*Ioh.* III.47; VII.375, 475).

³⁰² For the date of Antalas' birth see p. 248.

³⁰³ On Guntarith's death and its date see n. 1144.

³⁰⁴ *Ioh.* III.54–IV.246.

³⁰⁵ Cf. R. Dodi, 'Corippo poeta della «romanitas» Africana,' *Aevum* 60.1 (1986), 117; Schindler, *Per carmina laudes*, 231; and Zarini, *Berbères ou barbares?*, 5–6.

³⁰⁶ Dodi, 'La *Iohannis* di Corippo,' 117.

Liberatus has sometimes been proposed as Corippus' source of information within the Roman administration, since he is given unusual prominence within the poem and, furthermore, that his being chosen as the narrator was by way of acknowledgement.³⁰⁷ However, Liberatus must, at least in part, have been chosen as the narrator of the speech because he was, or could be presented as being, of Romano-African origins.³⁰⁸ As such, he served as an appropriate mouthpiece for the poet, and legitimised the suffering of the Romano-African population. Given that Liberatus is attested by no other source,³⁰⁹ it is conceivable that he is entirely a literary construct. The speech undoubtedly contains some genuine historical information. However, in view of its strongly literary features, any details which it provides must be carefully considered for their literary, as well as historical, implications.

The *Iohannis* is certainly not an unknown text. But it has primarily been treated as a repository of ethnographic information. Corippus, like Procopius, did not have a high opinion of the Berbers, and occasionally resorted to the *topos* of the barbarian when discussing them. Nevertheless, it has generally been accepted that, as a native of Africa, he was comparatively well informed about the Berber tribes,³¹⁰ and book II of the *Iohannis* has been seen as one of the primary sources of information on the Berbers in the 6th century. Older studies of book II have treated it simply as a catalogue identifying and localizing the various tribes.³¹¹ But Modéran's more recent study has suggested a political reading, and argues that the tribes are not presented in geographical order but in a network of political allegiances.³¹²

³⁰⁷ Riedlberger, *Philologischer, historischer und liturgischer Kommentar*, 88–9.

³⁰⁸ *Ioh.* III.49–51. As Modéran, *Les Maures*, 329 n. 59, notes, Corippus appears to suggest that Liberatus came from Hadrumetum (*Ioh.* IV.71–2). Given that Liberatus is not attested by any source other than Corippus, it is conceivable that he is entirely a literary construct.

³⁰⁹ *PLRE* IIIB, 790–1.

³¹⁰ Cameron, 'Byzantine Africa,' 40; and in more detail, Modéran, *Les Maures*, 38–42.

³¹¹ Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 301–19; Courtois, *Les Vandales*, 348 n. 7. Corippus is also the major source for many entries in J. Desanges, *Catalogue des tribus africaines de l'antiquité classique à l'ouest du Nil* (Dakar, 1962).

³¹² Modéran, *Les Maures*, 54–61. On book II, see also Zarini, *Berbères ou barbares?*

Nevertheless, the *Iohannis* has otherwise been treated with considerable scepticism as a historical source.³¹³ This scepticism appears to be based primarily on the fact that Procopius and Corippus are not always consistent in the information they provide,³¹⁴ and on the view that Procopius, as part of the classicizing historical tradition, must, by default, be a more reliable source of information than a poet.³¹⁵ This view is gradually being challenged, but there remains a tendency to consider Corippus' account only if an event is not covered by Procopius' *Bella*. Where possible, a more balanced comparative approach is intended here.

³¹³ For example, Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 92–3, who, while happy to accept Procopius' account without question, notes “Sans doute, il ne faut point prendre à la lettre ces hyperboles de poète”.

³¹⁴ Modéran, ‘Corippe et l’occupation byzantine de l’Afrique,’ 198–201, presents the divergences between the two authors in tabular form.

³¹⁵ Modéran, ‘Corippe et l’occupation byzantine de l’Afrique,’ 196–7.

Chapter 2: The Roman Invasion of Africa and its Motivations

2.1 Introduction

In the first book of his panegyric to the emperor Justin II (565–578), the *In laudem*, the poet Corippus describes the funerary ceremonies conducted for Justin's uncle and predecessor, Justinian I.³¹⁶ The text, composed within a year of Justinian's death on 14 November 565,³¹⁷ was undoubtedly intended to emphasize Justin's filial piety, presenting him grieving over the body of his uncle, who is lying in state. In this context, Corippus presents an *ekphrasis* on the funeral pall provided for the late emperor by Justin's wife, Sophia, as a sign of her own devotion.³¹⁸ The fabric, rich in purple, gold and gemstones, was embroidered with scenes of Justinian's achievements,³¹⁹ of which the poet chooses to highlight one:

But he himself [ie. Justinian] he [ie. the artist] depicted as victor in the midst of the court, trampling the cruel neck of the Vandal tyrant, [and] Libya bearing fruit and laurel...³²⁰

The scene which Corippus describes was not merely a generic depiction of imperial victory, but was clearly inspired by the triumph celebrated at Constantinople in the spring of 534, to which Corippus also alludes in book III of the *In laudem*,³²¹ in which the deposed Vandal king, Gelimer, prostrated himself before the emperor.³²² Nor was the episode restricted to literary depictions. In the *De Aedificiis* Procopius describes the no-longer extant mosaics of the Chalke Gate at

³¹⁶ *Iust.* I.226–93.

³¹⁷ On the date of the *In laudem*'s composition see p. 59.

³¹⁸ *Iust.* I.276–93.

³¹⁹ *Iust.* I.278–8.

³²⁰ *Iust.* I.285–7: [ipsum autem in media victorem pinxerat aula/ efferat Vandalici calcantem colla tyranni,/ plaudentem Libyam fruges laurumque ferentem...]

³²¹ *Iust.* III.124–5.

³²² *Bella* IV.9.1–14; John Lydus, *De Mag.* II.2 and III.55; Ps. Dionysius, 89 (trans. W. Witakowski, *Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre: Chronicle: Part III* (Liverpool, 1996), 82); Marius of Avenches, *s.a.* 534.2. The event is also reported by Evagrius in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* (IV.17). However, Evagrius himself acknowledges that he derives his account from that of Procopius and, although he does not reproduce Procopius' words *verbatim*, his paraphrase offers no new information.

Constantinople. The mosaics apparently included depictions of Belisarius' campaigns in Africa and Italy, as well as a scene in which:

In the centre stand the Emperor and the Empress Theodora, both seeming to rejoice and to celebrate victories over the King of the Vandals and the King of the Goths, who approach as prisoners of war to be led into bondage.³²³

The scene described by Procopius amalgamates Justinian's victories over the Vandals and the Goths, but otherwise appears to be a representation of the triumph celebrated at Constantinople in 534. Indeed, the Chalke mosaic may well have served as a visual inspiration for Corippus' *ekphrasis* on Justinian's funeral pall,³²⁴ although it should not be doubted that other visual representations existed.³²⁵

Nevertheless, it is clear that all representations (literary or artistic) rested on their depiction of the ritual submission of the Vandal king to the Roman emperor. This was an image exploited by Justinianic propaganda, and a defining image of Justinian's reign, which apparently endured after his death.

There is nothing inherently unusual about the use of the ideology of victory in imperial propaganda. While the Roman emperor had ceased to function as a military commander well prior to the 6th century, military victory remained an important aspect of the imperial image.³²⁶ However, the enduring significance of the African campaign is puzzling, given that Roman victory over the Vandals marked little more than the beginning of the Eastern Roman Empire's attempt to consolidate its position in Africa. Furthermore, the prominence granted to the

³²³ *Aed.* I.10.17: [κατὰ δὲ τὸ μέσον ἐστᾶσιν ὃ τε βασιλεὺς καὶ ἡ βασίλισ Θεοδώρα, εὐοκότες ἄμφω γεγηθόσι τε καὶ νικητήρια ἐορτάζουσιν ἐπὶ τε τῷ Βανδύλων καὶ Γότθων βασιλεῖ, δορυαλώτοις τε καὶ ἀγωγίμοις παρ' αὐτοὺς ἤκουσι.]

³²⁴ Cameron, *Flavius Cresconius Corippus*, 140–1.

³²⁵ Corippus (*Iust.* III.121–3) himself notes that Justinian gave orders that representations of his victories should be depicted on gold vessels.

³²⁶ On Justinian's use of the ideology of victory see A. D. Lee, 'The empire at war,' in M. Maas, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge, 2005), 113–4.

African campaign by its contemporaries has arguably distorted modern attempts to understand its strategic (as opposed to propagandist) significance.

This chapter will, therefore, attempt to separate the African campaign, as a military venture, from the propagandist uses to which it was subsequently put, and to assess the motivations for a campaign which was subsequently granted such significance. The chapter will begin by considering the internal politics of the Vandal kingdom in the early 6th century, and how this might have influenced the foreign policy of the Eastern Roman Empire in relation to Africa. It will then consider the manner in which the campaign was justified by and to contemporaries, first by considering historical accounts, and then by considering imperial legislation. Subsequently, the chapter will discuss the role played by interest groups at Constantinople in the decision making process which led to the launch of the campaign, before concluding with an assessment of the pragmatic strategic concerns which might have served as motivations for the campaign.

2.2 The Vandal context

Procopius prefaces his discussion of the African campaign with a digression concerning the history of the Vandals down to his own day, with an emphasis on Vandal domestic politics of the 520s and 530s.³²⁷ The historian himself suggests that these events merely provided a pretext upon which the emperor might launch a preconceived invasion and, as will be demonstrated in this chapter, there is little reason to doubt that this was indeed the case.³²⁸ However, since Procopius is not explicit concerning the relationship between Vandal domestic politics and the Roman invasion, and since the former undoubtedly created circumstances favourable to the latter, before attempting to understand the impetus for the invasion of Africa in 533 it is necessary to give some consideration to the politics of the Vandal kingdom at this time.

³²⁷ *Bella* III.3–9.

³²⁸ Eg. *Bella* III.9.24.

In 530/1, the Vandal king, Hilderic, who had reigned since 523, was deposed by his cousin and heir, Gelimer, and imprisoned, together with his nephews Hoamer and Hoageis.³²⁹ Gelimer's actions were immediately condemned as unlawful by the Roman emperor and, under pressure from Constantinople, by the Ostrogothic king of Italy, Athalaric.³³⁰ However, it is far from clear that they were negatively received by the population of the Vandal kingdom. The accounts of both Procopius and Corippus suggest that Gelimer's coup had the support of much of the Vandal ruling class, as well as that of the army.³³¹

The domestic politics of the Vandal kingdom which resulted in these events cannot be entirely reconstructed from the extant sources, none of which presents a Vandal perspective. Nevertheless, two possible causes of Vandal disillusionment with Hilderic's reign can be identified from Roman accounts.

First, Hilderic, who was quite elderly when he ascended the throne,³³² was not of martial temperament.³³³ However, the Vandal king was faced with a growing military threat from various Berber tribes, both inside and outside his territory. In the late 520s, one of the tribes of Tripolitania, which Procopius identifies as the Levathae (οἱ Λευάθαι),³³⁴ attacked and captured

³²⁹ While Procopius (*Bella* III.9.6–9) narrates the events which occurred in some detail, he does not explicitly date Gelimer's coup. A date of 530/1 can, however, be inferred from Procopius' claim that Hilderic reigned for seven years before he was deposed (*Bella* III.9.9), and Victor of Tunnuna's claim that Hilderic ascended the throne in 523 (*s.a.* 523). This is consistent with the explicit dating of Gelimer's coup by Malalas (XVIII.57) and Victor of Tunnuna (115).

³³⁰ *Bella* III.9.10–3, 15–9. The Ostrogothic response is attested only by Malalas (XVIII.57).

³³¹ *Bella* III.9.8; *Ioh.* III.262–4.

³³² *Bella* III.9.6, 10, 12; *Ioh.* III.263.

³³³ *Bella* III.9.1; *Ioh.* III.198.

³³⁴ On the identity of the Levathae see pp. 233–5.

the Vandal city of Leptis Magna;³³⁵ and, shortly before Gelimer's coup, the Vandals suffered a serious military defeat in Byzacena at the hands of the tribe (or tribes) ruled by Antalas.³³⁶

The Vandal defeat in Byzacena is granted varying significance by Roman commentators. Procopius makes no explicit connection between the defeat and Gelimer's decision to depose Hilderic. He attributes to Gelimer the accusation that Hilderic was "an unwarlike king who had been defeated by the Berbers".³³⁷ However, while this may be a direct reference to events in Byzacena, it could equally be the cumulative assessment of Hilderic's reign, and is by no means the only accusation which Procopius attributes to Gelimer.³³⁸

Corippus, on the other hand, implies that Hilderic was deposed as a direct result of the Vandal defeat.³³⁹ Indeed, he suggests that Hilderic had personally commanded the Vandal army in Byzacena,³⁴⁰ and that he was immediately deposed by the army upon its defeat.³⁴¹ Although it is not explicitly stated, Corippus seems to imply that Gelimer was granted the Vandal kingship by the army, rather than seizing the throne.³⁴² Nevertheless, Corippus is consistent with the other sources in presenting Gelimer as a usurper – the Vandal king is repeatedly described as a tyrant [tyrannus].³⁴³

³³⁵ *Aed.* VI.4.6. Procopius does not explicitly date the attack, however, he claims that it occurred during Justinian's reign over the Eastern Roman Empire (which began in 527). Y. Modéran, 'Les premiers raids des tribus sahariennes en Afrique et la *Johannide* de Corippe,' in *Histoire et Archéologie de l'Afrique du Nord: Actes du IVe colloque international (Strasbourg, 1988)* (Paris, 1991), 485, rightly suggests that this permits the attack to be dated to any point between 527 and 533. However, Malalas (XVIII.57) notes that, during the reign of Hilderic, the Berbers captured Tripolis, Leptoma, Sabatha and Byzakin (Βυζάκιν). His account implies that Byzakin is a city, like the other places he names, but it is almost certainly a reference to the province of Byzacena. Modéran is undoubtedly right to argue that Malalas has conflated the Berber attacks in Tripolitania and Byzacena. However, there is little reason to doubt that Malalas is correct in placing both attacks during the reign of Hilderic.

³³⁶ *Bella* III.9.3; *Ioh.* III.184–261. The defeat also appears to be alluded to by Malalas (XVIII.57). Unlike Procopius and Corippus, Malalas does not identify the leader of the Berber force. On Antalas and his power base see section 6.3.

³³⁷ *Bella* III.9.8: [... ἀπόλεμόν τε καὶ ἡσσημένον πρὸς Μαυρουσίων...]

³³⁸ *Cf.* pp. 84–5.

³³⁹ *Ioh.* III.262–4.

³⁴⁰ *Ioh.* III.219–24.

³⁴¹ *Ioh.* III.262–4.

³⁴² *Ibid.*

³⁴³ *Ioh.* I.380–1; III.264.

The differences between the accounts of Procopius and Corippus are probably to be explained by their different literary agendas. While Procopius' account is offered to justify the Roman invasion of Africa, and is thus little interested in relations between the Vandals and the Berbers,³⁴⁴ Corippus mentions the Vandal defeat at the hands of Antalas in order to stress Antalas' savagery, rather than to make any particular comment on the Vandal monarchy.³⁴⁵ The picture of an elderly and peaceful king who is defeated by a hoard of barbarians, and then turned on by his own army, conveys this emphasis far more vividly than a story of court intrigue.

A third version of events is presented by John Malalas, who claims that the Vandals were defeated in Byzacena because Gelimer betrayed them by changing sides and fighting with the Berbers, and that he then marched on Carthage and seized the Vandal throne with a Berber army.³⁴⁶ It is impossible to completely discount this version of events, but, if such treachery had actually occurred (and were common knowledge at Constantinople), it is hard to explain Procopius' failure to mention it, given that his justification of the Roman invasion of Africa is based on the illegality of Gelimer's actions.³⁴⁷ Thus, it seems that either Malalas or, more probably, his source, elaborated upon existing information in order to further discredit Gelimer, in line with imperial attempts to justify the Roman invasion of Africa.³⁴⁸

The second major reason for Vandal disillusionment with Hilderic's reign appears to have been Hilderic's attempt to align the Vandal kingdom more closely with the Eastern Roman Empire. Procopius presents Hilderic as a particular friend of Justinian,³⁴⁹ and also notes that Hilderic

³⁴⁴ Cf. p. 84.

³⁴⁵ On the role of Antalas in Corippus' narrative see pp. 245–7.

³⁴⁶ Malalas, XVIII.57.

³⁴⁷ See pp. 85–7.

³⁴⁸ Modéran, 'Les premiers raids des tribus sahariennes en Afrique,' 486.

³⁴⁹ Procopius (*Bella* III.9.5) describes Hilderic as φίλος ἐς τὰ μάλιστα Ἰουστινιανῶ καὶ ξένος, which is translated by Dewing as "a very particular friend and guest-friend of Justinian". Following this conventional translation of ξένος (guest-friend), J. Moorhead, *Theodoric in Italy* (Oxford, 1992), 216–7, argues that Hilderic had spent time in Constantinople. However, this is not attested in the sources, and ξένος might conceivably refer to a political rather than personal relationship.

and Justinian made gifts of money to one another.³⁵⁰ The significance of these payments remains unclear. Payments to the Vandals have never been identified as either tributary payments or donatives on the part of the Eastern Roman Empire,³⁵¹ and the exchange of funds between Justinian and Hilderic has been interpreted as evidence of no more than a personal relationship. However, given the foreign policy practices of the Eastern Roman Empire, it is certainly possible that the reciprocal exchange was intended to establish a more formal relationship between the two states.

Furthermore, Hilderic's reign appears to have been a period of unprecedented religious tolerance, after decades of intermittent persecution of Nicene Christians by the Vandal ruling class, which was predominantly Arian.³⁵² Procopius describes Hilderic as being "... harsh neither to the Christians nor to anyone else...".³⁵³ This view is consistent with that presented by Nicene Christian sources, which might otherwise be expected to be hostile to the Vandal monarchy, which attest to Nicene bishops being permitted to return from exile,³⁵⁴ the ordination of new Nicene bishops, and the reopening of Nicene churches.³⁵⁵ Furthermore, the convention of Nicene councils at Iunci in 523 and Carthage in 525 also suggests a greater degree of religious freedom during Hilderic's reign.³⁵⁶

Such gestures of religious tolerance can only have been positively regarded by the Roman imperial government, which endorsed Chalcedonian Christianity, and might well have

³⁵⁰ *Bella* III.9.5. This claim is perhaps supported by Procopius' accusation in the *Anecdota* (XIX.6), that Justinian dissipated the contents of the imperial treasury, upon his accession to the throne, by distributing largesse to barbarians.

³⁵¹ See J. Iluk, 'The export of gold from the Roman Empire to the barbarian countries from the 4th to the 6th centuries,' *Münstersche Beiträge zur Antiken handelsgeschichte* 4 (1985), 91-2, who has compiled a list of such payments.

³⁵² On the Vandals as Arians see *Bella* 3.8.4, 21.20, 4.9.14; Victor of Vita, *passim*; Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* II.2-3. Cf. pp. 89-90.

³⁵³ *Bella* III.9.1: [... οὔτε Χριστιανοῖς οὔτε τῷ ἄλλῳ χαλεπὸς ἐγεγόνει...]. Procopius uses Χριστιανοὶ only to refer to Chalcedonian Christians.

³⁵⁴ It may, however, be doubted how bishops did return, after potentially forty years in exile. Cf. Victor of Vita, I.51.

³⁵⁵ *Vita Fulgentii* 25-6; Victor of Tununna, 106.

³⁵⁶ Courtois, *Les Vandales*, 304-10. For sources see J. L. Maier, *L'Épiscopat de l'Afrique romaine, vandale et byzantine* (Rome, 1973), 74-7.

represented concessions on Hilderic's behalf in order to foster a closer relationship between the Vandal kingdom and the Eastern Roman Empire.

Indeed, it would not be surprising if Hilderic had deliberately cultivated his relationship with the Eastern Roman Empire, given that the Vandal kingdom had, by the 6th century, become increasingly politically isolated. Relations between the Vandals and Ostrogothic Italy, in particular, were strained. While relations had deteriorated during the reign of his predecessor, Thrasamund,³⁵⁷ Hilderic irrevocably alienated the Ostrogothic regime through the imprisonment of Amalafriada, Thrasamund's wife, and sister of the Ostrogothic king Theodoric; and through the murder of her Ostrogothic troops, whom he accused of rebellion.³⁵⁸ Amalafriada ultimately died in captivity, probably c. 525.³⁵⁹ No narrative source claims that she died of anything other than natural causes. However, a letter from Theodoric's successor, Athalaric, to Hilderic, suggests otherwise. It accuses Hilderic of parricide, and advises that three legates were to be sent from Italy to investigate Amalafriada's death.³⁶⁰

Furthermore, there is some evidence that Theodoric was planning a punitive expedition against the Vandal kingdom at the time of his death. In the mid-520s, the Ostrogothic king unexpectedly ordered the construction of a fleet of a thousand dromones.³⁶¹ Cassiodorus, at this time serving as Theodoric's *magister officiorum*, claimed that the fleet "would both be able to carry public grain and, if it should be necessary, meet with hostile ships",³⁶² but there seems

³⁵⁷ See Moorhead, *Theodoric in Italy*, 192, who tentatively suggests that the 9th century historian, of Ravenna (*Liber pontificalis ecclesiae ravennatis* 39) may refer to a Vandal attack on Ostrogothic Sicily in c. 512/3.

³⁵⁸ *Bella* III.9.4, 14.5–6. See Bury, *History*, II, 129; and Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 15.

³⁵⁹ Victor of Tunnuna, 106, appears to conflate her imprisonment and her death. However, Moorhead, *Theodoric in Italy*, 248, is undoubtedly right to argue that there would have been Ostrogothic retaliation for her death had Theodoric and Amalafriada not died within a short time of one another (Theodoric died in 526). He thus places Amalafriada's death in 526. Cf. Courtois, *Les Vandales*, 401, who places it in 525.

³⁶⁰ Cassiodorus, *Variae* IX.1.

³⁶¹ Cassiodorus, *Variae* V.16.2.

³⁶² Cassiodorus, *Variae* V.16.2: [qui et frumenta publica possint convehere et adversis navibus, si necesse fuerit, obviare].

little reason to doubt that a fleet of this size, constructed at speed, was commissioned with military objectives in mind.³⁶³ This is further emphasized by Cassiodorus' claim that, as a result of the fleet's construction, "the Greek [ie. the Eastern Roman Empire] would not dispute with us nor the African insult".³⁶⁴ It is highly unlikely that Theodoric would have intended aggressive military action against the Eastern Roman Empire, but, given the "insult" to his house caused by the imprisonment and death of Amalafriada, it is certainly possible that he intended an attack against the Vandal kingdom, which was, at this time, already weakened by repeated Berber incursions.³⁶⁵ Theodoric's command that a fleet be constructed cannot be precisely dated, but it is reasonable to suppose that it was prompted by the death of his sister.³⁶⁶ Thus, by the mid-520s, the Vandals and Ostrogoths may well have been on the verge of open hostilities.

Ultimately, Hilderic's actions against the Ostrogoths cost the Vandal kingdom dearly. Ostrogothic hostility towards the Vandals led them to allow the Roman expeditionary force to disembark in Sicily *en route* to Africa, and to encourage Ostrogothic merchants in Sicily to provision the Roman army, thus facilitating the overthrow of Vandal rule in Africa.³⁶⁷ Thus, while Hilderic's attempt to align the Vandal kingdom with the Eastern Roman Empire may have been a prudent political move, it appears to have been a source of resentment to many Vandals. Procopius attributes to Gelimer the accusation, offered to the Vandal ruling class in order to encourage them to support his coup, that Hilderic had intended to surrender the Vandal kingdom to the Roman emperor, Justin I (Justinian's uncle and predecessor).³⁶⁸ Procopius

³⁶³ A thousand dromones was a large fleet by the standards of the day. By way of comparison, the fleet which conveyed the Roman expeditionary force to Africa consisted of five hundred and ninety-two ships, of which only ninety-two were dromones (*Bella* III.11.13-4).

³⁶⁴ Cassiodorus, *Variarum* V.17.3: [non habet quod nobis Graecus imputet aut Afer insultet.]

³⁶⁵ See pp. 78-80.

³⁶⁶ Moorhead, *Theodoric in Italy*, 246-8.

³⁶⁷ *Bella* III.14.5-6. Procopius does, admittedly, suggest that the Ostrogoths were also anxious to secure support from the Eastern Roman Empire, and were thus amenable to Justinian's requests.

³⁶⁸ *Bella* III.9.8.

dismisses the accusation as slander, but it is certainly possible that Hilderic's own people saw his policies in this light.

2.3 Justinian as defender of legitimate rule in Vandal Africa

The *Bella* is undoubtedly the most detailed extant account of Gelimer's coup. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that Procopius' narrative was intended to provide a justification for Justinian's invasion of Africa. The historian is, in fact, largely uninterested in the Vandals.³⁶⁹ Although he refers to their history and politics, he does so only insofar as it furthers his pro-Roman literary agenda, and it certainly cannot be assumed that he is concerned with the factual accuracy of the information he provides.³⁷⁰

Procopius notes, prior to his account of Gelimer's coup, that Vandal kingship did not pass from father to son, but rather to the eldest living descendent of the first Vandal king, Gaiseric, and that, on the basis of this rule, Gelimer was expected to be Hilderic's successor.³⁷¹ This information not only enables the historian to present Gelimer as a tyrant,³⁷² who overthrew a legitimate ruler to seize the power he would ultimately have inherited anyway, but also, and more importantly, to present Justinian as defender of legitimate rule in Vandal Africa, according to its own laws.³⁷³ However, while Procopius is probably accurate in his depiction of political instability in Vandal Africa, he should not be assumed to provide an accurate account of the intricacies of Vandal politics.

Procopius attributes to Gelimer a number of accusations against Hilderic. However, he is inclined to dismiss these as slander, and thus as another indication of Gelimer's base character.³⁷⁴ As a result, insufficient attention has perhaps been given to Gelimer's claim that

³⁶⁹ Eg. *Bella* IV.6.5–9.

³⁷⁰ Cameron, 'Byzantine Africa,' 32.

³⁷¹ *Bella* III.7.29, 9.6.

³⁷² *Bella* III.9.7. Cf. Procopius' depiction of Justinian in the *Anecdota* (VII.19–21).

³⁷³ *Bella* 3.9.19.

³⁷⁴ Eg. *Bella* III.9.19.

his cousin had attempted to remove him from his legitimate position in the line of succession because he came from another branch of Gaiseric's descendants.³⁷⁵ If this were indeed the case, it would certainly explain why Gelimer was unwilling to wait and assume power in a legitimate manner, despite his own ostensible position as heir to the throne, and Hilderic's advanced age.³⁷⁶ And this may well be what is implied in Gelimer's statement, in a letter attributed to him by Procopius, that Hilderic had been "planning a revolution against the house of Gaiseric".³⁷⁷

Hilderic appears to have attached considerable significance to his own lineage. As the son of Huneric and of Eudocia, the daughter of the Western Roman emperor Valentinian III (425–455), Hilderic could claim descent from two royal lines – the Hasding and the Theodosian.³⁷⁸ Evidence that he attached some importance to the Theodosian connection may be found in some of the epigrams of the *Anthologia Latina*. One such epigram not only promotes its subject, *Vandaliricus*, who may be identified as Hilderic, but also advertises the power of his ancestors – Theodosius, Honorius and Valentinian.³⁷⁹ Thus, it is possible that Hilderic attempted to restrict the royal succession to those individuals who could claim descent from both the Hasding and Theodosian families.³⁸⁰ This would have included Hilderic's nephews, Hoamer and Hoageis, who were both targets during the coup, but excluded Gelimer, who could only claim descent from the Hasding family.³⁸¹

Hilderic's deposition and imprisonment certainly precipitated a diplomatic response from Constantinople, which is presented by Procopius through an exchange of letters between

³⁷⁵ *Bella* III.9.8.

³⁷⁶ Merrills & Miles, *The Vandals*, 76. Both Procopius (*Bella* III.9.6, 12) and Corippus (*Ioh.* III.262) suggest that Hilderic was an elderly man when he assumed the Vandal kingship in 523.

³⁷⁷ *Bella* III.9.21: [Ἰλδέριχον γὰρ νεώτερα πράσσοντα ἐς οἶκον τὸν Γιζερίχου καθεῖλε τὸ τῶν Βανδύλων ἔθνος.]

³⁷⁸ On Hilderic's lineage see *PLRE* II, 564–5 (Hildericus).

³⁷⁹ *AL* 206 (Shackleton Bailey) [= 215 Riese].

³⁸⁰ Merrills & Miles, *The Vandals*, 76.

³⁸¹ On Hoamer and Hoageis see *PLRE* IIIA, 600–1 (Hoamer) and 452 (Euagees). Procopius (*Bella* III.9.9) notes that Hoamer and Hoageis were initially imprisoned with Hilderic, and that Gelimer subsequently had Hoamer blinded following Justinian's condemnation of his coup (*Bella* III.9.14).

Justinian and Gelimer, which the historian implies that he reproduces *verbatim*.³⁸² However, the veracity of the letters which he purports to present must be questioned. The historical value of the letters in the *Bella* cannot, of course, be entirely dismissed. If Procopius indeed had access to official documents at Constantinople while he was writing the *Bella*, he might conceivably have consulted the exchange of correspondence between Justinian and Gelimer. However, Procopius' letters have often been seen as fulfilling a similar role to the paired commanders speeches presented before a battle in classical historiography. While they might contain some element of plausible information, they are largely rhetorical exercises.³⁸³ Furthermore, in the *Bella*, Justinian never speaks directly,³⁸⁴ and letters are thus a means of attributing views or intentions to the emperor himself. As will be argued below, in this context, it seems likely that the genuine information contained in the letters may have been the imperial propaganda used to justify the Roman invasion of Africa, rather than a statement of Roman foreign policy.

According to Procopius, Justinian initially wrote to Gelimer, stressing the unlawful nature of his actions, and requesting that Gelimer release Hilderic, and wait to assume the throne legally.³⁸⁵ When this missive accomplished nothing, Justinian wrote again, requesting that Hilderic (and his nephews) be allowed to seek sanctuary within the Eastern Roman Empire, and threatening Roman military intervention.³⁸⁶ Gelimer responded that his actions were at the behest of the Vandal people, and were thus according to Vandal law.³⁸⁷ Furthermore, he stressed that Roman interference in Vandal affairs was unwanted, and would be interpreted as a declaration of war.³⁸⁸

³⁸² *Bella* III.9.10–23. Malalas (XVIII.57) attests to Gelimer sending an ambassador to Constantinople with gifts, but does not suggest that he derives his information from genuine documents.

³⁸³ Cameron, *Procopius*, 148.

³⁸⁴ Cameron, *Procopius*, 149.

³⁸⁵ *Bella* III.9.10–13.

³⁸⁶ *Bella* III.9.17–9.

³⁸⁷ *Bella* III.9.21.

³⁸⁸ *Bella* III.9.22–3.

It has sometimes been suggested that Justinian had a personal obligation to intervene, given his friendship with Hilderic,³⁸⁹ and it is unclear whether Justinian's response to the situation would have been different had Hilderic not been a friend and, potentially, an ally.³⁹⁰ Justinian may well have regarded Hilderic's policies as favourably pro-Roman, and the personal connection cannot be entirely dismissed. Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that this was an overriding concern, especially in light of Procopius' claim that Justinian "... having been angry with Gelimer even before then, was still more eager to punish him", suggesting an ulterior motive.³⁹¹

Certainly, it does not seem legitimate to push the significance of Hilderic's status as an 'ally' further, and to argue that Justinian felt that he had a legal obligation to intervene in Vandal Africa, on the basis of the treaties agreed between the Vandal king Gaiseric, and the Eastern and Western Roman Empires in the course of the 5th century.³⁹² This argument might be seen to derive support from Procopius' claim that Justinian presented himself to Gelimer, not as a military aggressor, but as defender of the constitutional arrangements established by Gaiseric,³⁹³ and from the fact that Roman emperors reserved the right to intervene in the politics of peoples to whom they had granted federate status. However, if one traces the development of the relationship between the Roman Empire (both Eastern and Western) and the Vandal kingdom through the treaties agreed between them in the course of the 5th century, there is little evidence that, by the 530s, the Eastern Roman Empire had any legal basis, according to its own laws (recognised by the Vandals or not), upon which to exert political authority in Vandal Africa.

³⁸⁹ *Bella* III.9.5.

³⁹⁰ Stein, *Histoire*, II, 311.

³⁹¹ *Bella* III.9.24: [... ἔχων καὶ πρότερον δι' ὀργῆς Γελίμερα, ἔτι μᾶλλον ἐς τὴν τιμωρίαν ἐπήρτο.]

³⁹² Bury, *History*, II, 311; and, more recently, Puliatti, *Ricerche sulla legislazione «regionale» di Giustiniano*, 72. Formal treaties had been struck with the Western Roman Empire, during the reign of Valentinian III, 435 and 442, and, after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, with the Eastern Roman Empire, during the reign of Zeno, in 476.

³⁹³ *Bella* III.9.19.

Three treaties are known to have been struck between the Vandals and the Roman Empire (both Eastern and Western) – in 435, 442 and 476.³⁹⁴ Information concerning them is limited. However, it is clear that, while the Vandals may originally have been regarded as *foederati* by the Western Roman Empire,³⁹⁵ and thus subject to Roman political intervention, by 476, at the very latest, the Vandal kingdom was able to interact with the Eastern Roman Empire as a state in its own right.³⁹⁶ This is evident from the equivalent nature of the terms binding the two sides in the treaty agreed between Gaiseric and the Eastern Roman emperor, Zeno (474–491), in 476, which required that both parties refrain from hostile action against one another.³⁹⁷

Thus, unless it could be demonstrated that the ‘friendship’ which Procopius notes between Hilderic and Justinian constituted the submission of the Vandal monarch to Roman client-kingship, an argument not substantiated by the extant sources, the Eastern Roman Empire, according to its own laws, had no right, let alone obligation, to intervene in Vandal domestic politics. And, indeed, in the letter attributed to him by Procopius, Gelimer rightly points out

³⁹⁴ For the treaty of 435 see Prosper, *s.a.* 435, 437. For the treaty of 442 see Prosper, *s.a.* 442; Victor of Vita, I.13; *Bella* III.4.13–4. Procopius appears to conflate the agreements of 435 and 442. However, it has generally been accepted that these provisions relate to that of 442. See A. Schwarcz, ‘The settlement of the Vandals in north Africa,’ in A. Merrills, ed., *Vandals, Romans and Berbers: New Perspectives on Late Antique North Africa* (Aldershot, 2004), 52. For the treaty of 476 see *Bella* III.7.26.

³⁹⁵ According to Prosper (*s.a.* 435): “Peace was agreed with the Vandals, who were given a portion of Africa to inhabit” [Pax facta cum Vandalis data eis ad habitandum Africae portione]. In his entry for the year 437, Prosper (*s.a.* 437) provides additional information concerning the division of land, suggesting that Gaiseric exerted influence over the former Roman provinces of Mauretania Sitifiensis, Numidia and part of Proconsularis. See Schwarcz, ‘The settlement of the Vandals in north Africa,’ 53. It is, however, far from clear whether the Western Roman emperor, Valentinian III, ever relinquished control of these provinces. It has generally been assumed that the Western Roman Empire would have regarded the ‘treaty’ of 435 as little more than the formal reallocation of *foederati* from one region to another, and thus, that the agreement should not be seen as establishing any kind of Vandal state, or even as indicating a change in the nature of the relationship between the Western Roman Empire and the Vandals. See Courtois, *Les Vandales et l’Afrique*, 169–70; and, more recently, Merrills & Miles, *The Vandals*, 60–1.

³⁹⁶ This was perhaps already the case in 442. See Prosper, *s.a.* 442; and Victor of Vita, I.13. Prosper’s reference to “fixed regions” [certis spatiis], in contrast to the granting of Roman lands to the Vandals in 435, suggests the demarcation of land between two distinct polities. The terms noted by Procopius are consistent with this, and suggest that the Vandals were no longer regarded as *foederati*, and were thus required to pay tribute to the empire, rather than receiving imperial pay for their services. See Merrills & Miles, *The Vandals*, 63. Cf. *Bella* III.4.13–4; with n. 394.

³⁹⁷ Procopius notes (*Bella* 3.7.26) that an “endless peace” [σπονδαί ἀπέραντοι] was agreed between Gaiseric and the Eastern Roman emperor, Zeno (474–491), requiring that each party refrain from hostile action against the other.

that it is Justinian who will act unlawfully in invading Africa, breaking the treaty agreed by Gaiseric and Zeno, which had been duly honoured by the subsequent Eastern Roman emperors Anastasius (491–518) and Justin I (518–527).³⁹⁸

However, given that Procopius composed his account of the African campaign retrospectively, in c. 551, by which time it would have been evident that the campaign had not been the success that was initially proclaimed, it would have been necessary to present a strong justification for Roman intervention in the region.³⁹⁹ And it is certainly not impossible, that, by this date, the Roman imperial government had reworked its propaganda on Africa, and that this later version is what is evident in Procopius' narrative.

2.4 Imperial representations of the Roman invasion of Africa

It is important to make a distinction between the manner in which the invasion of Africa was presented to the Roman population and its actual motivations. The imperial justification of the African campaign, offered less than a year after the launch of the campaign, sets out motivations which were very different to the legal justification presented by Procopius. In the administrative legislation (*CJ* 1.27.1 and 1.27.2), promulgated immediately following the apparent success of the conquest of Africa, on 13 April 534, an attempt is made to justify Roman intervention in the region by presenting it as a response to the atrocities committed by the Vandals against their Nicene Christian subjects.⁴⁰⁰ The legislation does not, in fact, make explicit reference to the religious beliefs of the Vandals themselves. Nevertheless, given that it refers to them as “enemies of body and soul”,⁴⁰¹ and the Vandals are elsewhere identified as Arians,⁴⁰² *CJ* 1.27.1 has been interpreted as evidence that the Roman invasion of Africa was

³⁹⁸ *Bella* III.9.22–3.

³⁹⁹ On the date of the composition of the *Bella* see pp. 41–3.

⁴⁰⁰ *CJ* 1.27.1.8.

⁴⁰¹ *CJ* 1.27.1 pref.: [animarum ... simul hostes et corporum].

⁴⁰² Victor of Vita, *passim*; *Bella* III.8.4 and IV.21.

religiously motivated, and intended to liberate the Nicene Christian population from the Arian heresies inflicted upon it by its Vandal rulers.⁴⁰³

The two pieces of legislation – *CJ* 1.27.1 and 1.27.2 – were promulgated with the intention of incorporating the newly conquered provinces of Africa into the imperial administrative system.⁴⁰⁴ However, considerable prefatory information is attached to *CJ* 1.27.1, presenting a justification for Roman intervention in Vandal Africa in 533. It opens with the statement that the Roman conquest of the region represented the will of God,⁴⁰⁵ and then enlarges upon this statement, by claiming that, through Justinian, God would free the people of Africa from the yoke of servitude.⁴⁰⁶ Furthermore, the legislation details the ‘injuries’ inflicted by the Vandals upon the Nicene Christian population – forced conversions, churches being converted into stables, and the torture and exile of venerable men.⁴⁰⁷

The legislation does not provide any indication of the time at which this Vandal persecution took place. Nevertheless, it has been cited as evidence for the religious motivation of the Roman invasion of Africa in 533.⁴⁰⁸ However, such citations overstate the historical reliability of the text. As has been noted above, the situation of Nicene Christians in Vandal Africa had improved significantly during the reign of Hilderic.⁴⁰⁹ Given that Hilderic’s tolerance of Nicene Christianity may have contributed to his deposition, some have argued either that Gelimer’s reign saw an immediate backlash against Nicene Christians, and a return to the persecutions of the previous century⁴¹⁰ or, alternatively, that such a backlash was believed to be imminent at

⁴⁰³ Diehl, *L’Afrique byzantine*, 15; E. L. Woodward, *Christianity and Nationalism in the Later Roman Empire* (London, 1916), 89; Jones, *LRE*, 270.

⁴⁰⁴ The administrative significance of the legislation is discussed in detail in sections 3.2 and 3.3.

⁴⁰⁵ *CJ* 1.27.1.1.

⁴⁰⁶ *CJ* 1.27.1.5.

⁴⁰⁷ *CJ* 1.27.2.2–4.

⁴⁰⁸ Diehl, *L’Afrique byzantine*, 7–8.

⁴⁰⁹ See p. 81.

⁴¹⁰ In particular, Woodward, *Christianity and Nationalism in the Later Roman Empire*, 89–91.

the time the Roman invasion was launched.⁴¹¹ However, as has been argued above, Hilderic's deposition was more likely to have been the result of Vandal domestic politics than religious concerns *per se*,⁴¹² and the violent persecution implied by *CJ* 1.27.1 is not evident in any other contemporary source.

Furthermore, the legislation's depiction of a persecution appears to be anachronistic. Similarities between *CJ* 1.27.1 and Victor of Vita's *Historia* have often been noted.⁴¹³ However, parallels in a wide variety of texts, in both the Greek and Latin traditions, suggest that *CJ* 1.27.1 does not simply imitate the style of Victor of Vita, but rather draws on a more wide-spread *topos*.

The nature of the material included in *CJ* 1.27.1 is particularly evident from its account of an apparent miracle which occurred as a result of the persecution:

We saw venerable men, who, with their tongues cut off at the root, miraculously spoke of their punishment.⁴¹⁴

This statement is clearly very similar to Victor of Vita's earlier claim that:

He [a count acting on the command of the Vandal king Huneric] was to cut off their tongues at the root and their right hands. When that had been done, through the presence of the Holy Spirit, they spoke and continue speaking, as they had spoken previously.⁴¹⁵

However, accounts of men who had had their tongues cut out during a persecution in Vandal Africa, and yet remained able to speak, may also be found in the later Latin writings of Marcellinus Comes, Victor of Tunnuna, and Pope Gregory I,⁴¹⁶ as well as in the later Greek

⁴¹¹ Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 10, presents the Roman invasion of Africa in 533 as a pre-emptive strike based on the legitimate concerns of the Romano-African elite.

⁴¹² See pp. 78–85.

⁴¹³ Moorhead, *Justinian*, 69 n. 3, goes so far as to suggest that the author of the legislation, whom he accepts as being Justinian himself, was familiar with Victor of Vita's work.

⁴¹⁴ *CJ* 1.27.1.4: [vidimus venerabiles viros, qui abscissis radicitus linguis poenas suas mirabiliter loquebantur].

⁴¹⁵ Victor of Vita, III.30: [linguas eis et manus dextras radicitus abscidisset. Quod cum factum fuisset, spiritu sancto praestante, ita locuti sunt et loquuntur, quomodo antea loquebantur.]

⁴¹⁶ Marcellinus Comes, *s.a.* 484.2; Victor of Tunnuna, 78; Gregory, *Dialogues* III.32.

writings of Procopius and Evagrius.⁴¹⁷ The accounts are not identical, nevertheless, all writers, with the exception of the author of *CJ* 1.27.1 and Pope Gregory I, explicitly date the event to the reign of Huneric. Victor of Vita and Marcellinus Comes specifically date it to 484, while Victor of Tunnuna dates it to 479. Indeed, *CJ* 1.27.1 has, somewhat ironically, also been cited as evidence for the specific atrocities committed during Huneric's persecution.⁴¹⁸

Victor of Vita makes no claim to have witnessed the episode which he describes. However, later writers appear to have made minor additions in order to maintain the story's currency. Thus, both the author of *CJ* 1.27.1 and Marcellinus Comes claim to have seen such men;⁴¹⁹ Procopius notes that such men were still present in Constantinople in his own day, and that two had subsequently lost the power of speech as a result of consorting with prostitutes;⁴²⁰ and Evagrius, despite explicitly stating that his account derives from Procopius' *Bella* claims, *contra* Procopius, that the historian had actually spoken to these men.⁴²¹ Interestingly, Evagrius also connected the story he presents with *CJ* 1.27.1, which he incorrectly attributes to Justin I.⁴²² This suggests that contemporaries, in fact, understood that the references to religious persecution in the legislation were anachronistic.

The account furthest removed from that of Victor of Vita is that of Pope Gregory I, written in the late 6th century, which claims that a group of bishops had their tongues cut out during the persecution which occurred during Justinian's reign.⁴²³ Petersen, in attempting to explain how

⁴¹⁷ *Bella* III.8.4; Evagrius, *HE* IV.14. Cf. Theophanes, *AM* 6026 (ed. De Boor, pp. 186–7).

⁴¹⁸ Merrills & Miles, *The Vandals*, 240, cite the legislation as evidence that the Romano-Africans were forced to convert to Arianism.

⁴¹⁹ *CJ* 1.27.1.4; Marcellinus Comes, *Chron. s.a.* 484.

⁴²⁰ *Bella* III.8.4.

⁴²¹ Evagrius, *HE* IV.14; with P. Allen, *Evagrius Scholasticus: The Church Historian* (Leiden, 1981), 185, who stresses that Evagrius elaborates on Procopius' account without indicating that he is doing so. *Contra* J. Conant, *Staying Roman: Conquest and Identity in Africa and the Mediterranean, 439–700* (Cambridge, 2012), 78, who suggests that Evagrius conflates the account of Procopius with that of Aeneas of Gaza.

⁴²² Evagrius, *HE* IV.14; with M. Whitby, *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus* (Liverpool, 2000), 214 n. 38.

⁴²³ Gregory, *Dialogues* III.32.

Gregory came to have misdated the event, suggests that he simply repeated a story which was well known in the Mediterranean region during the 6th century, and that he set it in Justinian's reign because many versions of the story were written during this period.⁴²⁴ The story took on the form of an urban legend, possibly in the early 6th century.⁴²⁵ Thus, the historical reliability of *CJ* 1.27.1 is extremely doubtful.

However, based on Honoré's argument, that *CJ* 1.27.1 and 1.27.2 are rare examples of legislation drafted by the emperor himself, rather than by members of the committee responsible for the recodification,⁴²⁶ it has sometimes been suggested that the true value of *CJ* 1.27.1 lies in the fact that it constitutes a genuine statement of the emperor's personal beliefs, which, irrespective of their validity, were the primary force behind imperial policy.⁴²⁷ The extent to which the emperor's personal beliefs might have dictated imperial policy is almost impossible to assess. But, while their role certainly cannot be dismissed, the undoubtedly propagandist nature of the prefaces of much of the Justinianic legislation offers reason to doubt that *CJ* 1.27.1 constitutes a genuine statement of Justinian's personal views or his policies, irrespective of whether or not it was drafted by the emperor himself.

Indeed, it might be argued that a greater understanding of the prefatory material of *CJ* 1.27.1, and thus its presentation of the Roman invasion of Africa, must come from an appreciation of the text as legislation, rather than as historical narrative. *CJ* 1.27.1 was included among Justinian's codified legislation. However, it was one of the most recent additions, having been

⁴²⁴ J. M. Petersen, *The Dialogues of Gregory the Great in their Late Antique Cultural Background* (Toronto, 1984), 19–20.

⁴²⁵ Indeed, C. Courtois, *Victor de Vita et son oeuvre: étude critique* (Alger, 1954), 84, raises doubts about the story as it appears in Victor of Vita's *Historia*, given that martyrs who lost their tongues but remained able to speak were a common motif in hagiography.

⁴²⁶ T. Honoré, 'Some constitutions composed by Justinian,' *JRS* 65 (1975), 117–9. Honoré bases his argument on the comparison of the legislation with Justinian's letters to the Pope, which he argues, on stylistic grounds, were written by the same hand. This is certainly plausible. His identification of this hand as that of the emperor himself, on the basis that "It is marred by lapses into vulgarity" (107), is less certain.

⁴²⁷ W. Kaegi, 'Arianism and the Byzantine army in Africa 533–546,' *Traditio* 21 (1965), 24–5 n. 4; Moorhead, *Justinian*, 69.

issued a mere seven months prior to the promulgation of the *Codex repetitae praelectionis*. And this has perhaps distorted its modern interpretation. On the basis of its primary subject matter – the administrative organisation of the Roman provinces of Africa – the legislation may be better appreciated through comparison with the legislation relating to provincial administrative reform, which constitutes a significant proportion of Justinian’s *Novellae* (uncodified legislation issued from 535 onwards).

Given that the *Novellae* were not re-edited as part of a codification process, their (often lengthy) prefaces and, indeed, some other portions of the texts, are of great importance to the understanding of the development of imperial propaganda and, in particular, imperial image, during Justinian’s reign. In this context, the *Novellae* often make use of pseudo-historical accounts to present an ideology of renewal and reconquest, and thus bring together Christian and Roman traditions of authority.⁴²⁸ To cite but one of many examples, *Novella 24*, which concerns the amalgamation of administrative and military offices in Pisidia into the single office of a praetor, begins with a preface which attributes the extent of the classical Roman Empire to the efficacy of its magistrates,⁴²⁹ and stresses that historical investigation had revealed that the Pisidians were a dishonest and bloodthirsty people, and that:

... this office had charge over those bandit-ridden and murderous regions which are to be found on the summit of a mountain called the ‘Head of the Wolf’, and those dwelling there are called ‘Wolf-heads’...⁴³⁰

This anecdote is almost undoubtedly fictional, and uses questionable logic to justify the position of the praetor in Pisidia. However, its significance derives from the fact that Justinian’s

⁴²⁸ M. Maas, ‘Roman history and Christian ideology in Justinianic reform legislation,’ *DOP* 40 (1986), 17–31.

⁴²⁹ *J. Nov.* 24 pref.

⁴³⁰ *J. Nov.* 24.1: [... et latrocinantibus illis et homicidis praediis, quae in aliqua summitate montis Lupi caput appellata commorantur – Lycocranitarum [Lupicapitorum] habitaculum nominatur – administrationem hanc praeesse = καὶ τοῖς τε ληστρικοῖς ἐκείνοις καὶ ἀνδροφόνοις χωρίοις, ἅπερ ἐπὶ τινος ἀκρωρείας Λύκου κεφαλῆς καλουμένης ἴδρυται Λυκοκραωιτῶν τε οἰκητήριον ὀνομάζεται, τὴν ἀρχὴν ταύτην ἐφεστάναι...] *Novella 24* was promulgated bilingually.

administrative reforms are presented as justified by anecdotes spuriously presented as historical precedent.

CJ 1.27.1 deserves to be considered in this context. In much the same manner as *Novella* 24, *CJ* 1.27.1 presents a quasi-historical anecdote concerning the atrocities committed by the Vandals against the Romano-African population as a precedent for Roman intervention, including the complete administrative reorganisation of the region, as subsequently set out in the legislation. Indeed, on this basis, reference to a historical event (Huneric's persecution of Nicene Christians) rather than a contemporary one would have been seen as presenting a stronger justification for Roman intervention in Africa, as it created a longer standing precedent.⁴³¹ Thus, when compared with Justinian's reform legislation, *CJ* 1.27.1 appears to offer little more than propaganda in explanation of the Roman invasion of Africa in 533, and cannot be taken to imply that Justinian was genuinely motivated by concern for the well-being of Nicene Christians in Vandal Africa.

Furthermore, since *CJ* 1.27.1 is the earliest source to suggest that the Roman invasion of Africa was motivated by imperial concern for, and obligation to, the Nicene Christian population of Vandal Africa, having been produced within months of the launch of the campaign, it must be speculated that all subsequent accounts which refer to such a motivation were written in the knowledge of such imperial propaganda, and were likely to have been influenced by this. Consequently, the role of religion in the Roman invasion of Africa should not be overstated.

2.5 Other influences on the Roman invasion of Africa

As noted in the preceding section, although the extent to which Justinian's personal beliefs might have dictated imperial policy is impossible to assess, the role of those beliefs should not be dismissed. However, as is clear from Procopius' account of events leading to the launch of

⁴³¹ *Cf.* p. 94.

the African campaign, the emperor was surrounded by advisers with their own views regarding such a venture. And, while the emperor undoubtedly expected to claim credit for any decision which resulted in a positive outcome, there is no reason to suppose that he was not susceptible to influence by others. Consequently, the influence of those around the emperor, and the way in which their interests might have shaped the campaign which was ultimately launched, merit some consideration.

There was by no means unanimous support for an African campaign. Procopius attributes to Justinian's advisers a number of concerns regarding a campaign against the Vandals. These concerns appear to have been primarily based on the consequences of the failures of previous Roman campaigns against the Vandals – namely the loss of men and funds.⁴³² Procopius identifies only one of Justinian's advisers by name, the Praetorian Prefect of the East, John the Cappadocian, but they undoubtedly included both administrators and military advisers. He notes that the “administrator of the treasury” [ὁ τοῦ ταμείου ἡγούμενος], presumably the *comes sacrarum largitionum*,⁴³³ and all those who were responsible for the collection of taxes, despaired as to how they were to raise the funds required for an extended military campaign,⁴³⁴ while the generals feared being placed in command of a campaign against such a formidable enemy, particularly when they, together with their soldiers, had only recently returned from the war in the East, against Sasanian Persia.⁴³⁵

According to Procopius, John the Cappadocian was the only man prepared to voice his concerns to the emperor, and a detailed account of the risks of the campaign are attributed to him – the difficulties in reaching Carthage from Constantinople, either by land or by sea; the time-lag in receiving accurate information about events in Africa; the difficulty in holding the region

⁴³² Two unsuccessful campaigns had been launched against Vandal Africa during the reign of the Eastern Roman emperor Leo I, in 462 and 468.

⁴³³ This individual has not been identified for the years 530 to 535. See *PLRE* III B, 1483.

⁴³⁴ *Bella* III.10.3.

⁴³⁵ *Bella* III.10.4–5.

securely while Italy and Sicily remained in the hands of the Ostrogoths, even assuming the campaign should be a success; and, should the campaign fail, the risk of Vandal retaliation against the Eastern Roman Empire, as well as the loss of men and resources.⁴³⁶ John's speech to the emperor concludes with the assessment that:

It is before action that good council is profitable. For regret is unprofitable to those who have failed, but, before disasters, there is no danger in changing one's mind. Surely, then, it will be advantageous above all to use this time as is needful.⁴³⁷

Given that the invasion of Africa occurred regardless, as Procopius was well aware when he wrote the *Bella*, his presentation of the debate which preceded it has sometimes been regarded as contrived in order to fit his literary purpose. By presenting Justinian as having acted contrary to the recommendations of his advisers, Procopius was able to credit the entire success (and subsequent lack thereof) of the campaign to the emperor himself, as well as implicitly discrediting John the Cappadocian, whom the historian disliked.⁴³⁸ However, the concerns which Procopius claims were raised by both Justinian's administrators and his generals, while possibly based on an outdated knowledge of Vandal military capabilities in the 6th century, were legitimate.⁴³⁹ It should not be doubted that significant concerns were raised at Constantinople, or that these concerns shaped the objectives of the campaign which was ultimately launched, as will be considered in greater detail in section 2.6.

There were also groups, both at Constantinople and elsewhere, with interests in encouraging the Roman invasion of Africa. According to Procopius, Justinian was initially discouraged from invading Vandal Africa by the concerns raised by John the Cappadocian.⁴⁴⁰ However, the emperor was subsequently persuaded to proceed with the invasion under pressure from the

⁴³⁶ *Bella* III.10.14–6.

⁴³⁷ *Bella* III.10.17: [πρὸ τῶν πραγμάτων τὸ τῆς εὐβουλίας ὄφελός ἐστι. τοῖς μὲν γὰρ ἐπταικόσι τὸ μεταμελεῖσθαι ἀνόνητον, πρὸ δὲ τῶν δεινῶν τὸ μεταμανθάνειν ἀκίνδυνον. οὐκοῦν ξυνοίσει πάντων μάλιστα τὸ τοῖς καιροῖς ἐν δέοντι χρῆσθαι].

⁴³⁸ Moorhead, *Justinian*, 66.

⁴³⁹ Thus, Bury, *History*, II, 127.

⁴⁴⁰ *Bella* III.10.18.

Chalcedonian church. Procopius notes that the emperor was visited by an anonymous bishop from the East. This man claimed that God had appeared to him in a dream, and told him to rebuke the emperor for abandoning the campaign.⁴⁴¹ The bishop describes Justinian's purpose in Africa as "... protecting the Christians in Libya from tyrants...", and concludes with the claim that God had said to him that "I myself will assist him [Justinian] in waging war and will make him lord of Libya".⁴⁴²

Similarly, ecclesiastical interest in the invasion may also be inferred from the *Vita* of St Sabas, written by the Palestinian monk Cyril of Scythopolis. In the *Vita*, Cyril describes how Sabas, having been granted an audience before the emperor at Constantinople, informed Justinian that, if he should follow Sabas' advice, God would grant him Africa, in order that he might drive out Arianism.⁴⁴³ Such accounts are consistent with the argument that the Roman invasion of Africa was intended as a crusade against Arianism, and it is certainly plausible that the church had an interest in establishing what it regarded as orthodoxy in Africa.

Thus, when considering the 'religious' motivation for the African campaign, a distinction needs to be made between Justinian's personal convictions – both his personal theology and his belief in his role as defender of the true faith (both of which were probably genuine) – and the interests of the church as an institution. The 'religious' motivation for the Roman invasion of Africa may have derived as much from ecclesiastical pressure to extend the church's influence, as from the personal piety of the emperor.

The Chalcedonian church's interest in the Roman invasion of Africa has generally been seen as stemming from a pious concern for its brethren living under Arian rule and for those souls who

⁴⁴¹ *Bella* III.10.18–21.

⁴⁴² *Bella* III.10.19: [... Χριστιανούς τοὺς ἐν Λιβύῃ ῥύεσθαι ἐκ τυράννων...]; and III.10.20: ["καίτοι αὐτὸς," ἔφη, "οἱ πολεμοῦντι ξυλλήψομαι Λιβύης τε κύριον θήσομαι."]

⁴⁴³ Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita sancti Sabae* 72; with B. Flusin, *Miracle et histoire dans l'oeuvre de Cyrille de Scythopolis* (Paris, 1983), 206–7, who argues that Cyril presents Sabas' comments as a prophecy, and that its fulfilment constitutes one of the saint's miracles.

had yet to recognise the true faith. Undoubtedly, theological concerns were a consideration, but the church, as an institution, may also have had other, more worldly, motivations for encouraging Roman intervention in Africa.

On 1 August 535, Justinian promulgated *Novella* 37, “Concerning the African Church” [*De Africana ecclesia*], which is primarily concerned with the African church’s right to reclaim property seized from it during the period of Vandal rule. The legislation was undoubtedly issued as an addendum to *Novella* 36, promulgated on 1 January 535, and concerned with the rights of individual Romano-Africans to claim restitution for property lost during the Vandal period.

Novella 37 was addressed to Solomon, the recently appointed Praetorian Prefect of Africa.⁴⁴⁴ However, unlike the administrative reform legislation, there is some indication that it may have been intended to have been disseminated far more widely than simply among the Roman provincial administration. *Novella* 37 is one of a relatively small group of Justinianic *novellae* which were promulgated solely in Latin, rather than in Greek or bilingually. The use of Latin for these select *novellae* has usually been explained by the desire of the Roman imperial government to ensure maximum comprehension of the legislation in the provinces which remained predominantly Latin speaking.⁴⁴⁵ And, certainly, it is unlikely that *Novella* 37 would have been composed solely in Latin were it only intended for circulation among the Roman administrative offices of Africa, which were likely to have been predominantly Greek speaking.⁴⁴⁶ While it was accessible to those Romano-Africans who had legal interests, the

⁴⁴⁴ *PLRE* IIIB, 1167–76. For the date of Solomon’s appointment see pp. 136–7.

⁴⁴⁵ See B. Hemmerdinger, ‘Les lettres latines à Constantinople jusqu’à Justinien,’ *Byzantinische Forschungen* 1 (1966), 194.

⁴⁴⁶ As Merrills & Miles, *The Vandals*, 239, have argued, the repeated reminders in the Justinianic legislation that the Roman administrators not prey on African tax-payers (eg. *CJ*1.27.1.5) suggest that, at the upper levels, at least, the new administration needed time to establish the good will of the local population, and was probably not composed of Romano-Africans. On the use of Greek as the language of imperial administration in the 530s, see Honoré, *Tribonian*, 124–38.

novella was also directed towards the imperial bureaucracy, both in Africa and in Constantinople, the legal profession, and the church.

Following the conquest of Africa, the Roman imperial government is thought to have sought to redefine its relationship with the African population. Legislation, such as *Novella 37*, was one means through which this may have been done.⁴⁴⁷ Although *Novella 37* is entitled “Concerning the African church” [*De Africana ecclesia*], its contents are wide ranging, relating to both the Nicene Church as an institution, and to religious and social affairs in Africa more generally. Among other provisions it included a number of apparently oppressive measures against those who did not ascribe to Nicene Christianity – they were banned from performing ecclesiastical rites, ordaining bishops and clergy, and holding public office (the latter prohibition even applied to those who had been re-baptised as Nicene Christians).⁴⁴⁸ After the period of Vandal rule in Africa, during which time Nicene Christianity was, at the very least, not officially endorsed, *Novella 37* appears to represent, *prima facie*, the restoration of Nicene Christianity to a position of unchallenged authority in the Roman provinces of Africa.

On this basis, the promulgation of *Novella 37* has been accepted as the culmination of Justinian’s short term objectives in Africa, and thus as a means through which to reconstruct the emperor’s intentions in the region prior to the launch of the campaign in 533. In particular, it has been used to reinforce the longstanding view that the Roman invasion of Africa was primarily motivated by religious concerns. The text has been read as entirely consistent with *CJ 1.27.1*, and as indicating that Justinian’s intentions in Africa were entirely religiously motivated.⁴⁴⁹ Indeed, it has sometimes been suggested that the prohibitions included in *Novella 37* closely resemble those measures taken against Nicene Christians during the reign of

⁴⁴⁷ Thus, Pringle, *Defence*, 11, suggests that *Novella 37* was a means through which the Roman imperial government sought to present itself as a liberator to the Romano-African population.

⁴⁴⁸ *J. Nov.* 37.5–8.

⁴⁴⁹ W. H. C. Frend, ‘The Christian period in Mediterranean Africa,’ in F. D. Fage, ed., *The Cambridge History of Africa* (Cambridge, 1978), II, 485.

Huneric, and that they were intended as a *quid pro quo* response to the earlier Vandal persecutions.⁴⁵⁰

However, recent scholarship has suggested that *Novella 37* is, in fact, a significant development of Justinian's original intentions in Africa. The harsh religious policy presented in the legislation and the apparently tolerant manner in which the campaign was undertaken appear to be somewhat inconsistent.⁴⁵¹ Thus, *Novella 37* may, in fact, have marked a departure from Justinian's original, tolerant, policy in Africa, and have been intended as a conciliatory gesture towards the Nicene church, which had originally approached the emperor regarding the matter of restitution.⁴⁵²

Novella 37 also granted the Nicene church the right to reclaim property confiscated from it during the period of Vandal rule – a right which the legislation notes to have been requested by Reparatus, the bishop of Carthage, on the behalf of the bishops of the province of Proconsularis.⁴⁵³ There is nothing particularly remarkable in this. The Roman imperial government effectively granted the Nicene church the same right to restitution as any other landowner, and reiterated its own right to tax church property in the region.⁴⁵⁴ However, the *novella* goes further. It grants the Nicene church its former lands in perpetuity and as well the right to 'reclaim' possessions held by Arians, pagans or others, outside the prescriptive time-limit imposed for the restitution of secular property.⁴⁵⁵ Furthermore, the legislation specifies that synagogues be converted to churches, effectively also granting the Nicene church all

⁴⁵⁰ See Victor of Vita, III–III *passim*.

⁴⁵¹ According to Procopius, Belisarius stressed to the Roman army the need to treat the Romano-African population with respect, since their support was essential to the success of the Roman campaign (*Bella* III.16.1–8. Cf. III.17.6).

⁴⁵² Merrills & Miles, *The Vandals*, 241. The request from the African bishops for a decision regarding the status of church property in Africa is noted in *Novella 37* itself (*J. Nov.* 37.1) and is also attested by a group of letters in the *Collectio Avellana* (85–8).

⁴⁵³ *J. Nov.* 37.1.

⁴⁵⁴ *J. Nov.* 35.

⁴⁵⁵ *J. Nov.* 37.3.

property previous held in common by the Jewish community.⁴⁵⁶ Consequently, the Nicene church stood to gain substantial material benefit from the Roman invasion of Africa.

The Roman imperial government may have held the view that the support of the Nicene church in Africa would aid integration of the provinces into the imperial administration (although this was not ultimately the case), and was thus willing to make some concessions. However, the letters of the *Collectio Avellana*, between Justinian and the pope Agapetus (535–536),⁴⁵⁷ confirm that the restitution of church property was not merely a concern of the bishops of Proconsularis, but a matter of wider significance over which the pope petitioned the emperor.⁴⁵⁸ In light of this, it is tempting to suggest that the church at Rome also attempted to exert significant influence over Roman intervention in Africa, and that the promulgation of *Novella 37* in Latin, the language of diplomatic communication, was intended to communicate the scale of the concessions made by the Roman imperial government as a result of ecclesiastical pressure.

Nor was the church the only party which sought to benefit (either materially or otherwise) from the Roman invasion of Africa. The chronicle attributed to Zachariah of Mytilene notes that:

Now there were in Constantinople certain magnates from Africa who, owing to a quarrel which they had with the prince of the land, had left their country and taken refuge with the king [Justinian].⁴⁵⁹

In the 5th and 6th centuries, Constantinople appears to have had a significant Romano-African population, comprising mainly of refugees who had fled Vandal oppression.⁴⁶⁰ The extent of

⁴⁵⁶ *J. Nov. 37.8*. The extent to which this provision was enforced is unclear. Archaeological evidence confirms that the synagogue at Hammam Lif (c. 20 km south-east of mod. Tunis, Tunisia) remained in use in the 6th century. See K. B. Stern, *Inscribing Devotion and Death: Archaeological Evidence for Jewish Populations of North Africa* (Leiden, 2008), 95.

⁴⁵⁷ On Agapetus see *PLRE IIIA*, 23 (Agapetus I).

⁴⁵⁸ *Coll. Avell.* 86–8.

⁴⁵⁹ Ps. Zachariah, IX.17 (trans. F. J. Hamilton & E. W. Brooks, *The Syriac Chronicle known as that of Zachariah of Mitylene* (London, 1899), 262).

⁴⁶⁰ B. Croke, 'Justinian's Constantinople,' in M. Maas, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge, 2005), 75.

this migration, and its causes, are difficult to map. However, a recent attempt to quantify Romano-African migration between 439 and 533 suggests that there were two distinct emigration peaks – one between 439 and 450, and the other between 481 and 490.⁴⁶¹

These peaks can be relatively easily explained. As the account of Victor of Vita makes clear, following the Vandal capture of Carthage in 439, the Vandal king, Gaiseric, sent the Carthaginian clergy into exile.⁴⁶² The senators and *honorati* of Carthage were also banished, first from the city, and then from the kingdom.⁴⁶³ The expulsions from Carthage appear to have represented a deliberate attempt to disrupt existing power structures.⁴⁶⁴ However, subsequent expulsions of Romano-African landowners do not appear to have been restricted to the centre of government, Carthage. A *novella* of the Western Roman emperor, Valentinian III, promulgated in 451, refers to Romano-African landowners being deprived of their lands in the former Roman provinces of Mauritania Sitifiensis, Mauritania Caesariensis and Byzacena.⁴⁶⁵ While this may have constituted an attempt to disrupt local power structures, it might equally be interpreted as an attempt to increase the territory of the *sortes Vandalorum*. The second emigration peak (481–490) coincides almost exactly with the persecution of Nicene Christians which occurred during the reign of Gaiseric's successor, Huneric.⁴⁶⁶ While there is no clear evidence for Nicene Christians being expelled from the Vandal kingdom during this period, it is highly likely that many devout Romano-Africans, particularly from among the remaining Nicene clergy, fled Africa during the persecution.

⁴⁶¹ Conant, *Staying Roman*, 67–90. It must, however, be noted that Conant's sample of Romano-African emigrants consists of only 54 individuals, identified from both literary and epigraphic evidence, over a period of close to a hundred years. This is a relatively small sample, and the statistics drawn from it can provide, at best, no more than rough indication of the scale of emigration during this period.

⁴⁶² Victor of Vita, I.15–6.

⁴⁶³ Victor of Vita, I.15; *Vita Fulgentii* 1.

⁴⁶⁴ Conant, *Staying Roman*, 67.

⁴⁶⁵ *Val. Nov.* 34.2–3.

⁴⁶⁶ Victor of Vita, III–III *passim*.

As noted above, *Novella* 36, promulgated on 1 January 535, granted former Romano-African landowners the right to reclaim property seized during the period of Vandal rule.⁴⁶⁷ The possibility of such restitution might well have served as an incentive to members of the Romano-Africa elite in Constantinople to encourage Roman invasion of Africa. And it is certainly probable that there were those whose families had fled, or been exiled from, Africa decades earlier who saw that they might profit from a change in political circumstances in the region if Roman rule were re-established. But the representatives of such families were probably acting opportunistically, and their actions may have been behind the provision in *Novella* 36, which restricted restitution claims to property which had been held by the claimant's father or grandfather.⁴⁶⁸ While those who had been forced from their homes in the region as a result of religious or political persecution would certainly have had legitimate reason to agitate for Roman intervention, it is hard to explain why this agitation did not occur until the 530s, at least thirty years after most would have been forced into exile, and during a period in which the Vandal monarchy was far more positively disposed towards its non-Arian population (see section 2.2).

It seems far more likely that the 'magnates' to whom Pseudo-Zachariah refers⁴⁶⁹ had fled Africa relatively recently, in order to escape the political turmoil which had afflicted the Vandal kingdom during the 530s rather than because they objected to Vandal rule *per se*. A brief statement in the *Bella* suggests that many of Hilderic's partisans fled to Constantinople following his deposition, and attempted to exert influence on the emperor to intervene.⁴⁷⁰ It is these partisans who had arguably suffered the greatest recent losses (in terms of both power

⁴⁶⁷ *J. Nov.* 36.1.

⁴⁶⁸ *J. Nov.* 36.1.

⁴⁶⁹ See n. 459.

⁴⁷⁰ *Bella* IV.5.8: ... after Hilderic had been removed from the office and was in confinement ... he [Apollinarius, one of Hilderic's partisans] came to the Emperor Justinian with the other Libyans who were working in the interest of Hilderic... [... ἐπεὶ παρελέλυτο τῆς ἀρχῆς Ἰλδέρικος καὶ ἐν φυλακῇ ... [Apollinarius] εἶχετο, ἐς Ἰουστινιανὸν βασιλέα ξὺν Λίβυσι τοῖς ἄλλοις, οἱ τὰ Ἰδερῖχου ἔπρασσον, ἰκατεύσων ἦλθε.]

and property) in Africa, who had the most to gain by agitating for Roman intervention in the 530s.

Justinian's decision to invade Africa may also have been encouraged by commercial groups, although this argument is extremely difficult to substantiate, since the extant written sources provide only limited information about commercial activity.⁴⁷¹ Significantly, however, when the Romans entered the city of Carthage, they discovered a number of imprisoned eastern merchants. According to Procopius, they had been imprisoned by Gelimer because he believed that the merchants had urged Justinian towards war.⁴⁷² Unfortunately, Procopius provides no indication as to why the merchants might have wished for Roman intervention in Africa. But the fact that he mentions them as having an interest in the African campaign is remarkable, as merchants are largely absent from historical writing of the Eastern Roman Empire.

The specific causes for the merchants' dissatisfaction with Vandal rule in Africa, or with Gelimer's rule in particular, are difficult to determine, but may well have been economic. The Vandal kingdom, like the former Roman provinces of Africa, was a prosperous and commercially active region. Under Vandal rule, Africa remained a major producer of both grain and oil,⁴⁷³ and, while the trade in these products is difficult to trace, ceramic evidence indicates that the Vandal kingdom remained integrated into the pan-Mediterranean trading networks.⁴⁷⁴ Both Vandal fine-ware and amphorae can be found throughout the western Mediterranean.⁴⁷⁵ Furthermore, the increased presence of Palestinian and Aegean ceramics at Carthage in the late

⁴⁷¹ Commercial lobby groups have been suggested by both Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 6; and Evans, *The Age of Justinian*, 126.

⁴⁷² *Bella* III.20.6.

⁴⁷³ Courtois, *Les Vandales*, 205–14; D. Mattingly, 'Oil for export? A comparison of Libyan, Spanish and Tunisian oil production in the Roman Empire,' *JRA* 1 (1988), 33–56; idem, 'The olive boom. Oil surpluses, wealth and power in Roman Tripolitania,' *LibStud* 19 (1988), 21–41.

⁴⁷⁴ R. Hodges & D. Whitehouse, *Mohammed, Charlemagne and the Origins of Europe* (Ithaca, 1983), 26–30.

⁴⁷⁵ P. Reynolds, *Hispania and the Roman Mediterranean, AD 100-700* (London, 2010), 91–100.

5th and early 6th centuries suggest that the Vandal kingdom had sought to develop stronger trading connections with the eastern Mediterranean.⁴⁷⁶

However, it is possible that, while trade continued to be profitable to the Vandal state, it became increasingly less profitable for ship owners. In the 4th and early 5th centuries, a significant proportion of grain from Africa had been shipped to Rome for the *annona*. The shipping of grain was undertaken by state nominated shippers (*navicularii*) who enjoyed a number of subsidies, including exemption from tariffs.⁴⁷⁷ While the *navicularii* were only contracted to transport grain to Rome, it seems likely, given their commercial advantage, that they also traded in a large number of other goods, which were ‘piggy-backed’ onto the *annona* shipments.⁴⁷⁸

The *annona* shipments from Africa ceased in 439, when Gaiseric captured Carthage, but the region continued to produce a surplus and to trade. In the absence of demand for grain from Rome, the Vandals may well have explored alternative markets in both the eastern and western Mediterranean, allowing for an expansion of their trade networks.⁴⁷⁹ But, without state subsidized shipping, the costs to both shippers and buyers of the traded goods would have been higher.

Meanwhile, those *navicularii* responsible for transporting the *annona* shipments from Alexandria to Constantinople continued to receive generous subsidies from the Eastern Roman Empire.⁴⁸⁰ Consequently, those merchants with contracts with the Eastern Roman Empire enjoyed a commercial advantage over those trading solely in the western Mediterranean. It is therefore possible, although it cannot be conclusively demonstrated, that commercial

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid, 105–7.

⁴⁷⁷ On the laws relating to the *navicularii* see M. McCormick, ‘Bateaux de vie, bateaux de mort: maladie, commerce, transports annonaires et le passage économique du Bas-Empire au Moyen Age,’ in *Morfologie Sociali e Culturali in Europa fra Tarda Antichità e Alto Medioevo* (Spoleto, 1998), 80–92.

⁴⁷⁸ Merrills & Miles, *The Vandals*, 145–7.

⁴⁷⁹ Reynolds, *Hispania and the Roman Mediterranean*, 93.

⁴⁸⁰ A. R. Lewis, *Naval Power and Trade in the Mediterranean: AD 500–1000* (New York, 1970), 90.

dissatisfaction with Vandal rule in Africa stemmed from the tariffs imposed on those trading out of Carthage, and that there were merchants who hoped that the return to Roman rule in Africa might result in a return to state subsidized commerce in the region.

None of the individual factors outlined above will have been solely responsible for the decision of the Roman imperial government to invade Africa in 533. Nevertheless, regardless of the presentation of the motivations of the campaign by contemporary sources, it is clear that the decision was the result of a complex inter-play of factors, each of which may have been every bit as influential as the will of the emperor.

2.6 Strategic concerns

All accounts of the African campaign were written retrospectively – either in the immediate aftermath of the Roman victory at Tricamarum, or decades later, in full knowledge of the conflict between the Roman administration of Africa and the Berbers in the 530s and 540s – and it is legitimate to ask whether modern scholarship can realistically hope to ascertain the Roman imperial government's intentions *vis-à-vis* Africa at the time its invasion was launched.

Attempts to understand Justinianic policy, including that in relation to Africa, have long been skewed by the perception that there was an imperially directed policy of *renovatio imperii*, under which the emperor sought to restore the Roman Empire to its classical form and ideals. Key to such a policy would have been the (re)conquest of the former Western Roman Empire – in particular, Italy, the former heartland of the Roman Empire, and also Africa and Spain.⁴⁸¹ Certainly, Justinianic legislation and, in particular, the *Novellae*, lend support to such an argument by presenting the incorporation of the provinces of the classical Roman Empire into

⁴⁸¹ This view is particularly dominant in the older scholarship, both on the reign of Justinian generally and on Justinianic Africa, which is inclined to interpret all aspects of Justinian's regime as western orientated. See Bury, *History*, II, 124; Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 4; C. Saumagne, 'Points de vue sur la reconquête de l'Afrique au VI^e siècle,' *CT* 7 (1959), 286; and, more recently, S. Raven, *Rome in Africa*, 3rd edn. (London, 1995), 210.

the Eastern Roman Empire as the emperor's ultimate intention and defining achievement. Thus, *Novella* 30, issued in 536, and ostensibly unconnected with the West (it reorganises the civil administration of the province of Cappadocia), proclaims:

God also gave us [Justinian] ... hope that he would grant to us dominion over those places yet remaining, which the Romans of old held as far as the boundaries of each ocean, and subsequently lost through their negligence.⁴⁸²

Particular value has been attached to the Justinianic legislation as a source of information on imperial policy, as a result of its 'official' nature. However, an 'official' text is no less subjective and no more reliable than any other, and it has increasingly been recognised that the Justinianic legislation generally,⁴⁸³ and the *Novellae* in particular, were a means through which the imperial propaganda was consciously disseminated.⁴⁸⁴ Thus, while the theme of *renovatio imperii* was undoubtedly exploited and incorporated into the imperial image, it should certainly not be inferred from this that it was the rationale for imperial policy. Rather, it served as a convenient historical pretext, and justification, for imperial actions (including the invasion of Africa) which were likely to have been unpopular.⁴⁸⁵

Nevertheless, previous studies of the Roman invasion of Africa have inevitably begun from the premise that, for one reason or another, the Roman imperial government sought, from the outset, to lay claim to much of the classical Roman Empire's holdings in Africa – perhaps not the classical provinces in their entirety, but certainly territory beyond the littoral.⁴⁸⁶ This is hardly

⁴⁸² *J. Nov.* 30.11.2: [... dedit nobis deus ... et spes habere bonas quia etiam reliquorum nobis detentionem annuet deus, quam prisci Romani usque ad utriusque oceani fines tenentes sequentibus negligentibus amiserunt;/ ... δέδωκεν ἡμῖν ὁ Θεὸς ... καὶ ἐλπίδας ἔχειν ἀγαθὰς ὅτι καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ἡμῖν τὴν ἐπικράτειαν νεύσειεν ὁ Θεὸς ὧνπερ οἱ πάλαι Ῥωμαῖοι μέχρι τῶν ἐκότερον ὠκεανὸν ὀρίων κρατήσαντες ταῖς ἐφεξῆς ἀπέβαλον ῥαθυμίας'] *Novella* 30 was promulgated bilingually.

⁴⁸³ Unlike the codified legislation of the *Codex repetitae praelectionis*, *Digesta* and *Institutiones*, the *Novellae* were not re-edited to remove superfluous material, and thus retain more information incidental to the legislation than the other legal texts.

⁴⁸⁴ Maas, 'Roman history and Christian ideology,' 26.

⁴⁸⁵ Maas, 'Roman history and Christian ideology,' 26, suggests that the theme of *renovatio imperii* was adopted in *Novellae* following the Nika riot, in order to create a more positive imperial image for propaganda purposes.

⁴⁸⁶ On the extent of the Eastern Roman Empire's authority in Africa following the conquest see pp. 127–8, 133–4.

an unreasonable premise. Even if one dismisses the idea of a policy of *renovatio imperii* as retrospective propaganda, and thus the statements of the Justinianic legislation which proclaim that the African campaign resulted in the Roman conquest of “a third part of the world”,⁴⁸⁷ it is difficult to explain the imperial directive in the otherwise strictly pragmatic legislation setting out the military administration of Africa, which dictated that Roman military commanders should aim to extend Roman control in Africa to the boundaries of the classical Roman Empire.⁴⁸⁸ Nevertheless, this premise has never been tested, and this section will consider the possibility that, already, in April 534, imperial intentions in Africa were evolving, and that, when the Roman invasion was conceived (probably in 532), the imperial government’s intentions may have been far less ambitious than they were subsequently presented to be.

Closely connected with the view that the Roman invasion of Africa was envisaged as part of a grand plan to restore the Roman Empire to its classical form is the argument that Justinian’s ultimate foreign policy objective was always the conquest of Italy (begun in 535), and that this could not be undertaken until the Eastern Roman Empire had secured maritime positions in Zeugitana, Sardinia and Sicily. These positions would have granted the Eastern Roman Empire control of the Strait of Sicily, and were therefore essential to the provisioning of any campaign in Italy.⁴⁸⁹ Thus, contrary to the ideological motivations presented in the Justinianic legislation, Justinian’s motives for invading Africa might be seen as entirely pragmatic and dictated by longer term military requirements.

There is certainly some logic to this argument. However, it rests on the unsubstantiated view that the conquest of Italy was Justinian’s objective from the outset, and not merely an opportunity afforded by the unexpected success of the African campaign. While it is clear from the Justinianic legislation that the inhabitants of the Eastern Roman Empire were aware of a

⁴⁸⁷ *D. Const. Tanta/ΔΕΔΩΚΕΝ* 23; with n. 86. Similarly, *D. Const. Tanta/ΔΕΔΩΚΕΝ* pref.

⁴⁸⁸ *CJ* 1.27.2.4; with p. 135.

⁴⁸⁹ Saumagne, ‘Points de vue sur la reconquête de l’Afrique,’ 286; Raven, *Rome in Africa*, 210.

Roman past, in which the Roman Empire had controlled substantially greater territories, there is no reason to think that this knowledge superseded more practical considerations in the development of imperial policy. Thus, it cannot be argued, on this basis, that the conquest of Italy was always Justinian's priority.⁴⁹⁰ This does not, of course, discredit the possibility that Justinian had strategic, rather than ideological, reasons for planning a campaign against Italy, and that the African campaign was undertaken in order to facilitate the subsequent invasion of Italy. However, when the propaganda of *renovatio imperii* is disregarded, there is little to suggest that the Roman imperial government ever prioritized the conquest of Italy over other foreign policy objectives.⁴⁹¹ Nevertheless, the suggestion that the Roman invasion of Africa was motivated by longer term strategic concerns should not be entirely dismissed.

The Roman expeditionary force captured Carthage, and other cities along the coast of Zeugitana, with remarkable speed and efficiency.⁴⁹² However, the outcome of the campaign was by no means a foregone conclusion and, given the objections raised by Justinian's advisers, it can certainly not be assumed that the campaign was undertaken on the understanding that it would be complete in a matter of months. As has been noted previously, Procopius presents Justinian as having launched the African campaign against the wishes of his advisers in order to attribute to the emperor sole credit for a campaign which the historian knew to have been a success.⁴⁹³ Nevertheless, there is little reason to suppose that the objections to the campaign which Procopius attributes to John the Cappadocian and Justinian's military advisers were not raised, given that they express realistic concerns that the Eastern Roman Empire risked over-extending its resources if it attempted an aggressive campaign of conquest.

⁴⁹⁰ *Contra Saumagne*, 'Points de vue sur la reconquête de l'Afrique,' 286.

⁴⁹¹ Kouroumali, 'Procopius and the Gothic War,' 135–51, stresses how little interest contemporary writers show in the Italian campaign.

⁴⁹² See pp. 31–3.

⁴⁹³ See p. 97.

Given these concerns, the Roman imperial government is unlikely to have contemplated an aggressive campaign of conquest unless it were confident that the available military resources would not be required for the empire's defence. Thus, it has sometimes been argued that the terms of the so-called 'Endless Peace' with Sasanian Persia, agreed in September 532,⁴⁹⁴ sacrificed an outright military victory over the Persians in order that the Eastern Roman Empire might commit available military resources to the West in perpetuity.⁴⁹⁵ A connection between the 'Endless Peace' and the African campaign is certainly implied by Procopius in his claim:

And when the Emperor Justinian considered that the situation was as favourable as possible, both as to domestic affairs and to his relations with Persia, he took under consideration the situation in Libya.⁴⁹⁶

However, this should probably not be interpreted as meaning more than that the conclusion of the 'Endless Peace' influenced the timing of, and facilitated, military action in the West.⁴⁹⁷ The notion of an 'endless' peace is highly likely to have been the product of Roman propaganda needs, and the treaty was unlikely to have been conceived as truly 'endless' by the Roman imperial government.⁴⁹⁸ Thus, the Eastern Roman Empire could only rely on a short-term lull in hostilities with the Sasanian Persia, and the time and resources which it could realistically expect to commit to the African campaign would have been calculated accordingly.

In fact, the African campaign was undertaken in a period of considerable uncertainty and, as a result, its initial military objectives may have been considerably less ambitious than have generally been assumed. The Roman imperial government simply could not be sure that it had

⁴⁹⁴ The specific date of the conclusion of the 'Endless Peace' remains the subject of some debate, largely as a result of the variety of dating systems employed by the sources. On this issue see Stein, *Histoire* II, 295 n. 1; and Greatrex, *Rome and Persia at War*, 214–5 with n. 5. A date in September 532 has, however, been widely accepted.

⁴⁹⁵ This view is dominant in the older scholarship on the reign of Justinian. See J. W. Barker, *Justinian and the Later Roman Empire* (Madison, 1986), 118; Jones, *LRE*, 273; Stein, *Histoire*, II, 295.

⁴⁹⁶ *Bella* III.10.1: [βασιλεὺς δὲ Ἰουστινιανὸς, ἐπεὶ οἱ τὰ τε οἴκοι καὶ τὰ ἐξ τοῦς Πέρσας ὡς ἄριστα εἶχε, τὰ ἐν Λιβύῃ πράγματα ἐν βουλῇ ἐποιεῖτο.]

⁴⁹⁷ Indeed, Moorhead, *Justinian*, 24 with n. 16, notes that Procopius is the only contemporary to suggest a connection between the two events.

⁴⁹⁸ M. E. Williams, 'Roman-Sasanian relations (532 to 545 CE)' (Oxford University MPhil. thesis, 2010), chap. 1.

the time or resources to devote to a large scale campaign. Indeed, the objections raised by Justinian's advisers suggest that they doubted that even a more modest campaign was feasible.⁴⁹⁹

What, then, were the initial Roman military objectives in Africa? Despite the Eastern Roman Empire's declaration of victory in Africa, it never held effective control of much more than the littoral.⁵⁰⁰ This has been seen as indicating a failure of Roman strategy in Africa and, in particular, a failure to appreciate the threat posed by the Berber tribes.⁵⁰¹ However, it is possible that this is to misunderstand the intentions of the initial Roman invasion. In the first instance, at least, Roman ambitions may not, in fact, have extended far beyond key coastal positions in Zeugitana.

It is notable that, following the victory over the Vandals at the battle of Tricamarum, the immediate Roman military priority was not the subjugation of inland regions. Procopius makes the somewhat generic statement that Belisarius "... sent out an army to recover for the Romans everything which the Vandals ruled".⁵⁰² However, the extent of effective Vandal control over the former Roman provinces of Africa is far from clear – not least because of the development of independent Berber polities inside the former Roman *limes* (see further Chapter 4). Certainly, it cannot be inferred from Procopius' account that the Romans immediately set out to consolidate their hold over the territories referred to in the legislation detailing the civil and military administration which was promulgated on 13 April 534.⁵⁰³ Indeed, Justinian's failure to do just this is one of the criticisms made of his African policy in the *Anecdota*.⁵⁰⁴

⁴⁹⁹ See pp. 96–7.

⁵⁰⁰ See pp. 127–8, 133–5, 213–6.

⁵⁰¹ Modéran, *Les Maures*, 573–84

⁵⁰² *Bella* IV.5.1: [... καὶ στρατεύμα ἔστειλεν ἐφ' ᾧ ἀνασώσονται Ῥωμαίοις ἅπαντα, ὧν Βανδίλοι ἦρχον.]

⁵⁰³ *CJ* 1.27.1.12, 2.1–4.

⁵⁰⁴ *Anec.* XVIII.9.

Procopius, in fact, provides quite specific information concerning Roman military priorities following the capture of Carthage. These were the capture of Caesarea in Mauritania (mod. Cherchell, Algeria), Sardinia and Corsica, and the garrisoning of Septem (mod. Ceuta) and the islands of Ebusa, Majorica and Minorica (mod. Ibiza, Majorca and Minorca).⁵⁰⁵ These priorities do not, however, appear to be consistent with a military campaign intended to capture Africa. With the possible exception of Caesarea, itself a considerable distance from the Roman centre of power at Carthage,⁵⁰⁶ these coastal positions were of minimal value in establishing Roman control over the mainland Vandal kingdom, let alone over the former Roman provinces of Africa. And, equally, none of these positions can reasonably be said to have constituted a military threat to the Roman presence in the region following the collapse of the Hasding dynasty at Tricamarum.

But the significance of Sardinia and Septem, at least, is reinforced by the legislation setting out the civil and military administration of Africa. Sardinia was confirmed as a province in its own right,⁵⁰⁷ and established as a ducal military command.⁵⁰⁸ The legislation also dictated that both soldiers and a fleet of dromones were to be stationed at Septem under the command of a tribune.⁵⁰⁹ Unusually, the legislation details the priorities of this command – namely, that the tribune was not only to guard the crossing between Spain and Africa, but that he was also to monitor events in Spain, Gaul and Francia, and report upon them to the *dux*.⁵¹⁰ The attention

⁵⁰⁵ *Bella* IV.5.3–7. See Map III.

⁵⁰⁶ Procopius (*Bella* IV.5.5) himself notes that the distance from Carthage to Caesarea was thirty days travel for an unencumbered traveller.

⁵⁰⁷ *CJ* 1.27.1.12.

⁵⁰⁸ *CJ* 1.27.2.3.

⁵⁰⁹ *CJ* 1.27.2.2.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.* It is not entirely clear to which *dux* the tribune was to report. But, given Septem's position within the provinces of Mauritania, and given that the tribune's position is set out following a clause establishing the ducal command in Mauritania (*CJ* 1.27.2.1), it may be assumed that the tribune was to report to the *dux* of Mauritania (see pp. 132–3).

devoted to Septem in the legislation, as well as the commitment of a fleet,⁵¹¹ surely attests to strategic importance of the position.⁵¹²

Whether Sardinia or Septem were under Vandal control immediately prior to the Roman invasion of Africa is unclear. While Sardinia is assumed to have been incorporated into the Vandal kingdom at some point between 456 and 466,⁵¹³ Procopius attests to a revolt by the Vandal governor of Sardinia, Godas, shortly prior to the launch of the Roman invasion, and notes in particular that Godas refused to continue to pay tribute to Carthage.⁵¹⁴ This suggests that, while Sardinia was nominally a Vandal possession, as long as its tribute continued to be paid, it was granted a significant degree of autonomy.⁵¹⁵ Furthermore, Sardinia's semi-autonomous position is highlighted by the fact that it was the preferred place of exile for many of those who fled, or were exiled from, the Vandal kingdom during periods of religious persecution.⁵¹⁶ Information concerning Corsica and the Balearic Islands under Vandal rule is far more limited. But it is certainly possible that these islands too enjoyed a degree of autonomy as a result of their distance from the Vandal centre of power at Carthage.

The political position of Septem in 533 is even more ambiguous. Procopius' claim in *De Aedificiis*, that "... this [Septem] was built by the Romans in early times, but being neglected by the Vandals, it had been destroyed by time",⁵¹⁷ has been cited both as evidence for the Vandal occupation of the site,⁵¹⁸ and as evidence that it lay outside Vandal control.⁵¹⁹ In reality,

⁵¹¹ The Eastern Roman Empire did not have extensive naval resources during this period. J. Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World, 565–1204* (London, 1999), 68.

⁵¹² Contra J. Wood, 'Defending Byzantine Spain: frontiers and diplomacy,' *EME* 18.3 (2010), 313, who suggests that assigning the command to a tribune suggests that the position was unimportant.

⁵¹³ S. Cosentino, 'Byzantine Sardinia between West and East: Features of a regional culture,' *Millennium* 1 (2004), 336.

⁵¹⁴ *Bella* 3.10.27.

⁵¹⁵ G. Lulliri & M. Bonaria Urban, *Le monete della Sardegna vandalica: storia e numismatica* (Sassari, 1996), 24–5; followed by Merrills & Miles, *The Vandals*, 136.

⁵¹⁶ Victor of Vita, II.23; *Vita Fulgentii* 25.

⁵¹⁷ *Aed.* VI.7.14: [... ὅπερ ἐδείμαντο μὲν ἐν τοῖς ἄνω χρόνοις Ῥωμαῖοι, Βανδύλων δὲ οὐκ ἐπιμελουμένων καθεῖλεν ὁ χρόνος.]

⁵¹⁸ M. Vallejo Girvés, *Bizancio y la España tardoantigua (Ss. V-VII): un capítulo de historia mediterranea* (Alcalá de Henares, 1993), 52–3.

⁵¹⁹ M. Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain and its Cities* (Baltimore, 2004), 407 n. 87.

Procopius' statement is probably of little significance. Throughout book VI of the *De Aedificiis*, Procopius claims that cities were either destroyed or neglected by the Vandals, and had to be rebuilt from their foundations by Justinian.⁵²⁰ Similarly, Procopius' reference to the Vandal capture of Septem in the *Bella* offers no information concerning the political position of the city in 533. Given its considerable distance from the main theatre of military operations, it is even possible that Procopius himself lacked this information.

There is, however, no reason to believe that the Vandals held Septem immediately prior to it being captured by the Romans, particularly given that effective Vandal control of the former Roman province of Mauritania Tingitana is far from certain,⁵²¹ and a number of theories have emerged concerning the political position of the city. One possibility is that, by 533, Septem was an independent *civitas* governed by a local elite.⁵²² The acquiescence of such a local government to Roman rule would certainly explain why Procopius offers no suggestion that the city resisted Roman occupation.⁵²³ Alternatively, it has been argued that Septem was held by the Visigoths in 533. All such arguments rest on the *Historia Gothorum* of Isidore of Seville. In reference to a later Visigothic attempt to capture Septem from the Eastern Roman Empire, Isidore notes that, previously, the Romans had expelled the Visigoths from the city.⁵²⁴

Following the capture of Carthage, the Roman expeditionary force also attempted to seize Lilybaeum in Sicily (mod. Marsala),⁵²⁵ which had been a Vandal fort, having been gifted by the Ostrogothic king, Theodoric, to his sister, Amalafriada, on the occasion of her marriage to the Vandal king Thrasamund.⁵²⁶ But the Romans were initially repulsed from Sicily by the

⁵²⁰ See p. 55.

⁵²¹ Vallejo Girvés, *Bizancio y la España tardoantigua*, 52.

⁵²² Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain and its Cities*, 273.

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ Isidore, *Historia Gothorum* (2nd redaction) 42. The date of the later Visigothic attack on Septem remains the subject of considerable debate. Little more can be said than that the attack must have occurred between 541 and 548. Cf. R. Collins, *Early Medieval Spain: Unity in Diversity, 400–1000*, 2nd edn. (Basingstoke, 1995), 37; Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain and its Cities*, 407 n. 88.

⁵²⁵ *Bella* IV.5.11.

⁵²⁶ *Bella* III.8.13–4.

Ostrogoths, who argued that Sicily was an Ostrogothic possession, and that the Romans had no claim to it.⁵²⁷ On this basis, perhaps the subsequent Roman conquest of Sicily (in 535) should be seen as one of the initial objectives of the 'African' campaign, rather than as part of the later campaign against mainland Italy, with which Procopius associates it.

Thus, it is far from clear that the 'African' campaign was even envisaged, in the first instance, as an attack on Vandal sovereignty, which was fragmenting of its own accord, so much as a campaign to secure certain key positions irrespective of their existing political standing. As has been noted previously, many of these positions would have been essential to a subsequent campaign against mainland Italy. But this cannot have been the primary motivation for the African campaign. The positions seized effectively granted the Eastern Roman Empire control of shipping routes through the western Mediterranean, including control of the key passages through the Strait of Sicily and the Strait of Gibraltar. This was a valuable achievement in its own right.

The ambitions for the African campaign held by the Roman imperial government might then never have extended beyond the capture of these key western Mediterranean positions, to encompass the complete conquest of the former Roman provinces of Africa. This would have fulfilled a number of objectives. First, with minimal resources, the Eastern Roman Empire was able to establish forward bases in the western Mediterranean which could, potentially, facilitate (as yet unplanned) military activity against not only Ostrogothic Italy, but also Visigothic Spain, having secured the crossing into Europe at Septem.⁵²⁸ And, not only were these forward bases key military positions, they were also positions from which the Eastern Roman Empire could gather intelligence on the West. Furthermore, this less ambitious campaign would appear to explain interest taken by merchant groups in the invasion of Africa. Irrespective of the political

⁵²⁷ *Bella* IV.5.11.

⁵²⁸ *Contra* Wood, 'Defending Byzantine Spain,' 294, who implies that the African campaign was undertaken with the intention of facilitating a pre-conceived invasion of Spain.

developments in other Mediterranean kingdoms, the key ports would remain under the control of the Eastern Roman Empire.

Chapter 3: Establishment of Civil and Military Administration

3.1 Introduction

On 13 April 534, just one month after the surrender of the Vandal king,⁵²⁹ Justinian issued legislation establishing the civil administration (*CJ* 1.27.1) and military administration (*CJ* 1.27.2) of the Eastern Roman Empire's newly conquered provinces in Africa. Although the two pieces of legislation are addressed to different individuals – *CJ* 1.27.1 to Archelaus and *CJ* 1.27.2 to Belisarius (on the significance of the addressees see further below) – and were incorporated into the second edition of the *Codex Justinianus*, the *Codex repetitae praelectionis*, as distinct decrees,⁵³⁰ there is every reason to suppose that they were envisaged as a single, comprehensive, statement of imperial policy in Africa. Not only were the two decrees promulgated simultaneously, but *CJ* 1.27.2 was clearly intended as a continuation of *CJ* 1.27.1.⁵³¹ Indeed, it is plausible that *CJ* 1.27.1 and *CJ* 1.27.2 were originally composed as a single decree,⁵³² and were subsequently divided, according to subject matter and the official responsible for execution, by the committee responsible for editing the *Codex repetitae praelectionis*.⁵³³ This would certainly explain the lack of significant prefatory clauses to *CJ* 1.27.2 and the cross-references between the two decrees.

⁵²⁹ For the date of this event see n. 83. It should not necessarily be assumed that the legislation was a direct response to the Vandal surrender, since it is unclear how quickly knowledge of the event might have reached Constantinople and how far in advance of its promulgation the legislation might have been drafted.

⁵³⁰ The *Codex repetitae praelectionis* was promulgated on 16 November 534. The preface to this revised edition of the *Codex Justinianus*, the *Constitutio Cordi*, notes that the new legislation included in this edition required 'correction' [emendatio], in order to remove superfluous material and improve clarity (*CJ Const. Cordi* 2-3). This new legislation would have included *CJ* 1.27.1 and *CJ* 1.27.2, since these decrees were not promulgated until after 7 April 529, the date of the first edition of the *Codex Justinianus* (*CJ Const. Summa* 5). Thus, the form in which *CJ* 1.27.1 and *CJ* 1.27.2 are preserved need not be the form in which they were originally promulgated in April 534.

⁵³¹ *CJ* 1.27.2.1.

⁵³² *Contra* Rubin, *Das Zeitalter Justinians*, I, 160, who argues that the original decrees establishing civil and military administration in Africa were incorporated into the *Codex Justinianus* without emendation.

⁵³³ *CJ Const. Cordi* 2.

Prima facie, the legislation appears to lack internal consistency. As noted in section 2.4, the opening clauses of *CJ* 1.27.1 have attracted considerable attention as a source of information on the religious and ideological motivations for the Roman invasion of Africa.⁵³⁴ However, the opening clauses contrast sharply with the subsequent contents of the legislation, which amount to a detailed hierarchy of the civil and military offices to be created in the African provinces and the schedule of payments to be associated with these offices.⁵³⁵

The propagandist tone of the opening clauses of the legislation is unsurprising. Despite the somewhat esoteric nature of their primary subject matter, new pieces of imperial legislation were public documents. A number of Justinian's *novellae* contain instructions for their public dissemination, most notably *Novella* 8, which directs the Praetorian Prefect of the East, to whom the *novella* was addressed, to ensure that its contents were made known to the inhabitants of the provinces under his jurisdiction;⁵³⁶ and, in an appended edict, that the bishops should see that the *novella*, which has no specific significance to the church, was inscribed on tablets or stone and placed in the porches of the churches, in order that it might be accessible to the population.⁵³⁷ While the legislation establishing the administration of Africa was ultimately included in the second edition of the *Codex Justinianus*, it differed from the majority of the codified legislation in having originally been promulgated during the Justinian's reign,⁵³⁸ and it may be assumed that its contents were initially disseminated in the same manner as the later *novellae*.

⁵³⁴ Eg. *CJ* 1.27.1.6–7 and 1.27.2. pref; and *CJ* 1.27.1.1 and 1.27.1.8.

⁵³⁵ It is difficult to imagine for what audience other than the imperial bureaucracy the schedules of payments included at *CJ* 1.27.1.21–42 and *CJ* 1.27.2.19–35 could have been intended.

⁵³⁶ *J. Nov.* 8. epilogue. For similar provisions see *J. Nov.* 1. epilogue. 1 and *J. Nov.* 6. epilogue. 2.

⁵³⁷ *J. Nov.* 8. epilogue. *edictum*. R. Scott, 'Malalas and Justinian's codification,' in E. Jeffreys *et al.*, eds., *Byzantine Papers, Proceedings of the First Australian Byzantine Studies Conference, Canberra 17–19 May 1978* (Canberra, 1981), 19, pushes the interpretation of *Novella* 8 further, suggesting that the notices of new legislation were intended to be read to the public.

⁵³⁸ See n. 530.

Similarly, the tone of many of the *novellae* suggests that the Roman imperial government was well aware of the value of legislation as a vehicle for the dissemination of imperial propaganda,⁵³⁹ and the legislation establishing the civil and military administration of Africa should be considered in this light. While there are strong reasons to reject the interpretation of the opening clauses of the legislation as being a genuine statement of imperial policy in relation to Africa,⁵⁴⁰ it has sometimes been assumed that the legislation comprised distinct propagandist and practical clauses, directed at different audiences and intended to fulfil different purposes.⁵⁴¹ However, the sheer quantity of administrative detail provided in the apparently 'practical' clauses, sometimes in reference to geographical regions marginally, if at all, under Roman control,⁵⁴² invites an alternative conclusion – that this administrative detail is itself intended to add weight to the significance of the empire's achievements in Africa, and thus to reinforce the legislation's propaganda message.

The significance of the legislation to the understanding of Roman administration cannot, of course, be dismissed entirely. It remains the most comprehensive source of information on the administration of the African prefecture – a subject which receives little attention in the literary sources concerned with the region. Indeed, it is the only such detailed list of administrative offices and salaries for the 6th century, and has consequently been used in the reconstruction of the administrative structures of the other prefectures.⁵⁴³ But, if it is accepted that the legislation's administrative details are, at least in part, an element of imperial propaganda, the significance of the apparently practical clauses merits far greater attention than it has received to date.

⁵³⁹ For a full discussion see Rubin, *Das Zeitalter Iustinians*, I, 146–68, and esp. 160–2 on *CJ* 1.27.1 and *CJ* 1.27.2. Rubin's views are followed by Scott, 'Malalas and Justinian's codification,' 12–13.

⁵⁴⁰ See section 2.4

⁵⁴¹ Rubin, *Das Zeitalter Iustinians*, I, 161.

⁵⁴² See pp. 127–8, 133–5.

⁵⁴³ Jones, *LRE*, 587.

The legislation establishing the administration of the African prefecture is undoubtedly a unique source of information, but the significance of the information which it provides is not obvious. While the legislation has been quarried for technical details of the African administration,⁵⁴⁴ in attempting to characterise this administration and its aims more generally, insufficient attention has been paid not only to the fact that the text fulfils a dual function, as both legislation and imperial propaganda, but also to the fact that the legislation reflects only the nature of the African administration (real or imagined) as it was envisaged from Constantinople in early 534, and need not reflect either the situation 'on the ground' or the situation after this date. The legislation was promulgated on 13 April 534, but it was not intended to come into effect until 1 September 534,⁵⁴⁵ a fact which has often been overlooked. By September 534 the situation in Africa had changed significantly – Belisarius had been recalled to Constantinople prematurely, and the Berber tribes of Byzacena were conducting raids against the Romano-African population.⁵⁴⁶ A distinction must be drawn between the practical realities of administration, and the Roman imperial government's expectations (or, perhaps, hopes) for the future of the African prefecture. The former is, of course, essential to the understanding of 6th century Africa, but it is the latter which enables the reconstruction of a post-conquest African 'policy'.

3.2 Civil administration

On a practical level, the civil legislation, *CJ*1.27.1, was intended, first and foremost, to establish Africa as a prefecture in its own right, under the authority of the Praetorian Prefect of Africa.⁵⁴⁷ The legislation is addressed to Archelaus, as Praetorian Prefect, and may have been intended to

⁵⁴⁴ Especially, Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 97–118 (on civil administration) and 119–37 (on military administration); but also, Pringle, *Defence*, 55–6, on military administration.

⁵⁴⁵ *CJ*1.27.1.43 and *CJ*1.27.2.18.

⁵⁴⁶ See section 5.2.

⁵⁴⁷ *CJ*1.27.1.10.

confirm his appointment, as there is no evidence for the appointment of any other civil official before this date.⁵⁴⁸

This appointment may itself provide some insight into the Roman imperial government's intentions in Africa. Archelaus had accompanied the expeditionary force to Africa as “prefect of the army” [τοῦ στρατοπέδου ἑπαρχος],⁵⁴⁹ which Procopius notes was the title assigned to the officer responsible for the maintenance of the army [ὁ τῆς δαπάνης χορηγός].⁵⁵⁰ Archelaus does not, however, appear to have participated in the military campaign, remaining with the fleet off-shore until the Roman army had captured Carthage.⁵⁵¹ Appointment of a ‘deputy Praetorian Prefect’, to organize the logistics for an army, appears to have been common practice from the 5th century and Archelaus’ appointment has been interpreted in this light.⁵⁵²

It is certainly reasonable to suppose that Archelaus was entrusted with the logistics of the campaign. He was an experienced administrator, having served as Praetorian Prefect of the East (524–527) and Praetorian Prefect of Illyricum (dates unknown), two of the most senior administrative positions of the empire.⁵⁵³ Indeed, Archelaus seems to have been somewhat overqualified for the position to which he was initially appointed,⁵⁵⁴ and he might have been included in the expeditionary force as an administrator who would be competent to oversee

⁵⁴⁸ *Contra* Honoré, ‘Some constitutions composed by Justinian,’ 117, who argues that the legislation ought to have been addressed to Belisarius.

⁵⁴⁹ *Bella* III.11.17. Haury, *Procopius Caesariensis: opera omnia*, I, 363, reads ἑπαρχος, although two manuscripts contain the reading ὑπαρχος instead. However, the sense of the phrase is not significantly altered.

⁵⁵⁰ *Bella* III.11.17.

⁵⁵¹ *Bella* III.17.16 and III.20.11.

⁵⁵² Jones, *LRE*, 1261 n. 41; S. Barnish *et al.*, ‘Government and administration,’ in Averil Cameron *et al.*, eds., *CAH XIV* (Cambridge, 2000), 146 with n. 145. Indeed, Barnish *et al.* go so far as to suggest that Archelaus was the appointment of John the Cappadocian, who is known to have been concerned about the cost of the African campaign (*Bella* 3.10.3), rather than of the emperor himself.

⁵⁵³ On Archelaus’ appointments see *PLRE* II, 133–4.

⁵⁵⁴ Jones, *LRE*, 1261 n. 41, identifies two other individuals as having held such a position – Germanus (in 441) and Apion (in 504). Germanus is described as *magister militum vacans* (*CJ* 12.8.2.4) and Apion as χορηγός τῆς τοῦ στρατοπέδου δαπάνης (*Bella* I.8.5) and ὑπαρχος τοῦ στρατεύματος (Theophanes, *AM* 5997 (ed. De Boor, p. 146)). Neither of these men is known to have held any administrative position prior to their logistical appointment. Germanus is not otherwise attested, and Apion is otherwise attested as Praetorian Prefect of the East many years later (in 518). See *PLRE* II, 111–2 (Apion 2) and 505 (Germanus 3).

the integration of Africa into the imperial administrative system should the campaign be a success.⁵⁵⁵ If Archelaus were indeed selected as a potential Praetorian Prefect of Africa before the launch of the campaign, this would imply a greater degree of forward-planning than has generally been associated with the campaign and its aftermath.

The Praetorian Prefect of Africa was granted a staff of 396 men, who were divided among various administrative offices.⁵⁵⁶ Traditionally, the Praetorian Prefectures of the empire were divided into two distinct branches – the financial and the judicial – and this distinction appears to have been preserved in Africa.⁵⁵⁷ The African prefecture had four general financial offices [scrinia I–IV], plus one responsible for public works [scrinium operum] and another responsible for the “chest” or treasury [scrinium arcae]. In addition, the financial division of the Praetorian Prefecture was also provided with its own secretaries [schola chartulariorum].

The prefecture of Africa was divided into seven provinces, the names of which remain open to debate as a result of inconsistencies between the readings of the various manuscripts in which this section of the *Codex Justinianus* is attested.⁵⁵⁸ Krüger’s 1892 edition of the text reads:

Et ab auxiliante deo septem provinciae cum suis iudicibus disponantur, quarum Zeugi, quae proconsularis antea vocabatur, Carthago et Byzacium ac Tripolis rectores habeant consulares: reliquae vero, id est Numidia et Mauritaniae et Sardinia, a praesidibus cum dei auxilio gubernentur

[And by the aid of God, seven provinces, together with their judges, shall be prescribed, of which Zeugi, which was previously called Proconsularis, Carthage and Byzacium and Tripolis shall have consular governors; but the others, that

⁵⁵⁵ Cf. Ps. Zachariah, IX.17: And so the king [ie. the emperor] made ready an army under Belisarius and Martin and Archelaus the prefect... (trans. Brooks & Hamilton, *The Syriac Chronicle Known as that of Zachariah of Mitylene*, 262), which appears to attribute to Archelaus greater significance than does Procopius.

⁵⁵⁶ *CJ* 1.27.1.22–40.

⁵⁵⁷ Jones, *LRE*, 587.

⁵⁵⁸ The standard text of the *Codex Justinianus* remains that of Paul Krüger. The edition cited here is: P. Krüger, *Corpus Iuris Civilis II: Codex Iustinianus*, 5th edn. (Berlin, 1892). For *CJ* 1.27.1 and 1.27.2 Krüger appears to have relied on three manuscripts, which he designated **C**, **R** and **Q**. These are Montecassino 49, Berlin Lat. Fol. 273, and Berlin Lat. Fol. 275 respectively. The three manuscripts have all been dated to the first part of the 12th century. See G. Dolezalek, *Repertorium manuscriptorum veterum Codicis Iustiniani* (Frankfurt, 1985), I, 64 and 70.

is, Numidia and the Mauritania and Sardinia shall, with the aid of God, be governed by praesidential governors].⁵⁵⁹

However, this reading immediately presents a problem – the text explicitly refers to seven provinces, but apparently names eight. Furthermore, a number of variant readings exist. *Zeugi, quae* appears to be the emendation of Krüger, who presumably had the pre-Vandal province of Zeugitana in mind – which was indeed otherwise known as Proconsularis. But, according to the *apparatus criticus*, ms. C reads *zeigi quae*, ms. R reads *tegi atque* and ms. Q reads *zegy et que*.⁵⁶⁰ Additionally, ms. R reads *Mauritania* rather than *Mauritaniae*.⁵⁶¹

Given that there is no reason to doubt that there should be seven provinces (the manuscripts are consistent in reading *septem provinciae*), two possible means of resolving this inconsistency have been proposed. One possibility would be to read *Mauritania* for *Mauritaniae*, and accept that the other six provinces were Zeugi, Carthage, Byzacium, Tripolis, Numidia, and Sardinia.⁵⁶² Were there no other problems with the text, this would undoubtedly be the preferred solution, since the difference of one letter between *Mauritania* and *Mauritaniae* can easily be explained by scribal error.

Alternatively, it is necessary to remove one name – that of Carthage [Carthago]. Although Carthage had never previously existed as a province in its own right, there is no reason why

⁵⁵⁹ *CJ* 1.27.1.12. This reading of the text is itself a correction of that presented by Krüger in earlier editions of the *Corpus Iuris Civilis II*. See, for example, P. Krüger, *Corpus Iuris Civilis II: Codex Iustinianus*, 1st edn. (Berlin, 1877):

Et ab ea auxiliante deo septem provinciae cum suis iudicibus disponantur, quarum Tingi et quae proconsularis antea vocabatur, Carthago et Byzacium ac Tripolis rectores habeant consulares: reliquae vero, id est Numidia et Mauritania et Sardinia, a praesidibus cum dei auxilio gubernentur.

For the significant objections to reading ‘Tingi’ rather than ‘Zeugi’ see Diehl, *L’Afrique byzantine*, 107–8, whose arguments are based on the 1884 edition of the text.

⁵⁶⁰ For the identification of the manuscripts see n. 558. I am here reliant on Krüger’s *apparatus* as I have not seen the three manuscripts.

⁵⁶¹ The *apparatus criticus* for earlier editions of the text do not include the reading *Mauritaniae* in ms. C.

⁵⁶² This was Krüger’s original reading of the text (see n. 559), and remained the solution preferred by J. Desanges, ‘Un témoignage peu connu de Procope sur la Numidie vandale et byzantine,’ *Byzantion* 33 (1963), 60 n. 2, who argued that Zeugitana and Proconsularis were listed as separate provinces in the 4th century *Verona List*. This is true. However, the most recent editor of the text, T. D. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1982), 201–8, esp. 208, suggests that Zeugitana is a mistake, and should refer to Tripolitania, which is otherwise omitted.

the provinces established in 534 should follow the same organization as those of the pre-Vandal period.⁵⁶³ However, that the city of Carthage should have stood as a province in its own right within the province of Zeugis, which, if it indeed corresponds to Proconsularis, occupied the region surrounding Carthage, seems improbable.⁵⁶⁴ Furthermore, in the *De Aedificiis*, Procopius places the city within the province of Proconsularis.⁵⁶⁵

On the basis of the late 6th/early 7th century geographical text attributed to George of Cyprus,⁵⁶⁶ which associates the names Carthage [Καρταγέννα] and Proconsularis [Προκονσουλαρίας] (albeit placing both in the province of Byzacena), it has sometimes been argued that the two words should be conflated to refer to a single province called Carthago-Proconsularis.⁵⁶⁷ However, this argument would be more convincing if the two words appeared consecutively in the text.⁵⁶⁸ Arguments in favour of instead conflating the words *Zeugis* and *Carthago* to give a single province called Zeugis-Carthago, and then reading *Proconsularis* as being in apposition to this, are equally difficult to justify from the existing edition of the text.⁵⁶⁹

Instead, it might be suggested that the entire phrase ... *quae proconsularis antea vocabatur, Carthago...* was not originally included in the decree. Given that the intention of the legislation

⁵⁶³ The best source of information on the pre-Vandal provincial organization of Africa is the early 5th century *Notitia Dignitatum* (OC II. 35-40), which identifies the provinces of Africa as Byzacium, Numidia, Mauritania Sitifensis, Mauritania Caesariensis and Tripolis.

⁵⁶⁴ Thus, Pringle, *Defence*, 60, argues that there is “no reason to suppose that ‘Zeugis’ and ‘Carthago’ were not one and the same province”. *Contra* Tissot, *Geographie comparée*, 49; who accepts that Carthage and Zeugitana should be regarded as separate provinces post-534.

⁵⁶⁵ *Aed.* VI.5.12. Diehl, *L’Afrique byzantine*, 108–9.

⁵⁶⁶ Based on internal references, E. Honigmann, *Le Synekdèmos d’Hiéroklos et l’Opuscule Géographique de Georges de Chypre* (Brussels, 1939), 49, argues that the text must have been composed between 591 and 603.

⁵⁶⁷ Diehl, *L’Afrique byzantine*, 109. However, Diehl bases his interpretation of the text on *Georgii Cyprii descriptio orbis romani*, ed. H. Gelzer (Leipzig, 1890), which is itself read on the assumption that *CJ* 1.27.1.12 refers to a single province called Carthago-Proconsularis (Gelzer, *Georgii Cyprii descriptio orbis romani*, xxvi-xxviii).

⁵⁶⁸ Diehl, *L’Afrique byzantine*, 109, notes that *CJ* 1.27.1.12 includes a comma between the words ‘proconsularis’ and ‘Carthago’, but implies that this is a scribal error, stressing that it should be compared with the phrase Καρθαγέννα προκονσουλαρέα in Gelzer’s edition of the geographical text attributed to George of Cyprus. These words are not, however, to be found as a phrase in the more recent edition of Honigmann, *Le Synekdèmos d’Hiéroklos*.

⁵⁶⁹ *Contra* Pringle, *Defence*, 23, 60–1, who proposes this alternative, apparently also on the basis of the conflation perceived in the text attributed to George of Cyprus. See previous note.

was to establish a new provincial organization in a region which had not previously been administered by the Roman imperial government at Constantinople,⁵⁷⁰ it is in some respects surprising that the decree makes no attempt to define the geographical extent of the new provinces. However, the Roman position in Africa remained insecure in April 534, and the administrative legislation was not intended to come into effect for another five months. Precise definition of provincial boundaries which were still in the process of being extended may have been considered premature.⁵⁷¹ Although, this must, presumably, have been done at some later date, as 6th century writers, including Procopius in the *De Aedificiis* and the anonymous author of the geographical treatise attributed to George of Cyprus, demonstrate an awareness of which cities were located within which African provinces.⁵⁷²

That being the case, the decision to localize only one of the provinces listed in the legislation – Zeugi, by noting that it was “previously called Proconsularis” – seems inconsistent. After all, the province which contained Carthage was likely to have been the one African province, if any, of which those within the imperial administration would be aware. Furthermore, given that the name Proconsularis for the region surrounding Carthage appears to have been well attested in the 6th century,⁵⁷³ contrary to the statement in the legislation, it seems unlikely that this clarification of the text would have been deemed necessary in the original decree. It is more probable that it was added by a copyist sometime later. Similarly, it might be argued that

⁵⁷⁰ Pre-Vandal Africa, following the division of the Roman Empire into the Western Roman Empire and the Eastern Roman Empire, had been administered by the Western Roman Empire.

⁵⁷¹ This seems clear from the legislation establishing the military administration. See nn. 623–4.

⁵⁷² See Appendices I–II; with Maps VII and X. Procopius is not, however, always consistent. He identifies Sitifis as the capital of Mauritania I (*Bella* IV.20.30), and as being located in Numidia (*Aed.* VI.7.9). *Contra* Y. Duval, ‘La Maurétanie sitifienne à l’époque byzantine,’ *Latomus* 29 (1970), 158–60, who suggests that this is not an error on Procopius’ part, but rather reflects a change to the African provincial boundaries, following Solomon’s death in 544 (see n. 1095), since Honigmann’s edition of the geographical treatise attributed to George of Cyprus emends the text, placing Sitifis in Mauritania, rather than in Numidia (see n. 1438). However, given that *Bella* I–VII and the *De Aedificiis* must both have been completed in the early 550s, most probably within a couple of years of one another (see pp. 41–3, 45–7), and well after Solomon’s death, there is little reason to suppose that a change in the African provinces boundaries should be reflected in one text and not the other.

⁵⁷³ The term, and its derivations, certainly continued to be used throughout the 6th century. It is attested in Procopius’ *De Aedificiis* (Προκοῦσουλαρία) (VI.5.12), and in the geographical work attributed to George of Cyprus (Προκοῦσουλαρία) (line 641; ed. Honigmann, *Le Synekdèmos d’Hiéroklès*, 54).

“Carthage” [Carthago] was again a later attempt to make the province’s location clear to readers largely unfamiliar with the geography of Africa.

Thus, the legislation establishing civil administration in Africa divided the prefecture into seven provinces: Zeugis (henceforth Zeugitana), Byzacium (henceforth Byzacena), Tripolis (henceforth Tripolitania), Numidia, Mauritania I, Mauritania II and Sardinia.⁵⁷⁴

The definitions of Mauritania I and Mauritania II also require some clarification. Prior to the Vandal period, two African provinces were identified as Mauritania – Mauritania Sitifensis (Mauritania I) and Mauritania Caesariensis (Mauritania II).⁵⁷⁵ On this basis, the *Mauritaniae* to which the legislation refers have been assumed to be Mauritania Sitifensis and Mauritania Caesariensis.⁵⁷⁶ Procopius does not discuss Mauritania in the *De Aedificiis*, but in the *Bella* he notes that the capital of Mauritania Prima [Μαυριτανία Πρώτη] was Sitifis, and the capital of “the other” Mauritania [Μαυριτανία ἕτερα] was Caesarea,⁵⁷⁷ which is consistent with the traditional identifications.

However, Procopius elsewhere notes that:

... the land of Zabe, which is beyond Mount Aurasium, and is called Mauritania Prima, having Sitifis as its capital, he [Solomon] added as a tributary to the Roman empire.⁵⁷⁸

This passage refers to Solomon’s campaign in the Aurès massif in 540.⁵⁷⁹ On this basis, it has sometimes been argued that the legislation establishing the civil administration cannot refer to Mauritania Sitifensis, since the region was not under Roman control at the time it was promulgated, or even when it came into effect; and that Mauritania I, in the legislation, must

⁵⁷⁴ *CJ* 1.27.1.12. See Map IV.

⁵⁷⁵ *Notitia Dignitatum* OC II. 38–9. The *Verona List* also identifies Mauritania Caesariensis, but designates Mauritania I, Mauritania Tabia Insidiana, which Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine*, 208, suggests was the precursor of Mauritania Sitifensis.

⁵⁷⁶ Diehl, *L’Afrique byzantine*, 110.

⁵⁷⁷ *Bella* IV.20.30–1; with n. 584.

⁵⁷⁸ *Bella* IV.20.30: [... Ζάβην τε τὴν χώραν, ἣ ὑπὲρ ὄρος τὸ Αὐράσιόν ἐστι Μαυριτανία τε ἡ πρώτη καλεῖται μητρόπολιν Σίτιφιν ἔχουσα, τῇ Ῥωμαίων ἀρχῇ ἐς φόρου ἀπαγωγὴν προσεποίησε.]

⁵⁷⁹ *Bella* IV.19.1. On the campaign see section 5.4.

refer to Mauritania Gaditana.⁵⁸⁰ Mauritania Gaditana would have occupied the territory on the African side of the Strait of Gibraltar, which, prior to the Vandal period, was called Mauritania Tingitania.⁵⁸¹ This argument might be seen to derive support from the fact that the only city which the geographical text attributed to George of Cyprus associates with Mauritania II [MAYPITANIA B] is Septem.⁵⁸²

Such an argument rests on the assumption that the provinces to which the legislation refers, and thus Mauritania Caesariensis and Mauritania Gaditana, must have been held by the Eastern Roman Empire in 534. But this is demonstrably not the case. The only position which the Romans are known to have held in north-west Africa is Septem itself;⁵⁸³ and concerning Mauritania Caesariensis, Procopius himself notes:

For of the other Mauritania, Caesarea is the first city, where Mastigas is established with his Berbers, holding the whole region here obedient and tributary, except the city of Caesarea ... to which the Romans always travel by ship, not being able to go by land, since the Berbers live in this region.⁵⁸⁴

It seems clear that the Romans had little authority in Mauritania Caesariensis, and there is thus no reason to suppose that the provinces to which the legislation refers were much more than hypothetical. Consequently, it is more logical to assume that the provinces set out in the legislation were those indicated by Procopius in the *Bella* – Mauritania Sitifensis and Mauritania

⁵⁸⁰ Pringle, *Defence*, 64 and 356 n. 14.

⁵⁸¹ *Notitia Dignitatum* OC III. 12–3. Tingitania is not attested in the 6th century. See Pringle, *Defence*, 393 n. 156.

⁵⁸² Lines 670–671a (ed. Honigmann, *Le Synekdèmos d’Hiéroklos*, 56). Pringle, *Defence*, 393 n. 154, suggests that Procopius’ reference to Gadir in *Aed.* VI.7.14 refers to the province of Gaditana. But Gadir more commonly refers to the town of Gades (mod. Cadiz).

⁵⁸³ *Bella* IV.5.6.

⁵⁸⁴ *Bella* IV.20.31: [Μαυριτανίας γὰρ τῆς ἐτέρας πρώτη Καισάρεια τυγχάνει οὖσα, οὗ δὲ ὁ Μαστίγας ξὺν Μαυρουσίοις τοῖς αὐτοῦ ἴδρυτο, ξύμπαντα τὰ ἐκείνη χωρία κατήκοά τε καὶ φόρου ὑποτελῆ πλήν γε δὴ πόλεως Καισαρείας ἔχων. ταύτην γὰρ Ῥωμαίοις Βελισάριος τὸ πρότερον ἀνεσώσατο ... ἐς ἣν Ῥωμαῖοι ναυσὶ μὲν εἰς αἰὲ στέλλονται, πεζῇ δὲ ἰέναι οὐκ εἰσὶ δυνατοὶ Μαυρουσίων ἐν ταύτῃ ᾠκημένων τῇ χώρᾳ.] Cf. *Bella* IV.5.5. Procopius (*Bella* IV.13.19) subsequently refers to the leader of the Berbers of Mauritania as Mastinas, but Mastigas and Mastinas are almost certainly the same individual. The apparent inconsistency may easily be explained as scribal error, given that the difference between the two names is only that of one letter, and the forms of the letters ν and γ are quite similar. Cf. Courtois, *Les Vandales*, 360; Morizot, ‘Recherches sur les campagnes de Solomon,’ 103–4. On Mastigas see further *PLRE* IIIB, 851.

Caesariensis, with the latter encompassing the limited Roman possessions which were held in the region of the former Roman province of Mauritania Tingitana (ie. Septem).⁵⁸⁵

Furthermore, given that the Roman imperial government used the legislation to claim possession of the provinces of Mauritania Sitifensis and Mauritania Caesariensis on the basis of, in all likelihood, no more than the Roman occupation of the cities of Septem and Caesarea, the territorial extent of the Eastern Roman Empire's provinces of Zeugitana, Byzacena, Tripolitania and Numidia in early 534 is also called into question.⁵⁸⁶ Consequently, Roman possessions in Africa in the early 530s should not be assumed to include cities other than those explicitly noted by Procopius in the *Bella* as being occupied by the Romans at this time.

Whether or not the arrangements outlined in the legislation were ever fully implemented, there is every indication that the Roman imperial government attempted to establish the framework for a relatively sophisticated administration in Africa – albeit, an administration which was intended for a considerably larger territory than that held by the Eastern Roman Empire, in early 534, or subsequently. Such an administration would undoubtedly have required considerable organisation and expense, although the extent to which the establishment of the African civil administration can be seen as an expensive exercise is open to interpretation.⁵⁸⁷ Nevertheless, the legislation establishing the civil administration makes allowance for a significant number of individuals at not insignificant expense, suggesting planning had been undertaken for the future of Africa beyond the initial campaign of conquest.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁵ *Bella* IV.20.30–1.

⁵⁸⁶ Roman administration does appear to have been established on Sardinia by 534 (*Bella* IV.5.2–4), although Roman control over the island appears to have been tenuous, given that, in 535, Solomon was obliged to send troops to put down a Berber insurrection (*Bella* IV.13.41–5).

⁵⁸⁷ G. Lapeyre & A. Pellegrin, *Carthage latine et chrétienne* (Paris, 1950), 148, stress the cost involved in establishing such an administrative system.

⁵⁸⁸ Jones, *LRE*, 274.

The newly created provinces of Africa included the five Roman provinces of Africa which had existed prior to the Vandal conquest of the region.⁵⁸⁹ Consequently, it has sometimes been suggested that the Roman imperial government deliberately attempted to recreate pre-Vandal Roman Africa in order to reinforce the Roman Empire's historical claim to the region – a theme which is developed in greater detail in the military legislation (see below).⁵⁹⁰ At a superficial level, the legislation undoubtedly made use of historical precedent in order to justify Roman intervention in Africa – in much the same way as the *Novellae* justify administrative changes in other regions,⁵⁹¹ and the choice of the names of the provinces should probably be interpreted in this light.

However, at a practical level, there was a clear break with historical precedent. This was partly the result of necessity. There had not previously existed a Praetorian Prefecture of Africa. The majority of the African provinces (Byzacena, Numidia, Mauritania Sitifensis, Mauritania Caesariensis and Tripolitania) had previously existed as a diocese under the jurisdiction of the *vicarius* of Africa, who reported to the Praetorian Prefect of Italy.⁵⁹² Sardinia and Corsica, meanwhile, had been provinces of Italy, which fell under the jurisdiction of the *vicarius* of the City of Rome, who similarly reported to the Praetorian Prefect of Italy.⁵⁹³ And Mauritania Tingitania and the Balearic Islands had been provinces of Hispania, under the jurisdiction of the *vicarius* of Hispania, who reported to the Praetorian Prefect of Gaul.⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁸⁹ The *Notitia Dignitatum* (OC II. 35–40) gives the five provinces of Africa as: Byzacium, Numidia, Mauritania Sitifensis, Mauritania Caesariensis and Tripolis. Cf. the *Verona List*, which lists them as: Proconsularis, Bizacina, Zeugitana (? Tripolitania), Numidia Cirtensis and Numidia Militiana (amalgamated in 314), Mauritania Caesariensis and Mauritania Tabia Insidiana (? Sitifensis). See Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine*, 208.

⁵⁹⁰ Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 110–11, argues that the provinces outlined in the legislation, and the officials appointed to them are identical to those outlined in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, and that the legislation is evidence of Justinian's desire to recreate "anciennes traditions romaines". *Contra* Pringle, *Defence*, 356 n. 14, who argues that, while there are obviously some similarities with the administration of pre-Vandal Roman Africa, these similarities are not as close as Diehl would suggest, not least because the provinces were far from occupied in their entirety in 534.

⁵⁹¹ See pp. 94–5.

⁵⁹² *Notitia Dignitatum* OC II. 5–8 and XX. 8–15.

⁵⁹³ *Notitia Dignitatum* OC II. 26–7 and XIX. 10–14.

⁵⁹⁴ *Notitia Dignitatum* OC III. 12–3 and XXI.11–5.

Obviously, in 534, the conquest of Italy had not yet begun, so the recreation of this earlier administrative system would have been impossible. However, the decision to amalgamate the provinces of Africa into a single administrative unit was novel. Equally, there was no attempt to recreate the intermediate administrative level previously occupied by the *vicarii*, who had previously been responsible for the administration of the dioceses.⁵⁹⁵ But the office had largely been made redundant, since the Praetorian Prefecture of Africa comprised a single diocese.⁵⁹⁶ Given that the provinces identified in the legislation potentially occupied a vast geographical area, the decision to restrict the Praetorian Prefecture to a single diocese again suggests that the Roman imperial government was well aware, in 534, that only parts of these provinces were under effective Roman control.

Zeugitana, Byzacena and Tripolitania were to be consular provinces; and Numidia, Mauritania I, Mauritania II and Sardinia were to be praesidential provinces.⁵⁹⁷ This similarly shows some change from what is known of the administration of the African provinces during the pre-Vandal period, during which Byzacena (which would have included Zeugitana) and Numidia were consular provinces; and Tripolitania, Mauritania Sitifensis, Mauritania Caesariensis and Sardinia were praesidential provinces.⁵⁹⁸ However, a specific motivation for this change, if it were even recognised as such, is not clear.⁵⁹⁹

Interestingly, the legislation suggests that the decision to establish Africa as a prefecture was motivated by a deliberate desire to place the region, at least administratively, on a par with

⁵⁹⁵ Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire*, II, 319.

⁵⁹⁶ There is, in fact, no mention of the diocese of Africa in the legislation establishing the civil administration. However, the term is employed in the legislation establishing military administration (*CJ* 1.27.2.13).

⁵⁹⁷ *CJ* 1.27.1.12.

⁵⁹⁸ *Notitia Dignitatum* OC XX. 8–15. Sardinia was, according to the *Notitia* a province of Italy during this period, but was nevertheless a praesidential province (*Notitia Dignitatum* OC XIX. 10–12).

⁵⁹⁹ *Contra* Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 111, who argues that Tripolitania, rather than Numidia, would have merited a consular governor because, in 534, it would have been regarded as securely under Roman control. This is not demonstrable.

Oriens and Illyricum.⁶⁰⁰ And, certainly, there are clear similarities between the financial administration of the three prefectures, which operated a number of sub-regional financial offices [*scrinia*], as well as offices responsible for the treasury of the prefecture and for public works.⁶⁰¹ There is no indication that the Prefecture of Africa was intended to be seen as inferior to the longer standing prefectures of the empire, although its administration was somewhat smaller.⁶⁰²

Indeed, the legislation appears to show a trend towards the standardization of administrative practices empire-wide, rather than the desire to recreate the past. The guidelines for the conduct of officials demonstrate an attempt to ensure that administrative practices in Africa would be in line with those elsewhere in the empire,⁶⁰³ and the evident wish to address the problem of corruption is in keeping with the administrative reforms subsequently undertaken elsewhere.⁶⁰⁴

The legislation establishing civil administration in Africa undoubtedly drew upon historical precedent in its presentation of the African provinces and, as a result, might be argued to overstate the extent of Roman authority in Africa in 534 for propagandist purposes. But, it was also practical, reflecting careful advance planning. The legislation appears to have been in line with administrative reforms undertaken elsewhere in the empire during Justinian's reign. Furthermore, it aimed to balance the need to establish an administrative framework which could be both quickly and comparatively easily implemented, against the need for an administrative framework which could be expanded at a later date, in accordance with such territorial expansion as might occur.

⁶⁰⁰ *CJ* 1.27.1.11.

⁶⁰¹ For a comparison of the three prefectures see Jones, *LRE*, 448–50.

⁶⁰² Jones, *LRE*, 589; Barnish *et al.* 'Government and administration,' 186.

⁶⁰³ *CJ* 1.27.1.17–18.

⁶⁰⁴ The provisions attempting to address the threat of corruption (*CJ* 1.27.1.18–20) are notably similar to those which can be found in the *Novellae*. *Cf. J. Nov.* 8 and 28.4. Jones, *LRE*, 590, stresses that corruption was a particular concern for Justinian.

3.3 Military administration

The military administration, set out in *CJ* 1.27.2, and addressed to Belisarius, is primarily concerned with the establishment of ducal commands, based in five of the seven provinces set out in the legislation establishing the civil administration – Tripolitania, Byzacena, Numidia, Mauritania and Sardinia.⁶⁰⁵ The appointment of a *dux* to Mauritania is problematic given that the legislation setting out the civil administration refers to Mauritania I and Mauritania II.⁶⁰⁶ Presumably, the *dux* appointed to Mauritania was intended to oversee both Mauritania I and Mauritania II, particularly given that these provinces were minimally under Roman control at the time the legislation was promulgated.⁶⁰⁷ There is no mention of a *dux* of Zeugitana and, at the time the legislation was issued, this may have been a role assumed by Belisarius, who, as overall military commander in Africa, was based at Carthage. The *dux* of Tripolitania was to be based at Leptis Magna, the *dux* of Byzacena alternatively at Capsa and Thelepte, the *dux* of Numidia at Constantina, and the *dux* of Mauritania at Caesarea.⁶⁰⁸ The headquarters of the *dux* of Sardinia is only described as being “... near the mountains, where the *barbaricini* may be seen”.⁶⁰⁹ The legislation also dictates that both soldiers and a fleet of *dromones* were to be stationed at Septem under the command of a tribune.⁶¹⁰

Like the legislation setting out the civil administration, *CJ* 1.27.2 includes a detailed schedule of positions and salaries for each of the ducal commands.⁶¹¹ The provisions made for each

⁶⁰⁵ *CJ* 1.27.1.12 and *CJ* 1.27.2.1.

⁶⁰⁶ *CJ* 1.27.1.12. The legislation establishing the military administration might, in this respect, be seen as evidence that *CJ* 1.27.1.12 should read Mauritania rather than Mauritaniae in its list of provinces (*cf.* p. 123). However, since *CJ* 1.27.2.1 does not offer an alternative province in order to maintain the required seven, this argument can probably be discarded.

⁶⁰⁷ See pp. 127–8.

⁶⁰⁸ *CJ* 1.27.2.1. See Map V.

⁶⁰⁹ *CJ* 1.27.2.3: [... iuxta montes, ubi Barbaricini videntur...] S. Dyson & R. Rowland Jr., *Shepherds, Sailors, Conquerors: Archaeology and History in Sardinia from the Stone Age to the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 2007), 178, 184–6, argue that the Roman military administration must have been based at Forum Traiani, presumably on the basis of *Aed.* VI.7.2.

⁶¹⁰ See p. 113.

⁶¹¹ *CJ* 1.27.2.19–35.

command are the same, with each *dux* granted funds of 1 582 *solidi* and a staff of 41 officials.⁶¹² Additionally, the legislation notes that each *dux* was liable for the customary registration fees: 6 *solidi* to the imperial registry office, 12 *solidi* to the office of the *magister militum* and 12 *solidi* to the office of the Praetorian Prefect of Africa.⁶¹³

The legislation establishing the military administration may, however, have been somewhat optimistic in its allocation of military command positions. As discussed in section 3.2, it is far from clear that the provinces defined in the legislation were much more than an ideal at the time the legislation was issued. But, beyond this general uncertainty, it is unclear whether the Roman imperial government even held authority in the cities to which it assigned ducal headquarters.

As has been discussed in section 2.6, a deliberate attempt was made to secure Caesarea, Sardinia and Septem, following the Roman capture of Carthage.⁶¹⁴ Given that these positions were only loosely under Vandal control, if at all, it is reasonable to suppose that they would have been in Roman hands by April 534.⁶¹⁵ However, there is no explicit evidence that the Eastern Roman Empire held Leptis Magna, Capsa, Thelepte or Constantina at this time, or that they were secured by September 534. Concerning Leptis Magna, Procopius notes in the *De Aedificiis* that the Vandals had been driven from the city by the Berbers, and that the city then remained empty until its occupation by the Romans at an unspecified date.⁶¹⁶ He does not note a Roman presence at Leptis Magna until 543/4, when Sergius, then governor of Tripolitania, is attested as having been present in the city, which at this time came under Berber attack and Sergius

⁶¹² *CJ* 1.27.2.19-32.

⁶¹³ *CJ* 1.27.2.35.

⁶¹⁴ *Bella* IV.5.4-6.

⁶¹⁵ *Cf.* pp. 114-5.

⁶¹⁶ *Aed.* VI.4.6. Procopius presents this episode in the context of noting that Justinian built baths and restored the circuit wall at Leptis Magna, as well as converting a nearby tribe to Christianity (*Aed.* VI.4.11-2). These are such stereotypical comments regarding Justinian's restoration of the African cities that it is impossible to infer any date from them.

returned to Carthage.⁶¹⁷ Capsa is not attested by Procopius at all, but two almost identical inscriptions (both in fragments), attest to city walls being constructed at Capsa during the Praetorian Prefecture of Solomon.⁶¹⁸ These confirm that the city was under Roman control by the second prefecture of Solomon (539–544), but offer no specific indication of when the city first came under Roman control.⁶¹⁹ Thelepte is attested by Procopius in the *De Aedificiis*, but in the context of a generic list of cities in Byzacena which Justinian fortified.⁶²⁰ Again, there is no indication of the date at which the city might have come under Roman control. Constantina is only noted by Procopius as being two days journey from Gadiaufala,⁶²¹ and no archaeological evidence attests to the city being occupied by the Romans in the 6th century.⁶²²

Although the civil legislation does not make any specific claim about re-establishment of the Roman provinces which had existed before the Vandal conquest (beyond using their names) – and the civil administration is itself contrary to such a claim – the military legislation explicitly claims that Roman Africa is to be restored to its classical form, noting repeatedly that the provinces of Africa were to be returned to the boundaries they held prior to the Vandal conquest.⁶²³ Indeed, the re-establishment of the former provincial boundaries is presented as

⁶¹⁷ *Bella* IV.21.1–16. *PLRE* IIIB, 1125, identifies Sergius as the *dux* of Tripolitania. However, this is not clear from Procopius' account (see n. 1079).

⁶¹⁸ Durliat, *Les dédicaces*, nos. 12 and 13.

⁶¹⁹ Solomon served two terms as Praetorian Prefect of Africa, between 535 and 536, and between 539 and 544. See *PLRE* IIIB, 1170–1173. Cf. Pringle, *Defence*, 191, suggests that the inscriptions could conceivably be dated to Solomon's first term as Prefect. Contra J. Durliat, *Les dédicaces d'ouvrages de défense dans l'Afrique byzantine* (Rome, 1981), 97 n. 13, who argues that all the inscriptions from Africa which mention Solomon should be viewed as a group, rather than divided between his first and second terms as Praetorian Prefect, and must therefore be dated to Solomon's second prefecture. Cf. pp. 147–53.

⁶²⁰ *Aed.* VI.6.18. No details specific to Thelepte are provided. Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 190–6, suggested, on the basis of observation, that Thelepte's walls were "Byzantine". This has often been accepted, but the walls are no longer extant, and no excavations have been carried out. Pringle, *Defence*, 237–8; Leone, *Changing Townscapes*, 269–70.

⁶²¹ *Bella* IV.15.52.

⁶²² Pringle, *Defence*, 194–5. Constantina lies beneath the mod. city of Cirta in Algeria. Remains of a late antique city are known from the 19th century, but were never dated and have been largely destroyed.

⁶²³ Eg. *CJ* 1.27.2.4. Similarly, *CJ* 1.27.2.4a, 1.27.2.4b, 1.27.2.7 1.27.2.10 and 1.27.2.13.

the primary responsibility not only of the *duces* but also of Belisarius, who was not expected to return to Constantinople until this objective was achieved.⁶²⁴

The relationship between the ducal commands and the civil legislation is also set out in the military legislation. The ducal commands were to be accountable to both Belisarius, as overall military commander in Africa, and to the Praetorian Prefect of Africa, as the highest ranking civil official. Belisarius held the right to oversee the deployment of troops, and the *duces* were to report to him on matters of strategy and intelligence.⁶²⁵ However, financial matters – including camps, provisions and pay – were placed under the authority of the Praetorian Prefect of Africa, following Belisarius' return to Constantinople.⁶²⁶ How many *duces* were ultimately appointed is, however, open to question. Only four are clearly identified by the sources, and these only for the provinces of Byzacena and Numidia.⁶²⁷

While the nature of the ducal commands in Africa is clearly established by the military legislation (*CJ* 1.27.2), the nature or, indeed, existence, of a military high command in Africa remains contested.

Procopius' account of the launch of the African campaign makes clear that Belisarius, in his capacity as *magister militum per Orientem*, was granted extraordinary powers which gave him absolute authority over the Roman troops in Africa.⁶²⁸ There is, however, no suggestion that he was ever granted a specific position within the African administration, a view which is

⁶²⁴ *CJ* 1.27.2.13. On Belisarius' recall p. 136.

⁶²⁵ *CJ* 1.27.2.2, 1.27.2.5, 1.27.2.7 and 1.27.2.13.

⁶²⁶ *CJ* 1.27.2.13.

⁶²⁷ Marcellus is attested as *dux* of Numidia in 536 (*PLRE* IIIB, 814); Guntarith is attested as *dux* of Numidia in 545 (see n. 1135); Himerius is attested as *dux* of Byzacena in 544 (*PLRE* IIIA, 599); and Marcentius is attested as *dux* of Byzacena in 545/6 (*PLRE* IIIB, 818–9). *Contra* *PLRE* IIIB, 1125, which also identifies Sergius as *dux* of Tripolitania (see n. 617); and *PLRE* IIIB, 1434 (Anonymus 41), which notes that Corippus (*Ioh.* VI. 49–52) refers to two *duces* in Byzacena. However, given that there is no other suggestion that the ducal command of Byzacena had been subdivided by 546, and Corippus sometimes uses the term *dux* generically, to refer to a leader, there is no reason to suppose that he here uses the term *dux* as a title.

⁶²⁸ *Bella* III.11.18.

supported by the fact that *CJ* 1.27.2 is addressed *Bel. mag. mil. per Orientem*. No specific issue arises from Belisarius being granted extraordinary powers to respond to the specific circumstances of the African campaign. However, the Roman imperial government's longer term intentions regarding the military command of Africa are not clear. Certainly, the legislation sets out the role assigned to Belisarius, including the instructions that he should return to Constantinople once he had ensured that the provinces of Africa were returned to their former boundaries.⁶²⁹ This suggests that Belisarius' tenure in Africa was not envisaged, in April 534, as open ended.

But, in early summer of 534,⁶³⁰ shortly after the legislation establishing civil and military administration was promulgated, Belisarius returned to Constantinople, almost undoubtedly ahead of schedule, given that his subordinates had made accusations against him to the emperor.⁶³¹ His role in Africa, as set out in the legislation, was unlikely to have been regarded as fulfilled, particularly in view of the fact that his departure was immediately followed by Berber raids.⁶³²

The state of both the civil and military administration of Africa immediately after Belisarius' return to Constantinople is unclear. The legislation attributes specific responsibilities to Belisarius, in his capacity as commander of the Roman army in Africa – including the re-establishment for the former Roman provincial boundaries, and the allocation of the troops to the various defensive positions – and no subsequent legislation re-assigns these responsibilities

⁶²⁹ *CJ* 1.27.2.13.

⁶³⁰ The date of Belisarius' return to Constantinople is not explicitly provided by the sources. However, Gelimer did not surrender until late March 534, three months after the battle of Tricamarum (*Bella* IV.7.1); and Belisarius was still in office on 13 April 534, as he is the addressee of *CJ* 1.27.2. His departure should therefore probably be dated to May or June 534. Cf. Stein, *Histoire*, 320; *PLRE* IIIB, 1170; Pringle, *Defence*, 22.

⁶³¹ *Bella* IV.8.1–2. Procopius (*Bella* IV.8.5) implies that Belisarius wished to return to Constantinople to defend himself against the accusations levelled against him – that he intended to establish himself as the independent ruler of Africa. But it is equally possible that Procopius uses this explanation to disguise the fact that his patron was recalled, as he does in relation to Belisarius' recall from the East following the Roman defeat at Callinicum in 531 (*Bella* I.18; Malalas, XVIII.60).

⁶³² See pp. 190–1.

to other offices.⁶³³ Procopius notes that: “... and he [Belisarius] granted to Solomon the practice of authority in Libya”.⁶³⁴ This statement has often been interpreted as referring to Solomon’s appointment as Praetorian Prefect of Africa.⁶³⁵ But it might equally refer to a military appointment, particularly in view of the fact that, immediately after this statement, Procopius refers to the troops placed under Solomon’s command.⁶³⁶

Indeed, whether Solomon was appointed Praetorian Prefect of Africa following Belisarius’ departure is not clear. Archelaus is only attested as Praetorian Prefect on 13 April 534,⁶³⁷ and Solomon is not attested as holding this position until 1 January 535.⁶³⁸ Procopius, at no point, clarifies Solomon’s function within the African administration. Nor does he provide the titles of the subsequent administrators or commanders of the Roman army in Africa.⁶³⁹ Procopius’ lack of precision is unsurprising. His use of titulature is generally vague and he largely avoids Latin vocabulary, except where it can be used to demonstrate his own erudition.⁶⁴⁰ As result, the labels he attributes to Roman military commanders in Africa, and elsewhere, should be treated as descriptions rather than as technical terms.⁶⁴¹

Nevertheless, in the absence of any explicit evidence in either the works of Procopius or the Justinianic legislation, Solomon is assumed to have been granted the title of either *magister militum Africae* or *magister militum per Africam* following Belisarius’ departure from Africa,

⁶³³ *CJ* 1.27.2.5, 1.27.2.7, 1.27.2.13 and 1.27.2.15.

⁶³⁴ *Bella* IV.8.23: [... Σολόμονι δὲ διέπειν τὸ Λιβύης κράτος παρείχετο ...]

⁶³⁵ Certainly, Dewing, *History of the Wars: Books III–IV*, 277, translates διέπειν κράτος as “administration”.

⁶³⁶ *Bella* IV.8.23.

⁶³⁷ *CJ* 1.27.1; with pp. 114–5.

⁶³⁸ *J. Nov.* 35.

⁶³⁹ Germanus and Sergius are not accorded any specific title; while Artabanes and Areobindus are only described as στρατήγος Λιβύης (*Bella* IV.24.4, 28.45; VII.13.7). On these individuals see Chapter 5, as well as *PLRE* IIIA, 125–31 (Artabanes), 107–9 (Areobindus), 527 (Germanus), and *PLRE* IIIB, 1124–8 (Sergius).

⁶⁴⁰ On Procopius’ disinclination to use technical Latin terms see Cameron, *Procopius*, 35–6.

⁶⁴¹ Similarly, in the *Iohannis*, Corippus describes John Troglita, who was *magister militum per Africam* from 546 until 551/2 (see *PLRE* IIIA, 644–9), as *magister*. But this label should not be seen as holding any particular significance. *Magister* is far more appropriate to Corippus’ literary (that is, epic) style than a more technical term.

and in conjunction with his appointment as Praetorian Prefect of Africa.⁶⁴² Such an assumption is certainly logical. The structuring of a military command around a field army, under the overall command of a *magister militum*, was standard practice during Justinian's reign.⁶⁴³ There is no explicit reference to the title *magister militum Africae* or *magister militum per Africam* until at least 570.⁶⁴⁴ However, the argument that there is **no** reference to a *magister militum Africae* before 570 might be contested on the basis of the epigraphic evidence. Fifteen extant building inscriptions refer to building projects undertaken in Africa during Solomon's tenure as Praetorian Prefect of Africa.⁶⁴⁵ In two of these, Solomon is described as *magister militum et praefectus Africae* (and, in Greek, στρατηλάτης καὶ ἑπαρχος Ἀφρικῆς).⁶⁴⁶ That this is an epigraphic contraction of the title *magister militum Africae* and *praefectus Africae* is certainly possible.⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴² This view was originally set out by Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 120; and was subsequently followed by Bury, *History*, II, 141; Stein, *Histoire*, 319; Jones, *LRE*, 655; and, more recently, Moorhead, *Justinian*, 71. J. Durliat, 'Magister militum – ΣΤΡΑΤΗΛΑΤΗΣ dans l'empire byzantine (VIe–VIIe siècles),' *BZ* 72 (1979), 308, 313, argues that there would have been a distinction between the titles *magister militum per Africam* and *magister militum Africae*, with the latter, his preferred term, being used for lesser administrative regions. He thus notes that there was a *magister militum Hispaniae* but a *magister militum per Orientem*. However, given the deliberate attempt to associate Africa with Illyricum and Oriens in the legislation establishing the civil administration (*CJ* 1.27.1.10), Durliat's preference for *magister militum Africae* does not seem altogether logical, and *magister militum per Africam* will be used here.

⁶⁴³ See Jones, *LRE*, 654–5; Lee, 'The empire at war,' 117; and W. Treadgold, *Byzantium and its Army, 284–1081* (Stanford, 1995), 15, 60; all of whom assume that such an arrangement must have existed in Africa (and in Italy) under Justinian.

⁶⁴⁴ The earliest literary reference to the title is to be found in the chronicle of John of Biclar (*s.a.* 570), who refers to Theoctistus, who was killed by the Berbers in 570, as *magister militum provinciae Africae*. The date of the creation of the office is, however, contested. Pringle, *Defence*, 56, accepts that such a position must have existed by 570, which view is followed by the *PLRE* III B, 1226–7. *Contra* Durliat, 'Magister militum – ΣΤΡΑΤΗΛΑΤΗΣ,' 311–3, who argues that John of Biclaro is imprecise in his use of titulature and anachronistically attributes to him a title which did not exist until 572. This is, however, a somewhat circular argument, given that Durliat accepts John of Biclaro's testimony as evidence that the office must have existed within the chronicler's lifetime.

⁶⁴⁵ A catalogue of buildings inscriptions erected between the Roman conquest of Africa and the Arab conquest of Africa has been compiled by Durliat, *Les dédicaces*. Inscriptions number 1, 3–9, 12, 15–9, refer explicitly to Solomon.

⁶⁴⁶ Durliat, *Les dédicaces*, nos. 6 and 12. No. 6 is bilingual.

⁶⁴⁷ *Contra* Durliat, 'Magister militum – ΣΤΡΑΤΗΛΑΤΗΣ,' 307–8, who, while acknowledging that the epigraphic evidence demonstrates that Solomon is attested as *magister militum*, argues that the epigraphic evidence does not constitute evidence for a formal military command in Africa in the 530s, and that the references to Solomon as *magister militum* are simply descriptions of his activities as Praetorian Prefect of Africa rather than indications of a specific position. This argument is followed by Pringle, *Defence*, 55–6.

Certainly there were positions of military command, other than the prescribed ducal commands, within the Roman military administration in Africa. Nevertheless, the established view is that the military commands of Solomon, Germanus, Sergius, Areobindus, Artabanes, and John Troglita, all of whom are identified as *magister militum per Africam* by the *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*,⁶⁴⁸ were all held as temporary, and extraordinary, appointments, which were created on an *ad hoc* basis to address exceptional military threats.⁶⁴⁹

However, while the evidence can be interpreted in this light, a succession of extraordinary military commands, over a period of nearly forty years, appears to be both an extremely ineffective means of consolidating power in a region plagued by military incursions, and inconsistent with the nature of Roman military command elsewhere in the Eastern Roman Empire during Justinian's reign.⁶⁵⁰ While the situation in Africa might have been unique, given the instability of the region, which saw intermittent conflict with the Berbers from the time of Belisarius' departure, and the importance which the Roman imperial government placed on the region (as is evident from the claim in the civil legislation that the region was to be equal to Oriens and Illyricum), this seems a strangely *ad hoc* arrangement, particularly given the evident attention to detail in the legislation detailing military administration.

Indeed, the legislation establishing the military administration may constitute the strongest evidence for a military high command in Africa – despite the fact that it does not explicitly refer to a *magister militum per Africam*. The legislation obliged individual *duces* to pay fees to various administrative offices in order to register their appointment – including to the “office of the master of soldiers” [officium magistri militum].⁶⁵¹ Furthermore, the fee required (12

⁶⁴⁸ *PLRE* IIIB, 1500. John Rogathinus may also have been *magister militum per Africam* (in 563), but it is unclear whether he held this position, or that of Praetorian Prefect (*PLRE* IIIA, 670).

⁶⁴⁹ Durliat, ‘*Magister militum – ΣΤΡΑΤΗΛΑΤΗΣ*,’ 309. This argument is followed by Pringle, *Defence*, 56, who further notes that Roman military command in Africa continued on the same basis as the original command granted to Belisarius.

⁶⁵⁰ See n. 643.

⁶⁵¹ *CJ* 1.27.2.35.

solidi) was equal to that required by the office of the Praetorian Prefect of Africa, suggesting that the two offices were of similar importance.⁶⁵² The most plausible interpretation of this is that it refers to the office of the *magister militum per Africam* – albeit possibly one which was yet to be established, given that the legislation makes no reference to a *magister militum per Africam*, and, at the time it was promulgated, Belisarius retained overall military command in Africa. That such a provision should be made concerning successive extraordinary military appointments seems highly unlikely.

Finally, the fact that Solomon, and probably also his successor, Sergius,⁶⁵³ held the office of Praetorian Prefect of Africa, does not, as has sometimes been suggested, constitute an impediment to the existence of the office of *magister militum per Africam*.⁶⁵⁴ While it is certainly the case that the two pieces of legislation suggest that a separation of civil and military powers was intended, the amalgamation of civil and military offices was not unprecedented.⁶⁵⁵ In fact, Justinian seems to have preferred to amalgamate offices, generally only separating civil and military administration in frontier regions, where the military commander needed to be able to concentrate fully on defence.⁶⁵⁶ Given the uncertainty of the security of Africa at the time the legislation was promulgated, the decision to separate civil and military powers appears pragmatically cautious.

Thus, the fact that Solomon served as both Praetorian Prefect of Africa and as *magister militum per Africam* was perhaps less the result of deliberate policy, than the result of Belisarius'

⁶⁵² *Ibid.* By comparison, the imperial registry office [sacrum laterculum] was only entitled to a fee of 6 *solidi*.

⁶⁵³ Sergius may have served as both Praetorian Prefect of Africa and *magister militum per Africam* between 544 and 545. See p. 220.

On the correct dating of this episode see Stein, *Histoire*, II, 483 n. 1.

⁶⁵⁴ *Contra* Pringle, *Defence*, 55, who suggests that civil and military administration in Africa could not have been amalgamated, since Justinian was deliberately attempting to recreate the administrative system which had existed prior to the Vandal conquest. However, as has been noted above, there is little evidence that Justinian was actively striving for historical imitation.

⁶⁵⁵ Civil and military offices were amalgamated in Pisidia (*J. Nov.* 24.1 and 26.1–2), Thrace (*J. Nov.* 25.2), Hellespont (*J. Nov.* 28.2) and Cappadocia (*J. Nov.* 30.1).

⁶⁵⁶ Jones, *LRE*, 282.

unexpected departure coinciding with serious Berber raids. Rather than Solomon being granted an *ad hoc* military command at this time, the *ad hoc* response to the crisis may well have been the assimilation of the offices. In the case of Sergius, who assumed both offices in a state of emergency, following Solomon's death, the amalgamation of offices can hardly have been intended.⁶⁵⁷

3.4 Military resources

Closely connected to the nature of military administration in Africa is the question of the scale of military resources committed to Africa during Justinian's reign, and what this might indicate about the significance which the Roman imperial government attached to the region. While a significant military commitment appears to have been made to Africa at the outset of the campaign of conquest, consistent with the attention to detail and forward planning shown by the administrative legislation, this commitment does not appear to have been maintained over time.

The expeditionary force had numbered ten thousand infantry – all *comitatensian* troops – and five thousand cavalry – composed of both *comitatenses* and *foederati*.⁶⁵⁸ Procopius additionally identifies two contingents of non-Roman allied troops (*symmaxoi*) – four hundred Heruls and six hundred Massagetae – who served as mounted bowmen and were commanded by their own officers.⁶⁵⁹ In addition to this force of 16 000 men, the expeditionary force has generally been assumed to have included Belisarius' *bucellarii*, or personal guardsmen.⁶⁶⁰ Taking into account

⁶⁵⁷ See pp. 218–9.

⁶⁵⁸ *Bella* 3.11.2.

⁶⁵⁹ *Bella* III.11.11–12. On the officers see *PLRE* IIIA, 169 (Balas); and *PLRE* IIIB, 1015–6 (Pharas) and 1156 (Sinnion).

⁶⁶⁰ Cf. Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 16–7. The term *bucellarii*, while existing in Greek, as βουκελλάριοι, is never used by Procopius, who refers to the troops who accompanied Belisarius as ὑπασπιστὰι and δορυφόροι terms which he frequently uses together, as a set phrase, to refer to the soldiers attached to a particular commander (*Bella* III.11.19). Cf. *Contra* J. Gascou, 'L'Institution des bucellaires,' *Bulletin de l'institut français d'archéologie orientale* 76 (1976), 146 n. 2, who assume that the entire phrase ὑπασπιστὰι τε καὶ δορυφόροι must refer to *bucellarii*.

a degree of attrition,⁶⁶¹ the expeditionary force must, at the very least, have numbered c. 16 000 men when it landed in Africa.

The military force committed to the African campaign has sometimes been seen as unusually small for a campaign of conquest.⁶⁶² However, a force of 16 000 men was not an unusually small army for the time. Limited information exists concerning the overall manpower of the Roman army during the sixth century. Nevertheless, Procopius does provide some indication of the size of field armies. The Army of Armenia numbered 15 000 men in 530, the Army of the East numbered 20 000 men in 531, and the Army of Illyricum numbered 15 000 men in 546, even after the outbreak of plague.⁶⁶³ While the accuracy of Procopius' figures is certainly open to question, particularly in view of his tendency to present the sizes of armies as multiples of five thousand, it may reasonably be supposed that these numbers accurately represent the comparative sizes of the various field armies. Thus, the size of the expeditionary force committed to the African campaign was comparable with that of the provincial field armies and, indeed, must subsequently have been intended to form the basis for the Army of Africa.⁶⁶⁴

Admittedly, the role of an army of conquest is not directly analogous to that of a standing field army. By the mid-6th century, the role of the field armies was far more defensive than offensive, and they were undoubtedly heavily supported by *limitanei*. Nevertheless, when the African expeditionary force is compared to the only other known army of conquest of Justinian's reign – the army which invaded Italy in 535 – it appears to represent a reasonable commitment of manpower on the part of the Roman imperial government. A mere 7 500 men were initially committed to the Italian campaign, which can certainly not be regarded as having any less ideological, and thus political, significance than the African campaign.⁶⁶⁵ These men were, of

⁶⁶¹ On the recorded losses *en route* to Africa see *Bella* III.13.11–20, 14.14.

⁶⁶² Bury, *History*, II, 123; Jones, *LRE*, 273.

⁶⁶³ *Bella* I.15.11, 18.5; VII.29.3.

⁶⁶⁴ Treadgold, *Byzantium and its Army*, 60.

⁶⁶⁵ *Bella* V.5.1–4.

course, subsequently reinforced,⁶⁶⁶ but this is equally true of the African expeditionary force.⁶⁶⁷ The military resources initially committed to the African campaign were significant.

There is no reason to suppose that, in 534, troop numbers in Africa were significantly less than the numbers originally committed to the expeditionary force.⁶⁶⁸ While many of the allied troops chose not to remain in Africa after the initial campaign of conquest,⁶⁶⁹ the majority of the *comitatenses* and *foederati* appear to have remained, along with some of Belisarius' personal guard.⁶⁷⁰ At this time, the newly created Prefecture of Africa had military resources available for a field army of comparable size to the other major field armies of the empire.⁶⁷¹

However, these numbers appear to have declined rapidly. When Belisarius returned to Carthage in 536, during the mutiny, he found only 2000 troops loyal to the Roman administration.⁶⁷² Less than twelve months later, when the emperor's nephew, Germanus, arrived at Carthage as the newly appointed *magister militum per Africam*, he found that those troops loyal to the Roman administration, in Carthage and at a small number of other Roman positions, amounted to no more than a third of the Roman army in Africa.⁶⁷³

In the immediate aftermath of the Roman capture of Carthage, an attempt appears to have been made to maintain Roman troop numbers in Africa. Following Belisarius' departure in 534, the emperor sent an additional force, of unspecified number but described as an "army" [στρατία]

⁶⁶⁶ *Bella* V.27.1, 6.5.1–2, VI.13.16–8.

⁶⁶⁷ *Bella* IV.8.24.

⁶⁶⁸ Cf. Treadgold, *Byzantium and its Army*, 60, who suggests a figure of c. 15 000 men.

⁶⁶⁹ Belisarius had been forced to promise the allied troops of the Massagetae that, once the Vandals were defeated, they would be permitted to return home, in order to secure their loyalty prior to the battle of Tricamarum (*Bella* IV.3.7). Given that neither the Massagetae generally, nor any of their leaders, are attested in Africa following the battle of Tricamarum, it must be assumed that this promise was fulfilled. It is unlikely that any of the allied troops were expected to remain in Africa for an extended period of time. While allied troops were regarded as valuable during a campaign, they were also seen as untrustworthy, and consequently unsuited to being stationed in permanent garrisons. Cf. *Bella* IV.2.3; *Strategicon* VIII.2.228–32.

⁶⁷⁰ *Bella* IV.8.10; with n. 660.

⁶⁷¹ See p. 142.

⁶⁷² *Bella* IV.15.11. On the mutiny see section 5.3.

⁶⁷³ *Bella* IV.16.3; with p. 206.

by Procopius, as well as two additional commanders, to Solomon, which were presumably intended to compensate for those troops who had returned to Constantinople with Belisarius.⁶⁷⁴ However, the Roman imperial government's subsequent willingness to commit additional military resources to Africa appears to have fluctuated, depending on priorities elsewhere in the empire. In late 537/early 538, a large cavalry force was sent from Africa to Rome, where Belisarius was besieged.⁶⁷⁵ This was presumably drawn from the cavalry originally committed to Africa. When Solomon assumed the role of Praetorian Prefect of Africa for the second time, in 539, the emperor sent "an army and officers" [στράτευμα ... καὶ ἄρχοντες] to him.⁶⁷⁶ But, when Areobindus assumed the position of *magister militum per Africam* in 545, with the Eastern Roman Empire as yet at war with Sasanian Persia, he was accompanied by only "a few soldiers" [στρατιῶται ὀλίγοι] and "a few Armenians" [Ἀρμένιοι ὀλίγοι], presumably because no further troops were available.⁶⁷⁷ From this, it can only be inferred that the significance of the provinces of Africa to the Roman imperial government declined over the course of Justinian's reign, as events on other frontiers became greater priorities, and Roman control in Africa became an increasingly remote possibility.

3.5 Building program

In the *Bella*, one of the immediate Roman priorities following the capture of Carthage in September 533 was the restoration of the fortifications of the city, which Procopius claims had been allowed to fall into disrepair during the period of Vandal occupation.⁶⁷⁸ This subject is picked up, and elaborated upon, in the *De Aedificiis*, in which Procopius again attests to the complete reconstruction of the city walls,⁶⁷⁹ together with a complete program of urban renewal, which included the construction of shrines to the Theotokos and a local saint, Saint

⁶⁷⁴ *Bella* IV.8.23-4; with n. 669.

⁶⁷⁵ *Bella* VI.7.15. For the date see *PLRE* IIIA, 616.

⁶⁷⁶ *Bella* IV.19.1.

⁶⁷⁷ *Bella* IV.24.1.

⁶⁷⁸ *Bella* III.21.11-13, 23.19-20. For the date of the capture of Carthage see n. 49.

⁶⁷⁹ *Aed.* VI.5.8-9.

Prima, of stoas and baths, and of a monastery.⁶⁸⁰ Procopius thus attributes to Justinian the building of all the typical features of a Roman city, and justifies the renaming of the city as Carthago Justiniana,⁶⁸¹ a name which is likely to have been connected with the re-establishment of Carthage as a Roman centre of power.⁶⁸²

Archaeological evidence suggests that Procopius offers a relatively accurate account of the building program undertaken at Carthage after the Roman capture of the city. That refortification, in the form of the re-cutting of a ditch surrounding the city wall, was carried out at Carthage in 533 or later seems to be clear from the archaeological record.⁶⁸³ Furthermore, the whole of the Byrsa hill (the Carthaginian citadel) is likely to have been fortified during this period.⁶⁸⁴ Archaeological evidence for the other building projects which Procopius claims were undertaken at Carthage under Justinian is less clear, but his general points appear to be broadly correct, if somewhat exaggerated. The location of the baths noted by Procopius remains uncertain, but his reference to their construction has legitimately been interpreted as a reference to the restoration of the Antonine baths,⁶⁸⁵ which is otherwise known to have occurred in the 6th century;⁶⁸⁶ while the chapel to the Theotokos has been identified within the Vandal palace on the Byrsa hill.⁶⁸⁷ Identification of the fortified monastery is uncertain. It has variously been identified with the transformation of the judicial basilica into a fortified church and with Koudiat el-Hobsia, both of which were in use in the 6th century, although neither can

⁶⁸⁰ *Aed.* VI.5.9–11.

⁶⁸¹ *Aed.* VI.5.8; *J. Nov.* 131.4.

⁶⁸² Carthage may not, admittedly, have been renamed immediately following its capture. Given that the city is first attested as Carthago Justiniana in *J. Nov.* 131, which was promulgated in 545, it may have been renamed following the suppression of the first period of Berber hostilities (534–5) or after the Aurès campaign (540) (see sections 5.2 and 5.4).

⁶⁸³ H. Hurst, 'Excavations at Carthage 1976: Third interim report,' *AJ* 57 (1977), 255–7; idem *et al.*, *Excavations at Carthage: The British Mission, Volume I,1* (Sheffield, 1984), 41. The cutting of the ditch is noted by Procopius (*Bella* III.23.19), but no explicit archaeological evidence has been found for the improvements to the walls which he also mentions (*Bella* III.23.20).

⁶⁸⁴ Leone, *Changing Townscapes*, 174.

⁶⁸⁵ Y. Thébert, *Thermes romains d'Afrique du Nord et leur contexte Méditerranéen* (Rome, 2003), 424–5.

⁶⁸⁶ A. Lézine, *Carthage-Utique: Études d'architecture et d'urbanisme* (Paris, 1968), 67–73; Leone, *Changing Townscapes*, 171.

⁶⁸⁷ Lézine, *Carthage-Utique*, 177–80; Leone, *Changing Townscapes*, 173.

be described as being on the coast, as implied by Procopius' account.⁶⁸⁸ The shrine to Saint Prima remains unidentified. But there is other clear evidence of church building and expansion during the 6th century.⁶⁸⁹

Outside of Carthage, Procopius also attests to building work at some thirty-three African cities during Justinian's reign in the *De Aedificiis*.⁶⁹⁰ However, with the exception of his descriptions of Leptis Magna and Sabratha,⁶⁹¹ these references are to the generic construction or improvement of city fortifications, ostensibly to secure the security of the region against the threat posed by the Berber tribes.⁶⁹² While the excavation necessary to confirm Procopius' claims is, in many cases, lacking, there is no specific reason to doubt that the defences of individual African cities should have been improved during this period. After all, the period following the Roman conquest was one which saw ever increasing raids against the Romano-African population.⁶⁹³ However, the assumption that such construction work should be interpreted as an imperially directed, defensive, building program, coordinated by the Roman administration in Africa, is open to question.

Durliat, in *Les dédicaces d'ouvrages de défense dans l'Afrique byzantine*, identifies twenty-four building inscriptions from Africa which can be firmly attributed to Justinian's reign – either because they include the name of the emperor (and often the empress), and/or because they bear the name of the Praetorian Prefect and *magister militum*, Solomon⁶⁹⁴ – from sixteen

⁶⁸⁸ Pringle, *Defence*, 176; Leone, *Changing Townscapes*, 173–4

⁶⁸⁹ Leone, *Changing Landscapes*, 174–7.

⁶⁹⁰ These cities are listed in Appendix I. See also Map VII. Not all of book VI of the *De Aedificiis* relates to the Prefecture of Africa, since Procopius also discusses Egypt, Libya Inferior and Pentapolis, which were part of the Prefecture of Oriens. On Procopius' description of Libya Inferior and Pentapolis see J. Reynolds, 'Byzantine buildings, Justinian and Procopius in Libya Inferior and Libya Superior,' *AnTard* 8 (2000), 169–76.

⁶⁹¹ In addition to the construction of fortification, Procopius notes the construction of a church to the Theotokos, four other churches and public baths, as well as the reconstruction of the Severan palace at Leptis Magna (*Aed.* VI.4.4–5, 11); and a church at Sabratha (*Aed.* VI.4.13).

⁶⁹² See pp. 55–7.

⁶⁹³ See Chapter 5.

⁶⁹⁴ Durliat, *Les dédicaces*, nos. 1–24. No. 24 does not, admittedly, refer to the emperor *per se*, but describes the city of Zabi as *nova iustiniana*.

different sites.⁶⁹⁵ Many of these inscriptions are, however, both no longer extant and heavily reconstructed, and the inclusion of the names Justinian and Solomon are often reconstructed based purely on the assumption that the inscriptions must be Justinianic.

While three inscriptions from Thamugadi, which are identical copies of the same text, date the restoration of the city's walls to the thirteenth year of Justinian's reign (539/540),⁶⁹⁶ the other building inscriptions lack explicit indications of date. Those inscriptions which refer to Solomon, with the exception of that at Gadiaufala, which notes that Solomon was in his second prefecture,⁶⁹⁷ could conceivably refer to either of the two periods in which he served as Praetorian Prefect and *magister militum* – 535 to 536 and 539 to 544.⁶⁹⁸ Nevertheless, the twenty-four inscriptions have usually been dated to Solomon's second prefecture (539–544), on the basis that they reflect a deliberate fortification policy, and should therefore be viewed as a group, rather than divided between the two prefectures.⁶⁹⁹ Furthermore, since the Thamugadi inscriptions refer to Solomon as *patricius*,⁷⁰⁰ inscriptions which include this title have been assumed to date from the same period.⁷⁰¹ However, while the Thamugadi inscriptions provide a *terminus ante quem* for Solomon being granted the title of *patricius*, there is no means of establishing a *terminus post quem*, and Solomon could well have been granted the title during the course of his first prefecture.⁷⁰² Furthermore, many of the inscriptions, which are very fragmentary, have had the entire word *patricius* restored, on the assumption that it ought to

⁶⁹⁵ Bordj Hellal, Calama, Madaura, Theveste, Thagura, Aïn-Bou-Driès, Capsa, Sufes, Cululis, Bagai, Gadiaufala, Ksar Belezma, Thamugadi, Tigisis, Sitifis and Zabi. See Map VI.

⁶⁹⁶ Durliat, *Les dédicaces*, nos. 19–21.

⁶⁹⁷ Durliat, *Les dédicaces*, no. 17.

⁶⁹⁸ For these dates see pp. 136–7, 201, 209, 219–20.

⁶⁹⁹ This view was originally put forward by Durliat, *Les dédicaces*, 97 n. 13.

⁷⁰⁰ Durliat, *Les dédicaces*, nos. 19–21.

⁷⁰¹ *PLRE* IIIB, 1173. Seven inscriptions (Durliat, *Les dédicaces*, nos. 3–5, 16–17, 19–21) explicitly list the title *patricius*, while it is plausibly reconstructed in two others (nos. 2 and 18).

⁷⁰² Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 74 n. 5, who suggests that the title might have been awarded following the military victories of 535. This argument is followed by Stein, *Histoire*, II, 321.

be present.⁷⁰³ The arguments for assigning all the building inscriptions to Solomon's second prefecture are thus somewhat circular.

Four inscriptions from the *corpus* can be firmly dated to Solomon's second prefecture.⁷⁰⁴ These four are all from Numidia, which is unsurprising, given Solomon's campaign in the region in 540.⁷⁰⁵ Some other inscriptions may also date to this period. However, logically, an imperially directed building program would have been better launched in the initial period of optimism following the Roman conquest of Africa, rather than in a period of active conflict, when resources would be required elsewhere.

The early 540s have often been assumed to have been a period of peace and prosperity, in which a building program could reasonably have been accomplished.⁷⁰⁶ However, this view is largely a product of Procopius' neglect of Africa in the *Bella* during this period. Having concluded his assessment of Solomon's campaigns in the Aurès massif with the optimistic assessment:

And on account of this, all the Libyans, who were subjects of the Romans, having obtained a secure peace and the prudent and very wise rule of Solomon, and finally having no thought of hostility in their minds, seemed to be the most fortunate of all men,⁷⁰⁷

⁷⁰³ Durliat, *Les dédicaces*, nos. 8 and 12 restore the title in its entirety, while no. 13 restores it entirely based on the presence of the letter α and no. 14 entirely on the basis of the case ending o.

⁷⁰⁴ Durliat, *Les dédicaces*, nos. 17, 19, 20, 21. Aside from the three inscriptions from Thamugadi, one from Gadiaufala notes describes Solomon as: praetorian prefect of Africa for the second time [BIS PREFECTO [PR]AETORIORUM AFRICAE...].

⁷⁰⁵ See section 5.4.

⁷⁰⁶ Bury, *History*, II, 145. Pringle, *Defence*, 29, suggests that Corippus' claim that: Flourishing, our earth, having been lightened, felt these joys for ten full years... (*Ioh.* III.289–90) [florens haec gaudia sensit/ nostra decem tellus plenos laxata per annos...], should be similarly be interpreted as reference to a golden age under Solomon's governance. However, the emphasis is slightly different. While Procopius' refers specifically to a brief period of peace following Solomon's campaigns in the Aurès, and stresses the role of Solomon as governor; Corippus refers to the entire period of Roman rule in Africa, prior to the outbreak of the Berber hostilities in 544, stressing the importance of Roman rule, generally, in Africa, during a period in which the Africa population was becoming disillusioned. Cf. *Ioh.* III.320–36, which presents similar themes in a more extended form.

⁷⁰⁷ *Bella* IV.20.33: [καὶ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ Λίβυες ἅπαντες, οἱ Ῥωμαίων κατήκοοι ἦσαν, εἰρήνης ἀσφαλοῦς τυχόντες καὶ τῆς Σολόμωνος ἀρχῆς σώφρονός τε καὶ λίαν μετρίας, ἕξ τε τὸ λοιπὸν πολέμιον ἐν νῷ οὐδὲν ἔχοντες, ἔδοξαν εὐδαιμονέστατοι εἶναι ἀνθρώπων ἀπάντων.]

he only resumes his narrative of the Roman campaigns against the Berbers with events four years later.⁷⁰⁸ He thus implies that Solomon's second prefecture was so successful that Africa was entirely at peace. However, Procopius' myopia as a source should certainly be considered in this context. Between 540 and 543, Procopius' own interests, and thus the focus of his history, were elsewhere. He appears to have been in Italy between 537 and 540, and in Constantinople between 540 and 542, and the sections of the *Bella* which relate to this period reflect these geographical foci.⁷⁰⁹ Consequently, Procopius entirely fails to mention the major extraneous influence on events in Africa in the early 540s – the outbreak of plague – which, regardless of the scale of its impact, must surely have acted as a deterrent to a large scale infrastructure project during this period.⁷¹⁰

Procopius' claim, that Solomon's building program in Africa was funded by wealth which the Romans seized from the Berber leader, Iaudas, following the capture of Toumar, during the campaign in the Aurès massif in 540, should certainly be treated with caution.⁷¹¹ The sack of a single position, even a large and wealthy town (which Toumar was not), would have been extremely unlikely to have funded a large scale provincial building program.⁷¹²

⁷⁰⁸ *Bella* IV.21.1: But in the fourth year after this, all our blessings became the opposite.

[Τετάρτῳ δὲ ὕστερον ἐνιαυτῷ ἅπαντα σοφίσι ἀγαθὰ ἐς τοῦναντίον γενέσθαι ξυνέπεσεν.]

⁷⁰⁹ *PLRE* III B, 1061–2.

⁷¹⁰ On the outbreak of plague in Africa see Victor of Tunnuna, 130; Ps. Zachariah, X.9 (trans. Brooks & Hamilton, *The Syriac Chronicle known as that of Zachariah of Mitylene*, 313); *Ioh.* III.343–92. Based on Victor of Tunnuna's account, it has generally been accepted that the plague reached Africa in 542. See J.-N. Biraben & J. Le Goff, 'La peste dans le Haut Moyen Age,' *Annales (HSS)* 24 (1969), 1494; J.-N. Biraben, *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens* (Paris, 1975) 27; P. Sarris, 'The Justinianic plague: origins and effects,' *Continuity and Change* 17 (2002), 170. D. Stathakopoulos, *Famine and Pestilence in the Late Roman and Early Byzantine Empire* (Aldershot, 2004), 115, is still more specific, and suggests that the plague must have reached Africa at the end of 542. *Contra* P. Horden, 'The Mediterranean plague in the Age of Justinian,' in M. Maas, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge, 2005), 135–6, 157 n.7, who argues that the plague first appeared in Africa in 543, although he offers no specific evidence to this effect beyond the (inaccurate) claim that he has followed Stathakopoulos's chronology.

⁷¹¹ *Bella* IV.20.28–9. On the Aurès campaign see section 5.4.

⁷¹² *Contra* Stein, *Histoire*, II, 328; and Pringle, *Defence*, 29; who assume that a building program could not have begun until these funds were acquired in 540.

Furthermore, the period between 540 and 544 is unlikely to have been one in which the Eastern Roman Empire was channeling significant financial resources towards Africa in order to support a building campaign. This period had seen the resumption of warfare on the eastern frontier while the empire remained committed in Italy, and resources were almost undoubtedly overextended. Were a building campaign to have occurred during this period, it would have to have been self-supported by the African economy.⁷¹³ However, the very evidence of the mutiny of 536, and the ongoing threat of mutiny from within the Roman army in Africa in subsequent years suggests that, even if the region's economy were prospering, resources were simply not reaching the administration at Carthage.⁷¹⁴

Indeed, the significance of information provided by these inscriptions concerning an imperially directed program of fortification in Africa is also questionable. Sites at which there is epigraphic evidence attesting to construction or reconstruction, since a building inscription will typically name the emperor, confirming that the construction occurred under the auspices of the Roman imperial government, have generally been assumed to be 'official' fortifications. Thus, plotting sites from which Justinianic building inscriptions are known has been used as a means of gaining an impression of the extent of Roman control in the region. However, the role of local initiative in the maintenance of fortifications should certainly not be overlooked.⁷¹⁵ There is, after all, ample evidence in the written sources for individual African cities acting in their own defence when under siege,⁷¹⁶ and the construction and maintenance of fortifications is but a step further. Furthermore, it is clear that, as had been the case during the Vandal period,⁷¹⁷ local elites

⁷¹³ Pringle, *Defence*, 90.

⁷¹⁴ See pp. 200–1.

⁷¹⁵ Reynolds, 'Byzantine buildings,' 176, has argued, in relation to the provinces of Libya Inferior and Pentapolis, that the role of private building initiatives, both civic and military, has probably been underestimated, and this point is equally applicable to the provinces of the Prefecture of Africa.

⁷¹⁶ For example, the actions of the citizens of Sullectum when approached by the Roman army in 533 (*Bella* III.16.9–11); and of the citizens of Laribus when besieged by the Berbers in 544 (*Bella* IV.22.18–20).

⁷¹⁷ Clover, 'The symbiosis of Romans and Vandals in Africa,' 60.

continued to exercise a considerable degree of control within their individual cities during the Justinianic period, particularly in respect of local expenditure.⁷¹⁸

The construction of unofficial fortifications was illegal, since such defences did not fall within the Roman imperial government's defensive strategy, and some have argued that it would not have occurred unless the state had lost control of the provinces.⁷¹⁹ This is undoubtedly the case, but it need not imply that there were no unofficial fortifications. The possibility that the administration at Carthage lacked significant control beyond the capital and its hinterland, particularly in view of the otherwise limited evidence for imperial control in the African provinces, should not be dismissed.⁷²⁰ The reality may have been that no prefecture-wide strategy coordinated from Carthage, let alone from Constantinople, existed. Rather, smaller scale strategies for individual provinces, or even districts, were dictated by local administrations.

While there is not explicit epigraphic evidence for the construction of fortifications by local initiative in Africa during Justinian's reign, evidence does appear to exist from the reign of Tiberius II (574–582).⁷²¹ An inscription erected at Aïn Ksar in Numidia states:

+ Inper(erantibus) d(o)m(i)n(is) n(o)st(ris) Fl(avi)o Costantino et Anas/tasie,
p(issimis) Agu{s}t{is}, t{e}m{p}(oribus) Ge{n}(a)d(ii), m(agistri) m(i)l(itum)/
Afr(i)ca(e), auxiliante D(e)o perf{ici}e(n)t(ibus)(?)/ hic k(a)st(rum)
consent[i]e(n)t(es) sibi cives istius loci/ p{r}ovid[e] de suis pr(o)p(riis)
laborib{u}(s) fecerunt +⁷²²

During the reign of our masters Flavius Constantine and Anastasia, most pious *augusti*, in the time of Gennadius, *magister militum per Africa* with the aid of God [granted] to the executors, the inhabitants of this place, having

⁷¹⁸ J. Durliat, 'Les finances municipales africaines de Constantin aux Aghlabides,' *Actes de IIe congrès d'histoire et de civilisation du Maghreb (Novembre 1980)*, 378–85.

⁷¹⁹ Pringle, *Defence*, 94–6.

⁷²⁰ See pp. 127–8, 133–5.

⁷²¹ Durliat, *Les dédicaces*, no. 29.

⁷²² Durliat, *Les dédicaces*, 73–5. The reading of the inscription is, unfortunately, contested. *Contra* A. Cherbonneau, 'Inscriptions découvertes dans la province de Constantine,' *Annuaire de la société archéologique de la province de Constantine* 6 (1862), 129; Courtois, *Les Vandales*, App. 2 no.168; and Pringle, *Defence*, Gaz. CB no. 31. *Cf.* Durliat, *Les dédicaces*, no. 30, from Ksar Lema in Byzacena, which dates from the reign of Maurice (582–602).

agreed among themselves, prudently built this *castrum* at their own labours.⁷²³

This is followed by a list of names, presumably those local notables responsible for the construction.⁷²⁴ The inscription does not dispense with the traditional mention of the emperor (and, in this case, empress) and the local representative of the Roman administration, but their acknowledgement appears to be somewhat perfunctory, functioning largely as a dating formula and crediting neither the emperor nor the *magister militum* with any role in the construction. It is therefore entirely plausible that not all inscriptions naming the emperor and his representative (whether the *magister militum* or Praetorian Prefect) should be regarded as imperial building projects, particularly given that no extant building inscriptions from Africa name the emperor as financial benefactor.

The mention of the emperor (and empress) as part of the dating formula in the building inscription from Aïn Ksar can perhaps be compared with the dating formula employed in the Bir Trough ostraca - wooden tablets and ostraca which were discovered near Bir Trough, in the eastern foothills of the Aurès massif.⁷²⁵ The ostraca, which record the produce of a local estate, are dated according to the regnal years of the Vandal king, Gunthamund (484–496), using the Latin formula *anno N Kartaginis domni nostri regis Gunthamundi*,⁷²⁶ and have traditionally been accepted as evidence of a degree of Vandal political influence, if not outright authority, in the region.⁷²⁷ However, it is perhaps more accurate to say that the lands in which the Bir Trough ostraca were found continued to be farmed by a Romano-African population⁷²⁸ – albeit one which may well, by the late fifth century, have fallen under the influence of a local Berber

⁷²³ My translation, based on Durliat's French translation (*Les dédicaces*, 72).

⁷²⁴ *Contra* Shaw, 'The structure of local society in the early Maghrib,' 41, argues that the names listed represent a local council made up of Berber tribal elders, on the basis that the named listed are 'African' rather than Roman.

⁷²⁵ J.-P. Bonnal & P.-A. Février, 'Ostraka de la région de Bir Trough,' *Bulletin d'Archéologie Algérienne* 2 (1966–1967), 239–49.

⁷²⁶ Bonnal & Février, 'Ostraka de la région de Bir Trough,' 247.

⁷²⁷ *Ibid*, 249; A. Ben Abed & N. Duval, 'Carthage, la capitale du royaume et les villes de Tunisie à l'époque vandale,' in G. Ripoll & J. M. Gurt, eds., *Sedes regiae (ann. 400–800)* (Barcelona, 2000), 175–6.

⁷²⁸ Clover, 'The symbiosis of Romans and Vandals in Africa,' 60.

leader.⁷²⁹ The population which adopted the dating formula used in the Bir Trough ostraca existed between two different power structures, and the continuity of the Vandal dating system in an area outside direct Vandal control might be interpreted as either practicality, or the desire to maintain connections with both communities. The use of Roman imperial dating formulae in building inscriptions in Africa should thus not be interpreted as clear evidence for Roman authority in the region.

This being the case, considerable care must be taken in speaking of a defensive building program. While it is certainly possible to outline lines of fortifications on a map, not all of these fortifications would have been imperially commissioned, and intended to function within an imperial strategy of defence. Equally, it is essential to recognise that the literary and archaeological sources for fortification in Africa provide different kinds of information, and that any attempt to reconcile them, in order to reveal a coherent defensive strategy in Africa, can only result in inaccuracy.

The establishment of civil and military administration in Africa was undoubtedly the product of careful planning on the part of the Roman imperial government and, initially at least, the commitment of significant resources. However, the administration, as envisaged from Constantinople, was not as effective as intended in practice, not least because territorial expansion does not appear to have occurred as rapidly as expected in the period between the promulgation of the legislation and its implementation, resulting in a high level of bureaucracy at Carthage, and in surrounding regions, but limited ability to impose regional policies on the prefecture as a whole. As a result, at the local level, communities continued to function as they had previously, in their own interests. The fragmentation, which had almost certainly begun

⁷²⁹ On the increasing Berber encroachment in the southern areas of the Aurès massif in the 480s see pp. 161–2.

during the Vandal period, had significant implications for the Roman administration's attempts to counter the threats posed by the Berber tribes.

Chapter 4: Romans, Vandals and Berbers to 534

4.1 Introduction

In January 535, Justinian promulgated *Novella* 1. The legislation is primarily concerned with the reform of inheritance law. However, in the preface, the *novella* offers some explanation (albeit rhetorical) as to why the emperor, at this specific time, should have chosen to begin a process of legislative reform. It states that, while Justinian had previously been occupied with other concerns, all of them relating to the Eastern Roman Empire's relations with peoples outside its borders, he now had the time to devote to the demands of his people:

Since the Persians are quiet, the Vandals, together with the Berbers, are obedient, the Carthaginians also have received their former freedom, and the Tzani now, for the first time, may be considered among our subjects, being under the Roman state...⁷³⁰

Although it is not explicitly stated, *Novella* 1 implies that the emperor's foreign policy obligations, as set out above, had been fulfilled. The statement was undoubtedly intended to fulfil a propaganda function, advertising the scope of imperial achievements. Nevertheless, its claims cannot be entirely dismissed. The Eastern Roman Empire had indeed concluded a peace agreement with Sasanian Persia in 532 and had received the surrender of the last Vandal king, Gelimer, in early 534. And the city of Carthage was once again under Roman control.⁷³¹

On the other hand, *Novella* 1's statement concerning the obedience of the Berbers would have been read with incredulous disbelief by the inhabitants of the newly conquered Roman provinces of Africa. Despite an initial diplomatic overture by some of the Berber leaders, in late

⁷³⁰ *J. Nov. 1. pref.:* [... quatenus Persae quidem quiescant, Vandali vero cum Mauris oboediant, Carchedonii autem antiquam recipientes habeant libertatem, et Tzani nunc primum sub Romanorum facti republica inter subiectos habeantur.../ ... ὅπως ἂν Πέρσαι μὲν ἡρεμοῖεν, Βανδίλοι δὲ σὺν Μαυρουσίοις ὑπακούοιεν, Καρχηδόνιοι δὲ τὴν παλαιὰν ἀπολαβόντες ἔχοιεν ἐλευθερίαν, Τζάνοι τε νῦν πρῶτον ὑπὸ τὴν Ῥωμαίων γενόμενοι πολιτείαν ἐν ὑπηκόοις τελοῖεν...] *Novella* 1 was promulgated bilingually.

⁷³¹ See n. 49.

533,⁷³² the provinces of Byzacena and Numidia had suffered from ongoing Berber raids since the autumn of 534 and, at the time the *novella* was promulgated, in January 535, the Roman army was yet to win any significant military victory against them.⁷³³

The inclusion of the Berbers in the preface to *Novella* 1 is somewhat puzzling. Certainly, the *novella's* claims regarding the Berbers can be interpreted as propaganda and wishful thinking on the part of the Roman imperial government, in much the same manner as the emperor's declaration of victory over the Vandals was proclaimed prior to their surrender.⁷³⁴ Furthermore, the inclusion of an additional non-Roman people in the *novella's* list of subjugated peoples served the literary purpose of enhancing the scale of the emperor's foreign policy achievements. However, the specific choice of the Berbers is interesting. The author of the *novella* must have felt, at the beginning of 535, that there was propaganda value attached to their subjugation – that is, like the Persians and the Vandals, the Berbers were recognised as a legitimate adversary – a view which is entirely contrary to the argument that the Romans failed to recognise the Berbers as a threat.⁷³⁵ The basis of Roman-Berber relations in the 530s thus requires a reassessment.

Unfortunately, any attempt to reconstruct the position of the Berbers *vis-à-vis* first the Vandals, and then the Romans, up to the Roman victory at the battle of Tricamarum, in mid-December 533, is severely hampered by the limitations of the source material.⁷³⁶ The Berbers left no written accounts of their own history, and they are rarely mentioned by Greek and Latin writers prior to the end of the 5th century.

⁷³² See p. 173.

⁷³³ For the date of the beginning of the raids see p. 191.

⁷³⁴ *I. Const. Imperatoriam* pref.; *D. Const. Tanta/Δέδωκεν* pref. and 23.

⁷³⁵ *Contra* Y. Modéran, 'La découverte des Maures: réflexions sur la reconquête byzantine de l'Afrique en 533,' *CT* 155–6 (1991), 211–3; and *idem*, *Les Maures*, 573–8, 583–92, who argues that the profound failure of Roman-Berber relations in the 530s was the result of a complete ignorance of, and, indeed, indifference towards, the Berber tribes by both the Roman imperial government and its military commanders in Africa.

⁷³⁶ For the date of the battle of Tricamarum see n. 84.

Furthermore, the major narrative sources for the political history of Africa during the Vandal period are Procopius' *Bella* and Victor of Vita's *Historia*. As has been discussed in section 2.3, Procopius' discussion of Vandal history is highly selective, and appears to be primarily intended to justify Justinian's decision to invade Africa in 533.⁷³⁷ For 5th century history, for which his sources are unknown, Procopius focuses on the uncivilized behaviour of the Vandals, drawing on the *topos* of the barbarian, and their oppression of the Romano-African population; while for events of the early 6th century, concerning which he may have had access to official documents, his focus is on presenting a sympathetic portrait of the Vandal king Hilderic, in order to stress the illegitimacy of Gelimer's coup, and on presenting Gelimer as a tyrant.⁷³⁸ It is therefore unsurprising that the Berbers rarely feature in Procopius' narrative of Vandal history. Their relations with the Vandals rarely elucidate his literary agenda. Similarly, for Victor of Vita, whose primary subject matter is the persecution of Nicene Christians by the Vandals kings, the Berbers are, for the most part, incidental to his narrative.

And, beyond the obvious problem – that the contemporary sources are only superficially interested in the Berbers during the Vandal period – there is also a problem of interpretation. The sources refer only to 'Berbers' (Μαυρούσιοι in Greek or *Mauri* in Latin), and provide no means of determining whether their statements are applicable to the Berber tribes generally (as has often been assumed), or only to specific groups.

4.2 Vandals and Berbers

Before attempting to assess Roman-Berber relations immediately following the Roman conquest of Africa, it is first necessary to consider the *status quo* at the time of the Roman

⁷³⁷ See p. 84.

⁷³⁸ See pp. 84–7.

invasion – that is, the nature of Vandal-Berber relations. This subject would itself merit further study, but here an overview of the known facts will suffice.⁷³⁹

The sources note two episodes which may provide information concerning the nature of Vandal-Berber relations during the reign of the first Vandal king of Africa, Gaiseric (428–477).

In 455, the Vandals launched an attack against Rome, breaking the peace treaty agreed with the Western Roman Empire in 442, which they probably regarded as void following the death of the Western Roman emperor Valentinian III.⁷⁴⁰ In reference to this campaign, Procopius notes that:

And the names of the Alans and of all the other barbarians, except the Berbers, were (?)included in the name of the Vandals. Then, once Valentinian was dead, Gaiseric, having won over the Berbers, every year, at the beginning of spring, made invasions into Sicily and Italy...;⁷⁴¹

Berber involvement in the campaign is also attested by Priscus, who wrote as a contemporary in the 5th century:

Since Gaiseric no longer kept the treaty having been set down with Majorian, he sent a multitude of Vandals and Berbers to ravage Italy and Sicily...⁷⁴²

These statements certainly indicate contact between the Vandals and the Berbers, but they need not be interpreted, as has sometimes been the case, as evidence that the Berbers were obligated to provide the Vandals with military support – the possibility that they attest to no more than Berber mercenaries serving in the Vandal army cannot be dismissed.⁷⁴³ Indeed, perhaps the most significant aspect of these references is the fact that neither writer provides any indication

⁷³⁹ The only recent study specifically devoted to the question of Vandal-Berber relations is that of Modéran, “Le plus délicat des peuples et le plus malheureux”, 213–25.

⁷⁴⁰ See n. 394.

⁷⁴¹ *Bella* III.5.21–2: [τὰ δὲ τῶν Ἀλανῶν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων βαρβάρων ὀνόματα, πλὴν Μαυρουσίων, ἐς τὸ τῶν Βανδύλων ἅπαντα ἀπεκρίθη. τότε δὲ Γιζέριχος Μαυρουσίους προσποιησάμενος, ἐπειδὴ Βανλεντινιανὸς ἐτελεύτησεν, ἀνὰ πᾶν ἔτος ἦρι ἀρχομένῳ ἕς τε Σικελίαν καὶ Ἰταλίαν ἐσβολὰς ἐποιεῖτο...] ἀπεκρίθη cannot, however, be correct, as it implies exclusion, which is clearly not the meaning intended here.

⁷⁴² Priscus, frag. 38.1 (ed. Blockley, 341): [ὅτι ὁ Γεζέριχος οὐκ ἔτι ταῖς πρὸς Μαυρουσιανὸν τεθείσας σπονδαῖς ἐμμένων Βανδύλων καὶ Μαυρουσίων πλῆθος ἐπὶ δηώσει τῆς Ἰταλίας καὶ Σικελίας ἔπεμπεν...] Cf. Paul the Deacon, *Hist. Rom.* XIV.16.

⁷⁴³ *Contra* Modéran, “Le plus délicat des peuples et le plus malheureux”, 218, who interprets *Bella* III.5.21–2 as evidence for a formal alliance.

that the Berbers were ever politically subordinate to the Vandals. Rather, Procopius employs the verb προσποιεῖσθαι, meaning ‘to win the support of’, which suggests that the Vandals were attempting to cultivate the Berbers as allies, rather than to subjugate them.

A more formal arrangement between the Vandal kingdom and the Berber tribes is suggested by the *Historia* of Victor of Vita. While this text does not mention Berbers serving with the Vandal army, it does note, in reference to the Vandal attack on Rome in 442, that:

When this multitude of captives [ie. those captured during the sack of Rome] reached the shore of Africa, the Vandals and the Berbers, dividing the vast mass of people...⁷⁴⁴

Furthermore, Victor of Vita’s work attests that cooperation between Vandals and Berbers was not restricted to military campaigns. The *Historia* notes, in reference to Nicene Christians being exiled from Africa following the arrival of the Arian Vandals, that:

The king [Gaiseric] immediately decreed that those who were to be banished ought to be sent to a pagan king of the Berbers, whose name was Capsur.⁷⁴⁵

And it is clear that the practice of exiling Nicene Christians to the territories of the Berbers continued under Gaiseric’s successors, as it is also attested during the persecution undertaken by Huneric in 484.⁷⁴⁶ These episodes suggest that some kind of formal relationship must have existed between the Vandal kingdom and at least one (unidentified) Berber tribe. However, the precise nature of this relationship remains unclear.

The relationship between the Vandals and the Berbers during the reign of Gaiseric has often been interpreted as being akin to the Roman adoption of Berber leaders as client-rulers, a practice which had been employed in Africa from the days of the Roman Republic until the loss of the region to the Vandals.⁷⁴⁷ On this basis, the Berber tribes, while not formally part of the

⁷⁴⁴ Victor of Vita, I.25: [Quae dum multitudo captivitatis Africanum attingeret litus, dividentes Wandali et Mauri ingentem populi quantitatem...]

⁷⁴⁵ Victor of Vita, I.35: [Decernit statim rex cuidam gentili regi Maurorum, cui nomen inerat Capsur, relegandos debere transmitti.] Nothing further is known concerning Capsur. See *PLRE* II, 260.

⁷⁴⁶ Victor of Vita, II.26–8

⁷⁴⁷ For discussions of the Roman Empire’s use of client rulers in Africa prior to the Vandal period see D. Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King: The Character of the Client Kingship* (London, 1984), 28–9; G.

Vandal kingdom, were nevertheless politically subordinate to it. While the Vandal kingdom would presumably have had some responsibilities towards its clients (like the Eastern Roman Empire ostensibly did towards its own clients), the relationship would largely have been defined by the obligations of the Berber tribes, as the subordinate parties. Based on the Roman model, these obligations could easily have included receiving those deemed politically undesirable by the Vandals and the provision of troops in a *quasi foederate* arrangement, consistent with the written sources on Vandal-Berber relations outlined above.⁷⁴⁸ Indeed, Procopius' claim that some Berber leaders had been invested with the insignia of Roman client-rulers by the Vandal kings might be seen to lend support to this interpretation.⁷⁴⁹

Alternatively, the relationship between the Vandals and the Berbers may be regarded as one of greater equality, potentially with formal treaty arrangements, under which the Berbers could be requested to provide military aid and were entrusted, rather than inflicted, with the responsibility for political and religious exiles. Such a relationship might have been brought about by the Vandals' recognition that they needed to maintain good relations with their increasingly powerful Berber neighbours.⁷⁵⁰

Either interpretation of Vandal-Berber relations can be reconciled with the limited written evidence. Thus, one's interpretation of the relationship between the Vandals and the Berber tribes during the reign of Gaiseric is heavily dependent on one's understanding of Roman relations with the Berbers, both before and after the Vandal period, and on the degree of continuity of Roman customs which one perceives in the early years of the Vandal kingdom. And, given the lack of explicit evidence, it is almost impossible to produce a definitive

Camps, 'Rex gentium maurorum et romanorum: recherches sur les royaumes de Maurétanie des VIe et VIIe siècles,' *AntAfr* 20 (1984), 183-218; T. Kotula, 'Firmus, fils du Nubel: était-il usurpateur ou roi des Maures?,' *ActaAntHung* 17 (1970), 137-46; D. Lengrand, 'Le limes interne de Maurétanie Césarienne au IVe siècle et la famille de Nubel,' in A. Rousselle, ed., *Frontières terrestres, frontières célestres dans l'antiquité* (Perpignan, 1995), 143-61.

⁷⁴⁸ This is the view of Vandal-Berber relations presented by Modéran, *Les Maures*, 543-4.

⁷⁴⁹ *Bella* III.25.6. The significance of this passage will be discussed in greater detail on pp. 173-81.

⁷⁵⁰ This interpretation is suggested by Merrills & Miles, *The Vandals*, 128.

interpretation. Indeed, a relationship between the dominant Vandal kingdom and the subordinate Berber tribes may have gradually shifted towards a relationship of increasing political equality. Certainly, as one traces the interaction between the Vandals and the Berbers in the late 5th and early 6th century, there is every indication that the balance of power between the parties changed, with Vandal authority being progressively reduced.

Procopius suggests that the Berbers remained content with the political *status quo* until the reign of Gaiseric's successor, Huneric (477–484), at which time a change in the relationship between the Vandals and the Berbers occurred. Procopius notes that:

During this time, while Huneric was ruling the Vandals, there was no war against anyone, except the Berbers. For the Berbers, having remained quiet before this out of fear of Gaiseric, as soon as he was out of their way, both inflicted many evils on the Vandals and suffered them themselves,⁷⁵¹

and subsequently explains that the Berbers who revolted were those who dwelled on Mount Aurasium.⁷⁵² The first outright Berber revolt against Vandal rule in Africa appears to have coincided with Huneric's persecution of Nicene Christians in 484, and, given that the Aurès region was highly Romanised, and Christianised, prior to the Vandal conquest of Africa, there is every reason to assume a connection between the two events.⁷⁵³ The outcome was undoubtedly

⁷⁵¹ *Bella* III.8.1–2: [ἐπὶ τούτου Ὀνωρίχου Βανδύλων ἄρχοντος πόλεμος αὐτοῖς πρὸς οὐδένα ἀνθρώπων, ὅτι μὴ Μαυρουσίους, ἐγένετο. δέει γὰρ τῷ ἐκ Γιζερίχου ἡσυχάζοντες πρὸ τοῦ οἱ Μαυρούσιοι, ἐπειδὴ τάχιστα ἐκποδῶν αὐτοῖς ἐκεῖνος ἐγεγόνει, ἔδρασάν τε πολλὰ τοὺς Βανδύλους κακὰ καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔπαθον.]

⁷⁵² *Bella* III.8.5. The location of Mount Aurasium [τὸ ὄρος τὸ Αὐράσιον] is debated. Procopius does not appear to use the term to refer to the entirety of the Aurès massif region, given that he claims that Mount Aurasium could be circumvented in three days (*Bella* IV.13.23), and the Aurès massif extends c. 360 km (Desanges, 'Un témoignage peu connu,' 45, 47; Morizot, 'À propos des limites méridionales,' 155). Desanges, 'Un témoignage peu connu,' 47, suggests that Mount Aurasium must have been the part of the Aurès massif which extends to the south-west of Mascula (mod. Khenchela, Algeria). This is certainly a plausible identification, being the closest part of the Aurès massif to Roman controlled territory, and falling in the centre of the triangle formed by Toumar, Babosis, Bagai and Thamugadi, locations where the Roman army is attested during the subsequent campaign against Mount Aurasium in 540 (see section 5.4 and Map VIII). *Contra* Morizot, 'À propos des limites méridionales,' 156, who identifies Mount Aurasium was the Belezma Mountains (Algeria), further to the west.

⁷⁵³ Merrills & Miles, *The Vandals*, 127. On the Romanisation of the Aurès region see P. Morizot, 'Économie et société en Numidie meridionale: l'exemple de l'Aurès,' *L'Africa Romana* 8 (1991), 429–46; and idem, 'Vues nouvelles sur l'Aurès antique,' *CRAI* 123.2 (1979), 309–37.

significant – the revolt resulted in the emergence of an independent Berber polity in the Aurès massif.⁷⁵⁴ Procopius somewhat misleadingly (in respect of the Roman position) remarks that:

... they [the Berbers of Mount Aurasium] never again fell under the Vandals, since the Vandals were unable to carry out a war against the Berbers on a mountain both inaccessible and very steep,⁷⁵⁵

but glosses over the true significance of the events to his own narrative. The Aurès massif subsequently became a centre of resistance against the establishment of Roman authority in Africa half a century later.

From the reign of Huneric forward, hostilities between the Vandals and the Berber tribes appear to have escalated.⁷⁵⁶ In relation to the reign of Gunthamund (484–496), Procopius notes only that:

This Gunthamund fought against the Berbers in many engagements...,⁷⁵⁷

although the historian does present in greater detail the campaign waged during the reign of Thrasamund (496–523), against the Berbers of Tripolitania, led by Cabaon,⁷⁵⁸ in which these Berbers again appear to have been subjugated by the Vandals.⁷⁵⁹ And, finally, as has been discussed in detail in section 2.2, the reign of Hilderic (523–530/1) saw the capture of the Vandal city of Leptis Magna by one of the Berber tribes of Tripolitania,⁷⁶⁰ and the significant military defeat of the Vandals in Byzacena at the hands of the Berbers under the rule of Antalas⁷⁶¹ – circumstances which appear to have been sufficiently catastrophic to have precipitated Gelimer's coup against Hilderic.⁷⁶²

⁷⁵⁴ *Bella* III.8.5.

⁷⁵⁵ *Bella* III.8.5: [... οἱ οὐκέτι ὑπὸ Βανδίλοις ἐγένοντο, οὐ δυναμένων Βανδίων ἐν ὄρει δυσόδῳ τε καὶ ἀνάντει λίαν πόλεμον πρὸς Μαυρουσίους διενεγκεῖν.]

⁷⁵⁶ Modéran, *Les Maures*, 550.

⁷⁵⁷ *Bella* III.8.7: [οὗτος ὁ Γουνδαμοῦνδος πλείοσι μὲν πρὸς Μαυρουσίους ἐμαχέσατο ξυμβολαῖς...]

⁷⁵⁸ On Cabaon see *PLRE* II, 244.

⁷⁵⁹ *Bella* III.8.15–29.

⁷⁶⁰ *Aed.* VI.4.6.

⁷⁶¹ *Bella* III.9.3; *Ioh.* III.184–216; Malalas, XVIII.57. For a more detailed discussion of Antalas and the tribes he controlled see section 6.3.

⁷⁶² See pp. 78–80.

It is thus clear that a significant change occurred in the political geography of Africa in the 5th and early 6th centuries. However, at no point does Procopius, or any other historian who makes passing reference to Africa during this period, attempt to offer any explanation for the conflict between the Berbers and the Vandals. This is not altogether surprising. For Greek and Latin writers, the Berbers were simply barbarians, whose behaviour could be explained by that very fact. Their motivations required no further analysis. But, as a result, the literary sources are, in many respects, of little value in understanding the causes of the changes in Vandal-Berber relations, and thus the basis of Roman-Berber relations.

4.3 Epigraphic evidence

The establishment and consolidation of independent Berber polities within the frontiers of the former Roman provinces, in the late 5th and early 6th century, is well recognised, and has reasonably been explained as being a response to a power vacuum created by the gradual disintegration of former imperial power in the frontier regions.⁷⁶³ Logic suggests that this is correct, although there is little concrete evidence. However, the establishment of polities by the stronger Berber tribes surely did not only occur at the expense of the Vandal kingdom but also, one may suppose, at the expense of the smaller and politically weaker Berber tribes, whose territories would have been integrated into these polities. Thus, in order to understand the political transformation which occurred in Africa in the late 5th and early 6th century, it is necessary to give some consideration to the role played by inter-tribal politics.

Further development of this argument is difficult, given Procopius' general disinterest in the Berbers beyond their interactions with the Roman army in Africa, and the complete lack of written histories produced by the Berbers themselves. However, some further information concerning the internal politics of the Berber world may be derived from the epigraphic evidence – in particular, the so-called Arris and Altava inscriptions (named for their places of

⁷⁶³ Merrills & Miles, *The Vandals*, 125.

discovery) – which provide a unique Berber perspective on the politics of Africa in the late 5th and/or early 6th century.

The Arris inscription has been the subject of numerous, and diverse, studies in the past.⁷⁶⁴ Previous studies have largely focused on three distinct issues – the philological issues associated with the text, which will be given minimal attention here; attempts to identify those individuals named in the inscription with figures attested by Procopius, which have now been largely, and correctly, dismissed (see further below); and attempts to explain Roman-Berber relations, based on the apparently ‘Roman’ features of the text, and the degree of contact which this was believed to imply between the two peoples (see further below). With the exception of the recent study by Modéran, historical interpretations of the inscription have, in a sense, focused on the manner in which the text can be rendered consistent with our understanding of *Roman* history, rather than what it might suggest about *Berber* history. The value of the inscription as a source of information on the Berber tribes generally, and those of the Aurès massif more specifically, has not been fully appreciated.⁷⁶⁵

The Arris inscription consists of nine lines of text, inscribed on a limestone block 0.74 x 0.48 x 0.12m.⁷⁶⁶ It was discovered in 1942, and was first published in 1944, by Carcopino.⁷⁶⁷ Since this date, a number of significant emendations have been made to the reading, and the current accepted reading is:

D(is) M(anibus) S(acrum). Ego Masties dux/ annis LXGII et imp(erator) annis X (+) qui nun/ quam per juravi, neque fide(m)/ fregi neque de Romanos, neque/ de Mauros, et in bellu parui et in/ pace et adversus facta mea/ sic mecu(m) Deus egit bene./ Ego Vartaia hunc edificium cum fratrib(us) me/is feci, in quod erogavi sil(icas) centu(m).⁷⁶⁸

⁷⁶⁴ For a general overview of the secondary literature on the subject see Modéran, *Les Maures*, 400–8.

⁷⁶⁵ Thus, Modéran, *Les Maures*, 405.

⁷⁶⁶ J. Carcopino, ‘Un «empereur» maure inconnu d’après une inscription latine récemment découverte dans l’Aurès,’ *REA* 66 (1944), 95.

⁷⁶⁷ Carcopino, ‘Un «empereur» maure inconnu,’ 92–120.

⁷⁶⁸ This version of the text was first presented by P. Morizot, ‘Pour une nouvelle lecture de l’*elogium* de Masties,’ *AntAfr* 25 (1989), 274. Morizot’s reading has largely been followed subsequent discussions of the text, including the most recent, that of Modéran, *Les Maures*, 398–415. *Contra* J. Moorhead,

D.M.S. I, Masties, dux for 67 years and imperator for 10 years, + have never been foresworn, nor broken faith, either with the Romans or with the Berbers, and I obeyed God, in war as in peace, and for that, because of my conduct, God has favoured me. I, Vartaia, erected with my brothers this monument, for which I dispensed 100 siliquae.⁷⁶⁹

The inscription was discovered about 1500m south of Arris, a town in the Aurès massif, in Algeria.⁷⁷⁰ Given the location of the inscription, and the fact that Masties is a Berber name,⁷⁷¹ it has generally been inferred that Masties must have been a Berber chieftain who exercised control over a portion of the Aurès massif.⁷⁷² This argument will be accepted here, albeit with some reservations. It is certainly reasonable to suppose that an individual honoured in such a manner would have been known in the area in which his memorial was erected. However, such arguments assume that the inscription was discovered where it was originally erected, and this, unfortunately, is unclear.

The majority of the text of the inscription is presented as self-eulogy, narrated by Masties himself, in the first-person. In the penultimate line, however, while the text remains in the first-person, the speaker changes, allowing the donor of the inscription, Vartaia, to note his own involvement. Vartaia claims to have built an *edificium*. This seems to be an unlikely word to describe the inscription itself and might reasonably be expected to refer to a tomb.⁷⁷³ No such tomb has been identified at Arris (or, indeed, elsewhere) and, as a result, it has generally

The Roman Empire Divided, 400-700 (London, 2001), who accepts that Masties was *imperator* for forty years. For discussions of the various problems in reconstructing the text see Morizot, 'Pour une nouvelle lecture,' 271-4; J. Desanges, 'À propos de Masties, imperator barbère et chrétien,' *Ktema* 21 (1996), 183-8; Modéran, *Les Maures*, 398-401; P. Salama, 'Économie monétaire de l'Afrique du Nord dans l'Antiquité tardive,' *Bulletin archéologique des travaux historiques et scientifiques* n.s. 19B (1985), 198-9.

⁷⁶⁹ My translation, based on the French translation presented by Modéran, *Les Maures*, 399-400.

⁷⁷⁰ Carcopino, 'Un «empereur» maure inconnu,' 92.

⁷⁷¹ Desanges, 'À propos de Masties,' 184.

⁷⁷² See most recently, Modéran, *Les Maures*, 401. Masties has occasionally been identified as Mastigas, the Berber leader of Mauritania Caesariensis attested by Procopius in 535 (Morizot, 'Pour une nouvelle lecture,' 282-3). However, given that this identification is based solely on the similarities between the two names and that, in all likelihood, Masties died before the end of the 5th century, this argument should probably be dismissed.

⁷⁷³ Carcopino, 'Un «empereur» maure inconnu,' 98. Indeed, Salama, 'Économie monétaire du l'Afrique du nord,' 199, has argued that the inscription must have originally been attached to the tomb, and was removed at some later date

been accepted that the Arris inscription was intended as a cenotaph – a memorial to an individual buried elsewhere.⁷⁷⁴

Given the location of the Arris inscription, Vartaia must also be assumed to have had connections with the Aurès massif. However, his relationship with Masties is not clear from the inscription. Given that he clearly places himself on the same level as Masties, with the parallel phrases *ego Masties... ego Vartaia*,⁷⁷⁵ it has sometimes been assumed that he must have been Masties' political successor.⁷⁷⁶ This is certainly possible. However, the assumption that Vartaia inherited Masties' authority in the Aurès massif has been pushed further, with Vartaia often being identified with Ortaïas, the Berber leader noted by Procopius in the context of the Roman attack on Mount Aurasium in 535.⁷⁷⁷ The similarities between the two names can certainly not be dismissed. But the identification is extremely tentative, and unless further evidence comes to light, it is probably best discounted.⁷⁷⁸

Unfortunately, attempts to date the erection of the inscription, and subsequently determine the lifetime of Masties, have relied on the identification of Vartaia with an otherwise attested historical figure, Ortaïas, and discounting this identification means that it is also necessary to dissociate the inscription from the territorial dispute between Ortaïas and Iaudas in the 530s,⁷⁷⁹ which has otherwise been used to date and contextualise it.⁷⁸⁰ It is, therefore, impossible to say

⁷⁷⁴ Courtois, *Les Vandales*, 337; Morizot, 'Pour une nouvelle lecture,' 278. Cf. Modéran, *Les Maures*, 401, who, accepting this interpretation, further argues that Vartaia may well have had Masties' epitaph, from a tomb located elsewhere, copied, adding the final two lines to stress his own reverence for Masties

⁷⁷⁵ Carcopino, 'Un «empereur» maure inconnu,' 101.

⁷⁷⁶ B. H. Warmington, *The North African Provinces from Diocletian to the Vandal Conquest* (Cambridge, 1954), 74.

⁷⁷⁷ *Bella* IV.13.28. On Ortaïas see *PLRE* IIIB, 957–8, which accepts the identification of Ortaïas with Vartaia.

⁷⁷⁸ *Contra* Carcopino, 'Un «empereur» maure inconnu,' 112, who argues that the oratorical tone of the Arris inscription is consistent with Procopius' account of Ortaïas' description of the Berber territories beyond Aurès (*Bella* IV.13.29).

⁷⁷⁹ See pp. 186–7.

⁷⁸⁰ Carcopino, 'Un «empereur» maure inconnu,' 111–8; Courtois, *Les Vandales*, 336–9; Morizot, 'Pour une nouvelle lecture,' 280–1.

anything further than that, on palaeographic and linguistic grounds, the inscription may be dated to the late 5th or early 6th century.⁷⁸¹

Attempts have also been made to establish the chronology of Masties' life based on his claim to the title *imperator*, and the assumption that this claim must have represented a direct challenge to Roman imperial authority in Africa. Masties has thus been assumed to have adopted the title either in 476 or 477, following the fall of Rome to the Goths, and possibly following the death of the Vandal king, Gaiseric in January 477,⁷⁸² or, alternatively, after Roman influence in Africa collapsed in 455, following the Vandal sack of Rome.⁷⁸³ However, as will be discussed below, it is far from clear that Masties' claim to the title *imperator* was ever intended as a direct challenge to either the Eastern or Western Roman Empire, which was, after all, by the 5th century, no longer the dominant political power in Africa. And, even had this been his intention, there is no reason why he should have waited until the Western Roman Empire was on the verge of collapse.

Attempts to date the inscription based on Masties' claim to the title *dux* are even more doubtful. It has sometimes been argued that Masties must have been granted this title by a reigning Roman emperor, assumed to be Valentinian III, and thus held an official position within the Roman administration.⁷⁸⁴ Certainly, it is well accepted that, during Republican and early Imperial periods, the Roman Empire appointed Berber client-rulers as *duces* and entrusted to them the defence of portions of the *limes*,⁷⁸⁵ and it has often been assumed that this practice

⁷⁸¹ Modéran, *Les Maures*, 400.

⁷⁸² Carcopino, 'Un «empereur» maure inconnu,' 116.

⁷⁸³ Courtois, *Les Vandales*, 338. More recently, this chronology has been accepted by Pringle, *Defence*, 14.

⁷⁸⁴ Carcopino, 'Un «empereur» maure inconnu,' 117. This argument is further developed by P.-A. Février, 'Masuna et Masties,' *AntAfr* 24 (1988), 143–6, who argues that the words DUX and IMPR in the inscription are not the titles *dux* and *imperator* but rather the verbs *dux* and *imperavi*, and that Masties was a Roman *tribunes* entrusted with the defence of the *limes*.

⁷⁸⁵ See, in particular, P. Leveau, 'L'Aile II des Thraces, la tribu des Mazices et les *praefecti gentis* en Afrique du Nord,' *AntAfr* 7 (1973), 151–91; and n. 747.

must have continued into the late antique period.⁷⁸⁶ However, there is little clear evidence for this, and it is certainly reasonable to suppose that the Vandal conquest of Africa would have resulted in a break in this practice. Indeed, it appears to be far more likely, that the title *dux* simply continued to be used for the hereditary leaders of Berber tribes during the Vandal period.⁷⁸⁷ This view is supported by the case of Masties himself. Given that he held the title for 67 years, he must have assumed it at a relatively young age.⁷⁸⁸

The titles *dux* and *imperator* thus appear to offer little insight on the chronology of Masties' life. However, the Christian nature of the inscription may provide an indication of the date at which Masties adopted the title *imperator*. The inscription opens with the phrase *dis manibus sacrum*, which might appear to be strictly pagan, but is not uncommon in early Christian epitaphs in Africa.⁷⁸⁹ In all other respects, the inscription appears to emphasize Masties' Christian faith. It makes clear reference to the favour of God, and to Masties' own adherence to God's will, and includes the sign of the cross. Furthermore, Masties' claim *neque fidem fregi*, which has generally been interpreted as a reference to Masties' political allegiances, may also have had Christian connotations.⁷⁹⁰

Tentatively accepting that Masties was connected with the Aurès region, this declaration of Christian faith is unsurprising – the region adopted Christianity at an early date.⁷⁹¹ And it is on this basis that a more plausible argument for the dating of the inscription, and for its purpose, may be proposed. Rather than attempting to tie the inscription to events in Roman history, one should instead attempt to tie it more closely to events in the Aurès massif.⁷⁹² As has been noted in section 4.2, in 484, the Vandal king, Huneric, initiated a persecution against Nicene

⁷⁸⁶ Thus, Modéran, *Les Maures*, 481–5

⁷⁸⁷ Thus, Desanges, 'À propos de Masties,' 185.

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁹ Carcopino, 'Un «empereur» maure inconnu,' 96.

⁷⁹⁰ Desanges, 'À propos de Masties,' 186–7. This argument is followed by Modéran, *Les Maures*, 408.

⁷⁹¹ See Morizot, 'Économie et société en Numidie méridionale,' 429–46; and Modéran, *Les Maures*, 407–11.

⁷⁹² Modéran, *Les Maures*, 405–7.

Christians within his kingdom.⁷⁹³ And, simultaneously, according to Procopius, the Aurès region broke with Vandal rule.⁷⁹⁴ Thus, it is tempting to suggest that Masties' wish to adopt the title *imperator* may reasonably be connected with the region's move towards autonomy in the 480s, prompted by the persecution of Nicene Christians.

Consequently, contrary to the traditional view, Masties' adoption of the title *imperator* does not appear to have been a challenge to Roman political authority, so much as to Vandal authority. And the inscription's presentation of Masties as a defender of the Christian faith presents both Masties and his ostensible successor, Vartaia, to the persecuted Romano-African population as a viable alternative to Vandal rule.⁷⁹⁵ However, the significance of the title *imperator* and of Masties' claim to it may be broader still. The inhabitants of a highly Romanised region would surely have been well aware that the title *imperator* carried connotations of the Roman Empire.⁷⁹⁶ Indeed, the adoption of the title was most likely intended as a means of stressing the continuity of Masties' rule with the former political power of the region.⁷⁹⁷ Masties' adoption of the title *imperator* is thus consistent with a challenge to Vandal authority, coinciding with the Aurès region's claim to independence.

The use of Latin for the inscription is, however, curious, and merits some further consideration. Undoubtedly, in a highly Romanised region, Latin would have been understandable to a significant body of the population.⁷⁹⁸ Nevertheless, if the intention of the inscription was to stress *Berber* autonomy from *Vandal* rule, Latin appears an odd choice. Latin remained the language of the dominant power in Africa and, in a declaration of independence, one might

⁷⁹³ Victor of Vita, II–III, *passim*.

⁷⁹⁴ *Bella* III.8.5; with pp. 161–2.

⁷⁹⁵ Modéran, *Les Maures*, 409–10.

⁷⁹⁶ *Contra* Desanges, 'À propos de Masties,' 184–5, who argues that *imperator* was simply intended as the Latin translation of the Berber title MNKD(H), designating the leader of a confederation of tribes, and citing as precedent a parallel bilingual inscription from Leptis Magna.

⁷⁹⁷ Thus, Modéran, *Les Maures*, 406.

⁷⁹⁸ See Morizot, 'Économie et société,' 429–46; idem, 'Vues nouvelles sur l'Aurès antique,' *CRAI* 123.2 (1979), 309–37.

expect the Berbers to stress their own institutions. The decision to use the Latin language can surely only be explained by the desire to appeal to the Romano-African population.⁷⁹⁹ In its stress on Christian faith, the Arris inscription may present Masties and Vartaia as an alternative to the Vandals, but in its claim to *Roman* institutional continuity, it effectively imitates the Vandals in attempting to use Roman institutions and symbolism to confer political legitimacy.⁸⁰⁰ Thus, one might well argue that Masties was also in competition with other Berber leaders for the support of the persecuted Romano-African population, and that it was in this local Berber competition that Masties' claim to rule a highly Romanized region, defined by the continuity of Roman institutions, might have increased his, and Vartaia's, legitimacy.

Masties' claim never to have broken faith with the Romans or the Berbers, and the decision to mention the Romans before the Berbers,⁸⁰¹ while not a strictly political claim, nevertheless recognises that the Berber leaders required the support of the Romano-African population, and were prepared to cultivate this support. Indeed, the significance of Masties' claim is perhaps emphasized by the slightly later Altava inscription.

The inscription, which was discovered in 1877, in unknown circumstances, at Altava (mod. Lamoricière, Algeria), consists of five lines of text inscribed on a limestone block 1.23 x 0.43 x 0.35m.⁸⁰² The inscription reads:

Pro sal(ute) et incol(umitate) reg(is) Masunae gent(ium)/ Maur(orum) et Romanor(um); castrum edificat(um) a Mas/guini pref(ecto) de Safar, Iider proc(uratore) Cast/ra severian(a) quem Masuna Altava posuit/ et Maxim(us) proc(urator) Alt(auae) perfec(it) p(rovinciae anno) cccclxuiiii.

For the salvation and safety of Masuna, king of the *gens* of the Berbers and of the Romans. This *castrum* was built by Masguin, the prefect of Safar, [and] by Iider, the *procurator* of Castra Severiana, whom Masuna stationed at Altava,

⁷⁹⁹ Modéran, *Les Maures*, 406.

⁸⁰⁰ On the Vandal imitation of Roman institutions see Clover, 'The symbiosis of Romans and Vandals,' 57–73.

⁸⁰¹ Modéran, *Les Maures*, 409.

⁸⁰² J. Marcillet-Jaubert, *Les inscriptions d'Altava* (Aix-en-Provence, 1968), 126.

and Maximus, the *procurator* of Altava completed it in the year of the province 469.⁸⁰³

Unusually, the Altava inscription is dated, to year 469 of a provincial dating system. This dating system has been assumed to be that of the Vandals, as the Bir-Trouch ostraka confirm that this system of dating continued to be used in the Aurès massif after the region declared its independence from Vandal rule.⁸⁰⁴ The year 469 corresponds to 508 CE, making the inscription contemporary with the reign of the Vandal king Thrasamund.⁸⁰⁵

Masuna has almost unanimously been identified as Massonas, whom Procopius notes to have been a Roman ally during the Roman attack on Mount Aurasium in 535.⁸⁰⁶ However, while the names Masuna and Μασσωνᾶς are similar, objections to this identification, based on chronology, certainly merit consideration.⁸⁰⁷ According to Procopius' account, Massonas aided the Romans against Iaudas because Iaudas had murdered Massonas' father, and his own father-in-law, Mephanias.⁸⁰⁸ No indication is given of the date of Mephanias' death. However, if Masuna and Massonas were the same individual, Massonas was, according to the Altava inscription, already the leader of his tribe by 508, and it may reasonably be assumed that his father had died prior to this date. Thus, in 535, Mephanias would have been dead for more than 27 years. It therefore seems unlikely, although, admittedly, not impossible, that he would still have been remembered, let alone included in the account of a Roman historian only minimally interested in Berber politics.⁸⁰⁹ As result, while the identification of Masunas as Massonas cannot be entirely dismissed, it should certainly be treated with caution.

⁸⁰³ Marcillet-Jaubert, *Les inscriptions d'Altava*, no. 194 (my translation). Unlike the Arris inscription, this reading of the Altava inscription has never been seriously challenged.

⁸⁰⁴ Bonnal & Février, 'Ostraka de la région de Bir Trouch,' 239-49.

⁸⁰⁵ G. Camps, 'Nouvelles observations sur l'inscription de roi Masuna à Altava,' *BCTH* n.s. 18B (1988), 153.

⁸⁰⁶ *Bella* IV.13.19. Carcopino, 'Un «empereur» maure inconnu,' 110-2; Marcillet-Jaubert, *Les inscriptions d'Altava*, 126; M. Janon, 'L'Aurès au VIe siècle: note sur le recit de Procope,' *AntAfr* 15 (1980), 350; Camps, 'Rex gentium maurorum et romanorum,' 191.

⁸⁰⁷ Courtois, *Les Vandales*, 334-5.

⁸⁰⁸ *Bella* IV.13.19.

⁸⁰⁹ Courtois, *Les Vandales*, 335, 337.

Masuna's claim, to have been *rex gentium maurorum et romanorum* has, however, attracted considerable attention, not least because the concept of a *gens Maura* is otherwise unattested.⁸¹⁰ However, for the purposes of this chapter, the existence of a *rex gentium romanorum* among the Berbers is of greater interest. Unlike Masties, Masuna makes no claim to the far more exalted title of *imperator*, employing the far more conservative title *rex*, which had been granted to Berber leaders during the early imperial period, and which appear to have continued as hereditary titles among the Berbers during the period of Vandal rule in Africa.

Like Masties, Masuna appears to make a bid for the support of the local Romano-African population. And he does this not only through his use of Latin for the inscription and his titulature, but also through the evident institutional continuity which the inscription suggests within his area of influence. The building inscription is typical of those which may be found in the Roman Empire, and the officials whom it names bear the titles *prefectus* and *procurator*.

Courtois argued that the Arris inscription was evidence for a nascent revival of African unity following the fragmentation caused by the collapse of the Roman Empire in the region.⁸¹¹ But in fact, both it, and the Altava inscription, may be evidence for exactly the opposite, and it is in this context of inter-tribal rivalry for the support of the local population – be it Romano-African or Berber – that the first interactions between the Roman administration in Africa and the Berber tribes must be considered.

4.4 Diplomacy and Investiture of Insignia

The first documented interaction between the Eastern Roman Empire and the Berbers, in the 6th century, occurred in November 533, shortly before the battle of Tricamarum, when Berber embassies from Byzacena, Mauritania and Numidia approached the Roman military

⁸¹⁰ Camps, 'Nouvelles observations,' 153.

⁸¹¹ Courtois, *Les Vandales*, 339.

commander, Belisarius, at Carthage.⁸¹² Procopius provides a relatively detailed account of the episode, and, indeed, as a member of Belisarius' household at the time, may well have been a witness to that which he describes.⁸¹³ It is, of course, likely that there was some, undocumented, contact between the Roman army and the Berbers – the Berbers were, after all, sufficiently well informed as to the situation at Carthage to send embassies. Nevertheless, it cannot be doubted that the embassies represented a unique point of 'official' contact between two societies. As such, the episode is of considerable importance as a basis for understanding the Eastern Roman Empire's initial policy *vis-à-vis* the Berbers, and it is worth reproducing Procopius' account in full:

For all those who ruled over the Berbers in Mauritania and Numidia and Byzacena sent envoys to Belisarius saying that they were slaves of the emperor and promised to fight with him. There were some who even furnished their children as hostages and requested that the insignia of office be sent them from him according to the ancient custom. For it was law among the Berbers that no one should be a ruler over them, even if he was hostile to the Romans, until the emperor of the Romans should give him the insignia of office.⁸¹⁴

And yet, despite all the requests of the Berber embassies being granted, in March 534, just as the Roman military commander in Africa, Belisarius, was preparing to depart for Constantinople, the Berber tribes of Byzacena and Numidia began raids against the Romano-African population.⁸¹⁵ According to Procopius the raids occurred “for no reason” [ἐξ αἰτίας οὐδεμιᾶς],⁸¹⁶ but it is clear that, for the historian, their explanation lay in the very character of the Berbers themselves. He notes:

⁸¹² *Bella* III.25.3.

⁸¹³ *Cf. Bella* III.12.3.

⁸¹⁴ *Bella* III.25.3-5: [ὅσοι γὰρ ἔν τε Μαυριτανία καὶ Νουμιδία καὶ Βυζακίῳ Μαυρουσίων ἦρχον, πρέσβεις ὡς Βελισάριον πέμπσαντες δοῦλοὶ τε βασιλέως ἔφασκον εἶναι καὶ ζυμμαχήσειν ὑπέσχοντο. εἰσὶ δὲ οἱ καὶ τοὺς παῖδας ἐν ὁμήρων παρείχοντο λόγῳ, τὰ τε ζύμβολα σφίσι παρ' αὐτοῦ στέλλεσθαι τῆς ἀρχῆς κατὰ δὴ τὸν παλαιὸν νόμον ἐδέοντο. νόμος γὰρ ἦν Μαυρουσίων ἄρχειν μηδένα, κἂν Ῥωμαίοις πολέμιος ᾗ, πρὶν ἂν αὐτῷ τὰ γνωρίσματα τῆς ἀρχῆς ὁ Ῥωμαίων βασιλεὺς δοίη.]

⁸¹⁵ *Bella* IV.8.20. The raids will be discussed in greater detail in section 5.2. On the chronology see *PLRE* IIIA, 192 (Belisarius).

⁸¹⁶ *Bella* IV.8.9.

... they decided, having broken the treaty, to suddenly revolt against the Romans. And this was not contrary to their unique nature. For among the Berbers there is neither fear of God nor respect of men.⁸¹⁷

Prima facie, Procopius' repeated claims, that the Berbers simply rebelled out of the desire to break the treaty [σπονδαί] which they had previously agreed with Belisarius,⁸¹⁸ an accusation which the historian also places in a letter which he attributes to the Roman *magister militum*, Solomon,⁸¹⁹ appear to be little more than an attempt to illustrate the *topos* of the barbarian, and to provide little information of value for the reconstruction of political history.⁸²⁰

However, given the repeated references to a treaty [σπονδαί] between the Romans and the Berbers following the Berber hostilities, it has sometimes been inferred that a formal arrangement had, in fact, been agreed between Belisarius and the Berber embassies at Carthage in November 533; or, rather, that the Romans believed that a formal treaty had been agreed.⁸²¹ Thus, the true significance of the embassies and their requests merits a re-examination.

Central to the interpretation of Procopius' account of the Berber embassies is the request made by some of the envoys, that Belisarius grant to them the insignia of office [τά ζύμβολα τῆς ἀρχῆς]. Procopius describes these insignia in some detail, noting that they included a silver staff covered in gold, a silver cap, like a crown, a white cloak gathered on the right shoulder by a golden brooch, a white tunic with embroidery, and gilded boots.⁸²² Belisarius duly granted these insignia to those who had requested them, together with a substantial monetary payment

⁸¹⁷ *Bella* IV.8.9–10: [... τὰς σπονδὰς διαλύσαντες χεῖρας ἀνταίρειν ἔξαπιναίως Ῥωμαίοις ἔγνωσαν. καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἄπο τρόπου τοῦ οἰκείου σφίσιν ἐπράσσετο. ἔστι γὰρ ἐν Μαυρουσίαις οὔτε θεοῦ φόβος οὔτε ἀνθρώπων αἰδώς.]

⁸¹⁸ *Bella* IV.8.9, 18, 11.4.

⁸¹⁹ *Bella* IV.11.3–4.

⁸²⁰ See p. 57.

⁸²¹ Thus, Modéran, *Les Maures*, 586, argues that the Romans would have interpreted the Berber request for insignia as their recognition of Roman sovereignty and their complete submission to this authority. This, he suggests, is evident from Procopius' attribution to the Berbers of the claim that they were "slaves of the emperor" [δοῦλοι βασιλέως].

⁸²² *Bella* III.25.7.

[χρήματα πολλά].⁸²³ However, the significance of the gesture, for both the Romans and the Berbers, is not entirely clear.

It is clear that, from the Roman perspective at least, the insignia were important to a Berber leader's legitimacy and right to rule, as Procopius notes that:

For it was the law among the Berbers that no one should rule, even if he should be an enemy of the Romans, until the Roman emperor should give him the tokens of office.⁸²⁴

The validity of this statement, from the Berber perspective, is reinforced by the very request itself, and also by Procopius' claim that some of those requesting insignia from Belisarius had previously received them from the Vandal king. Procopius' implication, that, in 533, the Berber leaders already doubted the value of Vandal insignia, is undoubtedly coloured by his knowledge of the subsequent Vandal defeat at Tricamarum.⁸²⁵ Nevertheless, the urgency with which the Berber leaders sought to obtain Roman insignia, before the outcome of the Roman-Vandal conflict was even known, suggests that the insignia were of high value, and were likely key to individual Berber leaders' political legitimacy.

Why the Berbers should have attached such value to what were, after all, *Roman* insignia, is, however, less clear.⁸²⁶ Certainly, the granting of Roman insignia to Africa rulers appears to have had a long history, being first attested during the days of the Roman Republic.⁸²⁷ However, the insignia comprised elements of both the Roman *ornamenta triumphalia* and the *ornamenta consularia*, combining both the military and civil aspects of the Roman magistrate,⁸²⁸ and it has thus been inferred that the granting of such insignia to native African rulers was also intended

⁸²³ *Bella* III.25.8.

⁸²⁴ *Bella* III.25.5; with n. 814.

⁸²⁵ Modéran, '«Le plus délicat des peuples et le plus malheureux»,' 219.

⁸²⁶ Modéran, *Les Maures*, 489, 493, concludes, through comparison of the insignia described by Procopius with representations of the symbolism of native African rulers, that the insignia could not have been African in origin.

⁸²⁷ See n. 747.

⁸²⁸ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, 28.

to recognised the rulers' semi-autonomous status and to formalise their role as representatives of the Roman state among their own people.⁸²⁹

Insignia, of the kind described by Procopius, are generally accepted as being associated with Roman client-rulership, although, for the Romans, the significance of the insignia rested on their overtly imperial connotations.⁸³⁰ These are perhaps most evident, in a 6th century context, from Corippus' *In laudem*.⁸³¹ In book II, Corippus provides a detailed description of the ceremonies surrounding Justin II's coronation on 14 November 565. He describes how the emperor, appearing before the people, was clothed in a white tunic trimmed with gold, purple boots, a belt worked with gold and precious stones, and a purple chlamys worked trimmed with gold and fastened with a gold brooch.⁸³²

Modéran argues that the granting of insignia to the Berber leaders in 533 should be considered within a purely African context, suggesting that Belisarius, as a general who had previously served in the East, would have understood his own gesture in light of his experience of similar investitures in the East, and thus misinterpreted the Berber request as a complete recognition of imperial sovereignty.⁸³³ Undoubtedly, Belisarius would have interpreted the gesture in light of similar investitures in the East (although there is no evidence that he had been involved in such a ceremony), but this is precisely the point. Accurate or not, Belisarius' interpretation of the gesture could only be based on a knowledge of the significance of such investitures elsewhere in the empire. Therefore, in order to understand the significance which the Romans attached to the investiture of the Berbers in 533, it is necessary to understand the significance of such gestures elsewhere.

⁸²⁹ Modéran, *Les Maures*, 493.

⁸³⁰ D. Braund, *Georgia in Antiquity: A History of Colchis and Transcaucasian Iberia, 550 BC–AD 562* (Oxford, 1994), 280.

⁸³¹ Cameron, *Flavius Cresconius Corippus*, 110. On the *In laudem* see p. 59.

⁸³² *Iust.* II.100–25.

⁸³³ Modéran, *Les Maures*, 586.

Perhaps the best attested example of a foreign ruler being invested with Roman insignia, in the 6th century, is the so-called ‘conversion of Tzath’. The episode is reported, in almost identical accounts, in the *Chronicle* of John Malalas, the *Chronicon Paschale*, and the *Chronicle* of Theophanes, with the latter almost certainly drawing its information from the former.⁸³⁴ According to these chronicles, in earlier times, when a king of Lazika came to the throne, his accession had to be ratified by the king of Persia. It is not entirely clear whether this was a longstanding tradition, although Agathias, writing in the 570s,⁸³⁵ describes Roman investiture of the kings of Lazika as having occurred since early times.⁸³⁶ However, when Damnazes, king of the Laz, died, his son, Tzath I (521/2–?), approached the Roman emperor, Justin I, and requested that he proclaim him king.⁸³⁷ Tzath I was duly received at Constantinople, baptised as a Christian, married to a high-born Roman woman, and crowned king of Lazika.⁸³⁸ Malalas is imprecise in his dating of this event, but appears to synchronise the event with the death of Paul, Patriarch of Antioch, in 521.⁸³⁹ The *Chronicon Paschale* and Theophanes are consistent in dating the event in 522, and this date generally been preferred.⁸⁴⁰

The accounts of Tzath I’s coronation describe the Laz king’s paraphernalia in some detail. He was dressed in a white tunic, with gold embroideries, including an image of the emperor; shoes studded with pearls, in the Persian fashion; and a belt, also decorated with pearls. He received from Justin a crown [στεφάνιον Ῥωμαϊκὸν βασιλικόν], and a white cloak with a gold border and a purple portrait medallion of the emperor. Thus far, the sources are consistent. However,

⁸³⁴ Malalas, XVII.9; *Chron. Pasch. s.a. 522*; Theophanes, *AM* 6015 (ed. De Boor, pp. 168–9). Mango & Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, 258 n. 1.

⁸³⁵ Cameron, *Agathias*, 9.

⁸³⁶ Agathias, *Hist.* III.15.2. Braund, *Georgia in Antiquity*, 277–8, argues, based on Malalas’ account of Tzath I’s coronation, that the practice was longstanding. However, Mango & Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, 278 n. 1, suggests that it might have begun with the reign of Damnazes, whom Malalas implies entered into a new agreement with the Persian king.

⁸³⁷ Malalas, XVII.9; *Chron. Pasch. s.a. 522*; Theophanes, *AM* 6015 (ed. De Boor, pp. 168–9).

⁸³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸³⁹ M. Whitby & M. Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale, 284–624 AD* (Liverpool, 1984), 106 n. 330.

⁸⁴⁰ See Stein, *Histoire*, II, 267; Braund, *Georgia in Antiquity*, 276. *Contra* Whitby & Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale*, 106 n. 330.

the *Chronicon Paschale* and Theophanes both describe Tzath's shoes as red, and Theophanes notes that his belt was made of gold.⁸⁴¹

Like the insignia granted to the Berbers, the insignia granted to the kings of Lazika bears considerable similarities with the insignia described by Corippus as part of Justin I's coronation. The major difference between the two is the chlamys. As Agathias himself stresses, in his description of the insignia granted to Tzath II, the wearing of the purple chlamys was restricted to the emperor himself.⁸⁴² Thus, foreign rulers were always granted a white chlamys – albeit, in the case of the kings of Lazika, one with substantial decoration, which represented a compromise between the imperial chlamys and white chlamys with a purple stripe worn by Roman dignitaries.⁸⁴³ The position of the foreign ruler, relative to the emperor, and the officials of the Eastern Roman Empire was thus defined.⁸⁴⁴ And there is every reason to suppose that foreign rulers were aware of these connotations – especially in view of the elaborate ceremony which accompanied investitures such as those of the kings of Lazika.

The symbolism of the investiture of insignia is thus clear. But what of the political significance of the gesture? More than anything else, the investiture appears to have created a connection between the Roman emperor and the client-ruler which entailed responsibilities and obligations to one another, and which would have entitled the Eastern Roman Empire to expect political, and military, support from the newly invested client-ruler.

⁸⁴¹ See n. 834. Furthermore, it would appear that this was the established list of insignia for a king of Lazika. see Agathias, *Hist.* III.14.2–15 and III.15.2; with Braund, *Georgia in Antiquity*, 281. Similarly, one might compare the insignia which Procopius claims were granted to the satraps of the Armenian *Pentarchy* during the 5th century (*Aed.* III.1.18–23).

⁸⁴² Agathias, *Hist.* III.15.2.

⁸⁴³ Cameron, *Flavius Cresconius Corippus*, 159 nn. 118–9.

⁸⁴⁴ Braund, *Georgia in Antiquity*, 280.

The Eastern Roman Empire granted insignia to show its support for particular rulers.⁸⁴⁵ While those rulers who received insignia were not bound by treaties in the traditional sense,⁸⁴⁶ the insignia were accepted in the full understanding that should the recipient not act in the interests of the Eastern Roman Empire, the empire had the capability, and will, to remove its support and install another native ruler. In exchange, the client-rulers might have expected some degree of protection from external threats from the Eastern Roman Empire, but only insofar as it lay within Roman interests. Such arrangements were, therefore, contingent on the Eastern Roman Empire's ability to enforce them.

It has sometimes been suggested that, in granting the Berbers insignia, Belisarius merely humoured a barbarian whim and, furthermore, that he would have been unwilling to enter into a formal treaty with them out of the belief that, as barbarians, they would not be bound by it.⁸⁴⁷ This is certainly possible. However, it should also be recognised that the Eastern Roman Empire was in no position to formally endorse native rulers in Africa. In November 533, when the Berber embassies approached Belisarius at Carthage, the Roman military position in Africa remained precarious. The Roman occupation of Carthage had certainly not been the *coup de grâce* to the Vandal kingdom that it is sometimes presented to be.⁸⁴⁸ The Romans certainly did not negotiate with the Berbers from a position of strength. Should those invested with insignia prove unwilling to support Roman interests, the empire lacked the resources to respond militarily, as is emphatically clear from its subsequent response to Berber hostilities,⁸⁴⁹ and failure to do so would undermine the authority of the empire in the region. Thus, while the Eastern Roman Empire might, ordinarily, regard the investiture of insignia as a means of

⁸⁴⁵ C. Morrisson, 'Les insignes du pouvoir impérial au Ve et VIe siècle,' in M. Rouche, ed., *Clovis, histoire et mémoire* (Paris, 1997), 767.

⁸⁴⁶ C. Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History* (Georgetown, 1963), 133.

⁸⁴⁷ Modéran, *Les Maures*, 489.

⁸⁴⁸ On the capture of Carthage see the Prologue.

⁸⁴⁹ See section 5.2.

securing its influence over native rulers, Belisarius cannot have failed to recognise that, under the circumstances, any such gesture would be symbolic at best.

Furthermore, there is every indication that the Berbers were well aware of the weakness of the Roman position. Procopius makes the following accusation against the Berbers, following the investiture of insignia:

However, they did not come to him for an alliance, nor did they dare to come to the aid of the Vandals, but, standing out of the way of both, they were waiting to see how the fortunes of war would play out.⁸⁵⁰

When this statement is considered in the context of Procopius' characterisation of the Berbers, it might appear to be yet another example of the Berbers as unfaithful allies.⁸⁵¹ However, this was also a pragmatic response on the part of a people anxious to derive the greatest personal benefit from the situation.

Thus, the investiture of the kings of Lazika offers an imperfect paradigm for understanding the events which occurred in Africa in 533. A more useful parallel may perhaps be drawn elsewhere. Procopius' claim that the Berbers:

Having already received these thing [the insignia] from the Vandals, they did not believe that they [the Vandals] held office securely,⁸⁵²

has attracted attention as evidence for the continuity of Roman institutions in Africa during the Vandal period.⁸⁵³ However, it is important to recognise that the process of investiture which occurred during the Vandal period was, at best, an exchange between equals. As will be discussed below, the Berber leaders who received insignia from the Vandals were those who were in the process of establishing autonomous polities within the borders of the former Roman provinces of Africa. Clearly, under such circumstances, the Vandals were hardly in a position to demand concessions from the Berber leaders. On the other hand, the Hasdings themselves

⁸⁵⁰ *Bella* III.25.9: [οὐ μέντοι αὐτῶ ἐς ξυμμαχίαν ἀφίκοντο, οὐ μὴν οὐδὲ Βανδίλοις ἐπαμύνειν ἐτόλμησαν, ἀλλ' ἐκποδῶν ἀμφοτέροις στάντες ἐκαραδόκουσιν ὅπη ποτὲ ἢ τοῦ πολέμου τύχη ἐκβήσεται.]

⁸⁵¹ See p. 57.

⁸⁵² *Bella* III.25.6: [ἄπερ ἤδη πρὸς Βανδύλων λαβόντες οὐκ ᾤοντο ἐν βεβαίῳ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἔχειν.]

⁸⁵³ For example, Merrills & Miles, *The Vandals*, 72.

derived benefits from the investiture of Berber leaders – the right to confer political legitimacy on the Berber leaders, in the manner of the former rulers of Africa, whom the Vandals otherwise sought to emulate,⁸⁵⁴ underscored their own claim to legitimacy within their own kingdom.⁸⁵⁵ The gesture was thus mutually beneficial.

It might thus be argued that the Roman position *vis-à-vis* the Berbers in 533 was analogous to that of the Vandals, and was intended to increase the prestige of both parties in a mutually beneficial, but in all likelihood temporary, arrangement. However, if this argument is accepted, how should one explain the Berber decision to request insignia from Belisarius at this time?

In order to better understand the political significance of the Berber embassies to the Berbers themselves, some further consideration should be given to the individuals and/or groups which they represented. Procopius notes that the embassies acted on the behalf of:

... those who ruled over the Berbers in Mauritania and Numidia and Byzacena...⁸⁵⁶

However, in this context, he does not offer any explicit information concerning those individuals who comprised the embassies, nor the leaders and tribes which they represented.⁸⁵⁷

As has been discussed previously, Procopius' presentation of the Berbers is relatively unsophisticated. Nevertheless, it is clear from his account of the subsequent Berber raids that he was, at least peripherally, aware of significant tribal leaders and the territories which they controlled. And the information which he provides on the political geography is probably more reliable than might be supposed.

It has sometimes been suggested that Procopius' omission of the province of Tripolitania from the list of regions from which the embassies came is remarkable, given that he clearly intended

⁸⁵⁴ See, for example, Clover, 'The symbiosis of Romans and Vandals in Africa,' 60-9.

⁸⁵⁵ Merrills & Miles, *The Vandals*, 72.

⁸⁵⁶ *Bella* III.25.3: [ὄσοι ... ἔν τε Μαυριτανίᾳ καὶ Νομιδίᾳ καὶ Βυζακίῳ Μαυρουσίῳ ἤρχον...]

⁸⁵⁷ Modéran, 'Koutzinas-Cusina,' 402, infers from the granting of insignia that the Berber leaders themselves must have been part of the embassies. However, while this is a logical assumption, it is not evident from Procopius' account (*Bella* III.25.3).

to encompass all the Berber tribes of Africa.⁸⁵⁸ However, had Procopius intended to be all encompassing in his description, it is unlikely that he would have made such an omission – especially given that the provinces were Roman, rather than Berber, geographical and administrative designations. Indeed, given that Procopius elsewhere refers to the Berbers simply as Μαυρούσιοι, or even βάρβαροι, his (admittedly imperfect) attempt to identify the embassies with specific provinces suggests that a discrete group of tribes was involved. Thus, the identification of these tribes and/or their leaders may provide further insight into the intentions of the embassies themselves.

A comprehensive list of those involved in the embassies cannot be reconstructed from Procopius' work. However, some additional information concerning the tribes represented may be derived from his account of the subsequent raids.⁸⁵⁹ Procopius identifies the leaders of the raids in Byzacena in 534 and 535 as Cusina (Κουτζίνας), Esdilasas, Iourphouthes, and Medisinissas.⁸⁶⁰ The letter which he attributes to the Roman *magister militum per Africam*, Solomon, asks of these men:

... what ever have you suffered that you thought to revolt against the great empire and to throw away your own security, and these things having given the strongest oaths in writing and having handed over your own children as pledges to that which has been agreed?⁸⁶¹

The reference to oaths and to the handing over of children appears to be an allusion to the agreement reached with Belisarius in 533 – indeed, it is interesting to note that Procopius here refers to the oaths as being given ἐν γράμμασι, a detail not provided elsewhere. The letter is undoubtedly a literary creation.⁸⁶² Nevertheless, Procopius creates a deliberate connection

⁸⁵⁸ Modéran, 'Koutzina-Cusina,' 399.

⁸⁵⁹ The raids themselves are discussed in greater detail in section 5.2.

⁸⁶⁰ *Bella* IV.10.6 On these figures see *PLRE* IIIA, 366-8 (Coutzinas); 451 (Esdilasas); 717 (Iourphouthes); and IIIB, 870 (Medisinissas).

⁸⁶¹ *Bella* IV.11.3-4: [... τί ποτε ἄρα παθόντες χειράς τε ἀνταίρειν ἐγνωτε βασιλεῖ τῷ μεγάλῳ καὶ τὴν ὑμῶν αὐτῶν σωτηρίαν προέσθαι; καὶ ταῦτα ὄρκους τε τοὺς δεινοτάτους ἐν γράμμασι δόντες καὶ τοὺς παῖδας τοὺς ὑμετέρους τῶν ὠμολογημένων ἐνέχυρα παρασχόμενοι;]

⁸⁶² See pp. 85-6.

between Cusina, Esdilasas, Iourphouthes and Medisinissas, and the Berber embassies to Carthage, and there is little reason to doubt that this information is accurate.

Unfortunately, little is known concerning Esdilasas, Iourphouthes and Medisinissas. Iourphouthes is nowhere else attested, while Medisinissas is only otherwise attested in the context of the raids of 534, and Esdilasas as having surrendered to the Romans following the battle at Mount Bougaon in 535.⁸⁶³ Based on Procopius' evidence that, these men were present in Byzacena in 534, the *PLRE* somewhat tenuously identifies them as chieftains of tribes in Byzacena.⁸⁶⁴ However, given that this identification cannot be conclusively demonstrated, and nothing further is known concerning the territories these leaders might have held or their relations with other tribes, it adds little to the understanding of the Berber embassies in 533.

Cusina, on the other hand, is relatively well attested.⁸⁶⁵ He has traditionally been assumed to have been the leader of a nomadic tribe, largely on the basis of Procopius' claims that Cusina, and those following him, pillaged Byzacena in 534, and that the Berbers were accompanied by their women and children.⁸⁶⁶ On the basis of Procopius' reference to camels, Courtois identified the origins of Cusina's tribe as Tripolitania, arguing that Cusina's presence in Byzacena in 534 (the first time he is attested) should be interpreted as the incursion of the nomadic tribes, unfamiliar with Roman culture, into the interior provinces.⁸⁶⁷ However, more recently, Modéran has challenged this view, arguing that Procopius' use of the verb οἰκέω, in reference to Cusina's presence in Byzacena, indeed implies that the tribe, while possibly semi-nomadic, was certainly established in this province.⁸⁶⁸ Furthermore, he suggests that the origins of the

⁸⁶³ *Bella* IV.10.11, 12.26, 29. On the battle of Mount Bourgaon see pp. 193–4.

⁸⁶⁴ *PLRE* IIIA, 451 and 717; and IIIB, 870.

⁸⁶⁵ On Cusina see further section 6.4.

⁸⁶⁶ *Bella* IV.11.17–9.

⁸⁶⁷ Courtois, *Les Vandales*, 349–50.

⁸⁶⁸ Modéran, *Les Maures*, 339.

tribe can be identified more precisely, convincingly locating it to the west of Capsa (mod. Gafsa, in Tunisia),⁸⁶⁹ a region which archaeological evidence suggests was highly Romanised.⁸⁷⁰

Procopius also identifies one other Berber leader with the province of Byzacena – Antalas.⁸⁷¹

Following his account of the battle at Mount Bougaon in 534, Procopius notes:

And the only Berbers who remained in Byzacena were those led by Antalas, who, during this time, having kept faith with the Romans, remained, together with his subjects, unaffected by the evils.⁸⁷²

The statement does not, admittedly, explicitly connect Antalas with the embassies to Carthage in 533. However, Procopius' description of Antalas as "having kept faith with the Romans" [τὴν ἐς Ῥωμαίους πίστιν φυλάξας] has tentatively been advanced as evidence that the Berber leader had entered into an agreement with the Romans.⁸⁷³ Given that Procopius elsewhere notes the inability of barbarians to keep ἡ ἐς Ῥωμαίους πίστις in relation to the failure of formal agreements between the emperor Arcadius and the Visigoths, and the emperor Diocletian and the Blemmyes,⁸⁷⁴ this appears to be a reasonable supposition.

Procopius clearly identifies the leader of the Berber tribe of Mount Aurasium, in Numidia, as Iaudas.⁸⁷⁵ Like Antalas, Iaudas is not explicitly connected with the embassies in 533. However, given that Procopius claims that the Berbers of Byzacena and Numidia broke their agreement with the Romans,⁸⁷⁶ and that Iaudas is the only Berber leader whom Procopius explicitly identifies with Numidia, it is reasonable to suppose that the historian intended to make a connection between the two.

⁸⁶⁹ Ibid, 341–2.

⁸⁷⁰ S. Ben Baaziz, 'Les sites archéologiques de la région de Gafsa,' *L'Armée et les affaires militaires* (Paris, 1991), II, 535–48; Modéran, *Les Maures*, 342–3.

⁸⁷¹ On Antalas see further section 6.3.

⁸⁷² *Bella* IV.12.30: [μόνοι δὲ Μαυρουσίων ἐν Βυζακίῳ διέμειναν ὧν ἡγεῖτο Ἀντάλας, ὅς δὲ ἐν τούτῳ τῷ χρόνῳ τὴν ἐς Ῥωμαίους πίστιν φυλάξας κακῶν ἀπαθῆς ξὺν τοῖς ὑπηκόοις τοῖς αὐτοῦ ἔμεινεν.]

⁸⁷³ Thus, Modéran, *Les Maures*, 328.

⁸⁷⁴ *Bella* III.2.7 and I.19.33.

⁸⁷⁵ *Bella* IV.12.29, 13.1. On Iaudas see further section 6.5.

⁸⁷⁶ *Bella* IV.8.9.

The leaders of the Berbers of Mauritania were also, according to Procopius, among those represented by the embassies to Carthage. Procopius identifies only one Berber leader with Mauritania – Mastigas.⁸⁷⁷ However, the historian does not connect Mastigas, either explicitly or implicitly, with the embassies.

The above discussion represents, at best, a very partial and tentative identification of the Berber leaders represented by the embassies to Carthage. Nevertheless, two significant points emerge from the catalogue of leaders. First, it is clear that the embassies sent to Carthage did not act in unison. This is perhaps to state the obvious. The Berber embassies are presented as comprising two distinct groups – those who merely proclaimed themselves δοῦλοι βασιλέως and offered their children as hostages, and those who also requested insignia.⁸⁷⁸ Certainly, it appears likely that the embassies were not united in their intentions *vis-à-vis* the Eastern Roman Empire, as is demonstrated by the fact that some tribes almost immediately came into conflict with the empire and others did not. However, the divisions may have been more significant than this – at least some of the tribes represented by the embassies appear to have been in conflict with one another at this time.

A second point emerges from this conclusion. The three most notable Berber leaders represented by the embassies were Antalas, Cusina and Iaudas. These men are comparably well attested, and in hostile (Roman) sources. Part of the reason for this is probably that they had, at the time of the Roman conquest, achieved something unprecedented. All three had established themselves as the rulers of autonomous polities within the frontiers of the former provinces of Roman Africa.⁸⁷⁹ And the territorial ambitions of these rulers, which will be

⁸⁷⁷ *Bella* IV.13.19.

⁸⁷⁸ Modéran, *Les Maures*, 488, suggests that the two groups represented two distinct agreements with the Romans. But he nevertheless maintains that both groups recognised Roman authority and pledged their allegiance.

⁸⁷⁹ The significance of this achievement is stressed by Camps, 'Rex gentium maurorum et romanorum,' 183.

considered in greater detail below, may be the key to understanding the Berber request for insignia in 533.

The significance of territorial expansion is most evident from the information which Procopius provides concerning Numidia. Mount Aurasium, the territory controlled by Iaudas at the time of the Roman conquest, lay within the Aurès massif, a region which, as has been discussed previously, had revolted against Vandal rule in 484 and established itself as an independent polity.⁸⁸⁰ Furthermore, there is every indication that, following the establishment of this polity, the leaders of the tribe attempted to continue to expand their territory, and were still attempting to do so in the 530s.

Procopius opens his account of the Berber raids in Numidia by noting that Iaudas had plundered the region and enslaved the local Romano-African population.⁸⁸¹ However, he is somewhat unclear as to the reasons for Roman military intervention in Numidia in 535, noting initially that Solomon:

... led an army against Mount Aurasium and Iaudas, alleging that, while the Roman army was occupied in Byzacena, he [Iaudas] had plundered much of the lands of Numidia. And this was so.⁸⁸²

The concluding remark, if nothing else, itself casts some doubt on the truth of this statement. Furthermore, Procopius subsequently claims that Solomon was urged to act by the Berbers Massonas and Ortaïas, both of whom were involved in personal disputes with Iaudas.⁸⁸³ Ortaïas was the leader of a tribe to the west of Mount Aurasium⁸⁸⁴ and, prior to the failure of the Roman attack on the mountain, both men are described as σύμμαχος by Procopius.⁸⁸⁵ Procopius' note, that Ortaïas held a grudge against Iaudas because he, together with another tribal leader, had

⁸⁸⁰ See pp. 161–2.

⁸⁸¹ *Bella* IV.13.1.

⁸⁸² *Bella* IV.13.18: [... ἐπί τε ὄρος τὸ Αὐράσιον καὶ Ἰαύδαν ἐπήγε τὸ στράτευμα, ἐπενεγκὼν αὐτῷ ὅτι, ἡνίκα ὁ Ῥωμαίων στρατὸς τὴν ἐν Βυζακίῳ ἀσכולίαν εἶχε, πολλὰ ἐληίσατο τῶν ἐν Νουμιδίᾳ χωρίων. καὶ ἦν δὲ οὕτως.]

⁸⁸³ *Bella* IV.13.19.

⁸⁸⁴ *Bella* IV.13.28.

⁸⁸⁵ *Bella* IV.13.20, 28, 30, 35, 37.

attempted to remove Ortaïas from his territory, which lay immediately to the west of Mount Aurasium, suggests a territorial dispute.⁸⁸⁶ Ortaïas appears to have attempted to exploit his connections with the Eastern Roman Empire in order to bring an end to the westward expansion of his better established neighbour, Iaudas,⁸⁸⁷

Like Iaudas, Antalas was the leader of a tribe which had established its independence during the Vandal period. As has been discussed in section 2.2, during the reign of Hilderic, the Vandals had suffered a significant defeat in Byzacena, at the hands of Antalas.⁸⁸⁸ In Byzacena, the differing positions of Cusina and Antalas *vis-à-vis* the Eastern Roman Empire may be connected with their own territorial dispute. Procopius makes repeated mention of antagonism between these two leaders, noting:

The two were enemies and were hostile to one another by disposition...⁸⁸⁹

The cause of this enmity is not explicitly attested. However, if Modéran is correct in suggesting that the territories of Antalas and Cusina bordered on one another,⁸⁹⁰ the territorial ambitions of one – clearly attested for Antalas, but possibly also applicable to Cusina – were likely to have been a cause for concern to the other. Indeed, it is tempting to suggest that the raids in Byzacena and Numidia, which were characterised by pillage,⁸⁹¹ rather than by attacks on Roman military infrastructure, were primarily driven by Berber tribal politics, as one tribe sought to prevent the expansion of another, and Roman intervention in these raids was exploited by one tribe against another.

In such an environment of competition – and competition not merely for land, but, possibly, as the Arris and Altava inscriptions imply, for the support of the local Romano-African population – the appearance of political legitimacy was vital, and the Berber request for insignia in 533

⁸⁸⁶ *Bella* IV.13.19.

⁸⁸⁷ *Bella* IV.13.19.

⁸⁸⁸ *Ioh.* III.262–4; *Bella* III.9.3, 8.

⁸⁸⁹ *Bella* IV.25.21: [ἀλλήλοις δὲ ἄμφω πολέμιοί τε καὶ δυσμενεῖς ταῖς γνώμαις ὄντες...]

⁸⁹⁰ Modéran, *Les Maures*, 341–2.

⁸⁹¹ See pp. 190–1.

should be seen in this context. The insignia represented one claim, most likely among many, to legitimacy, which might be recognised by both the Berbers and the Romano-African populations, based on different historical precedents. However, in a sense, the simultaneous request for insignia by multiple tribes might also be argued to represent little more than political one-upmanship.

As has been argued previously, the Romans were in no immediate position, in 533, to address any potential threat posed by the Berbers. The Berbers' lack of willingness to actively back either the Romans or the Vandals prior to the battle of Tricamarum suggests that they were well aware of this fact. Thus, they attempted to derive what benefit they could from the situation. Given that the investiture of insignia could be represented to the Roman population as a gesture of superiority and benevolence on the part of the Roman imperial government, and served to aid the political legitimacy of the various Berber leaders who requested it, the negotiations which occurred in 533 represented a temporary gesture of goodwill, with advantages to both parties, at a time when both groups were otherwise occupied with more immediate concerns. Despite Procopius' depiction of the subsequent Berber raids as an example of the inability of barbarians to keep faith, there is no indication that the negotiations were ever intended to represent a long term political agreement.

Chapter 5: Roman Action and Reaction in Africa (534 to 548)

5.1 Introduction

In mid-September 533, after a remarkably short campaign, the Roman army entered the city of Carthage unopposed and, according to Procopius, welcomed by the population.⁸⁹² The capture of Carthage, the foremost city of the former Roman provinces of Africa and the Vandal capital, undoubtedly held symbolic value for the Roman imperial government. While textual references to the capture of Carthage may have been used synecdochically to refer to the conquest of Africa more generally, it is notable that the prefatory constitutions to the *Digest*, the *Constitutio Tanta* and the *Constitutio Δέδωκεν*, which were promulgated on 16 December 533, and proclaim the success of the African campaign, make a distinction between the capture of Carthage and the conquest of Africa more generally, proclaiming:

... the complete capture of Libya and the recovery of most renowned Carthage...⁸⁹³

Within months, the Vandals been definitively defeated; key coastal position, the primary objective of the campaign, had been secured; and the basis of an administrative system had been established. Contrary to all the objections raised by Justinian's advisers, in the early months of 534, the campaign must have appeared, both from Carthage and from Constantinople, to have been an unmitigated success. From this point forward, the Roman administration in Africa must have imagined, it had only to continue to consolidate and expand Roman authority in the region, a process already begun through the granting of insignia to Berber leaders who might otherwise have posed a threat.

⁸⁹² *Bella* III.20.1.

⁸⁹³ *D. Const. Tanta. D. Const. Δέδωκεν* pref.: [... τὴν ὅλην Λιβύης κτήσιν καὶ τὴν τῆς ὀνομαστοτάτης Καρχηδόνας ἐπανάληψιν...]

However, it was from early 534 that the Roman battle to establish authority in Africa truly began, as the Roman administration sought to counter the threat posed by the Berber tribes, while simultaneously being plagued by a lack of resources, inexperienced and incompetent commanders, and disaffection within the African army; and, in the face of these problems, an ever increasing lack of support from Constantinople, as Africa undoubtedly became seen as a lost cause, and other foreign policy objectives took priority.

The intention of this chapter is to map the Roman response to the circumstances which developed in Africa, highlighting the factors which shaped the course of Roman policy in the region between 534 and 548, the period upon which the sources focus. The Roman responses to the situation in Africa which will be presented below have been broadly divided into five phases – Berber raids and Roman responses to them, from 534 to 536; mutinies within the Roman army, between 536 and 538; the Roman campaign in the Aurès massif, in 540; the resumption of Berber hostilities, between 544 and 546; and the campaigns of John Troglita, between 546 and 548 - each of which is characterised by a change in the balance of power which had been established between the Romans and the Berbers in 533.⁸⁹⁴

5.2 Berber raids and Roman responses (534 to 535)

As has been noted in section 4.4, in 534, mere months after sending embassies to Belisarius at Carthage, the actions of the Berber tribes of Byzacena and Numidia brought them into conflict with the Roman administration in Africa. Procopius' account, which is undoubtedly intended to stress the scale of the destruction wrought for literary effect, presents the Berbers as plundering the provinces, and murdering and enslaving the local Romano-African population.⁸⁹⁵ As has been discussed previously, Procopius makes no attempt to offer a motivation for these, apparently unexpected, hostilities, instead resorting to the *topos* of the

⁸⁹⁴ For the negotiations which occurred between the various Berber tribes and the Roman commander in Africa, Belisarius, in 533, see pp. 173–81.

⁸⁹⁵ *Bella* IV.8.20, 22, 13.1.

barbarian, and claiming that the inclination towards “rebellion” [χειρας ἀνταίρειν] lay in the Berbers’ very nature.⁸⁹⁶

Procopius gives the impression that these hostilities were timed to coincide with Belisarius’ departure from Africa in May or June 534.⁸⁹⁷ From the Roman perspective, the timing was certainly unfortunate. The Berbers, almost certainly unintentionally, exploited the instability caused by a change in Roman leadership in Africa;⁸⁹⁸ the fact that the intended civil and military administrations were not yet in place;⁸⁹⁹ and the lack of preparedness of the Roman army in Africa.⁹⁰⁰ Procopius’ terminology and his implication, that the Berbers’ actions were an attempt to dislodge the newly established Roman administration in Africa, have resulted in the Berber raids in Byzacena and Numidia being termed ‘revolts’ against Roman rule in Africa.⁹⁰¹

However, such an interpretation appears to be at odds with the inclination of individual Berber leaders to direct their hostilities primarily against the Romano-African population, rather than against Roman military and administrative positions, with direct confrontation between the Berbers and the Roman army occurring only as a result of Roman, rather than Berber, initiative.⁹⁰² The possibility that such raids were an established part of the tribal economy and inter-tribal relations, should certainly not be dismissed. Furthermore, as has been argued in section 4.4, the specific context of Berber tribal politics in the 530s appears to have contributed to the escalation of hostilities. Consequently, the term ‘revolt’, which has innate political connotations, will be avoided here.

⁸⁹⁶ *Bella* IV.8.9; with p. 57.

⁸⁹⁷ *Bella* IV.18–21. On the date of Belisarius’ departure from Africa see n. 630.

⁸⁹⁸ See pp. 136–7.

⁸⁹⁹ The legislation establishing civil and military administration in Africa was not intended to come into effect until 1 September 534. See *CJ* 1.27.1.43 and 1.27.2.18.

⁹⁰⁰ *Bella* IV.8.21.

⁹⁰¹ Eg. Bury, *History*, II, 141; Stein, *Histoire*, II, 320.

⁹⁰² *Bella* IV.10.5.

Indeed, the initial engagement between the Berbers and the Roman military was instigated by the commanders (Aïgan and Rufinus) of two detachments of Roman cavalry stationed in Byzacena.⁹⁰³ The Romans pro-actively, and apparently opportunistically, ambushed the Berber baggage train, killing those escorting it and seizing its contents.⁹⁰⁴ This relatively minor action proved to be disastrous for them. The main Berber force was not far away and, having become aware of the attack, it turned back and trapped the Romans in the same pass they had used for their own ambush.⁹⁰⁵ The Romans, including their commanders, were slaughtered.⁹⁰⁶

At Carthage, the recently appointed Praetorian Prefect and *magister militum per Africam*, Solomon, must have been dismayed at the loss of two experienced commanders as well as a significant number of cavalry.⁹⁰⁷ In response to the disaster, he personally led the entire Roman army in Africa into Byzacena.⁹⁰⁸ Procopius, consistent with his own interpretation of the Berber raids, presents the Roman push into Byzacena, in a letter attributed to Solomon, as an attempt to return the Berbers to their sworn obligations [ὄρκοι].⁹⁰⁹ However, this interpretation undoubtedly reflects a profound misunderstanding, on Procopius' part, of the Berber embassies to Carthage in 533, and may not be representative of the understanding of the situation within the Roman administration in Africa.⁹¹⁰

Solomon encountered the leaders of the Berbers of Byzacena - Cusina, Esdilasas, Iourphouthes and Medisinissas - at Mamma (the location of which remains unknown), where they were

⁹⁰³ *Bella* IV.10.3–5. Procopius does not provide any clear date for this engagement. However, since the defeat appears to have prompted Solomon's engagement with the Berbers at Mamma (see n. 908), a date in mid- to late 534 appears to be probable. On Aïgan and Rufinus see *PLRE* IIIA, 32–3 and IIIB, 1097–8 respectively.

⁹⁰⁴ *Bella* IV.10.5.

⁹⁰⁵ *Bella* IV.10.6–7.

⁹⁰⁶ *Bella* IV.10.7.

⁹⁰⁷ Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 66. On the date of Solomon's appointment see pp. 136–7.

⁹⁰⁸ *Bella* IV.11.14. The date of the battle of Mamma is unclear. Given the timing of the battle of Mount Bougaon, which was probably in the spring of 535 (see n. 919), a date in late 534 appears to be plausible. Cf. Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 69; followed by Pringle, *Defence*, 24. *Contra* *PLRE* IIIB, 1170, which favours a date in the spring of 535.

⁹⁰⁹ *Bella* IV.11.2–8; with pp. 190–1.

⁹¹⁰ See p. 188.

encamped with all their people.⁹¹¹ There, the Romans defeated the Berbers in battle.⁹¹² Procopius presents the events at Mamma as a decisive Roman victory, claiming that some ten thousand Berbers were killed, and that all the women and children were taken as slaves.⁹¹³ But these claims appear to be exaggerated. Despite their supposedly heavy losses at Mamma, the Berbers in Byzacena regrouped quickly, and soon returned to raiding the province.⁹¹⁴ Furthermore, there is no evidence that the Romans were able to capitalise upon their victory in order to improve their own territorial position. Instead of advancing further into Byzacena, or securing surrounding positions, the Roman army immediately returned to Carthage, apparently in order to celebrate its victory.⁹¹⁵ This suggests that, whatever Solomon's intention in engaging the Berbers at Mamma, the campaign should not be interpreted as one of territorial expansion, which does not appear to have been a priority in the first few years immediately following the Roman conquest, despite the stated intentions of the legislation establishing the military administration of Africa.⁹¹⁶

Solomon had barely reached Carthage when he was informed that the Berbers had again overrun Byzacena.⁹¹⁷ He immediately led his army back into the field, suggesting that Roman military activity during this period was largely reactive, rather than part of a larger African strategy.⁹¹⁸ On this occasion, the Romans encountered the Berbers encamped on Mount

⁹¹¹ *Bella* IV.11.15–16. On the four Berber leaders see pp. 182–4. The location of Mamma remains uncertain. On the basis of the limited topographical information provided by Procopius (*Bella* IV.11.16 and *Aed.* VI.6.18), M. Solignac, 'Recherches sur les installations hydrauliques de Kairouan et des steppes tunisiennes du VIIe au IXe siècle (J.-C.),' *Annales de l'institut d'études orientales* (Algiers) 10 (1952), 154–69, argues that Mamma must be in the vicinity of Henchir Douimis, between Djebel Ousselat and Djebel el-Cherichera, to the west of Kairouan, in mod. Tunisia. This general location is certainly consistent with what little topographical information is known. Cf. Pringle, *Defence*, 217, who rightly notes the lack of archaeological evidence for the stockade which Procopius claims that Solomon constructed in 535.

⁹¹² *Bella* IV.11.17–55.

⁹¹³ *Bella* IV.11.55–6.

⁹¹⁴ *Bella* IV.12.1; cf. *Bella* 4.11.55.

⁹¹⁵ *Bella* IV.11.56.

⁹¹⁶ See p. 134.

⁹¹⁷ *Bella* IV.12.2.

⁹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Bourgaon, the location of which remains unknown.⁹¹⁹ For a time, each force attempted to wait the other out. However, once it became clear that the Berbers had no intention, after their defeat at Mamma, of confronting the Romans on open ground, Solomon ordered a small force to ascend the less accessible eastern side of the mountain by night.⁹²⁰ He was thus able to attack the Berbers on the mountain from both above and below, and defeat them.⁹²¹

With the battle at Mount Bourgaon, the threat posed by the Berbers in Byzacena was, for a time, suppressed. Esdilasas surrendered to the Romans following the battle,⁹²² and Cusina, Iourphouthes and Medisinissas, together with their surviving followers, fearing attack from the Romano-African population which they had terrorized, fled to Numidia, where they sought sanctuary with Iaudas, the leader of the Berbers of Mount Aurasium.⁹²³ Procopius' claim, that the Berbers feared retaliation from the local population, rather than from the Roman army, reinforces the argument that the actions of the Berbers should not be viewed as revolts against Roman rule.

Antalas, who alone among the Berber leaders of Byzacena had remained peaceable during this period (534–535), was left as the sole Berber leader in Byzacena, with his rule apparently endorsed by the Roman administration.⁹²⁴

⁹¹⁹ *Bella* IV.12.3. On the location of Mount Bourgaon see Pringle, *Defence*, 24 and 537 n. 25. The date of the battle of Mount Bourgaon is uncertain, but a date in the spring of 535 appears to be likely, given that it must occur before the Roman move into Numidia (see n. 927). Cf. Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 69. Pringle, *Defence*, 24, dates the battle to the spring of 534, however, the relevant note (357 n. 24) makes it clear that this is an error, and he means the spring of 535.

⁹²⁰ *Bella* IV.12.3–19.

⁹²¹ *Bella* IV.12.20–8.

⁹²² *Bella* IV.12.26.

⁹²³ *Bella* IV.12.26, 29. In fact, neither Iourphouthes nor Medisinissas are cited by name at Mount Bourgaon, or subsequently, but their presence may be inferred. Procopius refers, in the context of the battle at Mamma, to: ... the four Berber leaders ... whom I mentioned a little before... [... οἱ τέτταρες τῶν Μαυρουσιῶν ἄρχοντες ... ὧν ὀλίγω πρότερον ἐπεμνήσθην...] (*Bella* IV.11.15), which must refer to *Bella* 4.10.6; and subsequently notes, in the context of the battle at Mount Bourgaon, that: All the leaders of the barbarians also fled, except for Esdilasas... [διέφυγον δὲ καὶ οἱ τῶν βαρβάρων ἡγούμενοι πάντες, πλὴν γε δὴ ὅτι Ἐσδιλάσας...] (*Bella* IV.12.26). On Iaudas see pp. 184–7 and section 6.5.

⁹²⁴ *Bella* IV.12.30. On Antalas see further section 6.3.

While the Roman army had been occupied in Byzacena, Iaudas, together with some thirty thousand men, had been pillaging the lands of Numidia and enslaving the Romano-African population there.⁹²⁵ The strong similarities between Procopius' account of the Berber raids in Numidia and of those in Byzacena does, however, create the impression that he had no specific information concerning these events, which occurred in a region largely outside Roman control, and thus resorted to a generic description of barbarian atrocities.⁹²⁶

Solomon, having briefly returned to Carthage following the defeat of the Berbers at Mount Bourgaon, marched into Numidia, probably late in the summer of 535, accompanied by Berber allies.⁹²⁷ The status of these allies is unclear. They may have represented tribes which had sworn allegiance to Belisarius in 533, or, subsequently, to Solomon.⁹²⁸ However, the possibility that they were mercenaries should not be dismissed. Regardless, the Roman administration's use of local military resources in its campaigns against the Berbers is notable.

The expedition against Mount Aurasium was far from successful.⁹²⁹ Iaudas, being better acquainted with the geography of the region over which he ruled than Solomon, decided to array his troops on the mountain itself, rather than on the plain below.⁹³⁰ The Roman army was thus obliged to ascend Mount Aurasium, the difficult terrain of which Procopius describes in the *De Aedificiis*.⁹³¹ Solomon attempted to facilitate this course of action by offering bribes to

⁹²⁵ *Bella* IV.13.1.

⁹²⁶ Contrast *Bella* IV.13.1: ... [Iaudas] ἐληίζετο τὰ ἐπὶ Νομηδίας χωρία, ἠνδραπόδιζε τε τῶν Λιβύων πολλούς; and *Bella* IV.10.5: ... ἐπειδὴ τοὺς Μαυρουσίους εἶδον τὰ τε ἐν ποσὶ ληιζομένους καὶ Λίβυας ἅπαντας ἐν ἀνδραπόδων λόγῳ ποιησαμένους...

⁹²⁷ *Bella* IV.13.18–20; *Aed.* VI.7.2–3. As is the case for all the military campaigns of the period 534 to 535, the date of Solomon's attack on Mount Aurasium is uncertain. However, it is clear from Procopius' account that it was called to a halt with the onset of winter 535 (*Bella* IV.13.39), and that the campaign in Numidia had dragged on for some time. Cf. Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 71; Stein, *Histoire*, 321; Pringle, *Defence*, 24.

⁹²⁸ *Bella* III.25.3–4.

⁹²⁹ On the location of Mount Aurasium see n. 752.

⁹³⁰ *Bella* IV.13.21.

⁹³¹ *Aed.* VI.7.1–7. Procopius' description of the geography of Mount Aurasium has sometimes been criticised for being excessively literary, particularly given the somewhat sinister manner in which it presents the mountain itself (see Janon, 'L'Aurès au VI^e siècle,' 348).

his Berber allies in order that they might act as guides.⁹³² But, having spent ten days on the mountain without encountering Iaudas' men, the Romans, running low on supplies, began to fear that they had been betrayed by their Berber allies, and again descended to the plain below.⁹³³ With winter (535) setting in, Solomon left behind a small force to guard the mountain, and returned to Carthage.⁹³⁴

Procopius, clearly anxious not to present the campaign as a complete failure, claims that Solomon returned to Carthage in order that he might better prepare to march against Mount Aurasium in the spring, with greater numbers and without Berber allies.⁹³⁵ However, it cannot be denied that the years 534 to 535 appear to have seen no significant territorial gain by the Romans in Africa, and only minimal success in discouraging Berber raids on the Romano-African population, if that were indeed the administration's intention. Furthermore, the campaign against Mount Aurasium intended for 536 never occurred.

5.3 The Roman mutiny (536 to 538)

At Easter 536,⁹³⁶ the Roman army at Carthage mutinied, seriously disrupting Solomon's plans for further military campaigns in the Aurès massif.⁹³⁷ The mutiny, which would continue for nearly three years, prevented the Romans from undertaking any campaigns of territorial expansion during this period, as well as disrupting any plans for infrastructure development in the African provinces.⁹³⁸ Between 536 and 539, the African provinces were effectively in a state of civil war, with imperial control at times extending no further than the city of Carthage itself.⁹³⁹

⁹³² *Bella* IV.13.30.

⁹³³ *Bella* IV.13.31–8.

⁹³⁴ *Bella* IV.13.39.

⁹³⁵ *Bella* IV.13.40.

⁹³⁶ *Bella* IV.14.6–7.

⁹³⁷ *Bella* IV.14.13; with n. 935.

⁹³⁸ *Cf.* section 3.5.

⁹³⁹ Jordanes, writing in Constantinople in 550/1 (*Rom.* 363) indeed describes the conflict in Africa in the second half of the 530s as a civil war [*civilia bella*] (*Rom.* 369).

The ramifications of the mutiny lasted far longer. Even after it was put down, the mutiny resulted in an effective depletion of the African army, as troops deemed to be untrustworthy were purged from the army, without alternative forces being available to replace them.⁹⁴⁰ The mutiny is also likely to have contributed to the ongoing ill-will which appears to have existed between the Roman army in Africa and its commanders, and which intermittently manifested itself in smaller scale mutinies.⁹⁴¹ Furthermore, some of the Berber tribes appear to have been aware of factional conflict within the Roman army in Africa and, while the sources are largely silent concerning the actions of the Berbers between 536 and 539, the Berbers almost certainly used this period to consolidate their own positions.⁹⁴² The overall Roman position in Africa was undoubtedly far weaker in 539 than it had been in early 536. The factors which led to ongoing mutiny in Africa, and the steps taken by the Roman administration to address these factors, is thus essential to the understanding of the development of Roman policy in Africa.

In his account of the events which occurred, Procopius explicitly identifies two major causes of resentment within the Roman army in 536 – one pecuniary and the other religious – which initially contributed to the outbreak of mutiny.

First, after the Vandals had been defeated, many Roman soldiers had taken Vandal wives.⁹⁴³ They then attempted to secure as their own those lands which their wives had previously owned.⁹⁴⁴ However, Solomon, while agreeing that slaves and objects of value should be distributed among the soldiers, as was customary, maintained that all lands had been claimed

⁹⁴⁰ *Bella* IV.19.3. Solomon's purge of the African army, on his return to Carthage in mid-to late-539, must have occurred mere months before the resumption of hostilities with Sasanian Persia in the spring of 540. See *Bella* 2.5.1; with G. Greatrex & S. N. C. Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars: Part II AD 363-630* (London, 2002). 269 n. 6. It is therefore highly unlikely that the Roman imperial government should have committed additional military resources to Africa in 540 (see pp. 143–5).

⁹⁴¹ See pp. 208–9, 230–1.

⁹⁴² See p. 207.

⁹⁴³ *Bella* IV.14.8.

⁹⁴⁴ *Bella* IV.14.9. Procopius in fact specifies that it was the Vandal women themselves who urged their husbands to insist on their right to claim their wives' property.

in the name of the emperor, and belonged to the imperial estates.⁹⁴⁵ The soldiers thus felt that they were being deprived of their due.

Regardless of his personal feelings, Solomon would have had little say in the matter. Within a short time of the conquest, Justinian had promulgated legislation granting anyone who could produce legal proof that he, or his family, had held property in Africa, and had been dispossessed of it during the period of Vandal rule, a period of five years in which to reclaim it.⁹⁴⁶ Consequently, for the five year period dictated by the legislation, the emperor merely held the lands conquered in Africa in trust (albeit, while undoubtedly extracting taxation revenues from them), unless or until they should be claimed by their former occupants.⁹⁴⁷ In these circumstances, lands could not be granted to the soldiers who had participated in the campaign until 1 January 539 at the earliest.⁹⁴⁸

Second, accurately or not, the African campaign had been presented to the population of the Eastern Roman Empire as being in defence of the Nicene Christian population of Africa.⁹⁴⁹ Consistent with this image, and apparently under pressure from both the African bishops, who had assembled for a general council in early 535,⁹⁵⁰ and the Pope, Justinian followed the proclamation of the conquest with legislation intended to enforce the practice of Nicene

⁹⁴⁵ *Bella* IV.14.10. There may also be an allusion to this grievance in the speech which Procopius attributes to the leader of the mutiny, Stotzas, in which he exhorts the soldiers to remember that: ... you have been deprived of the spoils of the enemy, which the laws of war have set as prizes for the dangers in battle... [... ἀφήρησθε δὲ τῶν πολεμίων τὰ λάφυρα, ἃ τῶν ἐν μάχαις κινδύνων ἄθλα ὁ τοῦ πολέμου τέθεικε νόμος...] (*Bella* IV.15.55). Cf. *Anec.* XVIII.10.

⁹⁴⁶ The original legislation of this Pragmatic Sanction does not survive, but it is alluded to by *Novella* 36, promulgated on 1 January 535, which adds the additional stipulation that the property had to have been held by an ancestor no more than three generations distant from the claimant. See C. Saumagne, 'Étude sur la propriété ecclésiastique à Carthage d'après les nouvelles 36 et 37 de Justinien,' *BZ* 22 (1913), 81–2. See also pp. 99–102.

⁹⁴⁷ *Bella* IV.8.25 makes it clear that, immediately following the Roman conquest, a census of lands in Africa was undertaken, in order to assess the taxes which should be drawn from them. Cf. *Anec.* XVIII.10.

⁹⁴⁸ Thus, Stein, *Histoire*, II, 321–2.

⁹⁴⁹ See pp. 89–90.

⁹⁵⁰ On the date of the council see P. Champetier, 'Les conciles africaines durant la période byzantine,' *Revue Africaine* 95 (1951), 104.

Christianity in the region.⁹⁵¹ Like the legislation relating to African property, the original legislation relating to the church in Africa is no longer extant,⁹⁵² but reference is made to it in *Novella* 37, promulgated on 1 August 535, which applies primarily to church property.⁹⁵³ *Novella* 37 includes the stipulation, which may or not have been present in the original legislation, that:

We do not permit Jews or pagans or Donatists or Arian or any other heretics either to have dens or to conduct certain ecclesiastical practices like rites, since it is irrational to permit sacred rites to be carried out by impious men.⁹⁵⁴

However, at least a thousand soldiers of Arian faith were serving with the Roman army in Africa – for the most part, among the Germanic *foederati*.⁹⁵⁵ As a result of Justinian’s legislation, these soldiers and their dependents were unable to receive any form of sacrament.⁹⁵⁶ According to Procopius, the tension caused by this issue was pushed to crisis point when the Arian soldiers, undoubtedly encouraged by the remaining Arian priests at Carthage,⁹⁵⁷ found themselves unable to baptise their children or celebrate the customary rites at Easter.⁹⁵⁸

These two factors undoubtedly contributed to the outbreak of mutiny in 536. However, a third factor, not explicitly noted by Procopius in the *Bella*, but suggested by the *Anecdota*, should also be considered – the fact that the soldiers’ pay was most likely in arrears.⁹⁵⁹ In the *Bella*, Procopius alludes to this issue in the context of a speech attributed to the leader of the mutiny,

⁹⁵¹ *J. Nov.* 37.1.

⁹⁵² See n. 946.

⁹⁵³ *J. Nov.* 37.1 and 4; with Saumagne, ‘Étude sur la propriété ecclésiastique,’ 81–2.

⁹⁵⁴ *J. Nov.* 37.8: [Neque enim Iudaeos neque paganos neque Donatistas neque Arianos neque alios quoscumque haereticos vel speluncas habere vel quaedam quasi ritu ecclesiastico facere patimur, cum hominibus impiis sacra peragenda permittere satis absurdum est.] Similarly, *J. Nov.* 37.5.

⁹⁵⁵ *Bella* IV.14.12.

⁹⁵⁶ *Bella* IV.14.14. Mention of this is also made in the *Anecdota*, specifically in reference to the Arians (XVIII.10).

⁹⁵⁷ *Bella* IV.14.13.

⁹⁵⁸ *Bella* IV.14.15.

⁹⁵⁹ *Anec.* XVIII.11. Cf. Stein, *Histoire*, II, 321; Jones, *LRE*, 1279 n. 164.

Stotzas, prior to the battle near Gadiaufala in the summer of 536.⁹⁶⁰ In this speech, Stotzas exhorts the forces of the Roman commanders:

... do you not remember that you have been deprived of the pay long since owed to you?⁹⁶¹

The contents of Procopius' speeches should undoubtedly be treated with caution, since they are largely literary constructs, and Procopius himself was definitely not present.⁹⁶² Nevertheless, it is likely that the army's pay was indeed in arrears. A lack of pay was a frequent complaint of the Roman army of Justinian's reign,⁹⁶³ and the actions of both Belisarius and Germanus, on their arrivals at Carthage in 536 – the distribution of outstanding pay – confirm that this was an issue in Africa.⁹⁶⁴

These causes of resentment were not necessarily the product of mismanagement on the part of the Roman administration at Carthage, or of the Praetorian Prefect. While Solomon was undoubtedly responsible for enforcing imperial decrees regarding the reallocation of property and religious orthodoxy, the legislation itself originated at Constantinople, and is likely to have been influenced by those groups at Constantinople which had originally advocated Roman intervention in Africa.⁹⁶⁵ Even the issue of soldiers' pay may not have been within the power of the provincial administration. While soldiers' pay was generally drawn from the revenues of the provinces in the soldiers were stationed, the limited Roman holdings in Africa in 536 are unlikely to have provided sufficient taxation revenues to support a large number of troops.⁹⁶⁶ The payment of troops was, therefore, contingent on the receipt of additional funds from

⁹⁶⁰ On the battle see pp. 204–5.

⁹⁶¹ *Bella* IV.15.55: [... οὐ μέμνησθε ὡς ἐστέρησθε μὲν τῶν ἄνωθεν ὑμῖν ὀφειλομένων συντάξεων...]. Similarly, *Bella* IV.18.9.

⁹⁶² Procopius had by this point departed from Africa (*Bella* IV.14.39).

⁹⁶³ This is one of the general criticisms of Justinian's reign made by Procopius in the *Anecdota* (XVIII.11): He [Justinian] was also tardy in respect of the pay for his military forces... [καὶ ταῖς στρατιωτικαῖς συντάξεσιν ὑπερήμερος ἦν...]. Cf. *Anec.* XXIV, in which Procopius make a number of complaints regarding soldiers' conditions of service during Justinian's reign.

⁹⁶⁴ Thus, Jones, *LRE*, 1279 n. 164. *Bella* IV.15.11, 16.5.

⁹⁶⁵ On groups with interests in the Roman invasion of Africa see pp. 97–107.

⁹⁶⁶ Jones, *LRE*, 677. The practice of paying soldiers from the revenues of the province in which they were stationed is noted in *J. Edict* 13.13

Constantinople, which were unlikely to be forthcoming when imperial resources were otherwise stretched.

The culmination of these grievances was a plot to murder Solomon on Good Friday (23 March) 536.⁹⁶⁷ The plot ultimately failed. Despite two attempts (on 23 and 24 March), none among the mutineers had the conviction to carry out their plan, and some fled the city, fearing that their role in the conspiracy was known.⁹⁶⁸ Nevertheless, disaffection within the Roman army at Carthage escalated rapidly and, on 28 March,⁹⁶⁹ soldiers marched on the prefect's palace, killing all those in their way and plundering where they could.⁹⁷⁰ As a result of these events, Solomon was forced to flee Africa, accompanied by Procopius, and take refuge with Belisarius in Syracuse, entrusting the administration of Carthage to his subordinate, Theodore the Cappadocian.⁹⁷¹

The mutineers, having plundered Carthage, gathered on the Plain of Boulla (Bulla Regia).⁹⁷² There, they chose Stotzas, who had previously been one of the guards of Martinus, one of the

⁹⁶⁷ *Bella* IV.14.22; with V. Grumel, *Traité d'études byzantines: La chronologie* (Paris, 1958), 310.

⁹⁶⁸ *Bella* IV.14.25–8.

⁹⁶⁹ Procopius describes the events as occurring “on the fifth day” [ἡμέρα ... τῆ πέμπτῃ] after Easter (*Bella* IV.14.31).

⁹⁷⁰ *Bella* IV.14.31–6.

⁹⁷¹ *Bella* IV.14.37–42. Nothing is known of Theodore the Cappadocian's position in the administration prior to the mutiny, although he had previously been sent by Solomon to try to win the soldiers support (*Bella* IV.14.33–4). He was clearly trusted by Solomon, despite the fact he was, at one point, acclaimed as general by the mutineers, and his actions suggest that he must have been one of the commanders. See *PLRE* III B, 1247.

⁹⁷² *Bella* IV.15.1. Cf. *Bella* IV.14.28. The location of the site of the Plain of Boulla remains contested. According to Procopius (*Bella* III.25.1), the Plain of Boulla was “... distant from Carthage a journey of four days for an unencumbered traveller, not far from the boundaries of Numidia...” [... ὅπερ εὐζώνω ἀνδρὶ τεσσάρων ἡμερῶν ὁδῷ Καρχηδόνος διέχει, οὐ πολλῶ ἄποθεν τῶν Νουμιδίας ὀρίων...] Traditionally, it has been identified with Bulla Regia (a site c. 5 km north of mod. Jendouba, Tunisia), largely on the grounds of etymological similarity. See Tissot, *Géographie comparée*, I, 62; Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 24; Courtois, *Les Vandales*, 190; Desanges, ‘La dernière retraite de Gelimer,’ 429–30; C.-A. Julien, *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord*, ed. C. Courtois, 2nd edn. (Paris, 1951), 259; A. Beschouch *et al.*, *Les ruines de Bulla Regia* (Rome, 1977), 9, 11. J. F. Hopkins, ‘The Medieval toponymy of Tunisia. Some identifications,’ *CT* 53–6 (1966), 34–5, also suggests that an identification with the plain south of Bulla Regia is consistent with the location of the *Fahs Boll* (Plain of Boll), noted by the 11th century geographer, al-Bakri (*Description de l'Afrique septentrionale*, trans. de Slane, 114–5). Contra A. Mcharek, ‘De saint Augustin à al-Bakri. Sur la localisation de l'ager Bullensis dans l'Africa latino-chrétienne et de “Fahs Boll” en Ifriqiya arabo-Musulmane,’ *CRAI* 143 (1999), 115–42, who argues that al-Bakri's *Fahs Boll*, and thus Procopius' Plain of Boulla, should be identified with the plain of Boughanem, some 150 km south of Bulla Regia. This view is tentatively accepted by Modéran, *Les*

nine commanders of the cavalry who had accompanied Belisarius to Africa in 533, and who had been present in Africa with Martinus since 533, as their leader.⁹⁷³

The mutiny initially appears to have been one of genuinely dissatisfied rank and file soldiers, rather than a bid for power by an ambitious commander, since the actions of the mutiny, in its initial plan to murder Solomon, appear to have lacked direction and leadership.⁹⁷⁴ Subsequently, however, strong leaders began to emerge from within the officer class of the African army, and the selection of Stotzas as leader appears to have consolidated the mutineers into a genuine threat to Roman administration in Africa.⁹⁷⁵ However, their longer term objectives remain unclear. Procopius claims that the mutineers intended to drive all the military commanders loyal to the emperor out of Africa.⁹⁷⁶ This may, of course, be his personal interpretation of events. But, Procopius, Agathias, the *continuator* of Marcellinus Comes and Jordanes all describe Stotzas as a tyrant [τύραννος/tyrannus], and Victor of Tunnuna claims that “in Africa, Stotzas assumed the kingdom with tyranny.”⁹⁷⁷ On the basis of these references Stotzas has sometimes been argued to have assumed the imperial title, which would imply the establishment of an African polity independent of the Eastern Roman Empire.⁹⁷⁸

Maurus, 432 n. 73. However, not only would this place the Plain of Boulla c. 250 km from Carthage, at the very limit of the distance which Procopius suggests that a man could travel in a day (between 32 and 62 km) (see Pringle, *Defence*, 352 n. 28), it also places it a considerable distance from the coast. Given that Gelimer waited at the Plain of Boulla to receive reinforcements from Sardinia in 533, Bulla Regia, being considerably closer to “... the point of Libya which marks the boundary between the Numidians and the Mauritanians” [... κατέπλευσαν ἐς τὴν Λιβύης ἀκτὴν, ἢ Νουμίδας τε καὶ Μαυριτανοὺς διορίζει], where Procopius claims that the Vandal reinforcements landed, before travelling to the Plain of Boulla, on foot (*Bella* III.25.21-2), appears to be a more likely identification for the Plain of Boulla than the plain of Boughanem. Although, the suggestion of Hopkins, ‘The Medieval toponymy of Tunisia,’ 35, that there were two Fahs Boll cannot be discounted.

⁹⁷³ *Bella* III.11.30 and IV.15.1. Stotzas is attested under a number of spellings. He is Στότζας in Procopius and Agathias, Stotzas in Jordanes, Stutias in Corippus, Stotias in the continuation of Marcellinus Comes, and Stuzas in Victor of Tunnuna. See *PLRE* IIIB, 1199. One Martinus see *PLRE* IIIB, 839–48.

⁹⁷⁴ Thus, W. Kaegi, *Byzantine Military Unrest, 471–843: An Interpretation* (Amsterdam, 1981), 49.

⁹⁷⁵ *Bella* III.11.30 and IV.15.1.

⁹⁷⁶ *Bella* IV.15.1.

⁹⁷⁷ *Bella* IV.15.1; Agathias, *Hist.* pref. 25; *Marc. Com. Addit. s.a.* 537.3; Jordanes, *Rom.* 369; Victor of Tunnuna, 129; [Stuzas apud Affricam regnum ... cum tirannide assumit.] The references to Stotzas in Agathias and Victor of Tunnuna do, admittedly, occur *à propos* of his actions in 541, rather than in the 530s.

⁹⁷⁸ *PLRE* IIIB, 1200.

Stotzas proceeded to gather a force of 8 000 Roman soldiers, as well as some thousand Vandals.⁹⁷⁹ The scale of the mutiny is perhaps surprising, and suggests massive disaffection within the army in Africa. If Procopius' troop numbers for the original campaign of conquest are even close to accurate, the mutiny must have enjoyed substantial support.⁹⁸⁰ Stotzas' forces would have amounted to more than half of the total military resources in Africa at the time.⁹⁸¹ Stotzas then marched on Carthage.⁹⁸² When his terms for the surrender of the city were rejected by Theodore the Cappadocian, he besieged it.⁹⁸³

Meanwhile, Belisarius, having been apprised of the situation by Solomon, sailed from Syracuse with a hundred of his own men and, landing near Carthage, encamped near the city.⁹⁸⁴ The mutineers, who had expected Carthage to capitulate imminently, fled once they learnt of Belisarius' presence,⁹⁸⁵ and he, having offered bribes in order to secure the loyalty of those Roman soldiers remaining at Carthage – according to Procopius, only some 2 000 men – set out in pursuit.⁹⁸⁶ Belisarius encountered the mutineers in the vicinity of the town of Membressa (mod. Medjez el-Bab, Tunisia).⁹⁸⁷ Stotzas' forces, although vastly superior in number, appear to have been disadvantaged by a poorly chosen defensive position and a lack of discipline.⁹⁸⁸ Once Belisarius committed his forces to the attack, the mutineers fled to Numidia.⁹⁸⁹ But, having only a small number of men at his disposal, Belisarius chose not to pursue them.⁹⁹⁰

⁹⁷⁹ *Bella* IV.14.18–9, 15.2–3. Stein, *Histoire*, II, 323, suggests that the Vandals who had escaped to Mount Aurasium had encouraged the Roman army to mutiny, but it seems to be more likely that they simply took advantage of the mutiny after the fact.

⁹⁸⁰ The initial military commitment to Africa must have amounted to c. 16 000 men. See p. 142.

⁹⁸¹ *Bella* IV.15.2. On the number of troops in Africa see section 3.4.

⁹⁸² *Bella* IV.15.2.

⁹⁸³ *Bella* IV.15.5–8.

⁹⁸⁴ *Bella* IV.15.9; *Marcell. Com. Addit. s.a.* 535; Jordanes, *Rom.* 369. The *continuator* of Marcellinus Comes places the event a year too early. See Croke, *The Chronicle of Marcellinus*, 127–8.

⁹⁸⁵ *Bella* IV.15.10.

⁹⁸⁶ *Bella* IV.15.11.

⁹⁸⁷ *Bella* IV.15.12.

⁹⁸⁸ *Bella* IV.15.40–4.

⁹⁸⁹ *Bella* IV.15.44; *Ioh.* 3.310–13.

⁹⁹⁰ *Bella* IV.15.46.

However, Belisarius' victory at Membressa only temporarily checked the threat posed by Stotzas' mutiny. On his return to Carthage, Belisarius learned that a mutiny had also broken out in the army in Sicily.⁹⁹¹ He was therefore forced to leave Carthage under the command of Theodore the Cappadocian and Ildiger, and depart for Sicily with all speed, leaving the situation in Africa unresolved.⁹⁹²

In Numidia, the Roman commanders in Africa who remained loyal to the Roman imperial government gathered their forces, under the overall command of Marcellus, the *dux* of Numidia.⁹⁹³ Upon hearing that Stotzas was at Gazophylos (more commonly Gadiaufala, mod. Ksar Sbahi, Algeria), Marcellus led his forces against the mutineers.⁹⁹⁴ However, when the two armies approached one another, Stotzas addressed the troops under Marcellus' command, urging them to remember the misfortunes which they had suffered and, in particular, that they had not been paid, and encouraged them to switch sides.⁹⁹⁵

When the Roman commanders saw that their troops were receptive to Stotzas' words, they hastily withdrew, and took refuge in a sanctuary at Gadiaufala.⁹⁹⁶ Stotzas combined the two military forces into a single army, and then, despite offering pledges for the safety of the Roman commanders, killed them.⁹⁹⁷ Procopius identifies the commanders of the *foederati* as Marcellus and Cyril, of the cavalry as Barbatus, and of the infantry as Terentius and Sarapis,⁹⁹⁸ and

⁹⁹¹ *Bella* IV.15.48.

⁹⁹² *Bella* IV.15.49. Jordanes (*Rom.* 370) also mentions Belisarius' defeat of the mutineers and Solomon's return to the position of Praetorian Prefect. However, he neglects to mention that Belisarius was forced to return to Sicily as the result of a mutiny there, instead merely noting that Belisarius had to return to Sicily because he was stationed there. On Theodore the Cappadocian see n. 971. Ildiger had been sent to Africa, together with Theodore the Cappadocian, in 534 (*Bella* IV.8.24). He was, moreover, the son-in-law of Belisarius' wife, Antonina. See *PLRE* IIIA, 615–6.

⁹⁹³ *Bella* IV.15.51. At the point of Solomon's departure from Africa, he had directed Martinus to travel to Numidia to rally support (*Bella* IV.14.40). On Marcellus see *PLRE* IIIB, 1355–6.

⁹⁹⁴ *Bella* IV.15.52. The events at Gadiaufala have sometimes been dated to the summer of 535, on the basis that they must occur before Germanus' arrival in Africa. See Stein, *Histoire*, 324. This is a reasonable assumption, if the date of Germanus' arrival (before the end of 536) is correct. However, this date is itself not without problems (see n. 1000).

⁹⁹⁵ *Bella* IV.15.54–7.

⁹⁹⁶ *Bella* IV.15.58–9.

⁹⁹⁷ *Bella* IV.15.59; Jordanes, *Rom.* 369.

⁹⁹⁸ *Bella* IV.15.50.

Jordanes provides the additional note that Pharas, who had been commander of the Herul allied troops during the campaign of conquest, was also killed.⁹⁹⁹ The loss of five experienced commanders, all of whom had been in Africa since 533, was undoubtedly a serious blow to the Roman military administration in Africa.

When news of the disaster at Gadiaufala reached the emperor at Constantinople, he sent his nephew, Germanus, to Carthage.¹⁰⁰⁰ Justinian's selection of a member of his own family as commander in Africa is testament to the seriousness of the situation. Germanus was accompanied by Symmachus, who was to be Praetorian Prefect of Africa, as well as being responsible for the maintenance of the army; and Domnicus, who was to be commander of the infantry, under Germanus' overall command.¹⁰⁰¹ Procopius describes both Symmachus and Domnicus as being "men of the senate" [ἄνδρες ἐκ βουλῆς], suggesting that they are likely to have had some administrative experience, although neither man is previously attested in a military capacity.¹⁰⁰² Given that the three men were sent to Africa together, as a response to the mutiny, and were subsequently recalled to Constantinople together in 539,¹⁰⁰³ these men, as a unit, may have been envisaged as an interim administration in Africa, which had been selected, as much as for any other reason, for its lack of connections with the previous administration.

⁹⁹⁹ Jordanes, *Rom.* 369. On Pharas see *PLRE* IIIB, 1015–16. It is interesting that he should have remained loyal to the Roman administration, given that Procopius implies that the Heruls, who were Arians, were among the initial mutineers (*Bella* IV.14.12).

¹⁰⁰⁰ *Bella* IV.16.1; *Marcell. Com. Addit. s.a.* 536. On Germanus see *PLRE* II, 505–6. The *continuator* of Marcellinus Comes places Germanus' arrival in Africa in the 14th indiction, which would place it between 1 September 535 and 31 August 536 (see Grumel, *La Chronologie*, 245). On the basis of this, it has been argued that Germanus must have arrived in Africa before the end of 536. See Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 83 n. 7; Stein, *Histoire*, 324 n. 2; and Pringle, *Defence*, 26. However, given that the *continuator* is not infrequently inaccurate in his dating of events in Africa (*cf.* n. 984), the event could as easily be a year later. Confidence in the entry is not instilled by the fact that two other entries for this year (3 and 8) appear to be a year too early (see Croke, *The Chronicle of Marcellinus*, 127–8). Although, entries 3 and 8 both refer to events in Italy, and it is plausible that the *continuator* had an alternative source for events in Africa.

¹⁰⁰¹ *Bella* IV.16.2.

¹⁰⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰³ See n. 1029.

Germanus, upon arriving at Carthage, discovered that some two-thirds of the Roman army in Africa had joined Stotzas, with the remaining third divided between Carthage and various other Roman positions.¹⁰⁰⁴ Presumably as a result of this numerical disadvantage,¹⁰⁰⁵ Germanus did not immediately seek to engage Stotzas and his followers in battle, instead trying to encourage desertions from Stotzas' forces by offering a general amnesty to those who returned, as well as all pay in arrears, including for the period during which the soldiers had been under Stotzas' command.¹⁰⁰⁶

Stotzas, becoming alarmed at his declining forces, was anxious to hasten a military confrontation while he still held some numerical advantage, and thus marched again on Carthage.¹⁰⁰⁷ He encamped 35 stades (c. 7.4 km) from the city, on the coast,¹⁰⁰⁸ and Germanus marched his forces out to meet him.¹⁰⁰⁹ The two armies remained in position opposite one another for some time.¹⁰¹⁰ However, when the mutineers saw that none among Germanus' forces was deserting, as Stotzas had assured his men they would,¹⁰¹¹ they once again withdrew to Numidia, where their women and wealth had remained.¹⁰¹²

Germanus and his forces followed, overtaking the mutineers at Scalae Veteres.¹⁰¹³ The site of Scalae Veteres is not entirely certain, but has tentatively been identified with modern Faïd es-Siouda, c. 30 km south of Tébessa, in Algeria.¹⁰¹⁴ Here, for the first time, the Berber tribes appeared in the context of the mutiny. According to Procopius, the mutineers were followed by “many thousands of Berbers” [Μαυρουσίων μυριάδες πολλάί].¹⁰¹⁵ This figure is almost

¹⁰⁰⁴ *Bella* IV.16.3.

¹⁰⁰⁵ *Cf. Bella* IV.16.7.

¹⁰⁰⁶ *Bella* IV.16.4–6.

¹⁰⁰⁷ *Bella* IV.16.8–9.

¹⁰⁰⁸ *Bella* IV.16.10.

¹⁰⁰⁹ *Bella* IV.16.10.

¹⁰¹⁰ *Bella* IV.17.1.

¹⁰¹¹ *Bella* IV.16.9 and IV 17.1

¹⁰¹² *Bella* IV.17.1.

¹⁰¹³ *Bella* IV.17.2–3. Scalae Veteres is presumably identical to Corippus' Cellas Vatari (*Ioh.* III.318).

¹⁰¹⁴ Pringle, *Defence*, 360 n. 58.

¹⁰¹⁵ *Bella* IV.17.8.

certainly an exaggeration on Procopius' part, but more than one tribal group does appear to have been represented. Procopius notes that they were led by many leaders, but names only two – Iaudas and Ortaías – a slightly odd pairing, given that, while both are previously attested as leaders in Numidia, his previous reference to the two men suggests that they were hostile to one another.¹⁰¹⁶ Procopius stresses that the Berber tribes had not allied themselves to the mutineers, and had hung back because some had previously pledged themselves to Germanus, and were waiting to see how the battle would play out before committing themselves to either side.¹⁰¹⁷

The battle which occurred at Scalae Veteres was one of complete disorder. Procopius notes that, given that the two armies spoke the same language and used the same equipment, it became almost impossible for the two sides to distinguish friend from foe.¹⁰¹⁸ In the confusion which resulted, Stotzas, abandoned by all but a few of his Vandal followers, fled to Mauritania, where he married the daughter of an unnamed local ruler.¹⁰¹⁹ But his role in events in Africa was by no means over. In 544, having clearly consolidated his position among the Berbers, he emerged from Mauritania and allied himself with Antalas, the leader of the Berbers in Byzacena.¹⁰²⁰

Either during or immediately following Stotzas' mutiny, Maximinus, one of the guards of Theodore the Cappadocian,¹⁰²¹ with the support of “very many soldiers” [τῶν στρατιωτῶν

¹⁰¹⁶ *Bella* IV.17.8; with pp. 186–7.

¹⁰¹⁷ *Bella* IV.17.9–12.

¹⁰¹⁸ *Bella* IV.17.21.

¹⁰¹⁹ *Bella* IV.17.35; VII.39.12; *Ioh.* III.314–9; *Marcell. Com. Addit. s.a.* 537. The only date for these events is again provided by the *continuator* of Marcellinus Comes, who places it in the 15th indication (1 September 536 to 1 August 537; see Grumel, *La Chronologie*, 245), and its reliability is open to question (see nn. 984 and 1000). Nevertheless, it has generally been accepted that these events must have occurred in the course of 537. See Stein, *Histoire*, 326; and Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 84, who offers a *terminus post quem* of the spring of 537. Diehl's rationale for narrowing the range of dates is not made clear, but presumably derives from the disinclination of the Roman army in Africa to campaign in winter (*cf.* *Bella* IV.13.39–40). The only clear *terminus ante quem* for Germanus' actions in Africa is his recall, in 539 (see n. 1029).

¹⁰²⁰ See p. 220.

¹⁰²¹ On Theodore see *PLRE* IIIB, 1247–8.

πλείστους], attempted to revolt against the Roman administration at Carthage and establish himself as ruler.¹⁰²² However, in the process of recruiting additional supporters to his cause, Maximinus confided his plans to Asclepiades, a friend of Theodore the Cappadocian, who conveyed this information to Theodore, who in turn informed Germanus.¹⁰²³ Germanus, being at that time occupied with other concerns, initially attempted to contain the threat by appointing Maximinus as one of his personal bodyguards – a position which required him to swear allegiance to both Germanus and the Roman emperor.¹⁰²⁴ However, when Maximinus and his followers attempted to stage a coup at Carthage, he was seized and executed.¹⁰²⁵ Procopius draws no explicit connection between Maximinus' revolt and Stotzas' mutiny. Nevertheless, it is likely that Maximinus was motivated by resentments about soldiers' conditions of service, as Procopius claims that the soldiers following Maximinus complained that they were owed pay for a long period, and he may well have been inspired by Stotzas' successes.¹⁰²⁶

Maximinus' revolt was, ultimately, contained relatively easily, although Procopius notes that this might not have been the case had the rebels been permitted to assemble.¹⁰²⁷ However, this was, at least in part, facilitated by the fact that the revolt occurred at Carthage, where Germanus was firmly established and surrounded by his own supporters; and even small scale insubordination, when it occurred in the army in the field, could pose a major threat to the African administration.¹⁰²⁸

¹⁰²² *Bella* IV.18.1–2. Procopius places Maximinus' revolt immediately following the battle of Scalae Veteres in his narrative. However, the only internal evidence for the respective chronology of the events is that Maximinus' revolt occurred during Germanus' time in Africa – that is, between 537 and 539 (see nn. 1000 and 1029). Beyond his role as Theodore the Cappadocian's guard and his revolt, nothing further is known about Maximinus. See *PLRE* IIIB, 865.

¹⁰²³ *Bella* IV.18.3–4. Nothing further is known about Asclepiades. See *PLRE* IIIA, 134.

¹⁰²⁴ *Bella* IV.18.5–7. The fact that Procopius claims that Germanus did not wish to act immediately might perhaps suggest that the incident occurred during Stotzas's revolt, but this is inconclusive.

¹⁰²⁵ *Bella* IV.18.8–18.

¹⁰²⁶ *Bella* IV.18.9.

¹⁰²⁷ *Bella* IV.18.12.

¹⁰²⁸ For example, the mutiny in the Roman army in 546. See pp. 230–1.

5.4 The Aurès campaign (539 to 540)

By 539, the immediate problem of mutiny within the African army must have been regarded as resolved. Germanus, Domnicus and Symmachus were recalled to Constantinople, and Solomon was again sent to Africa to resume both the position of Praetorian Prefect of Africa and that of *magister militum per Africam*.¹⁰²⁹ The precise date of Solomon's return to Africa is uncertain. Procopius notes only that it was "... in the 13th year of his [Justinian's] reign", which would place it between 1 April 539 and 31 March 540. The *continuator* of Marcellinus Comes, on the other hand, places the event in the 2nd indication of Justinian's reign (1 September 538 to 31 August 539).¹⁰³⁰ Given the rough correlation of the two chronologies, a date in mid-539 seems to be probable. This would be consistent with three (identical) building inscriptions from Thamugadi, which are explicitly dated to the 13th year of Justinian's reign, and name Solomon as *magister militum* and Praetorian Prefect, which must have been erected following Solomon's subsequent campaign in the Aurès massif.¹⁰³¹

Having firmly re-established his own administration,¹⁰³² Solomon again turned to the subjugation of the Berber tribes of the Aurès massif, which had originally been planned for 536.¹⁰³³ No source provides an explicit date for the campaign, resulting in its variously being dated to 539 and 540.¹⁰³⁴ However, given the date of Solomon's return to Africa, and his need to

¹⁰²⁹ *Bella* IV.19.1; *Marc. Com. Addit. s.a.* 539.5. It is not explicitly stated that Solomon was again to combine civil and military responsibilities, but, while Solomon clearly exercised military responsibility, there is no suggestion that he was accompanied to Africa by anyone who was to replace Symmachus as Praetorian Prefect. Cf. *PLRE* IIIB, 1172.

¹⁰³⁰ *Bella* IV.19.1: [... τρισκαιδέκατον ἔτος τὴν αὐτοκράτορα ἔχων ἀρχίῃν.] Justinian was appointed co-emperor to his uncle Justin I on 1 April 527. On the date of Justinian's accession see *PLRE* II, 647–8. *Marc. Com. Addit. s.a.* 539.5.

¹⁰³¹ Durliat, *Les dédicaces*, nos. 19–21. Pringle, *Defence*, 361 n. 1. These inscriptions are discussed further on pp. 147–8, 214–5.

¹⁰³² See *Bella* IV.19.3.

¹⁰³³ *Bella* IV.13.40.

¹⁰³⁴ Modéran, *Les Maures*, 593, favours 539; while Pringle, *Defence*, 27, is still more specific, dating the campaign to the summer of 539. *Contra* *PLRE* IIIB, 1174, which favours a date in 540.

secure his own position there, after the manner of his departure, a date in the spring of 540 seems to be more likely.

The objectives of the campaign are, by this point in time, unclear. The Roman campaign against the Berbers of Mount Aurasium in 535 is presented as being a counter to Berber raids against the Romano-African population.¹⁰³⁵ However, it would have been illogical to resume such action four years later, particularly in view of the fact that there is no evidence for ongoing Berber hostilities in the interim. Instead, the 540 campaign in the Aurès massif was perhaps the first Roman action against the Berbers which can be interpreted as a deliberate attempt to expand the Roman frontiers in Africa,¹⁰³⁶ in accordance with the terms of the legislation establishing military administration in Africa.¹⁰³⁷ Furthermore, Solomon may have been anxious to achieve victory in his interrupted campaign against Mount Aurasium in order to regain prestige, and to restore confidence, among both the African army and the Roman imperial government at Constantinople, in his leadership. A general forced to flee from his own army, can only have suffered a loss of status, and Solomon's re-appointment represented a considerable risk on the part of the Roman imperial government.

Solomon initially sent an advance force, which engaged the Berbers under the command of Iaudas near the city of Bagai,¹⁰³⁸ which has reasonably been identified, on etymological grounds, with the modern city of Baghai in Algeria.¹⁰³⁹ The Romans were defeated, and were forced to retreat into their camp, where they remained besieged.¹⁰⁴⁰ The Berbers then took advantage of the geography of the site. Bagai was located on a plain, which was watered by the tributaries of the Abigas River, flowing down from Mount Aurasium.¹⁰⁴¹ The Berbers cut off the streams,

¹⁰³⁵ See pp. 190–1.

¹⁰³⁶ Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 87, suggests that territorial expansion in Africa became a priority as the conquest of Italy drew to a close.

¹⁰³⁷ See nn. 623–4.

¹⁰³⁸ *Bella* IV.19.5–7. On Iaudas see section 6.5.

¹⁰³⁹ Morizot, 'Recherches sur les campagnes de Solomon,' 85.

¹⁰⁴⁰ *Bella* IV.19.8.

¹⁰⁴¹ *Bella* IV.19.1–13; with Morizot, 'Recherches sur les campagnes de Solomon,' 85.

channeling the entire flow of water from the mountains into the Roman camp, and creating a marsh around it.¹⁰⁴² When he heard what had occurred, Solomon, who had encamped some distance away with the main Roman force, moved towards Bagai.¹⁰⁴³ The Berbers, meanwhile, withdrew towards the foot of Mount Aurasium, to a place called Babosis.¹⁰⁴⁴ The main Roman force followed, defeating the Berbers at Babosis.¹⁰⁴⁵

Many of the Berbers who escaped from Babosis fled to Mauritania, and to the south of Mount Aurasium,¹⁰⁴⁶ both of which regions must be assumed to be outside Roman control at this time. However, Iaudas, together with some twenty thousand men, remained on Mount Aurasium, in the hope that the Romans would abandon their pursuit on account of the difficult terrain.¹⁰⁴⁷ Iaudas initially withdrew to the fortress of Zerboule, on the side of the mountain¹⁰⁴⁸ but, since the fortress lacked provisions for so many men, he left behind a garrison, and ascended to the summit of Mount Aurasium, to a place called Toumar.¹⁰⁴⁹

Meanwhile, Solomon, assuming the entire Berber force to be confined within Zerboule, and being unwilling to wait them out in a siege, led his army onto the plain surrounding Thamugadi

¹⁰⁴² *Bella* IV.19.14–15.

¹⁰⁴³ *Bella* IV.19.9, 15.

¹⁰⁴⁴ *Bella* IV.19.16. The site of Babosis remains debated. Morizot, 'Recherches sur les campagnes de Solomon,' 92–4, identifies Babosis with mod. Babar, in Algeria. He bases his argument on the fact that 6th century archaeological remains have been found at Babar, and on his argument that Toumar should be identified with mod. Taberdga, in Algeria (see n. 1049). Had Solomon marched south from Bagai to Toumar, as Procopius suggests (*Bella* IV.19.19), he would probably have passed through Babar. See Map VIII. Cf. Desanges, 'Un témoignage peu connu,' 58, has argued that Babosis should be identified with the fort, Dabousis, noted by Procopius in the *De Aedificiis* (VI.7.8). But, as he himself notes, the location of Dabousis is equally unknown. Contra Pringle, *Defence*, 307; and P. Troussel, 'Les limites sud de la réoccupation byzantine,' *AnTard* 10 (2002), 146, who identify Dabousis with Thabudeos, on the basis of homonymity.

¹⁰⁴⁵ *Bella* IV.19.17–8.

¹⁰⁴⁶ *Bella* IV.19.19.

¹⁰⁴⁷ *Bella* IV.19.18–9. Cf. *Aed.* VI.7.2–3.

¹⁰⁴⁸ *Bella* IV.19.19. The site of Zerboule remains unidentified. Pringle, *Defence*, 362 n. 15, suggests that Zerboule should be identified with Corippus' Zerquilis (*Ioh.* II.145), but this site is equally unidentified. Morizot, 'Recherches sur les campagnes de Solomon,' 92, argues that Zerboule must be located in the valley of the Oued al-Arab. Based on Procopius' description of the terrain, this is certainly plausible, but the site itself remains unidentified.

¹⁰⁴⁹ *Bella* IV.19.20–1. Morizot, 'Les campagnes de Solomon en Numidie méridionale,' 87–92, reasonably identifies Toumar as mod. Tabergda, in Algeria. See Map VIII.

(mod. Timgad, Algeria).¹⁰⁵⁰ There, they destroyed the ripening crops.¹⁰⁵¹ This suggests that the Romans had, as yet, made no territorial gains in Mauritania Sitifensis. They would hardly have employed a scorched earth policy within their own provinces, so the land around Thamugadi must have been under cultivation by either the Berbers themselves, or by a Romano-African population, living under the protection of a Berber leader. Indeed, much of Mauritania Sitifensis, while evidently a settled region, may well have been under the control of *iaudas* – in much the same manner as Mauritania Caesariensis was under the control of Mastigas, with a local, tribute paying, population.¹⁰⁵²

The Roman army subsequently returned to Zerboule and besieged it.¹⁰⁵³ After three days, the Berber garrison fled, and the Romans were able to seize the fortress unopposed.¹⁰⁵⁴ The Romans then approached *iaudas*' position at Toumar, which they were able to seize by a direct assault.¹⁰⁵⁵ The Berbers, taken entirely by surprise, fled.¹⁰⁵⁶ *Iaudas* himself was wounded, but nevertheless managed to flee to Mauritania along with many of his followers.¹⁰⁵⁷

With this campaign, Procopius declares:

And when the Berbers had retreated from Numidia, having been defeated as has been described, the land of Zabe, which is beyond Mount Aurasium, and is called Mauritania Prima, having Sitifis as its capital, he [*Solomon*] added as a tributary to the Roman empire,¹⁰⁵⁸

¹⁰⁵⁰ *Bella* IV.19.20.

¹⁰⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵² *Bella* IV.20.31; with pp. 127–8. Pringle, *Defence*, 28, suggests that *Solomon*'s intentions must have been to drive Berber cultivators off the land, in order to secure it for the Romans. However, it is equally plausible, given that the Romans did not remain in Mauritania Sitifensis to secure the territory, that the intention was merely to highlight to the local Romano-African population the consequences of supporting a Berber leader.

¹⁰⁵³ *Bella* IV.19.20, 23.

¹⁰⁵⁴ *Bella* IV.19.23–32.

¹⁰⁵⁵ *Bella* IV.20.1–19.

¹⁰⁵⁶ *Bella* IV.20.20.

¹⁰⁵⁷ *Bella* IV.20.21, 30. Cf. *Bella* IV.19.19.

¹⁰⁵⁸ *Bella* IV.20.30: [καὶ ἐπειδὴ Μαυρούσιοι ἀνεχώρησαν ἐκ Νουμιδίας νικηθέντες, ὥσπερ ἐρρήθη, Ζάβην τε τὴν χώραν, ἣ ὑπὲρ ὄρος τὸ Αὐράσιον ἔστι Μαυριτανία τε ἡ πρώτη καλεῖται μητρόπολιν Σίτιφιν ἔχουσα, τῇ Ῥωμαίων ἀρχῇ ἐς φόρου ἀπαγωγὴν προσεποίησε.]

and the provinces of Numidia and Mauritania Sitifensis have been accepted as having been incorporated into the Eastern Roman Empire.¹⁰⁵⁹ Beyond the above statement, this assessment has been based primarily on Procopius' claim in the *De Aedificiis*:

Taking care that the barbarians not pillage there again, having gained entry, he fortified cities around the mountain, having found them to be entirely deserted and lacking in fortifications. I speak of Pentebagae, Phlorentiane, Bade, Meleon and Tamougade, as well as two forts, Dabousis and Gaiana.¹⁰⁶⁰

The cities of Pentebagae, Bade, Meleon and Tamougade are more commonly known as Bagai, Badias, Mileu and Thamugadi, while the forts Dabousis and Gaiana should probably be identified with Yabous and Vaiana.¹⁰⁶¹ Florentiane remains unidentified.¹⁰⁶² Furthermore, Procopius notes:

And he [Justinian] took the region beyond Aurasium, which had not been under the Vandals at all. There he fortified two cities, Frice and Sitifis.¹⁰⁶³

Frice should probably be identified with the city which was subsequently Ksar el-Frigui.¹⁰⁶⁴

However, Procopius' implication, that the Romans effectively created a ring of fortifications around Mount Aurasium, or even around the Aurès massif, is implausible. On a practical level, the fortifications were simply not in the right place to provide an adequate line of defence for this purpose. First, Mileu, assuming that the site has been correctly identified, is some 150 km to the north of the Aurès massif, and is thus unlikely to have been any kind of defence for the region.¹⁰⁶⁵ Equally, Ksar el-Frigui and Sitifis, while certainly "beyond" Aurasium, are far removed from the Aurès massif, being to the north and north-west of respectively. Vaiana and

¹⁰⁵⁹ *Bella* IV.30, 33. Cf. *Aed.* VI.7.7. *Contra CJ* 1.27.1.12, which implies that Mauritania Sitifensis was already part of the Eastern Roman Empire in 534. See also pp. 126–8.

¹⁰⁶⁰ *Aed.* VI.7.8: [προνοήσας τε ὡς μὴ καὶ αὐθις οἱ βάρβαροι κακουργοῖεν ἐνταῦθα ἰόντες, πόλεις μὲν ἀμφὶ τὸ ὄρος ἐρήμους τε καὶ ἀτειχίστους τὸ παράπαν εὐρῶν ἐτειχίσατο, Πεντεγαγάην τε λέγω καὶ Φλωρεντιανὴν καὶ Βάδην τε καὶ Μήλεον καὶ Ταμουγάδην ἔτι μέντοι καὶ φρούρια δύο Δαβουσίην τε καὶ Γαιανά...]]

¹⁰⁶¹ For these identifications see Appendix I and Map VII.

¹⁰⁶² See n. 1432.

¹⁰⁶³ *Aed.* VI.7.9: [καὶ χώραν δὲ τὴν ὑπὲρ τὸ Αὐράσιον ὑπὸ Βανδίλοις ὡς ἤκιστα οὖσαν τοὺς Μαυρουσίους ἀφείλετο. πόλεις τε ἐνταῦθα ἐτειχίσατο δύο, τὴν τε Φρίκην καὶ Σίτιφιν.]]

¹⁰⁶⁴ See Appendix I.

¹⁰⁶⁵ See n. 1434.

Badias are the only identified sites south of the Aurès massif. But Vaiana is so far removed from any other known Roman site that it cannot have functioned effectively within any defensive strategy. Furthermore, Badias does not appear to have been firmly under Roman control - according to Corippus, the Berbers of the region surrounding this city participated in the Berber hostilities of 546.¹⁰⁶⁶ It seems more likely, given the city's location, that its population aligned itself far more closely with the Berber polity of the Aurès massif than with whatever administration, Vandal or Roman, held power at Carthage.¹⁰⁶⁷

This is not, however, to suggest that there is no evidence for a Roman presence in, and indeed to the south of, the Aurès massif. Inscriptions bearing the name of Solomon are known from inscriptions from Bagai and Thamugadi, where it is otherwise known that the Roman army was present in 540,¹⁰⁶⁸ as well as from Ksar Belezma and Gadiaufala in Numidia.¹⁰⁶⁹ This is entirely consistent with the presentation of the Aurès campaign in the *Bella*, which confirms that the Roman army was present in this region.

While Thabudeos has sometimes been identified as a post-Vandal fortification, this argument has been based primarily on the assumption that Procopius' account of fortifications in the Aurès massif in the *De Aedificiis*, implies that there was a ring of Roman fortifications,¹⁰⁷⁰ and

¹⁰⁶⁶ *Ioh.* 2.156-7.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Pringle, *The Defence of Byzantine Africa*, 183, suggests that the city might have been lost to the Berbers following its fortification, but this surely confirms that it was not firmly under Roman control.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Durliat, *Les dédicaces*, no. 16 (Bagai) and nos. 20 and 21 (Thamugadi). Unusually, inscriptions nos. 20 and 21 are explicitly dated to the 13th year of Justinian's reign (539-540). It might therefore be suggested that the inscriptions were erected as statements of authority during the course of Solomon's raids around Thamugadi, rather than as part of a building program following the 540 campaign. The same is possible of the inscription from Bagai (no. 16), although it cannot be dated more precisely than Solomon's second prefecture (Durliat, *Les dédicaces*, 44). The significance of the Justinianic building inscriptions in Africa is discussed in greater detail on pp. 147-53.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Durliat, *Les dédicaces*, no. 17 (Gadiaufala) and no. 18 (Ksar Belezma). The inscription from Ksar Belezma is, furthermore, extremely fragmentary, amounting to no more than: --CIISOLOMONI---CONSULE---. While it cannot be doubted that it refers to Solomon, the purpose of the inscription is unclear. One further inscription from the reign of Justinian has been identified in Numidia (Durliat, *Les dédicaces*, no. 22), at Tigisis. However, it makes no mention of Solomon, and its purpose is unclear: IMPIVSTI/ACTVSEST.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Troussset, 'Les limites sud,' 146; idem, 'Les fines antiquae,' 371, identifies Thabudeos with Procopius' Dabousis. 'Contra Morizot, À propos des limites méridionales,' 160.

epigraphic evidence from Thabudeos is inconclusive.¹⁰⁷¹ Equally, the evidence provided by the so-called 'Négrine ostrakon', which is explicitly dated to the 16th year of Justinian's reign, must be discounted on the basis that its provenance is unknown.¹⁰⁷²

There is simply no clear evidence for a sustained Roman presence in, or south of, the Aurès massif, and only limited evidence for a presence in northern Numidia.¹⁰⁷³

Evidence for Roman expansion into the provinces of Mauritania is still more limited. Epigraphic evidence exists only from Sitifis and Zabi Iustiniana in Mauritania Sitifensis.¹⁰⁷⁴ Furthermore, both Sitifis and Zabi Iustiniana were close to the border with Numidia, so evidence for a Roman presence in the cities does not translate to Roman control over the entire province of Mauritania Sitifensis, but might conceivably be viewed as a result of the Roman campaign in Numidia. The evidence for the most westerly Roman presence in Africa during Justinian's reign comes from a coin hoard containing 14 827 coins, dating from the Hellenistic period to the 6th century, discovered at mod. M'sila (Algeria) (c. 3 km to the west of Zabi Iustiniana) in 1982. The hoard contains eight coins which are identifiably Justinianic, including three which were minted following the coinage reforms of 538, providing a *terminus post quem* for the hoard being buried.¹⁰⁷⁵ However, the hoard, while attesting to Roman presence, is in no way evidence for long term Roman influence in the region.

¹⁰⁷¹ Cf. Morizot, 'À propos des limites méridionales,' 154–5. *Contra* Albertini, 'Ostrakon byzantin,' 59–60; and Troussel, 'Les limites sud,' 155; idem, 'Les fines antiquae,' 371, who identify Solomon's name in the inscriptions.

¹⁰⁷² The ostrakon was published by E. Albertini, 'Ostrakon byzantin de Négrine,' *Cinquantenaire de la Faculté des Lettres d'Alger (1881–1932)* (Alger, 1932), 53–8, and his interpretation of the ostrakon as evidence for the most southern extent of Roman control in Africa in the 6th century was followed by 'Les fines antiquae,' 370. *Contra* Morizot, 'À propos des limites méridionales,' 152–5.

¹⁰⁷³ Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 254–9; 237–45; Cagnat, *L'Armée romaine*, 594; J. Lassus, *La forteresse byzantine de Thamugadi: Fouilles à Timgad 1938–1956 (I)* (Paris, 1981), 19–20.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Durliat, *Les dédicaces*, no. 23 (Sitifis) and no. 24 (Zabi Iustiniana). The inscription from Sitifis is again fragmentary, and its purpose is unclear: +ANTIQUAMC---/SOLOMONFORT---

¹⁰⁷⁵ S. Deloum, 'Notes sur le trésor monétaire de M'Sila,' *Proceedings of the 10th Annual Congress of Numismatics (London, September 1986)* (London, 1986), 305–13.

The provinces of Numidia and Mauritania Sitifensis comprised a massive geographical area (roughly the northern half of Algeria), and the Roman campaign of 540 had taken place in a very small part of this. It is hardly surprising that, in the course of the various Roman military campaigns conducted, particularly in Numidia, the temporary presence of the Roman army and its administration should be present. However, the extent of practical Roman influence in either province remains far from clear. Yvette Duval, stressing that, archaeologically, it is extremely difficult to distinguish between temporary and permanent occupation,¹⁰⁷⁶ suggested that, following the campaign in the Aurès massif in 540, there was an initial attempt to hold the provinces of Numidia and Mauritania Sitifensis, and that the Roman presence was only withdrawn from these provinces following Solomon's death in 546.¹⁰⁷⁷ However, effective Roman control may not have lasted as long as that. Following the mutiny, and with the outbreak of plague in the early 540s,¹⁰⁷⁸ the Roman army in Africa can have had few troops to spare to reinforce its authority at positions far from its centres of power. It is more probable that, while the Roman army was present in the provinces, cities were willing to affirm their allegiance to the dominant power in the region, but once the army departed, that allegiance meant little.

Nevertheless, following the Aurès campaign, Africa appears to have enjoyed several years of peace between the Berbers and the Roman administration at Carthage.

5.5 Resumption of Berber hostilities (543 to 546)

After three years of peace, conflict between the Eastern Roman Empire and the Berbers began anew in Tripolitania in 543.¹⁰⁷⁹ A tribe, to whom Procopius refers as the Leuathae [οἱ Λευάθαι],

¹⁰⁷⁶ Duval, 'La Maurétanie sitifienne,' 160 n. 1.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Ibid, 157–9. Followed by Laporte, 'Zabi, Friki,' 160.

¹⁰⁷⁸ See n. 710.

¹⁰⁷⁹ The event is not, in fact, explicitly dated in the *Bella*. Rather, Procopius (*Bella* IV.21.1) notes: But in the fourth year after this it came to pass that all their good fortune became the opposite. For when the emperor Justinian was in the 17th year of his reign, Cyrus and Sergius, who were the sons of Solomon's brother, Bacchus, were chosen by the emperor to rule over the cities in Libya, Cyrus, the

and who are clearly identifiable with Corippus' Ilaguas,¹⁰⁸⁰ sent an army to Leptis Magna, apparently under the pretence of requesting from the *dux* of Tripolitania, Sergius, the insignia of office and of concluding a peace agreement, but with the intention of murdering Sergius.¹⁰⁸¹ Sergius invited eighty of the leading Ilaguas into the city, agreed to peace terms, and then invited the men to a banquet.¹⁰⁸²

Procopius does not explain the causes of enmity between the Ilaguas and Sergius, or, indeed, why an entire army was required for Sergius' removal. But, during the banquet, the Ilaguas became angered with the Romans, and accused them of plundering their crops.¹⁰⁸³ Procopius does not confirm whether the Romans had indeed been plundering Berber crops, but the accusation is entirely plausible. The Romans had, after all, adopted a scorched earth policy in

elder, over Pentapolis, and Sergius over Tripolis [Τετάρτῳ δὲ ὕστερον ἐνιαυτῷ ἅπαντα σφίσιν ἀγαθὰ ἐς τοῦναντίον γενέσθαι ζυνέπεσεν. ἔτος γὰρ ἑβδομὸν τε καὶ δέκατον Ἰουστινιανοῦ βασιλέως τὴν αὐτοκράτορα ἀρχὴν ἔχοντος, Κῦρος τε καὶ Σέργιος, οἱ Βάκχου τοῦ Σολόμωνος ἀδελφοῦ παῖδες, πόλεων τῶν ἐν Λιβύῃ πρὸς βασιλέως ἄρχειν ἔλαχον, Πενταπόλεως μὲν Κῦρος ὁ πρεσβύτερος, Τριπόλεως δὲ Σέργιος.] Solomon's decisive campaign in the Aurès massif, from which Procopius presumably dates the beginning of Roman good fortune in Africa, had taken place in 540. The fourth year after this would have been 544. The 17th year of Justinian's reign fell between 1 April 543 and 31 March 544. Sergius' appointment as *dux* of Tripolitania and the subsequent Berber hostilities, which Procopius implies occurred within a short time of Sergius' appointment, may be assumed to have taken place in either late 543 or early 544. Cf. Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 339; Stein, *Histoire*, 547; and *PLRE* III B, 1175; all of whom favour a date in 543, given that the battle of Theveste has been dated to the spring of 544 (see n. 1091).

¹⁰⁸⁰ *Bella* IV.21.2. The Leuathae are only attested by Procopius and are, interestingly, the only Berber tribe (or alliance of tribes) he identifies by name, rather than by their leader. The Leuathae have traditionally been identified with the people to whom Corippus refers as Ilaguas, among other names (see pp. 233–4), who have themselves been identified with the Lawâta or Louata of later Arabic writers (see Partsch, *Corippii Africani grammatici libri*, xii; Courtois, *Les Vandales*, 103, 344; Desanges, *Catalogue des tribus africaines*, 101–2; W. de Slane, *Ibn Khaldun. Histoire des Berbères et les dynasties musulmanes de l'Afrique Septentrionale* (Paris, 1925), I, 323 n. 1). The Arabic 'Lawâta' or 'Louata' may well have been intended as a transliteration of the Latin 'Ilaguas', or more probably 'Laguatan'. However, it is important to note that the phonetic similarity of the words need not imply a direct continuity of tribal identity from the 6th to the 14th century.

¹⁰⁸¹ *Bella* IV.21.2. *Contra Anec.* V.28, in which Procopius claims that: these men did not approach Sergius with treacherous intent... [οὔτε νῦν δολερῶ οἱ ἄνδρες οὔτοι παρὰ Σέργιον ἦλθον...] The request on the part of the Ilaguas for the insignia of office has sometimes been interpreted as evidence that the Ilaguas must have been among the tribes which sent embassies to Belisarius in 533. However, this need not be the case. *Contra* Pringle, *Defence*, 29.

The precise date of these events is unclear. However, a *terminus post quem* is provided by Sergius' appointment as *dux* of Tripolitania (see n. 1079), and a *terminus ante quem* by the battle of Theveste (see n. 1091).

¹⁰⁸² *Bella* IV.21.4; *Anec.* V.28.

¹⁰⁸³ *Bella* IV.21.5.

the region around Thamugadi as a means of trying to force the capitulation of the Berber leader of the region, Iaudas.¹⁰⁸⁴ Certainly, this appears to be the most likely cause of conflict between the Ilaguas and the Roman administration, whom Sergius merely represented. The accusation resulted in the murder, by the Romans, of all but one of the Ilaguas, who returned to the army which had remained outside the city.¹⁰⁸⁵ The Ilaguas then marched against Leptis Magna, where they were defeated by the Romans.¹⁰⁸⁶

The army of the Ilaguas subsequently moved into Byzacena, where it pillaged much of the countryside, before entering into an alliance with Antalas, the pre-eminent Berber leader in the province at the time, apparently with the intention of marching on Carthage.¹⁰⁸⁷ It is interesting to note that this is the first occasion on which Procopius suggests that a Berber tribe (or tribes) might have intended a direct assault on a city which was securely under Roman control, rather than simply a campaign of destruction and pillage intended to cow the Romano-African population.

Upon hearing that an alliance of Berber tribes had gathered in Byzacena, Solomon marched from Carthage with the Roman army,¹⁰⁸⁸ as well as, according to Corippus, some Berber allies.¹⁰⁸⁹ The Roman force encountered the Berbers at Theveste (mod. Tébessa, Algeria),¹⁰⁹⁰ and the

¹⁰⁸⁴ *Bella* 4.19.20; with p. 212. Cf. Pringle, *The Defence of Byzantine Africa*, 30.

¹⁰⁸⁵ *Bella* IV.21.10–11. In the *Bella*, Procopius implies that the Berber leaders were murdered by Sergius' guards in his defence. *Contra Anec.* 5.28, in which Procopius claims that Sergius ordered the death of all eighty of the Berber leaders "for no reason" [οὐδενὶ λόγῳ]. However, the discrepancy between the two texts is not particularly surprising. In the *Bella*, Procopius is primarily concerned to attribute the sufferings of Africa to the barbarian character of the Berbers; while in the *Anecdota* he prefers to stress the perfidy of Sergius, as a representative of Justinian's corrupt administration.

¹⁰⁸⁶ *Bella* IV.21.14.

¹⁰⁸⁷ *Bella* IV.21.16–8; cf. *Ioh.* II.28, 40–1; III.393–7. The relationship between Antalas and the Ilaguas remains contested and is discussed in greater detail in sections 6.2 and 6.3.

¹⁰⁸⁸ *Bella* IV.21.19.

¹⁰⁸⁹ *Ioh.* III.404–12.

¹⁰⁹⁰ *Bella* IV.21.19. The identification of the site of the subsequent battle is unknown. It has generally been assumed that it must have occurred somewhere in the vicinity of Theveste, since Procopius provides no suggestion that the Roman army moved from this location, and the location of the battle is not mentioned by Corippus. However, a further (possible) reference to the battle appears in the chronicle of Victor of Tunnuna (131), which refers to a battle at Cillium (mod. Kasserine, Tunisia), at which Solomon was killed (cf. n. 1095). Given that Cillium is c. 125 km from Theveste, the two accounts seem impossible to reconcile. However, there are a number of problems with Victor of

battle which occurred there was to prove disastrous for the Romans.¹⁰⁹¹ After an initial, failed, attempt at negotiation, the Berbers marched against the Roman army in force.¹⁰⁹² However, at this key point, those among the Romans who resented Solomon's command refused to engage the enemy.¹⁰⁹³ The Romans, vastly outnumbered and disheartened by their comrades' actions, were forced to retreat.¹⁰⁹⁴ In the course of this retreat, Solomon was killed.¹⁰⁹⁵

With the death of Solomon, Sergius assumed sole control in Africa, acting as both Praetorian Prefect and *magister militum per Africam*.¹⁰⁹⁶ Given that Solomon was killed in the spring of

Tunnuna's account. In particular, it suggests that the Berber force against which the Romans fought was commanded by Stotzas, who had fled to Mauritania following the failed Roman military revolt of 536 to 539 (*Bella* IV.17.1), in contrast to the account offered by Procopius (*Bella* IV.22.5), which claims that Stotzas joined Antalas, from Mauritania, following Antalas' victory in 544. Cf. Stein, *Histoire*, 548 n. 1, who suggests that Victor of Tunnuna here confuses Stotzas and Antalas. The account of the *continuator* of Marcellinus Comes should also be considered in this context (*Marc. Com. Addit. s.a.* 543.3), which, *pace* Procopius, suggests that Sergius was confronted with "rebellions by Stotzas and the Berbers" [rebellionibus cum Stotza et Mauris]. Stein, *Histoire*, 349 n. 1 is surely correct in suggesting that the *continuator* has conflated the events which occurred in Tripolitania in 543 and in Byzacena in 544, and that this entry refers to the latter. Similarly, it seems probable that Victor of Tunnuna has conflated a number of events into a single chronographic entry, particularly in view of the fact that he misdates the battle – although, the toponym Cillium, is, admittedly, difficult to explain. *Contra* Bury, *History*, 145; Modéran, *Les Maures*, 616; Pringle, *Defence*, 30, and *PLRE* IIIA, 574 and IIIB, 1176, 1200; who accept that the battle took place at Cillium, rather than at Theveste; and Croke, *The Chronicle of Marcellinus*, 134, who suggests that the two engagements narrated by Procopius occurred in different places – the first at Theveste and the second at Cillium.

¹⁰⁹¹ A date of spring 544 has generally been preferred, presumably on the basis that military campaigns would have halted over the winter. See Stein, *Histoire*, 548 (followed by Pringle, *Defence*, 31 and 364 n. 4). Cf. Modéran, *Les Maures*, 609–13, 616–21, who, while agreeing with this date, suggests that it is confirmed by the fact that the Ilaguas would have required the autumn and winter of 543–544 in order to seize Berenice before moving into Byzacena. However, these events, reported only by Theophanes (*AM* 6026) (ed. De Boor, p. 208), are suspect. See n. 1227. Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 342–3; and Bury, *History*, II, 145, are less specific and date the battle only to 544.

¹⁰⁹² *Bella* IV.21.20–1, 25.

¹⁰⁹³ *Bella* IV.21.23–5; *Ioh.* III.427–32.

¹⁰⁹⁴ *Bella* IV.21.26. *Ioh.* III.432–4.

¹⁰⁹⁵ *Bella* IV.21.27–8; *Anec.* V.29. *Ioh.* III.439–41. Corippus in fact suggests that Solomon was fighting on foot (*Ioh.* III.433–4), but this is surely to add to the dramatic effect of the description of the commander, abandoned by his army, fighting on foot, and alone, in the middle of the field of battle. Solomon's death is also noted by Victor of Tunnuna (131; with n. 1090); and by the *Marc. Com. Addit. s.a.* 541.3, which evidently misdates the event, and is out of sequence with the entry for 543, which notes that Solomon was troubled by revolts by the Berbers and by Stotzas, apparently conflating the Berber hostilities of 544 and Stotzas' subsequent alliance with Antalas. See Stein, *Histoire*, II, 483 n. 1.

¹⁰⁹⁶ *Bella* IV.22.1; *Marc. Com. Addit. s.a.* 541.3. For the date of the battle of Theveste see Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire*, II, 548 n. 1.

544, Sergius must have assumed authority at much the same time, although his formal appointment by the emperor would have been confirmed some months later.¹⁰⁹⁷

Both Corippus and Procopius present the death of Solomon as heralding an intensification of Berber raids against the Romano-African population. Both writers agree that the threat came from those Berbers under the command of Antalas, who had, by this point in time, been joined by the Roman mutineer, Stotzas, together with a small number of Roman and Vandal troops.¹⁰⁹⁸ However, despite the increase in hostilities, no official response against the Berbers in Byzacena appears to have been coordinated by Sergius.¹⁰⁹⁹

The Romano-African population instead appealed to the Roman commander, John Sisiniolus, to aid them.¹¹⁰⁰ John had arrived in Africa with Solomon in 539, however, his precise position within the Roman administration, in 544, is unclear.¹¹⁰¹ He gathered an army, and commanded the *dux* of Byzacena, Himerius, to gather all available troops, and to meet him at Menepessa, in order to make a joint attack.¹¹⁰² However, as a result of miscommunication, Himerius, together with his entire force, was captured by the Berbers, under the command of Antalas.¹¹⁰³ Those soldiers who had been under Himerius' command were persuaded to switch sides, and were placed under the command of Stotzas,¹¹⁰⁴ while Himerius himself was threatened with death if he would not aid the Berbers in the capture of the city of Hadrumetum (mod. Sousse, Tunisia).¹¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁹⁷ The *continuator* of Marcellinus (*s.a.* 541.3) cannot be correct in dating Sergius' command in Africa to 541. Croke, *The Chronicle of Marcellinus*, 134.

¹⁰⁹⁸ *Ioh.* III.449–60; and 4.29–30; *Bella* IV.22.5–6, 23.1; *Marc. Com. Addit. s.a.* 543.3.

¹⁰⁹⁹ *Bella* IV.22.6.

¹¹⁰⁰ *Bella* IV.23.2.

¹¹⁰¹ *Bella* 4.19.1. See also *PLRE* IIIA, 640.

¹¹⁰² *Bella* IV.23.2–5; *Ioh.* IV.10–17. The site of Menepessa is unknown, and the toponym is nowhere else attested.

¹¹⁰³ *Bella* IV.23.5–9.

¹¹⁰⁴ *Bella* IV.23.10.

¹¹⁰⁵ *Bella* IV.23.10–11.

With Himerius' assistance, the Berbers were able to seize Hadrumetum by deception.¹¹⁰⁶ Having plundered the city and left behind a small garrison, they again departed.¹¹⁰⁷ The city was subsequently retaken by the initiative of a local priest, Paul, whom the citizens of Hadrumetum aided in escaping from the captured city.¹¹⁰⁸ Having failed to secure more than a small number of soldiers from Sergius at Carthage,¹¹⁰⁹ Paul spread the rumour that that Germanus, the emperor's nephew, had returned to Carthage with a large army, which was, at that time, approaching Hadrumetum.¹¹¹⁰ He therefore requested that the citizens of the city secretly open a small gate, at night, to enable the army to enter the city.¹¹¹¹ This the citizens did, and when Paul entered the city with his small force, the Roman soldiers killed the Berber garrison and recovered the city.¹¹¹² The episode is characteristic of an increasing tendency for individual cities to see to their own defence when under attack, rather than relying on support from the Roman administration.¹¹¹³

Perhaps as a result of pressure from those refugees who had been forced to flee Africa during this period of Berber hostilities, in the spring of 545,¹¹¹⁴ the emperor sent an additional military commander to Africa, Areobindus.¹¹¹⁵ Procopius describes Areobindus as:

... a man of the senate and well-born, but in no respect experienced in matters of war.¹¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰⁶ *Bella* IV.23.13–5.

¹¹⁰⁷ *Bella* IV.23.16.

¹¹⁰⁸ *Bella* IV.23.18–9.

¹¹⁰⁹ *Bella* IV.23.20–1.

¹¹¹⁰ *Bella* IV.23.22–3.

¹¹¹¹ *Bella* IV.23.24; *Ioh.* IV.75–7. *Contra Pringle, Defence*, 364 n. 13, Corippus' account does not appear to imply that Liberatus and Marturius were involved in retaking Hadrumetum, merely that they escaped from the Berbers before the city was retaken.

¹¹¹² *Bella* IV.23.25.

¹¹¹³ *Cf. Bella* IV.22.12. The citizens of Laribus offer a ransom for their city when it is besieged by the Berbers.

¹¹¹⁴ *Bella* IV.23.28–9. Stein, *Histoire*, II, 550.

¹¹¹⁵ *Bella* IV.24.1; *Ioh.* IV.82–4. Areobindus' name appears in a number of forms in the sources. For the list of variants see *PLRE* IIIA, 107. The spelling Areobindus will be used exclusively here, in the interests of clarity.

¹¹¹⁶ *Bella* IV.24.1: [... ἄνδρα ἐκ βουλῆς μὲν καὶ εὖ γεγονότα, ἔργων δὲ πολεμίων οὐδαμῶς ἔμπειρον.]

As such, he appears an odd choice for the military commander of a prefecture in a state of crisis. He was, however, relatively well connected, being married to the emperor's niece, Preiecta.¹¹¹⁷ Areobindus was not intended to replace Sergius, who remained in Africa, but rather to share authority with him, with Sergius being directed to address the threat posed by the Berber tribes in Numidia and Areobindus in Byzacena, and the troops assigned to Africa divided between them.¹¹¹⁸ Areobindus was accompanied by Athanasius, who had previously served as Praetorian Prefect of Italy,¹¹¹⁹ and was now to be Praetorian Prefect of Africa.¹¹²⁰ Athanasius was clearly a much-needed experienced administrator, but the accounts of both Corippus and Procopius suggest that he was elderly and passive in character, and Sergius appears to have continued to dominate.¹¹²¹

Once Areobindus reached Carthage, Sergius immediately departed for Numidia with the troops assigned to him.¹¹²² Areobindus, meanwhile, made a pre-emptive attempt to halt the Berber raids on the Romano-African population in the autumn of 545.¹¹²³ Having learnt that Antalas and Stotzas were encamped near Sicca Veneria (mod. El Kef, Tunisia), he commanded John Sisiniolus to choose the best Roman troops and to engage the Berbers.¹¹²⁴ He also wrote to Sergius, requesting that he join forces with John.¹¹²⁵ But Sergius disregarded the message, presumably anxious to assert his own authority after the somewhat demeaning subdivision of his former command.¹¹²⁶ John was therefore forced to confront Antalas' forces with vastly

¹¹¹⁷ *Bella* IV.24.3; *Marc. Com. Addit. s.a.* 546.3. Preiecta was the daughter of Justinian's sister, Vigilantia. Areobindus was also accompanied by his sister.

¹¹¹⁸ *Bella* IV.24.4–5.

¹¹¹⁹ Athanasius was Praetorian Prefect of Italy from 539 until at least 540, and possibly until 542. See *PLRE* IIIA, 142–3.

¹¹²⁰ *Bella* IV.24.2.

¹¹²¹ *Bella* IV.26.33; *Ioh.* IV.237, 209; VII.202, 204, 208.

¹¹²² *Bella* IV.24.6.

¹¹²³ Stein, *Histoire*, II, 551 with n. 1. *Contra* Diehl, *L'Afrique Byzantine*, 350.

¹¹²⁴ *Bella* IV.24.6.

¹¹²⁵ *Bella* IV.24.7.

¹¹²⁶ *Bella* IV.24.8.

inferior numbers.¹¹²⁷ The Roman troops were routed, and John was killed.¹¹²⁸ Stotzas, having been shot by John during the course of the battle, subsequently died from his wounds.¹¹²⁹

According to Procopius, following this disaster, Justinian decided that it was not wise to have two generals,¹¹³⁰ and this certainly appears to have been the opinion of the inhabitants of the region.¹¹³¹ Sergius was immediately recalled, in October 545, and sent to Italy,¹¹³² and the military administration of Africa was handed entirely to Areobindus.¹¹³³

Two months after Sergius' departure from Africa, in December 545, the Roman administration in Africa was once again threatened by a revolt from within its military.¹¹³⁴ And, for the first time, the internal problems of the Roman administration in Africa intersected with the Eastern Roman Empire's conflict with the Berber tribes. Guntarith, the *dux* of Numidia, entered into negotiations with the Berbers of Numidia, who were led by Cusina and Iaudas, and the Berbers of Byzacena, who were led by Antalas, in the hope that they might march on Carthage, and establish him as ruler.¹¹³⁵ No source attributes any explicit motivation to Guntarith. Procopius

¹¹²⁷ *Bella* IV.24.8; *Ioh.* IV.104.

¹¹²⁸ *Bella* IV.24.14; *Marc. Com. Addit. s.a.* 545.2; Victor of Tunnuna, 134; *Ioh.* IV.35–7 – these lines of the *Iohannis* are considered to be out of place by the most recent editors of the text, Diggle and Goodyear, who, while retaining the original line numbering, insert the lines into the middle of line 201 of book IV.

¹¹²⁹ *Bella* IV.24.11, 14; *Marc. Com. Addit. s.a.* 545.2; Jordanes, *Rom.* 384.

¹¹³⁰ *Bella* IV.24.16.

¹¹³¹ Corippus condemns the dual administration of Sergius and Areobindus (*Ioh.* IV.86–102).

¹¹³² *Bella* IV.24.16; *Marc. Com. Addit. s.a.* 546.3;

¹¹³³ *Ibid.* Sergius was recalled two months before Guntarith's coup (*Bella* IV.25.1), which occurred in December 545. See n. 1134. *Contra* Partsch, *Corippi Africani Grammatici libri*, xxiv; and Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 350, who place Sergius' recall in January 546.

¹¹³⁴ *Bella* IV.25.1. The date of Guntarith's coup is one of the few events in Africa in the 540s which can be dated with any degree of precision. Procopius subsequently notes (*Bella* IV.28.41) that Guntarith's rule lasted only 36 days, and ended with his death in the 19th year of Justinian's reign (1 April 545 to 31 March 546), while Victor of Tunnuna (136) places Guntarith's death in 546. This suggests that Guntarith's death must have occurred between 1 January 546 and 31 March 546. If Guntarith's rule lasted only 36 days, it must have begun between December 545 and February 546 (inclusive). Given that Procopius elsewhere notes that Guntarith's coup occurred as winter was setting in (*Bella* IV.26.5), a date in December 545 is to be preferred. *Cf.* Modéran, *Les Maures*, 623. *Contra* Stein, *Histoire*, II, 551–2, who places Guntarith's death in the winter of 545/6, and thus his coup in the autumn of 545; and Partsch, *Corippi Africani Grammatici libri*, xxiv, who places Guntarith's death in May 546, and thus his coup in March 545; an argument followed by Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 353, 358; and Bury, *Histoire*, II, 146.

¹¹³⁵ *Bella* IV.25.1–3. Guntarith is attested under a number of spellings. See *PLRE* IIIA, 374–6 (Guntharis). He is only previously attested by Procopius as having been one of Solomon's bodyguards and as

simply notes that he wished to “establish a tyranny”, while Corippus characterises Guntarith as evil by nature:

Behold, again, Guntarith, the evil man of corrupted mind, treacherous, unfortunate, cruel, coarse, an adulterer, plunderer, rapacious, the worst author of war...¹¹³⁶

Like Stotzas, Guntarith appears to have aspired to outright sovereignty in Africa, as opposed to improved conditions of military service.¹¹³⁷ His bid for power was also supported by the Roman mutineers who had previously followed Stotzas, and were now led by John, otherwise known as Stotzas Iunior.¹¹³⁸

Once the Berbers marched on Carthage, Guntarith was recalled from Numidia to Carthage by Areobindus in order to counter them.¹¹³⁹ With the Berbers approaching Carthage, Guntarith promised Antalas that, if events should occur as planned, once Guntarith assumed the position of king, ruling over Carthage and the rest of Africa, Antalas would rule Byzacena, taking half the possessions of the *magister militum per Africam*, Areobindus, and 1 500 Roman soldiers.¹¹⁴⁰ The negotiations which occurred between Guntarith and Antalas are of interest primarily for the fact that Guntarith appears to have believed that Antalas’ goal was ultimately the confirmation of his own independent polity in Byzacena. The evidence is inconclusive, but the power of individual Berber leaders in Africa might actually have encouraged individual Romans to believe that the establishment of independent polities in the region represented a realistic possibility.

having commanded the Roman advance force at the battle of Bagai in 540 (*Bella* IV.19.6–9). However, Corippus also identifies him as having betrayed the Romans at the battle of Theveste by having ordered the troops under his command to retreat part way through the battle (*Ioh.* III.427–32; with pp. 219–20).

¹¹³⁶ *Ioh.* IV.222–4: [Guntarith en iterum peruersa mente malignus,/ perfidus, infelix, atrox, insulsus, adulter,/ praedo, homicida, rapax, bellorum pessimus auctor...]

¹¹³⁷ On Stotzas’ ambitions see pp. 202–3.

¹¹³⁸ *Bella* IV.25.3. On John’s (Stotzas Iunior’s) appointment as Stotzas’ successor see also Jordanes, *Rom.* 384; and *Marc. Com. Addit. s.a.* 545.2. According to Procopius, by this time, the mutineers amounted to about five hundred Romans, eighty Huns, and some Vandals (*Bella* IV.27.8).

¹¹³⁹ *Bella* IV.25.2, 4–5.

¹¹⁴⁰ *Bella* IV.25.10. See also p. 253.

However, once Guntarith had succeeded in having Areobindus murdered,¹¹⁴¹ he reneged on the deal. This resulted in the entirely unexpected submission of Antalas and the Berbers of Numidia to the Eastern Roman emperor.¹¹⁴²

Meanwhile, the soldiers who had previously been commanded by Stotzas, together with their new commander, John, abandoned Antalas, and were received at Carthage by Guntarith, who had established himself as ruler.¹¹⁴³ Guntarith's administration at Carthage was short-lived, lasting only 36 days,¹¹⁴⁴ before he too was murdered at a banquet by Artabanes, the leader of a force of Armenians who had been sent to Africa with Areobindus.¹¹⁴⁵ When the guards learnt of the death of Guntarith, many aligned themselves with Artabanes' Armenians, and they acclaimed the emperor.¹¹⁴⁶ When the people of Carthage heard the acclamation, those who remained loyal to the emperor killed the mutineers who remained in the city.¹¹⁴⁷ John, their leader, escaped the massacre by hiding in the sanctuary with some of his Vandal troops, but, having received pledges for his safety from Artabanes, emerged from there, and was sent to Constantinople.¹¹⁴⁸

On account of his actions, Artabanes was appointed *magister militum per Africam*.¹¹⁴⁹ He also appears to have confirmed Athanasius in his position as Praetorian Prefect of Africa, since Procopius notes that he requested that Athanasius take charge of the funds of the palace.¹¹⁵⁰ Artabanes' appointment is somewhat surprising. While Artabanes had demonstrated his loyalty

¹¹⁴¹ *Bella* IV.26.22–33. Cf. *Ioh.* IV.225–6; *Jord. Rom.* 384; *Marc. Com. Addit. s.a.* 547.6; and Victor of Tunnuna, 136.

¹¹⁴² *Bella* IV.27.3–6; with pp. 255–6.

¹¹⁴³ *Bella* IV.27.8. According to Procopius, by this time, the mutineers amounted to about five hundred Romans, eighty Huns, and some Vandals.

¹¹⁴⁴ *Bella* IV.28.41; Victor of Tunnuna, 136. Guntarith's coup occurred in December 545 (see n. 1134), so his death must have occurred in late January or early February 546.

¹¹⁴⁵ *Bella* IV.24.2, 28.6–31. On Artabanes see *PLRE* IIIA, 125–30.

¹¹⁴⁶ *Bella* IV.28.35–6.

¹¹⁴⁷ *Bella* IV.28.38–9.

¹¹⁴⁸ *Bella* IV.28.40–1.

¹¹⁴⁹ *Bella* IV.28.42.

¹¹⁵⁰ *Bella* IV.28.35.

to the Roman imperial government during the revolt, he was an Armenian who had been involved, in 538/9, in a successful conspiracy to assassinate the Roman governor of Armenia, Acacius.¹¹⁵¹ The men who had accompanied him to Africa were also Armenians, who had recently deserted from Sasanian Persia, and were thus not to be trusted on the eastern frontier.¹¹⁵² The Roman imperial government at Constantinople no longer seems to have been willing to commit experienced commanders to Africa, and was resorting to men it regarded as expendable. Nevertheless, Artabanes appears to have been an effective *magister militum per Africam*, although he only remained in Africa for a short time, before requesting to be recalled to Constantinople.¹¹⁵³

5.6 Campaigns of John Troglita (546 to 548)

Following Artabanes' recall to Constantinople, John Troglita was appointed *magister militum per Africam*.¹¹⁵⁴ The date of his arrival in Africa is unclear. However, it is likely that John sailed from Constantinople in early summer 546, and arrived in Carthage in late summer 546.¹¹⁵⁵

¹¹⁵¹ *Bella* II.3.25; IV.27.17. There appears to have been a deliberate attempt to remove Artabanes' family from the eastern frontier. Another Armenian commander in Africa, John, was Artabanes' brother, and Procopius subsequently notes that another relative of Artabanes, Gregorius, was among this group of Armenian troops (*Bella* IV.17.11).

¹¹⁵² *Bella* IV.24.2.

¹¹⁵³ *Bella* IV.28.44. Cf. *Bella* VII.31.2–7, elaborating on the reasons why Artabanes wished to return to Constantinople.

¹¹⁵⁴ *Bella* IV.28.45; VIII.17.20; *Ioh.* I.48–53; Jordanes, *Rom.* 385; *Marc. Com. Addit. s.a.* 547.6.

¹¹⁵⁵ According to the *De rei militaris* of Vegetius (IV.32), which was, admittedly, written in the late 4th century, the period in which it was safe to undertake a trans-Mediterranean voyage was between 27 May and 14 September. Between 10 March and 27 May, and between 14 September and 11 November, a voyage would be dangerous, and between 11 November and 10 March the seas were closed (see J. Rougé, 'La navigation hivernale dans l'Empire romain,' *REA* 54 (1952), 318). Given that the expeditionary force took around three months to travel from Constantinople to Carthage, John would presumably have had to sail from Carthage by the end of August, at the latest, and in all likelihood sailed at the beginning of the summer of 546. Cf. Stein, *Histoire*, II, 555 n. 2, who suggests that John must have departed Constantinople in July 546; and Modéran, *Les Maures*, 628 with n. 80. Modéran further adds that Corippus' claim (*Ioh.* I.331), that John, upon arriving in Africa, saw that: The nourishing crops, ripe throughout the cultivated fields, were burned... [uritur alma seges cultos matura per agros...] suggests that John must have arrived in Africa before the harvest, and thus before July. However, Corippus' agricultural reference need not be quite as precise as this. *PLRE* IIIA, 646, also argues in favour of a date in the summer, suggesting that the reference to good sailing conditions at *Ioh.* I.128–30 implies summer. But this is tenuous. The reference to favourable conditions might simply be intended to reinforce the impression that the voyage was divinely supported. *Contra* Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 366, who suggests the last months of 546; and Stein, *Histoire*, II, 555 n. 2, who suggests the autumn of 546.

Almost immediately upon arriving in Africa, he set out from Carthage with the intention of engaging the Berbers.¹¹⁵⁶ This is perhaps the first time that a Roman *magister militum per Africam* had acted in such a proactive manner to push the Berbers back from Roman controlled territory. It is, however, unclear whether this change of approach was the product of John's character, a shift in Roman policy, a response to the increasing state of crisis, or a combination thereof.

John initially made camp at Antonia Castra, the location of which is unknown, where he received envoys from the Berber leader, Antalas, whom he took prisoner.¹¹⁵⁷ He then set out in pursuit of the Berbers, who had withdrawn into the mountains.¹¹⁵⁸ When John drew close to the Berber position - the location of which is not specified by the sources, but appears to have been in Byzacena - he made camp,¹¹⁵⁹ and sent an embassy to Antalas, offering peace in exchange for his submission to the Eastern Roman Empire.¹¹⁶⁰ The offer was, however, rejected.¹¹⁶¹ On the following day, the Romans engaged the Berbers in battle, defeating them and recapturing the standards which had been captured from Solomon's forces at the battle of Theveste in 544.¹¹⁶² Ierna, the prominent leader of the Ilaguas, was among those killed.¹¹⁶³ The precise date of the battle is uncertain, however, it probably took place in the autumn of 546.¹¹⁶⁴

¹¹⁵⁶ *Bella* IV.28.46; *Ioh.* I.417–39. If a date in late summer is accepted for John's arrival in Africa, the campaign which followed should probably be dated to autumn 546. Cf. Modéran, *Les Maures*, 628, who dates the campaign more precisely to August 546. *Contra* Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 370; Stein, *Histoire*, II, 555 n. 2; and Pringle, *Defence*, 33, 365 n. 1, all of whom suggest that the campaign must have taken place in the winter of 546/7. This seems to be unlikely, given that military campaigns otherwise appear to have ceased in Africa during the winter months. Cf. *Bella* IV.13.39.

¹¹⁵⁷ *Ioh.* I.453–50. On Antonia Castra see Pringle, *Defence*, 366 n. 17.

¹¹⁵⁸ *Ioh.* I.509–19; II.1–10.

¹¹⁵⁹ *Ioh.* II.270–1.

¹¹⁶⁰ *Ioh.* II.342–416.

¹¹⁶¹ *Ioh.* IV.358–92.

¹¹⁶² *Bella* IV.28.46; *Ioh.* V *passim*.

¹¹⁶³ *Ioh.* V.493–502, 519–21. On Ierna see further section 6.2.

¹¹⁶⁴ Modéran, *Les Maures*, 626–8. *Contra* Partsch, *Corippi Africani grammatici libri*, xxvi n. 132, who placed the battle in the winter of 546/7, on the basis that *Ioh.* III.23–7, makes a comparison between autumn 533, when John Troglita had first arrived in Africa, and his arrival in 546. This view is followed by Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 364, 370; Bury, *History*, II, 147; Stein, *Histoire*, II, 555 n. 7; and *PLRE* IIIA, 647.

John Troglita returned to Carthage, where he celebrated his victory.¹¹⁶⁵ However, the Ilaguas, having apparently returned to Tripolitania following their defeat in Byzacena, soon regrouped, under the leadership of Carcasan.¹¹⁶⁶ They again moved west, probably in the spring of 547,¹¹⁶⁷ into Byzacena, where they again entered into an alliance with Antalas.¹¹⁶⁸

John immediately set out from Carthage, accompanied by Berber allies, under the command of Cusina, with the intention of engaging the Berbers under the command of Carcasan and Antalas.¹¹⁶⁹ But the Berbers, becoming aware that the Roman army was approaching, withdrew into the desert.¹¹⁷⁰ John pursued them, despite the fact that it was, by this time, mid-summer.¹¹⁷¹ This proved to be misguided. With the terrain failing to provide the Roman army with either water or food, and with the army's horses dying as a result of this,¹¹⁷² John was forced to withdraw to the coast, where he might be re-provisioned by sea.¹¹⁷³

The Berbers under the command of Carcasan and Antalas were equally suffering from a lack of water, and began to move towards a river in the region of Gallica (probably the Matmata plateau

¹¹⁶⁵ *Ioh.* VI.58–103. It has sometimes been suggested that Corippus' account implies that John celebrated a triumph (Blänsdorf, "'Aeneadas rursus cupiunt resonare Camenae'", 542). The poet may well have intended to create this impression, but it is highly unlikely that John actually celebrated a formal triumph. The audacity of such a gesture would surely have resulted in his immediate recall to Constantinople. Cf. the recall of Belisarius in 534 (*Bella* IV.8.1–5).

¹¹⁶⁶ *Ioh.* VI.104–44. Carcasan is first attested in the context of the battle in which Ierna was killed (*Ioh.* IV.639).

¹¹⁶⁷ Modéran, *Les Maures*, 631, argues in favour of a date in the spring of 547, on the basis of Corippus' claim (*Ioh.* VI.247): For the year was perceived to be fruitless... [sterilis nam cernitur annus...], which he suggests means that the Romans were aware that there would be no harvest that year, and thus that the harvest had not yet occurred. Cf. Stein, *Histoire*, II, 555–6; and Pringle, *Defence*, 36. Contra Shea, *The Iohannis*, 153, whose translation of *Ioh.* VI.247, "But you can see how poor the year's harvest has been.", implies that the Ilaguas moved into Byzacena after mid-summer.

¹¹⁶⁸ *Bella* IV.28.47; *Ioh.* VI.221–8. In the *Iohannis*, Corippus attributes to John Troglita a speech in which he claims that he must prevent the Berbers from entering Byzacena (*Ioh.* VI.250–2). However, if the Ilaguas had indeed allied themselves with Antalas, as Procopius suggests, then it seems to be probable that the Ilaguas had already entered Byzacena, an argument apparently supported by Corippus' claim at *Ioh.* VI.279–80.

¹¹⁶⁹ *Ioh.* VI.255–75.

¹¹⁷⁰ *Ioh.* VI.276–91.

¹¹⁷¹ *Ioh.* VI.270–3, 292–5. The season is given by Corippus' claim that the events occurred "under the constellation of Cancer" [sub sidere Cancrī]. Cf. *PLRE* IIIA, 647.

¹¹⁷² *Ioh.* VI.295–325, 350–65.

¹¹⁷³ *Ioh.* VI.366–86.

and the Monts des Ksour, in Tunisia), where they were seen by a Roman scout.¹¹⁷⁴ Urged by Cusina, John moved his forces towards them, with the intention of holding the river, and made camp at Marta (mod. Mareth, Tunisia).¹¹⁷⁵ At the battle which occurred at Marta, the Roman forces were routed.¹¹⁷⁶ John withdrew with the survivors, first to Iunci (mod. Bordj Younga, Tunisia), and then to Laribus (mod. Djebel Lorbeus, Tunisia).¹¹⁷⁷ He appears to have used the winter of 547/8 to re-consolidate the Roman position.¹¹⁷⁸ At Laribus, John regrouped, collecting additional troops, gathering supplies and, crucially, entering into alliances with a number of Berber tribes, including those under the command of Cusina, Ifisdaias and Iaudas.¹¹⁷⁹

Probably in the spring of 548,¹¹⁸⁰ the Berbers again overran Byzacena, and advanced as far as Carthage itself.¹¹⁸¹ John marched against the Berber alliance, led by Carcasan and Antalas, in Byzacena.¹¹⁸² The Romans pursued the Berbers under the command of Carcasan and Antalas, who continually withdrew, apparently in the hope of exhausting the Roman army's supplies.¹¹⁸³

John ultimately made camp at the harbour of Lariscus, where the Roman army could be re-supplied by sea.¹¹⁸⁴ There the army mutinied.¹¹⁸⁵ Corippus, the only source for these events, is unspecific about the precise causes of the mutiny – employing a metaphor in which he compares the mutiny to a forest fire, and attributing to the soldiers a speech in which they condemn John Troglita forcing them to pursue the Berbers through the desert, despite a lack

¹¹⁷⁴ *Ioh.* VI.437–77. On the location of Gallica see Pringle, *Defence*, 369 n. 45.

¹¹⁷⁵ *Ioh.* VI.467–95. On the identification of Marta as the site of the battle, see Partsch, *Corippii Africani grammatici libri*, xxxi–xxxiii; and Pringle, *Defence*, 369 n. 45.

¹¹⁷⁶ *Bella* IV.28.48; *Ioh.* VI.497–773.

¹¹⁷⁷ *Ioh.* VII.1–6, 109–11, 136–49.

¹¹⁷⁸ Stein, *Histoire*, II, 557; Pringle, *Defence*, 37.

¹¹⁷⁹ *Bella* IV.28.50. Cf. *Ioh.* VII.146–9; 262–80. On these alliances see sections 6.4 and 6.5.

¹¹⁸⁰ Partsch, *Corippii Africani Grammatici libri*, xxv–vi; Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, 376–7; Stein, *Histoire*, II, 557; *PLRE* IIIA, 648. Contra Pringle, *Defence*, 38, who suggests mid-summer.

¹¹⁸¹ *Bella* IV.28.49; *Ioh.* VII.283–7.

¹¹⁸² *Bella* IV.28.50; *Ioh.* VII.281–5.

¹¹⁸³ *Ioh.* VII.524–8.

¹¹⁸⁴ *Ioh.* VIII.20–32, 41–8. Corippus notes that the harbour was on the plain of Iunci (*Ioh.* VIII.20–1), but the site remains unidentified.

¹¹⁸⁵ *Ioh.* VIII.49–163.

of food and water.¹¹⁸⁶ His implication appears to be that there was no cause other than the soldiers' cowardice – a claim which he later places in the mouth of John Troglita.¹¹⁸⁷ However, given that Corippus was effectively a mouthpiece for the Roman administration in Africa, he could hardly be expected to have said otherwise.¹¹⁸⁸ Morale was almost undoubtedly low after years of continuous warfare, but conditions of service are again likely to have been a contributing factor.

The ultimate intention of the mutineers was apparently to murder John Troglita.¹¹⁸⁹ The mutiny was only suppressed when the Roman troops were shamed into submission by John Troglita's claim that they should depart, if they had no wish to fight, since the allied Berber troops would remain loyal, and the allied Berbers indicated their willingness to stand behind him.¹¹⁹⁰ The proportion of the Roman army in Africa which was, by this point in time, 'Roman' is open to question, if the mutineers could be cowed by the Berber troops. By this point, the Roman army may well have comprised primarily of allied troops, but there is insufficient evidence for this to be assessed.

Finally, at the Plains of Cato, in mid-548,¹¹⁹¹ the Roman forces decisively defeated the Berbers under the command of Carcasan and Antalas in battle.¹¹⁹² Carcasan himself was killed, along with seventeen other Berber leaders,¹¹⁹³ while Antalas was forced to submit to the authority of the Eastern Roman Empire.¹¹⁹⁴ Those Berbers who escaped from the battle of the Plains of Cato fled to the borders of Africa.¹¹⁹⁵

¹¹⁸⁶ *Ioh.* VIII.69–88.

¹¹⁸⁷ *Ioh.* VIII.123: Leave our camp, you cowardly group [uos ignava manus nostris discedite castris.]

¹¹⁸⁸ See pp. 68–70.

¹¹⁸⁹ *Ioh.* VIII.87–8.

¹¹⁹⁰ *Ioh.* VIII.119–31.

¹¹⁹¹ The precise date of the battle is uncertain, but it must fall after the spring of 548. *Cf.* n. 1180.

¹¹⁹² *Bella* IV.28.50–1; 8.17.21; *Ioh.* VIII.378–656; Paul the Deacon, *Hist. Lang.* I.25.

¹¹⁹³ *Ioh.* VIII.627–36; Jordanes, *Rom.* 385.

¹¹⁹⁴ *Bella* VIII.17.21.

¹¹⁹⁵ *Bella* IV.28.51.

Thus, according to Procopius:

... after so long a time, it came to pass that there was some peace for the remaining Libyans, who were few and very poor.¹¹⁹⁶

¹¹⁹⁶ *Bella* IV.28.52: [οὕτω τε Λιβύων τοῖς περιγενομένοις, ὀλίγοις τε καὶ λίαν πτωχοῖς οὖσιν, ὅψε καὶ μόλις ἡσυχίαν τινὰ ξυνηνέχθη γενέσθαι.]

Chapter 6: Roman-Berber Relations (543 to 548)

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter 5, it has been argued that the period between 534 and 548 saw significant changes in the nature of relations between the Roman administration in Africa and the Berber tribes. The initial period of Berber hostilities following the Roman conquest, between 534 and 535, appears to have been the product of inter-tribal competition and conflict, rather than a deliberate attempt to overthrow the new Roman administration in the region. However, by 544, a previously unknown Berber group, the Ilaguas, had entered Byzacena, destabilizing the uneasy peace which had existed between the Roman administration and the tribes of Byzacena and Numidia since Solomon's campaigns in the Aurès massif in 540. In 545, in a dramatic reversal, a Berber army, comprised of tribes previously hostile to one another, was encamped outside the walls of Carthage.

During this period, five Berber leaders emerge as key to the security of Roman administration in Africa – Cusina, Iaudas, Antalas, Ierna and Carcasan – although others, of lesser influence, such as Ifisdaias and Autiliten, were clearly known.¹¹⁹⁷ Of these, Antalas, Ierna and Carcasan were consistently hostile to the Eastern Roman Empire,¹¹⁹⁸ with the exception of a brief period in late 545, when Antalas attempted to back the imperially endorsed administration in Africa against the administration of the Roman rebel, Guntarith.¹¹⁹⁹ The roles played by Cusina and Iaudas are more ambiguous. Cusina, who was retrospectively presented by the poet Corippus as the Berber leader “always entirely loyal to the Roman state”, was both enemy and ally to the Eastern Roman Empire during the period 534 to 548,¹²⁰⁰ while Iaudas, a key figure of the conflict between 534 and 535, is entirely absent from the sources for the years 546 and 547, before

¹¹⁹⁷ On Autiliten and Ifisdaias see *PLRE* IIIA, 159 and 613 respectively.

¹¹⁹⁸ Carcasan succeeded Ierna as leader of the Ilaguas following Ierna's death in 546/7. *Ioh.* VI.142–3; with n. 1261.

¹¹⁹⁹ On these events see pp. 223–5, 253.

¹²⁰⁰ *Ioh.* III.407: [Romanis rebus nimium semperque fidelis].

reappearing, as an ally of the Eastern Roman Empire at the decisive battle of the Plains of Cato, in 548.¹²⁰¹

The intention of this chapter is, therefore, to outline what was known of these five Berber leaders, and the tribes which they represented, to the Roman administration; and to consider the manner in which the Eastern Roman Empire sought to both manage and exploit its relationships with these individuals and groups. Finally, it will assess whether it is possible to identify a coherent Roman strategy *vis-à-vis* the Berbers after the initial campaign of conquest in Africa.

6.2 The Ilaguas

Given the prominent role played by the Ilaguas (or Leuathae) in Procopius' narrative of the resumption of hostilities between the Berber tribes and the Eastern Roman Empire in 544, which began a period of conflict of greater intensity than the Berber raids of the 530s, their identity, and their sudden appearance in Roman awareness, merit some consideration.

Before discussing the identity of the Ilaguas, a problem of terminology must first be discussed briefly. As noted in section 5.5, the people to whom Corippus refers as Ilaguas, are referred to as Leuathae [οἱ Λευάθαι] by Procopius. However, in addition to the fact that Procopius and Corippus use different terms from one another, Corippus uses a number of distinct terms within his own work – Leucada, Ilaguas, Hilaguas, Ilasguas, Laguantan, Laguantan, Ilaguaten, Languantan, Languantan, Languatan¹²⁰² – which have generally been assumed to be synonymous with one another, and with Procopius' Leuathae.¹²⁰³ The term Leucada can,

¹²⁰¹ See pp. 183–6, 194–6, 229–30, and section 6.5.

¹²⁰² For full references to the various spellings see Partsch, *Corippi Africani grammatici libri*, xii; with minor emendations in Riedlberger, *Philologischer, historischer und liturgischer Kommentar*, 370–1. The *Iohannis* also includes two apparently adjectival (following Latin grammar) forms – Ilaguatensis (*Ioh.* VI.278) and Illaguatensis (*Ioh.* VI.166).

¹²⁰³ Partsch, *Corippi Africani grammatici libri*, xii; Courtois, *Les Vandales*, 344; O. Brogan, 'Inscriptions in the Libyan alphabet from Tripolitania, and some notes on the tribes of the region,' in J. Bynon & T. Bynon, eds., *Hamito-Semitic* (Paris, 1975), 284. Cf. Desanges, *Catalogue des tribus africaines*, 101, who only identifies four main forms – Leucada, Laguantan, Ilaguas and Hilaguas.

however, be discounted. It occurs only once in the *Iohannis*, and appears to be used in parallel with 'Africa' in the preceding line, thus seeming to refer to the land of the Ilaguas, rather than to the people.¹²⁰⁴ Confusingly, the various spellings of Ilaguas appear to have been standardised, without explanation, in the now standard edition of Diggle and Goodyear (1970), which prefers two forms – Ilaguas and Laguatan.¹²⁰⁵ This is somewhat misleading. While some of the multitude of spellings may well be explained by scribal error,¹²⁰⁶ deliberately varied spellings can also be explained on metrical grounds.¹²⁰⁷ But the preference for Laguatan, which is not attested in the manuscript at all, and is now common in the secondary literature, is puzzling. Nevertheless, in the interests of clarity, the spellings of Diggle and Goodyear's edition have been retained in the quotations presented in this study; and the term Ilaguas has been employed as the generic term.

Corippus' various terms for the Ilaguas have attracted some interest, since they are clearly not Latin, and appear to be transliterations of terms from a local Berber language.¹²⁰⁸ Based on what is known of modern Berber linguistics, Hilaguas/ilaguas/ilasguas should be the singular form and Laguantan/Languantan/Laguatan etc should be the plural form.¹²⁰⁹ Nevertheless, Corippus treats all forms as grammatically singular, from which it must be inferred that, while Corippus, as a native Romano-African, was familiar with some Berber words, notably names, he did not have sufficiently close contact with the Berber tribes so as to be able to speak their

¹²⁰⁴ *Ioh.* III.293–5: [non †mentis consensit† tunc Africa bellum/ te vigilante, pater. spectauit Leucada pugnas/ uirtutemque tuam.] Following the translation of Shea, *The Iohannis or De Bellis Libycis*, 105.

¹²⁰⁵ One usage each of Ilaguatan (*Ioh.* V.153), and the adjective, Ilagatensis (*Ioh.* VI.166), remain, although not in the lines in which they may be found in the manuscript. Cf. n. 1202.

¹²⁰⁶ Mattingly, 'The Laguatan,' 106 (appendix).

¹²⁰⁷ Zarini, *Berbères ou barbares?*, 41.

¹²⁰⁸ Brogan, 'Inscriptions in the Libyan alphabet from Tripolitania,' 284; Mattingly, 'The Laguatan,' 96 and 106 (appendix); idem, 'Laguatan,' in *EB* 28/9 (Aix-en-Provence, 1008), 4314; Riedlberger, *Philologischer, historischer und liturgischer Kommentar*, 370; Zarini, *Berbères ou barbares?*, 41.

¹²⁰⁹ S. Chaker, 'Laguatan: Note complémentaire sur le nom des Laguatan,' in *EB* 28/9 (Aix-en-Provence, 2008), 4321; W. Vycichl, 'Les terminaisons de pluriel externe des noms berbères. Étude sémantique et historique,' in J. Drouin & A. Roth, eds., *À la croisée des études libyco-berbères. Mélanges offerts à P. Galand-Pernet et L. Galand* (Paris, 1993), 255. Contra Mattingly, 'The Laguatan,' 96; and idem, 'Laguatan,' in *EB*, 4314, who claims that Ilaguas is the plural form.

language(s),¹²¹⁰ and his level of knowledge of the Berbers generally, and of the Ilaguas in particular, should not be overestimated.

A people referred to as the Austuriani (sometimes spelled Austoriani or Ausuriani) by contemporaries must also be considered when reconstructing the history of the Ilaguas.¹²¹¹ The Austuriani are listed among the Berber tribes which Corippus claims gathered at the summons of Antalas, in the catalogue of tribes in book II of the *Iohannis*,¹²¹² and are subsequently attested as being part of an alliance which included the Ilaguas.¹²¹³ Whether the Austuriani should be regarded as a specific sub-group of the Ilaguas, or whether the term Austuriani is synonymous with Ilaguas, is, however, uncertain, since it is often unclear whether Corippus is presenting a list, or two statements in apposition.¹²¹⁴ Nevertheless, the Austuriani of the 4th century¹²¹⁵ were either assimilated into the Ilaguas by the 6th century, or Austuriani is an anachronistic name for the Ilaguas.¹²¹⁶ Consequently, references to the Austuriani can also be used to reconstruct the history of the Ilaguas.

The earliest apparent references to the Ilaguas, by a contemporary writer, are to the Austuriani. Ammianus Marcellinus, writing in the 4th century, notes attacks by the Austuriani on the

¹²¹⁰ Riedlberger, *Philologischer, historischer und liturgischer Kommentar*, 370. *Contra* Riedlberger, Corippus does not actually use the singular and plural forms synonymously. In fact, the poet appears to use the singular form as a noun, and the plural form as an indeclinable adjective, with the exception of two contestable usages (*Ioh.* IV.629 and VII.535), in which he uses Languatan and Laguantan substantively. This, however, reinforces Riedlberger's argument, as does the fact that Corippus is otherwise scathing in his references to the Berber language (*Ioh.* II.27 and IV.350–1).

¹²¹¹ Ammianus Marcellinus uses Austoriani; Synesius of Cyrenaica uses Ausuriani; and Corippus uses both Austuriani and Austur. See nn. 1212–3, 1217–8 for references.

¹²¹² *Ioh.* II.89–91.

¹²¹³ *Ioh.* II.208–10, 344–5; V.171–2.

¹²¹⁴ For example, the poet notes, in the context of the gathering of tribes: The Ilaguas, having never been overcome, gathered in innumerable thousands, and flying forth, terrified the whole world. The savage Austur, having released the reigns of their horses, followed, trusting in their strength... [conuenit innumeris numquam superatus Ilaguas/ milibus et totum uolitans conterritat orbem./ cornipedum saeuus laxatis Austur habenis/ uiribus hunc sequitur fidens...](*Ioh.* II.87–90).

¹²¹⁵ See n. 1217.

¹²¹⁶ *Contra* D. Roques, 'Synesios de Cyrène et les migrations berbères vers l'Orient (398–413),' *CRAI* 127/4 (1983), 660–677, who argues that the Austuriani [Austoriani] noted by Ammianus Marcellinus (28.6.2, 13) were remnants of Gildo's defeated army.

population of Tripolitania, including the city of Leptis Magna, between 363 and 365.¹²¹⁷ Subsequent attacks by the Austuriani are attested in the early 5th century, both in Cyrenaica, by Synesius, bishop of Ptolemais (on the coast of Cyrenaica);¹²¹⁸ and in Tripolitania, based on epigraphic evidence.¹²¹⁹ However, no source explicitly identifies the original homeland of the Austuriani.

By the early 6th century, Procopius suggests that there were Berbers living within the borders of what had previously been the Roman province of Tripolitania.¹²²⁰ He notes in the *Bella* that the Berbers of Tripolitania were led by Cabaon, who defeated the Vandals in battle during the reign of the Vandal king Thrasamund (496–523), presumably at some point in the early 520s.¹²²¹ Furthermore, in the *De Aedificiis*, Procopius claims that, at the time of the Roman invasion of Africa, Leptis Magna had been abandoned by the Vandals, and the hinterland of the city was controlled by the Berbers.¹²²² Cabaon, or his successors, may be assumed to have gained control of the entire region. These Berbers are, admittedly, named as neither Austuriani nor Ilaguas.

¹²¹⁷ Ammianus Marcellinus, XXVIII.6.1–14. *Contra* Mattingly, ‘The Laguatan,’ 100; and idem, ‘Laguatan,’ in *EB* 28/9 (2008), 4314–18, who suggests that the earliest historical reference to the Austuriani should be dated to the late 3rd century, when the emperor Maximian campaigned against them. However, these events are not attested by any contemporary source, but rather by Corippus (*Ioh.* I.480–2; V.178–80; VII.530–33), writing some three centuries after the events he describes, and the reliability of the information is open to doubt. Indeed, it is worth noting that Corippus’ use of the terms Ilaguas and Laguatan, even in the context of the 6th century, appears to be quite generic. He does, after all, refer to Antalas as Laguatan, despite otherwise naming his tribe as the Frexes (*Ioh.* I.467–9), and despite Procopius categorically denying that Antalas was originally of the Ilaguas (*Ioh.* I.467–9 and *Bella* IV.21.18). It therefore seems to be likely that the terms Ilaguas and Laguatan were sometimes used simply to refer to those Berber tribes in opposition to the Eastern Roman Empire, perhaps to stress the barbarity of all the rebellious tribes by associating them with a powerful adversary on the fringes of the Roman world (see Y. Modéran, ‘Les Laguatan: Le problème des migrations des “néo-Berbères”,’ in *EB* 28/9 (Aix-en-Provence, 2008), 4320).

¹²¹⁸ For full references to Synesius’ *Epistulae* see Mattingly, ‘The Laguatan,’ 98.

¹²¹⁹ *IRT* 480; J. M. Reynolds, ‘The Austuriani and Tripolitania in the early fifth century,’ *LibStud* 8 (1976–1977), 13.

¹²²⁰ Thus, Modéran, *Les Maures*, 289.

¹²²¹ *Bella* III.8.15–29; cf. Evagrius, *HE* IV.15. Mattingly, ‘Laguatan,’ in *EB*, 4314–8, places the Vandal defeat in 523. However, this cannot be correct. The Vandal king Thrasamund died in 523, and Procopius is clear in stating that the Vandal defeat occurred prior to this: Such was the suffering which befell Thrasamund at the hands of the Berbers. And he died at a later time, having ruled the Vandals for 27 years [ταῦτα μὲν Τρασαμούνδῳ ταθεῖν πρὸς Μαυρουσίῳν ξενέπεσεν. ἐτελεύτα δὲ χρόνῳ ὕστερον ἑπτὰ τε καὶ εἴκοσιν ἔτη Βανδίλων ἄρξας] (*Bella* III.8.29). On Cabaon see *PLRE* II, 244.

¹²²² *Aed.* VI.4.6–10.

But, when the information provided by Procopius is taken in combination with that of Synesius, they should probably be identified as such.¹²²³

Thus, while the Ilaguas appear to have been established in Tripolitania, and perhaps also in Cyrenaica, by the 6th century, albeit as a transhumant population, their origins remain much debated. The two dominant, and opposing, views at present are that of David Mattingly, focusing on migration from the East, and that of Yves Modéran, focusing on ethnogenesis.¹²²⁴

The arguments are complex, being based on extremely limited contemporary source material, and rest heavily on the Berber genealogies constructed by medieval Arabic writers, notably Ibn Khaldun.¹²²⁵ The origins of the Ilaguas are undoubtedly of interest, but a detailed analysis of the question is certainly beyond the scope of this study, especially given that the essential point, for this study - the movement of the Ilaguas from Tripolitania to Byzacena and their alliance with the Fraxes, in 544 - is classified as anomalous according to both the model proposed by Mattingly and that proposed by Modéran.¹²²⁶

Unfortunately, neither Procopius nor Corippus offers an explicit explanation for the westward movement of the Ilaguas from Tripolitania to Byzacena in 544.¹²²⁷ Although, Corippus' account

¹²²³ Thus, Mattingly, 'Laguatan,' in *EB*, 4314–8.

¹²²⁴ See, in particular, Mattingly, 'The Laguatan,' 96–106; idem, *Tripolitania*, 173–5; idem, 'Laguatan,' in *EB*, 4314–8; and Modéran, 'Les premiers raids des tribus sahariennes en Afrique,' 479–90; idem, *Les Maures*, 289–310; idem, 'Les Maures de l'Afrique romaine,' 249–69; idem, 'Des Maures aux Berbères,' 91–134. For a concise summary of the differences between the two views see Modéran, 'Les Laguatan,' in *EB* 28/9, 4318–21.

¹²²⁵ Modéran, 'Les Laguatan,' in *EB*, 4318–21.

¹²²⁶ Mattingly, 'Laguatan,' in *EB*, 4315; Modéran, 'Les Laguatan,' in *EB*, 4318–21.

¹²²⁷ *Contra* Modéran, *Les Maures*, 609–13, who cites the chronicle of Theophanes (*AM* 6026) (ed. De Boor, p. 208) as evidence that the Ilaguas did not move directly from Leptis Magna to Byzacena, but instead initially moved to the East, to Cyrenaica, in order to capture the city of Berenice, which suggests that the invasion of Byzacena was not their immediate priority. This argument has been followed by Zarini, *Berbères ou barbares?*, 45. Theophanes, writing in the 9th century, generally offers no more than a paraphrase of Procopius' account of the Roman campaigns in Africa during the reign of Justinian (see pp. 38–9). But, in this instance, he does indeed offer a unique testimony, which has been argued to derive from a reliable, but no longer extant, source (see Mango & Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, 312 n. 104; and Modéran, *Les Maures*, 610 n. 20). However, the account of the capture of Berenice is inherently suspect, given that Theophanes is not writing as a contemporary; it does not derive from Procopius' *Bella*, Theophanes' major source for this section of his chronicle; and its source cannot be identified. Furthermore, given that Africa was entirely under

might be interpreted as evidence that Antalas, the leader of the Frexes of Byzacena, invited the tribes of Tripolitania into Byzacena in order to aid his vengeance against the Eastern Roman Empire, following the death of his brother.¹²²⁸ Procopius, on the other hand, notes only that the Ilaguas, upon entering Byzacena, plundered the surrounding countryside.¹²²⁹ He subsequently claims that an attack on Carthage was intended, but does so only after noting the alliance of the Ilaguas with Antalas and the Frexes, implying that this directed military action occurred at Antalas' instigation.¹²³⁰

Certainly, Corippus' claim, that the Ilaguas entered Byzacena at the invitation of Antalas, cannot be entirely dismissed.¹²³¹ However, this need not imply that there was any longstanding connection between the Ilaguas and the Frexes.¹²³² To a certain extent, the debate as to whether the Ilaguas were a confederation of tribes or simply tribes intermittently brought together by alliances is not relevant. Given that even the major proponent of a confederation concedes that, for much of its history, the confederation was "inoperative but latent",¹²³³ on a practical level, it is difficult to see how an 'activated' confederation would have differed from a short-

Islamic rule by the beginning of the 8th century, and this is the only reference to Berenice in Theophanes' chronicle, it is perhaps to be doubted that he were aware of its location.

¹²²⁸ *Ioh.* III.393–6; with Modéran, *Les Maures*, 608. See further pp. 245–6.

¹²²⁹ *Contra* Modéran, *Les Maures*, 607, who suggests that Procopius' account implies that the Ilaguas entered Byzacena in order to continue their retaliation against the Eastern Roman Empire for the murder of their notables at Leptis Magna and their subsequent defeat outside its walls. While this possibility cannot be dismissed, Procopius' statement does not obviously permit this interpretation: The barbarians, arriving in Byzacena, pillaged much of the land there through raids... [οἱ τε βάρβαροι ἐς Βυζάκιον ἀφικόμενοι πλεῖστα ἐξ ἐπιδρομῆς ἐλήϊσαντο τῶν ἐκείνη χωρίων.] (*Bella* IV.21.17).

¹²³⁰ *Bella* IV.21.18: So, at that time, Antalas was happy to see the barbarians and having made an alliance with them, he led them against Solomon and Carthage [τότε οὖν τούτους Ἀντάλας τοὺς βαρβάρους ἄσμενός τε εἶδε καὶ ὁμαχιμίαν ποιησάμενος ἐπὶ Σολόμωνά τε καὶ Καρχηδόνα σφίσιν ἠγήσατο.]

¹²³¹ See n. 1230.

¹²³² *Contra* Mattingly, 'Laguatan,' in *EB*, 4314–18, who suggests that a confederation of tribes was assembled, possibly after a long abeyance, as a response to the murder of the leaders of the Ilaguas at Leptis Magna in 544, as a result of a longstanding agreement between various tribal groupings, including the Frexes.

¹²³³ Mattingly, 'Laguatan,' in *EB*, 4318.

term multi-tribe alliance, such as clearly occurs between the tribes of Cusina and Iaudas in 535,¹²³⁴ or, briefly, between Antalas, Iaudas and Cusina in 545, at Guntarith's instigation.¹²³⁵

For the purposes of considering the events of the 6th century, the reasons why the Ilaguas and Frexes chose to act in collaboration at this specific point in time are far more important than whether or not they had previously done so. And the comparatively recent emergence of the Frexes as a political power in Africa, and the unique circumstances which facilitated this, argues against a longstanding relationship between the two tribal groups.¹²³⁶

There were, however, evident benefits to the Frexes in a temporary alliance with the Ilaguas. As will be discussed in greater detail in section 6.3, Antalas' hostilities against the Eastern Roman Empire between 544 and 548 appear to have been motivated by a desire to maintain his autonomy, and perhaps to expand his territory, and he may well have regarded the Ilaguas as a much needed military resource.¹²³⁷ However, the catalyst for the Ilaguas to temporarily relocate to lands they had never previously occupied, regardless of whether or not an agreement existed with the Frexes, requires a more sophisticated explanation than merely the wishes of Antalas.

Explanation for the movement of the Ilaguas in 544 must lie, at least in part, in their transhumant way of life.¹²³⁸ Significantly, the Ilaguas do not remain in Byzacena after entering it, despite their evident military achievements under Antalas' leadership.¹²³⁹ In the spring of 544, the united Berber tribes were ostensibly in a strong position. They had defeated the

¹²³⁴ *Bella* IV.12.26, 29; with p. 194.

¹²³⁵ See *Bella* IV.25.1–3; with pp. 223–4.

¹²³⁶ On the Frexes see pp. 248–51.

¹²³⁷ Thus, Modéran, *Les Maures*, 616.

¹²³⁸ Mattingly, 'The Laguatan,' 104–5, has legitimately argued against the older view of the Ilaguas as "les nomades chameliers" (see Courtois, *Les Vandales*, 102–104, 344–350 and E. F. Gautier, *Le passé de l'Afrique du Nord. Les siècles obscurs* (Paris, 1952), 188–214), rightly stressing that the Ilaguas practised a mixed economy and were reliant on the agricultural production of settled populations, either their own or tributary tribes, as well as on nomadic pastoralism.

¹²³⁹ This point has been stressed by Modéran, *Les Maures*, 620–21.

Romans at the battle of Theveste, which resulted in the death of Solomon, and had gained the support of the disillusioned Roman, Vandal, and possibly Berber, forces, under the leadership of the Roman mutineer, Stotzas, who joined them from Mauritania.¹²⁴⁰ The Berbers then moved north, presumably towards Carthage. *En route*, they came to the city of Laribus, which they besieged.¹²⁴¹ Apparently as a result of their inexperience in siege warfare, the Ilaguas were unable to capture Laribus, and, rather than continuing to move north, towards Carthage, they returned home, presumably to Tripolitania,¹²⁴² leaving Antalas without the greater part of his army. At this point, Antalas offered his surrender to the Eastern Roman Empire.¹²⁴³

This pattern of entering Byzacena, raiding, and then returning to Tripolitania was repeated by the Ilaguas over the next three years.¹²⁴⁴ The Ilaguas' failure to remain in Byzacena following each successive invasion, suggests that their movement cannot be interpreted as large-scale migration.¹²⁴⁵ Rather, the movements of the Ilaguas appear to be seasonal,¹²⁴⁶ although there is no clear indication of what might have prompted a change from their previous pattern of

¹²⁴⁰ *Bella* IV.22.1–6.

¹²⁴¹ *Bella* IV.22.12–20. Modéran, *Les Maures*, 616–18, is almost certainly correct in suggesting that the events presented by Procopius in *Bella* 4.22 are both compressed and not in the correct chronological order. In his account, Procopius claims that, following the death of Solomon, and Sergius' assumption of the powers of *magister militum* and Praetorian Prefect, Antalas wrote to the emperor offering the surrender of the Berbers under his control (presumably including the Ilaguas), on the condition that Sergius be removed from office. However, as Modéran argues, it is implausible that Antalas should have offered his surrender having just won a military victory and received reinforcements; and at a point when the turmoil within the Roman administration can only have aided his own objectives. Rather, Antalas must have offered his surrender following the failed siege of Laribus, having been abandoned by his Ilaguas allies a short distance from Carthage. The siege of Laribus should therefore be placed a few weeks later than the battle of Theveste, given that both Theveste and Laribus were on a major route to Carthage, allowing for easy movement.

¹²⁴² *Bella* IV.22.20.

¹²⁴³ *Bella* IV.22.7–10. See n. 1241 on the chronology. Procopius presents Antalas' offer of surrender by means of a letter to the emperor, in which Antalas offers his own surrender in exchange for the removal of Sergius from office. However, it is far more likely that Antalas should have negotiated directly with the Roman military commanders in Africa, rather than writing directly to the emperor – a process which would have taken some time. Furthermore, it seems probable that the letter is a literary creation of Procopius, designed to further condemn the administration of Sergius. Cf. pp. 85–6.

¹²⁴⁴ Modéran, *Les Maures*, 616–34. For the chronology see sections 5.5 and 5.6.

¹²⁴⁵ *Contra* Mattingly, 'The Laguatan,' 101–3, 105; idem, 'Laguatan,' 4314–8. Modéran, *Les Maures*, 631, rightly points out that no source attests to the return of the Ilaguas to Tripolitania following their invasion of Byzacena in 547. However, given the pattern of previous years, it appears to be likely that it occurred.

¹²⁴⁶ Modéran, *Les Maures*, 620–1.

behaviour. The most obvious possibility is adverse environmental conditions in southern Tripolitania, but conclusive evidence for this being directly connected to events of the 540s remains lacking.¹²⁴⁷ Nevertheless, a need to expand the Ilaguas' economic base appears to be the most likely explanation.

Specific to the events of the 540s, Corippus identifies the leader of the Ilaguas, in the catalogue of tribes in book II of the *Iohannis*, as Ierna.¹²⁴⁸ Neither Ierna nor any other leader of the Ilaguas is named by Procopius, so it is impossible to know whether he was the one tribal leader who escaped the massacre at Leptis Magna, or whether he otherwise emerged as the sole leader of the Ilaguas as a result of this catastrophe.¹²⁴⁹

Beyond his position of leadership, little else is known about Ierna other than that he was also the priest of the god Gurzil.¹²⁵⁰ According to Corippus, Gurzil was the son of the god Ammon, and was represented in the shape of a bull.¹²⁵¹ There is evidence for the continued practice of pagan religion in Tripolitania during the late antique period.¹²⁵² However, while it is clear that the Berber tribes retained their own deities during the Roman imperial period,¹²⁵³ with the exception of Corippus' testimony, there is no conclusive evidence beyond the 4th century,¹²⁵⁴

¹²⁴⁷ A. Wilson, 'Foggara irrigation and early state formation in the Libyan Sahara: the Garamantes of Fazzan,' in *Internationales Frontinus-Symposium: "Wasserversorgung aus Qanatan - Qanate als Vorbilder im Tunnelbau"*, 2-5 Oktober, Walférdange, Luxembourg (Bonn, 2003), 223-34; and idem, 'Saharan trade in the Roman period: short-, medium- and long-distance trade networks,' *Azania* 47.4 (2012), 409-449, has argued that the failure of the *foggara* irrigation system in the Fezzan (in the southwest of modern day Libya) caused in the collapse of north-south trans-Saharan trade, and resultant large scale population movements.

¹²⁴⁸ *Ioh.* II.109: Fierce Ierna was their [ie. the Ilaguas'] leader and the priest of Gurzil [Ierna ferox his ductor erat Gurzilque sacerdos.]

¹²⁴⁹ *Bella* IV.21.10-11.

¹²⁵⁰ See n. 1248. Similarly, *Ioh.* V.23-6.

¹²⁵¹ *Ioh.* II.110-11; V.23-6.

¹²⁵² von Rummel, 'The Frexes,' 586 cites Mattingly, *Tripolitania*, 38-40, in this context. However, Mattingly's evidence for pagan religious practice in Tripolitania is the references contained in the *Iohannis*. The same is true of O. Brogan & D. J. Smith, *Ghirza: A Libyan Settlement in the Roman Period* (Tripoli, 1984), 231 with 233 n. 64.

¹²⁵³ Brogan & Smith, *Ghirza*, 231.

¹²⁵⁴ It is doubtful how much value should be placed on the claim of the 11th century Arabic writer, al-Bakri, that pagan practices continued in the region in his own time (trans. de Slane, *Description de l'Afrique septentrionale*, 31). *Contra* Mattingly, 'The Laguatan,' 103, who interprets the reference as evidence for the continued practice of pagan religion well into the Islamic period.

and evidence for the specific cult of Gurzil is tenuous.¹²⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the paganism of Ierna and his people fulfils Corippus' literary agenda. As representatives of barbarians from far beyond the Roman frontiers, they would have been expected, by Roman contemporaries, to be entirely barbaric, and Corippus clearly exploits descriptions of their pagan practices in order to fulfil his audience's expectations.¹²⁵⁶

Ierna appears to have been responsible for the Ilaguas' initial move into Byzacena in 544. There, he entered into an alliance with Antalas, leader of the Frexes, which will be discussed in greater detail below. The alliance, at least in the beginning, appears to have been one of equals, and Ierna is attested as the leader of the Ilaguas at the battle of Theveste.¹²⁵⁷ However, the relationship with Antalas either changed over time, or was perceived to have changed by Roman observers. By 546/7, Ierna, while still leader of his people, is described by Corippus as subordinate to Antalas' leadership of the alliance.¹²⁵⁸ Given that the Ilaguas were not continuously present in Byzacena, and had been known to withdraw part way through a campaign, they were presumably regarded as useful, but not necessarily reliable, allies by Antalas.¹²⁵⁹ The Ilaguas' perception of their own role in the alliance is impossible to determine.

Ierna was killed in battle in the autumn of 546, when the Berbers were defeated at Antonia Castra by the Roman army under the command of John Troglita.¹²⁶⁰ Following his death, the Berber tribes which had previously followed him appear to have reassembled around the figure

¹²⁵⁵ A. Elmayer, 'The Libyan god Gurzil in a Neo-Punic inscription from Tripolitania,' *LibStud* 13 (1982), 49–50, identifies the name Gurzil in a neo-Punic inscription, originally from Leptis Magna. The text is, however, barely legible, and its date is uncertain. It has sometimes been suggested that the Roman city of Ghirza, in Libya, might have been named for the Berber god, Gurzil. Cf. Brogan & Smith, *Ghirza*, 232. But while it is plausible that there might be a linguistic connection, this remains unproven. Contra Mattingly, 'The Laguatan,' 103.

¹²⁵⁶ Cameron, 'Corippus' *Iohannis*,' 173; eadem, 'Byzantine Africa,' 40.

¹²⁵⁷ *Ioh.* IV.597–99; in which Ierna is described as "princeps bellorum".

¹²⁵⁸ *Ioh.* IV.631–2. Ierna is described, in the battle line as *comitante*, which clearly indicates a subordinate position, usually an attendant. Shea, *The Iohannis*, 129, translates "second in command".

¹²⁵⁹ Cf. Modéran, *Les Maures*, 621, who stresses that the intermittent presence of the Ilaguas within Byzacena should not be interpreted as evidence for disputes between various Berber factions, merely as evidence of their different ways of life.

¹²⁶⁰ *Ioh.* V.493–502, 519–21; with pp. 227–8.

of Carcasan.¹²⁶¹ Unfortunately, very little is known about Carcasan. Prior to 547, he was the leader of a tribe called the Ifuraces, apparently a subgroup of the Ilaguas, which, according to Corippus, originated in the region of the Greater Syrtes, in modern day Libya.¹²⁶²

In an initiative perhaps motivated by the disintegration of Ilaguas unity following their defeat in 546, Carcasan appears to have rapidly launched a new offensive, albeit, according to Corippus, after having consulted the oracle of Ammon.¹²⁶³ As a new leader, presumably anxious to establish his own authority, this would have been an unsurprising course of action. He appears to have been solely responsible for leading the Ilaguas, and perhaps some Berber allies, to victory over the Romans at the battle of Marta, in 547;¹²⁶⁴ before again entering into an alliance with Antalas in 548 – this time apparently with Antalas as the subordinate partner.¹²⁶⁵ The dynamic of the Berber alliance, and, in all likelihood, its objectives, had clearly changed.

The actions of Ierna in raiding Byzacena between 544 and 546 appear to have been primarily driven by economic motivations. Carcasan's objective, in contrast, might have been an independent Berber polity, albeit in Byzacena, rather than in Tripolitania. Corippus notes:

... under the leadership of Carcasan, the fierce tribes were advancing against the lofty walls of Carthage, promising to themselves a kingdom in name.¹²⁶⁶

¹²⁶¹ *Ioh.* VI.142–4: Bruten had scarcely spoken these words, and the rest followed with a shout, and they shouted [the name] Carcasan, and said with tongues and hearts that Carcasan alone was their leader of all the tribes [uix ea Bruten ait, cuncti clamore sequunter/ Carcasanque fremunt, Carcasan omnibus unum/ gentibus esse duces linguis animisque fatentur.]

¹²⁶² *Ioh.* IV.639–44 and VI.104.

¹²⁶³ *Ioh.* VI.145–76.

¹²⁶⁴ In his account of the battle of Marta, Corippus (*Ioh.* VI.551–773) makes no mention of Antalas or the Frexes, nor, indeed, of any Berber leader other than Carcasan. Cf. *PLRE* IIIA, 648, which suggests that Procopius' reference to Antalas in *Bella* IV.28.47–8 is in the context of the battle of Marta. Procopius' account of John Troglita's campaigns is, however, so compressed as to make this interpretation uncertain.

¹²⁶⁵ *Ioh.* VII.283–7: The Austur were strewing the bodies of the rural people across the Mammensian plains with deadly weapons, seizing part of Byzacena and second spoils. Antalas had again joined his own army to the enemy forces and was leading it to war [campis Mammensibus Austur/ rustica funereis sternebat corpora telis,/ Byzacii partem rapiens praedamque secundam./ Antalas rursus proprium tunc iunxerat agmen/ partibus aduersis seseque in bella ferebat]; with Modéran, *Les Maures*, 629.

¹²⁶⁶ *Ioh.* VI.225–7: [... Carthaginis altae/ Carcasan ductore feras ad moenia gentes/ ire docens nomenque sibi promittere regni.] Cf. *Ioh.* VI.192; VII.513–15.

Corippus presents Carcasan as motivated to attack Carthage by a prophecy which predicted that he would enter Carthage and that his people would hold Byzacena for eternity.¹²⁶⁷ This reference to a prophecy may be a literary device, through which Corippus attempts to show the primitive Ilaguas as being misled by their pagan god.¹²⁶⁸ This may well be the case. Nevertheless, Corippus' narrative requires its audience to believe that the possession of Byzacena was a legitimate ambition for the Ilaguas.

Furthermore, if Corippus is correct in suggesting that the Ilaguas intended to attack Carthage, independent of Antalas, this is a marked change from their previous pattern of raiding in Byzacena. Carcasan's intentions are impossible to verify, and no other source supports Corippus' implication. Nevertheless, it is possible that, given the successes of Antalas, prior to his defeat in 546, other tribal leaders, including Carcasan, began to see independent Berber polities within the former Roman provinces of Africa as a possibility.

Equally, Corippus may have been articulating a fear among the Romano-African population, which would have struggled to understand that a people could conduct a military campaign against them without a political agenda. Also, Corippus may exaggerate the threat posed by Carcasan as a means of elevating the significance of John Troglita's campaigns, the primary subject matter of his poem.¹²⁶⁹ Given the lack of comparative source material, it is impossible to present a definitive interpretation of either the events or Corippus' presentation thereof.

Whatever Carcasan's objective, it was never achieved. The outcome of the final Berber alliance against the Eastern Roman Empire in the 6th century was the decisive defeat of the Berbers at the battle of the Plains of Cato, and Carcasan's death.¹²⁷⁰

¹²⁶⁷ *Ioh.* VI.166–72.

¹²⁶⁸ P. Castranuovo, 'La visione dei Mauri nella *Iohannis* di Corippo,' in M. L. Silvestre & M. Squillante, eds., *Mutatio rerum: Letteratura, filosofia, scienza tra tardo antico e altomedioevo. Atti del convegno di studi (Napoli, 25–26 novembre 1996)* (Naples, 1997), 402–4.

¹²⁶⁹ Modéran, *Les Maures*, 633.

¹²⁷⁰ *Ioh.* VIII.627; with p. 231.

6.3 Antalas and the Frexes

Procopius' account of the resumption of hostilities between the Berbers and the Eastern Roman Empire in 544 focuses on the role played by the Ilaguas, as outlined in the preceding section. However, Corippus' account, which instead focuses on the Berber leader Antalas, and his people, the Frexes, must be considered in contrast to this.¹²⁷¹ Corippus makes no mention of the Berber attack on Leptis Magna, and his references to the outbreak of hostilities between the Eastern Roman Empire and the Berbers are less specific than the narrative offered by Procopius, being couched in the language of epic. Unlike Procopius, Corippus presents Antalas as the instigator of the conflict, stating outright that Antalas "first went to war...,"¹²⁷² and furthermore depicts Antalas as solely responsible for the attendant suffering inflicted on the Romano-African population.¹²⁷³

Corippus explains Antalas' actions as a response to the death of his brother, Guarizila, who was killed on the order of an "unjust general" [dux iniquus].¹²⁷⁴ This is not entirely incompatible with Procopius' account, which claims that Antalas entered into an alliance with the Ilaguas, after their attack on Leptis Magna, because Solomon had killed his brother, who had led a revolt in Byzacena, and had subsequently deprived Antalas of the subsidies which he had been paid by the Roman imperial government, presumably since 533.¹²⁷⁵ Procopius does not make clear whether Antalas was condemned by association, or had actively been involved in his brother's rebellion. Nevertheless, his account implies that Antalas' revolt was motivated by a desire to maintain his own autonomy.

¹²⁷¹ The name of Antalas' tribe is only given by Corippus (*Ioh.* II.42–46, 184; III.184–8; VII.383–4; VIII.647–9).

¹²⁷² *Ioh.* II.28: [primus init bellum...]

¹²⁷³ *Ioh.* II.40–1.

¹²⁷⁴ *Ioh.* IV.364–6. Cf. *Ioh.* II.36–40.

¹²⁷⁵ *Bella* IV.21.17. In the letter to the emperor which Procopius attributes to Antalas (*Bella* IV.22.7–10), Procopius claims that Antalas accused Solomon of having deprived him of his subsidies and killed his brother: ... having no wrong-doing to charge against him [... οὐδὲν ἀδίκημα αὐτῷ ἐπενεγκεῖν ἔχων] (*Bella* IV.22.8). However, as this letter is likely to have been a creation of Procopius, its contents should be treated with caution (cf. pp. 85–6).

Unlike Procopius, Corippus attaches no specific political or military significance to Guarizila's death. Instead, he presents Antalas as resorting to conflict as a result of grief.¹²⁷⁶ Thus, while Corippus presents Antalas as an explanation for the misfortunes suffered by the people of Africa, and as a justification for Roman intervention in the region, he offers no sophisticated account of Antalas' behaviour, resorting instead to little more than the *topos* of the barbarian, being governed by emotion rather than by reason.¹²⁷⁷ And, beyond this attribution of blame, Corippus presents Antalas' role as a destructive force as almost pre-destined. Set within the speech attributed to the Roman tribune, Liberatus, detailing the misfortunes of Africa prior to the arrival of John Troglita,¹²⁷⁸ is a set-piece, in which Antalas' father consults the oracle of Ammon concerning the future of his son.¹²⁷⁹ The poet attributes to the priestess the prophecy that:

When your Antalas rises in power, every fury and anger will throw this unhappy world into turmoil with its torch of horror.¹²⁸⁰

And yet, a discrepancy exists in Corippus' characterisation of Antalas. Despite Antalas' role in the *Iohannis*, as the figure responsible for all the misfortunes of Africa, he had, from 533 until 544, enjoyed the support of the Eastern Roman Empire. In relation to the Berber raids in Byzacena between 534 and 535, Procopius notes that:

And only the Berbers whom Antalas led remained in Byzacena, he alone, at this time, having kept faith with the Romans...,

and returns to this point when discussing Guarizila's revolt and Antalas' own decision to ally himself to the Ilaguas.¹²⁸¹ For Procopius, at least, Antalas' actions in 544 were at odds with the

¹²⁷⁶ *Ioh.* III.383–4. *Cf.* *Ioh.* II.28.

¹²⁷⁷ On this *topos* see Y. A. Dauge, *Le barbare: recherches sur la conception romaine de la barbarie et de la civilisation* (Brussels, 1981).

¹²⁷⁸ See pp. 72–3.

¹²⁷⁹ *Ioh.* III.81–140.

¹²⁸⁰ *Ioh.* III.109–10: [Antala crescente tuo furor omnis et ira/ horribili miserum turbabunt lampade mundum.] *Cf.* *Ioh.* III.116–9.

¹²⁸¹ *Bella* IV.12.30; with n. 872. *Cf.* *Bella* IV.21.17.

status quo of the previous decade. This was not something of which Corippus was entirely unaware, since he notes:

When peace had been taken up within the borders of Libya, he was loyal, and was so for ten full years.¹²⁸²

In order to fit the broader theme of the *Iohannis*, in which Roman imperial power in Africa acted as a bulwark against the threat of barbarian savagery,¹²⁸³ such statements appear to have been included to highlight the perfidy of Antalas' decision to turn against the Eastern Roman Empire, and to play on the *topos* of the barbarian as a faithless ally.¹²⁸⁴ However, they are not particularly successfully resolved with the rest of Corippus' presentation of Antalas.

While Corippus' presentation of Antalas is certainly negative, it is not entirely consistent, being primarily constructed to provide an unambiguous juxtaposition with John Troglita specifically, and with Roman culture more generally.¹²⁸⁵ Corippus sets up Antalas as the embodiment of the threat facing Roman Africa.¹²⁸⁶ This creates difficulties when considering the *Iohannis* as a historical source, as the presentation of Antalas is such as to obscure the motivations which might have inspired his actions. However, since both Corippus and Procopius present Antalas as central to the events which occurred between 544 and 548, it is necessary to give some consideration to the nature of Corippus' presentation of Antalas' background,¹²⁸⁷ and the position of his tribe, the Frexes, in Africa in the first half of the 6th century.¹²⁸⁸

The date of Antalas' birth is not explicitly stated by any source. However, Corippus provides two references which allow the date to be approximated. He notes that there was peace in

¹²⁸² *Ioh.* II.34–5: [finibus in Libycis suscepta pace fidelis/ ille fuit plenosque decem perfecerat annos.] Cf. *Ioh.* II.29–30.

¹²⁸³ Cameron, 'Corippus' *Iohannis*, 172–3.

¹²⁸⁴ This view underpins Procopius' presentation of the Berbers. See *Bella* IV.8.9, 13.37, 17.10.

¹²⁸⁵ Cameron, 'Corippus' *Iohannis*, 173.

¹²⁸⁶ Thus, Modéran, 'Corippe et l'occupation byzantine de l'Afrique,' 209, argues that, in the *Iohannis*, Antalas is "une véritable incarnation du mal".

¹²⁸⁷ No background information is provided by Procopius, who first refers to Antalas in the context of the defeat of the Vandal army in Byzacena in 530/1. See n. 336.

¹²⁸⁸ The *Iohannis* is the only source to mention the name of Antalas' tribe. See *Ioh.* II.42–6, 184–6; III.187–8; VII.383–4; VIII.647–8; and J. Desanges, 'Frexes,' in *EB* 19 (Aix-en-Provence, 1998), 2935.

Africa “until the thirtieth year of Antalas’ birth”; and that the Vandal kingdom was destroyed “in its hundredth year”.¹²⁸⁹ Both references appear to relate to Antalas’ first campaign against the Vandal kingdom, in which he defeated the forces of Hilderic.¹²⁹⁰ The date of the Vandals’ crossing into Africa remains debated, but has conventionally been dated to 429,¹²⁹¹ which would place Antalas’ campaign in 529. The events can also be dated from Malalas’ account, which places them in 530/1.¹²⁹² The minor discrepancy between the sources can easily be explained by the fact that Corippus was writing a literary, as well as historical, work, and preferred the round figure of hundred years. Antalas must have been born c. 500, and a difference of a year or two in either direction would not affect the rest of the chronology.¹²⁹³

The localisation of Antalas’ tribe, the Frexes, has been the subject of considerable debate. Traditionally, the Frexes were argued to have been located in the region between Thala and Thelepte (both in Tunisia).¹²⁹⁴ However, this localisation has now been demonstrated to have been based on a misunderstanding of the text of the *Vita* of Fulgentius of Ruspe.¹²⁹⁵ Most recently, Modéran has proposed locating the Frexes to the west of the Capsa-Thelepte route.¹²⁹⁶ Based on the areas in which the Frexes are attested by the literary sources,¹²⁹⁷ and in the absence of further archaeological evidence, this localisation is plausible, and will be followed here.

¹²⁸⁹ *Ioh.* III.73–4: [usque ad ter denos ... annos/ nascentis...]; and III.185: [centeno anno].

¹²⁹⁰ See pp. 78–80.

¹²⁹¹ Courtois, *Les Vandales*, 155 with n. 2.

¹²⁹² Malalas, XVIII.57; with n. 335.

¹²⁹³ Cf. Camps, *Encyclopédie Berbère*, 706; Modéran, *Les Maures*, 315 n. 2; von Rummel, ‘The Frexes,’ 577; and Zarini, *Berbères ou barbares?*, 5.

¹²⁹⁴ Diehl, *L’Afrique byzantine*, 303–4; Courtois, *Les Vandales*, 343–6; Mattingly, ‘The Laguatan,’ 99.

¹²⁹⁵ F. Châtillon, ‘L’Afrique oubliée de C. Courtois et les “ignotae regiones” de la *Vita Fulgentii*,’ *Revue du Moyen Age Latin* 11 (1955), 371–88. Châtillon does not, however, propose an alternative location.

¹²⁹⁶ Modéran, *Les Maures*, 316–23, which also reviews the earlier literature. This localisation is followed by von Rummel, ‘The Frexes,’ 578–9. See Map IX.

¹²⁹⁷ For the textual evidence upon which this is based see Modéran, *Les Maures*, 318 n. 14. Incidentally, this is the region of a modern Berber tribe, the Frechich (or Fraichich) (G. Camps & A. Martel, ‘Fraichich (Frechlich) in *EB* 19 (Aix-en-Provence, 1998), 2930; Modéran, *Les Maures*, 323), who are believed to have derived their name from the Frexes (Diehl, *L’Afrique byzantine*, 303; C. Monchicourt, *La région du Haut Tell en Tunisie* (Paris, 1913), 297–8; Courtois, *Les Vandales*, 346).

Despite the central position which Corippus accords to the Frexes in his work, their predominance as a tribe appears to have been a relatively recent development at the time he was writing, and Antalas appears to have experienced a rapid rise to power. According to the *Iohannis*, Antalas was the son of Guenfan, a Berber leader who is otherwise unknown,¹²⁹⁸ and who has been assumed to have been responsible for uniting his people into a force sufficiently powerful as to challenge the Vandals. Antalas would then have inherited his father's position as leader.

The hereditary aspect of this leadership is not in doubt. However, it is unclear that the Frexes were already a major power in the region under Guenfan's leadership. Courtois, assuming that the pre-eminence of the Frexes must have been established prior to Antalas' leadership, speculated that the various tribes of Byzacena were united into a "royaume de Dorsale" by Guenfan in c. 510, and that this established polity was inherited by Antalas in c. 517.¹²⁹⁹ More recently, Courtois' theory of a "royaume de Dorsale" has been re-evaluated by Modéran, who endorses it, although he notes that Courtois was insufficiently appreciative of the evidence which Corippus provides in its favour.¹³⁰⁰ However, both Courtois' original argument and Modéran's re-evaluation are highly speculative. There is simply no clear evidence for a unification of Berber tribes under Guenfan, in 510 or at any other date, and Modéran's claim, that this is supported by Corippus' statement:

Guenfan was the unhappy source of our distress, when savage Antalas was born. For, in earlier times, there was a most secure peace in all the lands of Libya,¹³⁰¹

is not evident.

¹²⁹⁸ See *PLRE* IIIA, 562. Guenfan is mentioned twice, in his own right, in the *Iohannis* (III.67–8, 107–8), and his name is used adjectivally (*Guenfeius*) on six occasions, to refer to Antalas (*Ioh.* I.467–9; III.77–8; V.8–10; VII.296–7, 522–4; VIII.239–41).

¹²⁹⁹ Courtois, *Les Vandales*, 343. This argument is followed by Pringle, *Defence*, 15.

¹³⁰⁰ Modéran, *Les Maures*, 325–6.

¹³⁰¹ *Ioh.* III.65–7: [Guenfan miseris est tristis origo/ Antala nascente fero. nam tempore prisco/ pax erat in cunctis Libyae tutissima terris].

Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that Antalas did not establish the Frexes as independent of the Vandal kingdom, let alone as the predominant tribe in the region which would become the province of Byzacena until immediately prior to the Roman invasion of Africa. This is suggested by Corippus' depiction of Antalas' early life. He presents Antalas as almost a caricature of barbarian savagery - stealing sheep, slaughtering the animals with his bare hands, and eating their half-cooked flesh in a cave - which, given the poet's literary agenda, must be treated with caution.¹³⁰² However, more significant is Corippus' claim that Antalas: "... drew other men around him..."¹³⁰³

and subsequently that:

... He would dare to lie in ambush in a captured valley, and, hidden, to test the Vandal forces. How many leaders, how many enemies did cut down with his sword, pressing them into an ambush in the middle of a pass. Drawing barbarian forces with an evil power, the impious one strew them before him on the open fields with his spear!¹³⁰⁴

In the above passage, Corippus presents Antalas' actions as little more than banditry - an image consistent with his characterisation of the Berber leader. Nevertheless, there was an uprising by the Frexes late in the reign of the Vandal king Hilderic, and events in Byzacena at this time were the motivation for Gelimer's coup against Hilderic.¹³⁰⁵ This suggests that Antalas' actions were not merely raiding, such as Corippus describes earlier, but a claim to political independence, as the Vandal kingdom began to lose control of its territory.¹³⁰⁶

There is little reason to suppose that the Frexes were a tribe of any particular significance prior to these events. Corippus himself notes, concerning the Frexes, that, upon hearing the prophecy concerning Antalas as a child:

¹³⁰² *Ioh.* III.156-70.

¹³⁰³ *Ioh.* III.173: [contrahit inde uiros secumque...]

¹³⁰⁴ *Ioh.* III.178-83: [...capta subsidere ualle/ Vandalicasque latens audet temptare phalangas./ quantos ille duces, quantos truncauerat hostes/ obsidione premens mediis in faucibus ense,/ barbaricasque trahens perverso numine turmas/ impius in latis prostrauit cuspide campis!]

¹³⁰⁵ *Bella* III.9.3; *Ioh.* 3.184-216; Malalas, XVIII.57. See also pp. 78-80.

¹³⁰⁶ *Cf.* pp. 78-80.

Elated by these strange responses, the tribe rejoiced and was silent, for it was a humble tribe.¹³⁰⁷

Certainly, the claim that the Frexes were, at the time of Antalas' birth, "humble" [humilis], suggests that their rise to power was rapid. But, even in 544, at the time of his alliance with the Ilaguas, Corippus claims that Antalas:

... did not have any power by which he might rise.¹³⁰⁸

The significance of this statement is not altogether clear. But, given that it is presented in the context of Antalas summoning tribes from beyond the confines of Byzacena, it might be interpreted as evidence that he lacked the military resources to directly confront the Eastern Roman Empire in Africa, an interpretation which is consistent with his willingness to ally himself to the more numerous Ilaguas when they showed the intention to enter his territory.¹³⁰⁹

Furthermore, the Eastern Roman Empire had, in the mid-530s, created an opportunity for Antalas to consolidate his position in Byzacena. It is clear from Procopius' account of Berber hostilities against the Romano-African population between 534 and 535, that Antalas was not the only notable Berber leader in Byzacena in the 530s. Procopius identifies the leaders of the raids in Byzacena during this period as Cusina, Esdilasas, Iourphouthes, and Medisinissas.¹³¹⁰ However, as a result of their actions in 534, in which Antalas did not participate, these Berber leaders were removed from Byzacena. Following their defeat at the battle of Mount Bourgaon in 535, Cusina fled to Numidia,¹³¹¹ Esdilasas surrendered and was taken prisoner to Carthage,¹³¹² and Iourphouthes and Medisinissas are not further attested, suggesting that they were either

¹³⁰⁷ *Ioh.* III.152-3: [responsis sublata nouis gaudetque siletque/ namque humilis gens illa fuit.] Cf. Modéran, *Les Maures*, 327. Modéran, noting that the first quotation has been overlooked by earlier scholarship, suggests that Corippus included it to emphasize the theme that Antalas was pre-destined from birth to be the ultimate enemy of the Roman Empire – that is, on account of him alone, were the Frexes able to emerge from complete obscurity in c. 500 to become a significant threat by 544.

¹³⁰⁸ *Ioh.* III.385: [... uirtus non ulla fuit qua surgere posset.]

¹³⁰⁹ See pp. 238-9.

¹³¹⁰ *Bella* IV.10.6; with pp. 182-4, 192-4.

¹³¹¹ *Bella* IV.12.29; with p. 194.

¹³¹² *Bella* IV.10.6.

killed during the battle or fled following it.¹³¹³ The actions of the Eastern Roman Empire created the circumstances in which Antalas could consolidate his own autonomous region within the province of Byzacena, without competition from other Berber leaders.

This is not, of course, to suggest that Antalas was not attempting to expand his influence in Byzacena prior to 535. Corippus' account of Antalas' early activities against the Vandals certainly suggests that he was attempting to incorporate additional people(s) within the *Fraxes*.¹³¹⁴ Furthermore, as has been argued in section 4.4, the attested enmity between Antalas and Cusina in the 530s may well have been the result of competition between the two leaders for the support of the local population. However, this was more likely to have been competition for the support of the Romano-African population, rather than the support of other Berber tribes.¹³¹⁵

Following the Roman victory at the battle of Mount Bourgaon in 535, Roman military activity was redirected against the Berbers of the Aurès massif, and, in particular, against those under the leadership of Iaudas.¹³¹⁶ While limited Roman military resources were based far to the west, Antalas had little reason to be concerned by the incorporation of his autonomous region into the province of Byzacena, which, while stipulated in the legislation establishing the civil administration of the Prefecture of Africa, does not appear to have been a practical reality.¹³¹⁷ However, the Aurès campaign of 540 permitted a reallocation of Roman military resources, which had previously been concentrated in the Aurès region. The movement of the *Ilaguas* towards Leptis Magna, and then into Byzacena, in 544, would have, from Antalas' perspective, directed Roman attention towards his own region. The prospect of direct confrontation with the Eastern Roman Empire appears to have prompted a pre-emptive bid for autonomy on

¹³¹³ *PLRE* IIIA, 717 (Iourphouthes); and IIIB, 870 (Medisinissas).

¹³¹⁴ *Ioh.* III.173.

¹³¹⁵ On competition between Berber leaders for the support of the Romano-African population see section 4.3.

¹³¹⁶ See sections 5.2 and 5.4.

¹³¹⁷ See pp. 127–8, 133–5.

Antalas' part, and his more aggressive approach to relations with the Eastern Roman Empire following 544 should probably be interpreted as a desire to preserve the autonomy which he had established, and then maintained without Roman intervention for more than a decade.

Indeed, by the mid-540s, Antalas' ambitions appear to have extended beyond the rule of a single Berber tribe. During the revolt of the *dux* of Numidia, Guntarith, against the Roman administration in Africa in late 545, Guntarith attempted to secure Antalas' support by offering him the rule of the entire province of Byzacena, half the possessions of Areobindus, the then Praetorian Prefect of Africa, and 1500 Roman soldiers; while Guntarith himself would assume the position of king, and rule over Carthage and the rest of Africa.¹³¹⁸ The negotiations which occurred are of interest primarily for the fact that a member of the Roman administration appears to have believed that Antalas' goal was the establishment of his own independent polity in Byzacena. Ultimately, despite Antalas agreeing to the terms, and moving his forces towards Carthage, Guntarith reneged on the deal, depriving Antalas of the money and the soldiers which had been promised.¹³¹⁹ Procopius does not, however, mention the right to rule Byzacena, which Antalas had also been promised.¹³²⁰ Whether or not Antalas considered himself the sole ruler of Byzacena from this point forward is, however, unclear.

Furthermore, by this point in time, Antalas would have been aware that it was possible for independent Berber polities to exist on the peripheries of a fragmented Roman prefecture of Africa, without concern that they would soon be incorporated into the Eastern Roman Empire. As noted in section 3.2, Procopius states that, with the exception of the city of Caesarea, the rest of the nominal province of Mauritania Caesariensis fell under the authority of the Berber

¹³¹⁸ *Bella* IV.25.10.

¹³¹⁹ *Bella* IV.27.2-3.

¹³²⁰ *Bella* IV.25.10.

leader Mastigas;¹³²¹ and there is no indication that this province was ever effectively incorporated into the Eastern Roman Empire.

Procopius and Corippus are consistent in suggesting that the conflict between the Eastern Roman Empire and the Berbers which began in 544 involved an alliance of Berber tribes. Corippus suggests that Antalas' conflict with the Eastern Roman Empire involved tribes from outside Byzacena. He writes:

He [Antalas] sent to the furthest deserts of thirsty Libya, where Phaethon once parched the earth with too much sun, having been struck down with a thunderbolt, and he [Antalas] taught the malicious peoples and filled their ears[?] with our [ie. that of the Romano-Africans] slaughter. And now the fierce tribes pour into the Libyan axis of the earth.¹³²²

The identification of the tribes with which Antalas allies himself remains unclear. The use of the geographical term “Libya” provides little clarification, since Corippus uses it to refer to the region of Africa generally – as, indeed, is evident from the two different usages of the term in the passage above. However, the reference to deserts on the edge of the poet's geographical awareness might legitimately be interpreted as a reference to the tribes of Tripolitania, such as the Ilaguas.

While Procopius does not depict Antalas as the instigator of the conflict, once the Ilaguas enter his territory, he is described as leading [ἡγήσατο] the entire Berber alliance against Carthage.¹³²³

Neither Procopius nor Corippus specifies the nature of the alliance agreed between Antalas and

¹³²¹ *Bella* IV.20.30–1.

¹³²² *Ioh.* III.393–7: [misit ad extremas Libyae sitientis harenas,/ sole ubi tellurem nimio siccauerat olim/ fulmine deiectus Phaethon, populosque malignos/ edocuit nostrisque impleuit cladibus aures./ iamque ferae gentes Libycum funduntur in axem.] All editors of the text agree that the manuscript offers *oras* as the final word of line 396. Diggle & Goodyear, *Iohannidos libri VIII*; following Petschenig, *Flauii Corippi Africani grammatici quae supersunt* Partsch, *Corippi Africani grammatici libri qui supersunt*; emend this to *aurēs*. Partsch, *Corippi Africani grammatici libri qui supersunt*; following Bekker, *Merobaudes et Corippus*; emended *aurēs* to *ora*. *oras*, as the accusative plural of *ora -ae* [shore], obviously makes little sense. However, *ora*, as the accusative plural of *os, oris* [mouth, speech], is plausible, and I would be inclined to prefer this reading as being closer to that of the manuscript.

¹³²³ *Bella* IV.21.18; *Ioh.* IV.631–2.

the Ilaguas.¹³²⁴ But the presentation, by both authors, of the events which follow suggests that, until the death of Ierna, the Ilaguas were considered as subordinates by Antalas, despite the fact that Ierna continues to be named as their leader.¹³²⁵ However, the fact that the Ilaguas repeatedly left Byzacena at times of their own choosing, suggests that they did not see themselves as entirely subject to Antalas' authority.¹³²⁶

Following Carcasan's assumption of the leadership of the Ilaguas, the objectives of the two Berber groups appear to have been at odds, given that Carcasan himself may have aspired to control of Byzacena.¹³²⁷ Antalas was willing to aid the Roman rebel, Guntarith, in staging a coup at Carthage, if it should result in him being recognised as sole ruler of Byzacena by the administration at Carthage – whether or not this administration was endorsed by Constantinople.¹³²⁸ But, when Guntarith failed to honour the deal, Antalas, as yet without reinforcements from the Ilaguas, was equally willing to negotiate with the imperially endorsed *dux* of Byzacena, Marcentius, who had fled to one of the islands off the coast of Byzacena following Guntarith's revolt.¹³²⁹

According to Procopius, Antalas contacted Marcentius because, no longer trusting Guntarith, he wished to submit to imperial rule.¹³³⁰ That Antalas genuinely wished to submit to imperial rule appears to be highly unlikely. Rather, he probably hoped to negotiate an independent polity in Byzacena in exchange for his assistance to the beleaguered Roman administration in Africa as

¹³²⁴ Procopius (*Bella* IV.21.18) describes the agreement between Antalas and the Ilaguas as an *ὁμαίχιμιά*. However, this is a fairly generic term for an alliance. Dewing, *Procopius: History of the Wars: Books III-IV*, 399, translates *ὁμαίχιμιά* as “an offensive and defensive alliance”, but this is probably too specific.

¹³²⁵ *Bella* IV.21.18.

¹³²⁶ See pp. 239–41.

¹³²⁷ See pp. 243–4.

¹³²⁸ *Bella* IV.25.10.

¹³²⁹ *Bella* IV.27.3–6.

¹³³⁰ *Bella* IV.27.3–4.

yet loyal to the Eastern Roman Empire.¹³³¹ Clearly, an agreement was reached between Antalas and Marcentius, as Marcentius subsequently took up residence in Antalas' camp.¹³³² However, when Guntarith was killed by Artabanes, and his regime was brought to an end by events in which neither Marcentius nor Antalas played a role,¹³³³ Marcentius would no longer have been in a position to honour any commitment which might have been made.¹³³⁴ Antalas was forced to abandon diplomacy, and return to attempting to achieve his objectives by military means – a course of action which again required the involvement of the Ilaguas.

Corippus' characterisation of Antalas as the source of all the evils suffered by the population of Africa in the 540s has frequently been treated as being no more than a literary foil for the generically 'good' John Troglita and everything which he represents.¹³³⁵ Undoubtedly, Corippus' portrayal of Antalas is heavily influenced by the *topos* of the barbarian, presenting him as a little more than a caricature. However, while his portrait is simplistic and stereotyped, Corippus is not incorrect in presenting Antalas as central to the misfortunes suffered by the Romano-African population between 544 and 548. But his portrayal of Antalas conceals the true agenda which Antalas appears to have been following. Antalas was far from the savage barbarian, but rather pursued political objectives via both military and diplomatic means.

6.4 Cusina

In contrast to Ierna, Carcasan and Antalas, who are presented as significant threats to the Eastern Roman Empire between 544 and 548, must be considered Cusina, the most significant Berber ally of the Eastern Roman Empire during this period. The position of Cusina at the time of the Roman invasion of Africa and immediately following has already been discussed in detail

¹³³¹ As Modéran, *Les Maures*, 625–6, stresses, the increasingly weak position of the 'official' Roman administration in Africa could only have strengthened the position from which Antalas could negotiate.

¹³³² *Bella* IV.27.6.

¹³³³ On the events leading to Guntarith's murder see pp. 223–6.

¹³³⁴ Modéran, *Les Maures*, 626.

¹³³⁵ Castranuovo, 'La visione dei Mauri,' 411–12; and p. 247.

in section 4.4. Cusina was the leader of a Berber tribe (or tribes) in Byzacena, probably based to the west of Capsa (mod. Gafsa, Tunisia).¹³³⁶ He appears to have been among the Berber leaders who sent embassies to Belisarius at Carthage in November 533, and was one of the Berber leaders whose raids against the Romano-African population of Byzacena between 534 and 536 brought him into conflict with the Roman administration in Africa.¹³³⁷ Cusina's own tribe was defeated in battle by the Roman army, under the command of Solomon, at the battle of Mount Bourgaon, in 535.¹³³⁸ Following this, he, together with his followers, fled to Numidia, where he took refuge with the tribe led by Iaudas, whose own people were also in conflict with the Roman administration in Africa.¹³³⁹

From Procopius' account of events in Africa in the 530s, Cusina appears to be unequivocally hostile to Roman interests in the region. However, Cusina next appears in the sources in the context of the battle of Theveste, in 544.¹³⁴⁰ Corippus, in addition to noting that Solomon had drawn together all available Roman military resources, also suggests that the Roman commander drew on the support of those Berber tribes perceived to remain loyal to the Eastern Roman Empire. He notes:

A letter was immediately sent, the direction of which was unfortunate, and, behold, he rushed forward willingly, not constrained by a need for equal forces, the general of the Berbers, the friend of wretched Solomon, always entirely loyal to the Roman state, great Cusina, with his Mastrician forces.¹³⁴¹

Berber troops may well have served with the Roman army at this time. As has been discussed in section 4.4, Berber leaders appear to have been willing to ally themselves with the Eastern

¹³³⁶ Following Modéran, *Les Maures*, 341–2.

¹³³⁷ See pp. 182–4, 192–4.

¹³³⁸ See pp. 193–4.

¹³³⁹ See p. 193.

¹³⁴⁰ *Ioh.* III.406–8. On the battle of Theveste see pp. 21–20.

¹³⁴¹ *Ioh.* III.404–8: [ilicet infausto mandatur pagina cursu,/ et ruit ecce uolans, aequo non Marte coactus/ Maurorum ductor, miseri Solomonis amicus,/ Romanis rebus nimium semperque fidelis/ Cusina †Mastracianos secum† uiribus ingens.] Partsch, *Corippi Africani grammatici libri qui supersunt*; emends the *crux* to *Mastracianis secum*, which reading is adopted by Shea, *The Iohannis or De Bellis Libycis*, 108, 209, in his translation; and which I have followed in my own translation as making better sense.

Roman Empire temporarily if it served their interests, and Corippus' subsequent references to the Mecales and Ifuraces among the Roman forces should probably be interpreted in this light – although it is, admittedly, impossible to rule out the possibility of Berber mercenaries serving with the Roman army in Africa.¹³⁴² The reference to Cusina is, however, problematic, given his role in Procopius' narrative.

Corippus, on the other hand, appears to have had a particular interest in Cusina. In view of what is known about Cusina from Procopius' *Bella*, Corippus' description of him, in the context of the events of 544, as “always entirely loyal to the Roman state”, seems wildly inaccurate.¹³⁴³ This statement is, however, typical of Corippus' characterisation of Cusina. The poet elsewhere describes the Berber leader as:

... Roman in spirit, [and] not far removed in blood, distinguished by calm manners and Latin gravity,

to cite but one of many examples.¹³⁴⁴ Corippus' presentation of Cusina is almost undoubtedly shaped by his knowledge of Cusina's role in the Roman campaigns commanded by John Troglita, between 546 and 548 – the primary focus of Corippus' poem. But, unfortunately, the *Iohannis* offers no explanation of the course of events which led Cusina to this alliance.

By autumn 546, Cusina was formally allied to the Eastern Roman Empire, serving on the Roman side at the battle of Antonia Castra.¹³⁴⁵ However, Procopius' account implies that this was the first occasion on which Cusina had entered into such an alliance.¹³⁴⁶ Given that Corippus never mentions Cusina's actions against the Eastern Roman Empire between 534 and 536, or in 545, when he sided with Guntarith, rather than with the official Roman administration, it is entirely

¹³⁴² *Ioh.* III.409–12.

¹³⁴³ *Ioh.* III.407.

¹³⁴⁴ *Ioh.* IV.511–12: [ille animo Romanus erat, nec sanguine longe,/ moribus ornatus placidis, grauitate Latina.] Cf. *Ioh.* V.450; VI.266–8, 467; VII.262–71; VIII.121–4.

¹³⁴⁵ *Ioh.* IV.509–10; V.450–5. Cf. *Bella* IV.28.50, which appears to suggest to date Cusina's alliance with the Eastern Roman Empire to the winter of 547/8. See pp. 229–30.

¹³⁴⁶ *Bella* VIII.17.21. It must, however, be acknowledged that, in this context, Procopius intends to present the achievements of John Troglita which led to peace in Africa. He too may be guilty of exaggerating Cusina's role.

possible that he backdates Cusina's alliance with the Eastern Roman Empire, in order to establish Cusina as the 'civilised' barbarian and thus as a literary foil to Antalas, the archetypal barbarian savage in Corippus' work.¹³⁴⁷ Furthermore, Cusina may have been one of the few Berber leaders Corippus himself might have seen, which might have convinced the poet to represent him more sympathetically.¹³⁴⁸ Cusina's presence with the Roman army in 544 should, therefore, be treated with scepticism.¹³⁴⁹

While Cusina could plausibly have decided that it was in his interests to ally himself temporarily with the strongest military force of the day - the Eastern Roman Empire - following Iaudas' defeat by the Romans at the battle of Toumar and his flight to Mauritania in 540,¹³⁵⁰ Procopius' failure to mention this is difficult to explain. Cusina was, after all, one of the few Berber leaders whom Procopius knew by name, and with whose actions he appears to have been comparatively familiar.

In late 545, at the summons of Guntarith, Cusina marched on Carthage in alliance with Iaudas.¹³⁵¹ Cusina and Iaudas appear to have been jointly in command of the Berbers of Numidia - an interesting development, given that only Iaudas had previously been attested as a leader in Numidia¹³⁵² - while Antalas was simultaneously summoned to march on Carthage from Byzacena.¹³⁵³ However, after the combined Berber force had encamped at Decimum,¹³⁵⁴ Cusina

¹³⁴⁷ On Corippus' presentation of Antalas see p. 245-5, 250.

¹³⁴⁸ Cf. section 1.3.

¹³⁴⁹ *Contra PLRE* III B, 366-7.

¹³⁵⁰ *Bella* IV.20.20-1.

¹³⁵¹ For the date see n. 1134.

¹³⁵² Cf. *Bella* IV.12.29, 13.1.

¹³⁵³ *Bella* IV.25.1-3.

¹³⁵⁴ Based on its etymology, Decimum should refer to the tenth milestone from the city of Carthage, which is consistent with Procopius' claim that Decimum was 70 stades from Carthage (*Bella* 3.17.17). It has sometimes been located on the plateau of Sidi Fathallah, in Tunisia, on the basis that the Roman *foederati* were able to survey the site from nearby hills (*Bella* 3.19.15), which have been assumed to be the scarp of the plateau (Tissot, *Géographie comparée*, II, 120; followed by Bury, *History*, II, 132-3). However, this argument is based on the assumption that the Roman expeditionary force must have approached Carthage from the south, crossing the Lake of Tunis at modern day La Goulette, which does not appear to have been the case (see n. 53). More recently, Pringle, *Defence*, 19, has argued in favour of Decimum being somewhere in the vicinity of Bab Souika, a northern suburb of modern day Tunis. This is a reasonable approximation of where ten miles from Carthage, following

was secretly summoned to Carthage by the Praetorian Prefect of Africa, Areobindus, who was then still in command, and who hoped to encourage a change of allegiance on Cusina's part.¹³⁵⁵ According to Procopius, the terms ultimately agreed were that, once battle began, Cusina would turn on Antalas and the Berbers of Byzacena.¹³⁵⁶ These negotiations appear to have been the first occasion on which Cusina contemplated an alliance with the Eastern Roman Empire. Unfortunately, however, no indication is given by Procopius of what Cusina would gain from this alliance.

For Procopius, Cusina's willingness to change sides was easily explained by the generalisation:

For the Berbers have trust in neither any other men nor in each other.¹³⁵⁷

However, another motivation can be inferred. As noted in section 4.4, Procopius explicitly attests that Cusina and Antalas were hostile to one another,¹³⁵⁸ a situation perhaps explained by the territorial ambitions of the two rulers.¹³⁵⁹ If the antagonism continued in the 540s, this would certainly explain Cusina's willingness to betray Antalas in battle, especially if further incentives were offered. Indeed, after ten years of Roman presence in Africa, the Berber leaders may well have been becoming familiar with the Roman strategy of playing the tribes off one another, and were beginning to attempt to exploit it to their own advantage – but this is entirely speculative. Furthermore, Areobindus' decision to summon Cusina to negotiate suggests that he was aware of a conflict between the two Berber leaders, and believed that Cusina might be susceptible to influence as a result of this.

the main Roman road entering Carthage from the west, might have been. Unless further archaeological evidence should come to light, it seems unlikely that Decimum can be located with any greater degree of precision.

¹³⁵⁵ *Bella* IV.25.12, 15.

¹³⁵⁶ *Bella* IV.25.15.

¹³⁵⁷ *Bella* IV.25.16: [Μαυρούσιοι γὰρ οὔτε πρὸς ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων τινὰς οὔτε πρὸς ἀλλήλους τὸ πιστὸν ἔχουσι.]

¹³⁵⁸ *Bella* IV.25.21.

¹³⁵⁹ See p. 187.

However, following Guntarith's murder of Areobindus and the breakdown of relations between Guntarith and Antalas,¹³⁶⁰ Cusina declared his support for Guntarith.¹³⁶¹ Again, what Cusina sought to gain by this alliance is unclear, but there appears, on some level, to have been a formal agreement between Cusina and Guntarith, since Procopius notes that the Berber leader handed over his son and his mother to Guntarith as hostages¹³⁶² - the exchange of hostages, particularly family members, being a typical feature of diplomatic agreements during the 6th century.¹³⁶³ When Guntarith sent Artabanes, together with the Roman troops loyal to him, to attack Antalas and his followers in Byzacena, Cusina and his forces accompanied them.¹³⁶⁴ Following Guntarith's coup, Cusina may have regarded his administration, rather than the imperially endorsed administration, as the most powerful organisation in Africa, and thus sought to ally himself with it. While Cusina is presented by Corippus as the loyal Roman ally, his actions prior to 546 appear to have been every bit as opportunistic as those of Antalas, and, while his motivations are less well documented, they should not be assumed to be less politically sophisticated.

Cusina's position following Guntarith's murder by Artabanes is unclear. However, he and his followers may be assumed to have returned to Numidia. Cusina does not reappear in the sources until his subsequent alliance to John Troglita.¹³⁶⁵ Henceforth, he appears to have been present in each of John Troglita's campaigns.¹³⁶⁶

By spring 547, Cusina appears to have been awarded the honorary title of *magister militum* within the Roman army,¹³⁶⁷ and Corippus suggests that he had been granted command of

¹³⁶⁰ *Bella* IV.27.1-3.

¹³⁶¹ *Bella* IV.27.24.

¹³⁶² *Bella* IV.27.24.

¹³⁶³ See A. D. Lee, 'The role of hostages in Roman diplomacy with Sasanian Persia,' *Historia* 40 (1991), 366-74. Cf. *Bella* 3.25.4.

¹³⁶⁴ *Bella* IV.27.25, 27.

¹³⁶⁵ See n. 1345.

¹³⁶⁶ See *PLRE* IIIA, 367-8.

¹³⁶⁷ *Ioh.* VI.267-8. Cf. *Ioh.* VII.267-80; VIII.268-71. For the date pp. 228-9.

soldiers other than those drawn from his own followers, which would suggest a degree of trust by the Roman administration.¹³⁶⁸ However, this point should not be stressed too heavily. Corippus certainly describes Cusina as *magister*, but this could be used as a generic term, given that Corippus is not otherwise specific in his use of either military or civic titles, and appears to vary them on metrical grounds.¹³⁶⁹

Cusina's co-operation with the Roman administration in Africa should never be viewed as being anything other than on his own terms. In 547, during the course of John Troglita's campaign, a dispute arose between Cusina and another Berber leader cooperating with the Romans, Ifisdaias.¹³⁷⁰ This dispute was at risk of degenerating into outright warfare, which would have had a profound effect on the Roman campaign,¹³⁷¹ and was only resolved by hasty mediation on the part of John Stephanides, acting at John Troglita's command.¹³⁷² Corippus' comment on the resolution of the dispute is, however, interesting. He claims that:

... he [John Stephanides] strengthened the agreement with the tribes.¹³⁷³

This suggests that individual tribes were entering into agreements with the Roman administration in Africa, or, at least, with John Troglita.¹³⁷⁴

The Roman administration in Africa appears to have valued Cusina's support between 546 and 548. Following the defeat of the Berbers under the command of Antalas and Carcasan at the battle of the Plains of Cato in 548, Cusina appears to have retained a privileged position in the

¹³⁶⁸ *Ioh.* VII.266–70.

¹³⁶⁹ *Contra PLRE* IIIA, 367, which speculates that, in addition to the title *magister militum*, Cusina was probably granted additional honorary titles.

¹³⁷⁰ *Ioh.* VII.242–61. Aside from his role in John Troglita's campaigns, little else is known of Ifisdaias. See *PLRE* IIIA, 613.

¹³⁷¹ *Ioh.* VII.244–7.

¹³⁷² *Ioh.* VII.242–3, 253–61. John Stephanides is otherwise unattested. See *PLRE* IIIA, 650–1.

¹³⁷³ *Ioh.* VII.257: [... pactum gentibus auxit...]

¹³⁷⁴ *Contra* Shea, *The Iohannis*, 178, who translates the clause as “strengthened the treaty between the tribes”, which suggests a pre-existing agreement between the two tribal groups, rather than individual agreements with the Eastern Roman Empire, which appears to be the more likely interpretation in the context.

eyes of the Roman administration. He is attested as having been a leader among the Berbers, and in receipt of Roman subsidies, until 562.¹³⁷⁵

6.5 Iaudas

Iaudas appears only sporadically in the written sources. He appears to have been a far less significant figure for Corippus, who refers to him only three times in the *Iohannis*,¹³⁷⁶ than for Procopius, who devotes considerable space to discussing Solomon's campaigns against him in both 535 and 540.¹³⁷⁷ Whether Iaudas' more limited role in the events of the period 544 to 548, particularly in the *Iohannis*, reflects his lesser political significance to the Roman administration, or simply a lack of information on the part of the sources, is unclear.

As has been discussed in section 4.4, Iaudas is presented by Procopius as being the pre-eminent Berber leader in Numidia in the 530s, and, in particular, as being leader of the Berbers of Mount Aurasium. He appears to have been one of the leaders represented by the embassies to Belisarius at Carthage in 533; and, like Cusina, Iaudas was, between 534 and 535, involved in raids against the Romano-African population of the province which he inhabited.¹³⁷⁸ An unsuccessful campaign was launched against the Berbers of Mount Aurasium by Solomon in 535, apparently at the instigation of the Berbers Massonas and Ortaïas, who were involved in personal disputes with Iaudas,¹³⁷⁹ but Solomon only succeeded in defeating Iaudas and the Berbers of Mount Aurasium after an extended military campaign in 540.¹³⁸⁰ Iaudas, wounded at the final battle at Toumar, fled to Mauritania, along with many of his followers.¹³⁸¹

¹³⁷⁵ Malalas, XVIII.145; Theophanes *AM* 6055 (ed. De Boor, pp. 238-9). See further pp. 273-4.

¹³⁷⁶ *Ioh.* III.302; VII.277; VIII.126.

¹³⁷⁷ See pp. 195-6, 209-13.

¹³⁷⁸ See pp. 186-7, 195.

¹³⁷⁹ See pp. 186-7.

¹³⁸⁰ See pp. 209-13.

¹³⁸¹ *Bella* IV.20.21.

Following these events, Iaudas disappears from the historical sources entirely until late 545,¹³⁸² when he reappears among the forces assembled by Guntarith to attack Carthage.¹³⁸³ Together with Cusina, he is identified by Procopius, as one of the leaders of the Berbers of Numidia.¹³⁸⁴ This is significant, given that Procopius claims that, following Iaudas' defeat at the battle of Toumar, in 540, the province of Numidia was incorporated into the Eastern Roman Empire.¹³⁸⁵ However, Iaudas' role in 545, as one of the two leaders of the Berbers of Numidia, suggests that the subjugation of Numidia may not have been as complete as Procopius' narrative suggests, and that Iaudas himself must have returned to Numidia from Mauritania at some point between 540 and 545.

The failure of either Guntarith or Areobindus to solicit Iaudas' support in 545 suggests that he was regarded as a less influential Berber leader.¹³⁸⁶ Indeed, beyond the initial note of his presence, he is not mentioned again in the context of Guntarith's revolt, so there is no way of knowing what role, if any, he might have played in Antalas' and Cusina's attempts to betray one another. Given that Cusina had fled to Numidia, and the protection of Iaudas, in 535, following his defeat at the battle of Mount Bourgaon in 535,¹³⁸⁷ and that he is likely to have fled to Mauritania together with Iaudas in 540,¹³⁸⁸ Cusina may well have assumed leadership of the Berbers of Numidia during this period.

Iaudas is entirely absent from the sources for the events of 546 and 547. However, in the winter of 547/8, he is suddenly noted by Corippus as one of the allies of the Eastern Roman Empire – notably only after Cusina becomes an ally to the Eastern Roman Empire.¹³⁸⁹ It is, however,

¹³⁸² For the date see n. 1134.

¹³⁸³ *Bella* IV.25.1–2.

¹³⁸⁴ *Bella* IV.25.2.

¹³⁸⁵ *Bella* IV.20.30.

¹³⁸⁶ *Cf. Bella* IV.25.6–22.

¹³⁸⁷ *Bella* IV.12.29.

¹³⁸⁸ *Cf. n.* 1057.

¹³⁸⁹ For the date see nn. 1178–9. On Cusina's alliance to the Eastern Roman Empire see n. 1345.

interesting that, in two of the three references which Corippus makes to Iaudas, he is described as “servile”, suggesting submission at some point prior to this.¹³⁹⁰

Iaudas is again present as a Roman ally at the battle of the Plains of Cato,¹³⁹¹ but is not attested subsequently.

6.6 Roman client-management in Africa during the reign of Justinian

The preceding four sections of this chapter have attempted to provide an overview of the major Berber groups which interacted with the Roman administration in Africa in the 540s. It is clear from this outline that relations between the Berber tribes and the Roman administration were fluid – a situation which was additionally complicated by the split within the Roman administration created by Guntarith’s coup in 545¹³⁹² – and alliances with individual Berber leaders, or tribes, were often short-lived, and affected by inter-tribal politics, as much as by the actions of the Roman administration in Africa.

Is it then possible to speak of a coherent Roman policy *vis-à-vis* the Berbers in the period following 540, when the Roman administration itself was in turmoil; or should Roman responses to the threat posed by the Berber tribe be seen as a series of *ad hoc* responses to emergent crises?

The Eastern Roman Empire had a developed system of client-state management which was integral to its foreign relations policy, particularly on its eastern frontier, where it established one Arab tribe, the Ghassan, as its pre-eminent client in the region, in parallel to an equivalent

¹³⁹⁰ *Ioh.* VII.277–8; VIII.125–6. Iaudas is referred to as *famulatus* and *famulantis* in these passages respectively.

¹³⁹¹ *Ioh.* VII.277–8. *Cf. Bella* VIII.17.21, in which Procopius claims that John Troglita reduced to submission both Antalas and Iaudas. This is possibly the case, but the two Berber leaders can not have submitted to Roman authority simultaneously, given that Corippus identifies Iaudas as a Roman ally at the battle of the Plains of Cato, and Antalas opposed the Romans at this battle.

¹³⁹² See pp. 223–6.

relationship between Sasanian Persia and another Arab tribe, the Lakhmids.¹³⁹³ The Eastern Roman Empire's relations with the Ghassan have frequently been seen as the empire's closest model for establishing its authority in a tribal society such as Africa.¹³⁹⁴ However, while the client-state relationship between the Ghassan and the Eastern Roman Empire appears to have been reasonably successful during Justinian's reign, attempts to foster a similar system of client-state relationships in Africa appear only to have fostered instability.

In Chapter 4 it was argued that the initial contact between the Eastern Roman Empire and some of the Berber tribes in November 533, and the granting of insignia to the Berber leaders may be seen as an attempt to establish Berber client rulers in Africa. But, while the arrangement was undoubtedly mutually beneficial at the time, allowing individual Berber leaders to elevate themselves within the context of inter-tribal competition, and the Roman administration in Africa to focus on definitively removing the threat posed by the Vandals and occupying key coastal positions without fear of interference from neighbouring Berber tribes, it was also short term. As has been demonstrated in Chapter 5, conflict subsequently occurred between the Romans and the Berbers in the 530s, driven by attempts at territorial expansion by both parties, which was clearly of greater value than the benefits conferred by the investiture of insignia in 533.

While the initial military commitment to Africa was significant, by the 540s, the commitment of military resources to Africa had declined significantly,¹³⁹⁵ and the Roman administration at Carthage had little reason to trust its own troops, who were prone to mutiny, or its provincial *duces*, who had been known to attempt to establish their own independent polities in the region.¹³⁹⁶ Nevertheless, despite the Eastern Roman Empire's limited effective authority

¹³⁹³ The role of Arab clients by the Eastern Roman Empire under Justinian is a complex issue which cannot be discussed in detail here. See further Fisher, *Between Empires*, 73–80.

¹³⁹⁴ Modéran, *Les Maures*, 576–8.

¹³⁹⁵ See pp. 142–5.

¹³⁹⁶ See pp. 223–6 on Guntarith's coup. Guntarith had been *dux* of Numidia.

beyond the littoral, the original objectives of the conquest of Africa had required the acquisition of a number of key positions along the Africa coast, which had created a frontier covering an area far beyond the means of the Roman army in Africa to control. In order to maintain its position in Africa, with the limited resources available to it, the Roman administration was forced to develop a strategy which was less militarily focused. That it should have had recourse to client rulers – as Cusina may be interpreted to be – a well established Roman defensive strategy, is unsurprising.¹³⁹⁷ The system of Roman client-state management was intended to allow the Eastern Roman Empire to create a buffer zone along frontiers which it lacked the military resources to defend actively. In many respects, a system of client rulers should have been ideally suited to the African context.

However, attempts to implement such a system of client rulers in Africa appears to have failed for a number of reasons. While a preliminary step towards establishing client-state relationships in Africa had been taken in 533, these relationships were not consolidated by the Eastern Roman Empire during the following decade. The Roman administration appears to have relied heavily on the fact that Antalas' leadership in Byzacena ensured the province's stability in the late 530s and early 540s. The repeated mention by the sources of Antalas' loyalty to the Eastern Roman Empire between 533 and 543 suggests that he might have been envisaged as a client ruler in the region.¹³⁹⁸ However, the relationship between Antalas and the Roman administration seems to have rested on the fact that, after 534, the Eastern Roman Empire's focus was on Numidia, and not to have entailed any significant obligations on either side.¹³⁹⁹ Thus, when the Ilaguas entered Byzacena in 544, disrupting the balance of power in the region, Antalas had no enduring loyalty towards the Eastern Roman Empire.

¹³⁹⁷ On Cusina's relationship with the Eastern Roman Empire see pp. 261–3.

¹³⁹⁸ See nn. 1281–2.

¹³⁹⁹ See pp. 251–3.

The failure of the Roman administration to follow through the diplomacy initiated in 533 must to a large degree be explained by its domestic concerns. The threat of mutiny within the Roman army in Africa from 536 onwards undoubtedly forced the African administration to focus inwards, rather than on the threats posed from outside.¹⁴⁰⁰ Furthermore, the frequent changes in leadership in Africa proved detrimental to the development of a coherent strategy *vis-à-vis* the Berbers. Not only did individual commanders have their own agendas, the lack of continuous leadership would have created the impression of weakness from the Berber perspective. Interestingly, the role of individual commanders in this process suggests that Roman strategy with respect to the Berbers was being dictated from Carthage, rather than from Constantinople.

This is not to say that individual commanders did not attempt to establish alliances with individual Berber leaders. This undoubtedly occurred, and is evident not only in the overt gestures of Guntarith and Areobindus to secure the support of Antalas and Cusina respectively in 545/6, but also in the fact that Berber troops are regularly attested as serving with the Roman army.¹⁴⁰¹ However, the regularly shifting alliances between both the Eastern Roman Empire and individual Berber leaders and the Berber leaders themselves, suggests that these alliances were opportunistic and short term.¹⁴⁰²

Furthermore, the perceived weakness of the Eastern Roman Empire undoubtedly encouraged Berber leaders to seek short term alliances with the empire in order to gain an advantage in inter-tribal conflicts.¹⁴⁰³ However, the value of a relationship with the Eastern Roman Empire

¹⁴⁰⁰ See sections 5.3 and 5.5.

¹⁴⁰¹ Berbers are attested as serving with the Roman army under both Solomon (*Ioh.* III.404–12) and John Troglita (*Bella* IV.28.50; *Ioh.* IV. 267–8; VII.262–80; VIII.119–26).

¹⁴⁰² *Cf.* the episode in which Cusina and Ifisdaias, having both allied themselves with the Eastern Roman Empire, came into conflict with one another (*Ioh.* VII.242–61).

¹⁴⁰³ As in 535, when Massonas and Ortaïas encouraged Solomon to attack Iaudas, as part of their own dispute (*Bella* IV.13.19; with pp. 186–7).

had shifted. The relationship was no longer valued for the prestige which it conferred, but rather for the military resources it might provide.

With the arrival of John Troglita in 546, a renewed attempt appears to have been made to establish a client ruler in Africa. Cusina's role from 546 onwards must certainly be interpreted in this light. Both his command of Roman troops in battle and his integral role in forcing the mutineers within the Roman army to back down at Lariscus in 547 suggest that his relationship with the Eastern Roman Empire was more than a short term alliance. Furthermore, the fact that Cusina is attested, in 562, to be in receipt of regular Roman payments, confirms that he served as a client ruler following the battle of the Plains of Cato.¹⁴⁰⁴

However, Procopius and Corippus give the impression that, in the 540s, Cusina, while valuable to the Eastern Roman as a source of much needed troops, lacked the authority within the region to effectively function as a Roman client ruler. As has been suggested in section 6.5, Iaudas appears to have become subordinate to Cusina at some point in the early 540s, but Cusina otherwise lacked sufficient influence over other Berber tribes in the region so as to maintain the stability of the Roman frontier. Furthermore, by 546, after two years of Roman military defeats and a split in the Roman administration during Guntarith's revolt,¹⁴⁰⁵ a client relationship with the Eastern Roman Empire lacked the value it had once held to the Berber leaders. The empire was thus unlikely to be able to offer sufficient incentives to secure a client-state relationship with a Berber leader strong enough to hold the other tribes in check. Indeed, at this time, Antalas must have appeared to be the strongest power in the region, and only Berber leaders who were already in conflict with him, such as Cusina, were likely to consider a client relationship with the Eastern Roman Empire.

¹⁴⁰⁴ See n. 1421.

¹⁴⁰⁵ See section 5.5.

Given that Cusina subsequently served as a Roman client for more than a decade,¹⁴⁰⁶ it must be assumed that the system of client-state relationships was more successfully implemented during the 550s than it had been in the preceding two decades. However, the almost complete lack of information concerning Africa in the 550s makes the reasons for this impossible to determine.¹⁴⁰⁷

It has sometimes been argued that the over-arching Roman policy with respect to the Berbers was to convert them to Christianity.¹⁴⁰⁸ This argument is primarily based on the information provided by Procopius in book VI of the *De Aedificiis*. In reference to the inhabitants of Augila, who are claimed to have sacrificed to Ammon and to Alexander the Great until the time of Justinian, Procopius notes:

And now, the emperor, not only providing for the safety of the bodies of his subjects, but also acting with a concern to save their souls, provided in every respect for the people living in that place.¹⁴⁰⁹

Given that Augila was in Pentapolis, and thus part of the Prefecture of Oriens, rather than the Prefecture of Africa, it is uncertain what significance this statement might have for Roman policy *vis-à-vis* the Berbers more generally. Certainly, Procopius' statement may be read as a reference to the Ilaguas, since Corippus likewise refers to them sacrificing to Ammon.¹⁴¹⁰ However, the Roman administration in Africa appears to have been largely disinterested in Pentapolis until the emergence of the threat posed by the Ilaguas, a decade after the Roman conquest.

Equally, it is difficult to read Procopius' statement as but one example of a general policy. The idea of the Christianisation of the empire under Justinian is an underlying theme of the *De*

¹⁴⁰⁶ See n. 1421.

¹⁴⁰⁷ See Epilogue.

¹⁴⁰⁸ I. Engelhardt, *Mission und Politik in Byzanz: Ein Beitrag zur Strukturanalyse byzantinischer Mission zur Zeit Justins und Justinians* (Munich, 1974), 25-7; Cameron, 'Byzantine Africa,' 35, 40.

¹⁴⁰⁹ *Aed.* VI.2.18: [νὸν δὲ δὴ ὁ βασιλεὺς οὗτος οὐχ ὅσον ἐς τὰ σώματα τοῖς κατηκόοις ἐκποριζόμενος τὴν ἐπιμελεία ποιούμενος, καὶ τῶν ταύτη ὠκημένων ἀνθρώπων κατὰ πάντα προὐνόησε τρόπον.] *Cf. Aed.* VI.2.23, 4.12.

¹⁴¹⁰ *Ioh.* VI.145-8, 189-90, 554-8; VII.515-18; VIII.251-3.

Aedificiis. But, with the exception of the Ilaguas, the Berber tribes discussed in this chapter came from regions with a long term Christian presence. They may not have been orthodox, as the Eastern Roman Empire saw it, but they are unlikely to have practised the kind of paganism which Procopius and Corippus attribute to the Ilaguas either. Consequently, an underlying policy of religious conversion should be discounted.

As has been argued in Chapter 3, the planning and commitment of resources to the original Roman campaign of conquest in Africa appears to have been significant, and ought to have facilitated the establishment, and then expansion, of Roman authority in the region. However, the emerging threat posed by the Berber tribes does not appear to have been met with a coherently planned response, as a result of both a lack of unity among the Berber tribes and the instability and constantly changing leadership of the Roman administration in Africa. The Roman response to the Berber threat in the period between 543 and 548 does not fit coherently with Roman actions in Africa in the 530s, nor is it possible to identify consistency in the actions of the Roman administration during this period. While the Eastern Roman Empire was ultimately victorious at the battle of the Plains of Cato, its response to the Berber threat was *ad hoc* and circumstantially driven.

Epilogue (548 to 565)

Little is known of events in Africa following John Troglita's defeat of the Berbers at the battle of the Plains of Cato, since both Corippus' *Iohannis* (as it is extant) and book IV of Procopius' *Bella* conclude with these events. Nevertheless, care should be taken in assuming that the silence of the sources necessarily indicates peace and prosperity in the region from 548 forward.¹⁴¹¹

For the years between 548 and 562, the written history of the region is largely reduced to names of its officials – and even those are few. John Troglita himself appears to have remained in Africa as *magister militum per Africam* for some years. Procopius notes that he was responsible for sending troops from Africa to Sardinia in 551, after the island had been seized by Totila's Goths.¹⁴¹² However, after John Troglita no individual is firmly attested as holding the position of *magister militum per Africam* again until 570, with the possible exception of John Rogathinus (see further below).¹⁴¹³

The African civil administration is equally problematic. The Praetorian Prefect, Athanasius, is last firmly attested either late 547 or 548,¹⁴¹⁴ although it is probable that he was still in office in 549/50, since the praise given him in the *Iohannis* suggests that he was present at Carthage

¹⁴¹¹ *Contra Pringle, Defence*, 39.

¹⁴¹² *Bella* VIII.24.31–7. It is interesting to note that, despite both Corsica and Sardinia having been occupied by the Romans in 534, and being placed within the administrative structure of the diocese of Africa, by 551, neither island appears to have had a Roman significant garrison, since Procopius (*Bella* VIII.24.32) notes that: Having first sailed to Corsica, they [the Goths] took the island, since it was defended by no one, and, afterwards, they also seized Sardinia [οἱ δὲ τὰ μὲν πρῶτα ἐς Κουρσικὴν ἀποπλεύσαντες, οὐδενὸς αὐτῆς ἀμυνομένου, τὴν νῆσον ἔσχον, μετὰ δὲ καὶ Σαρδῶ κατέλαβον]. Procopius probably overstates the case in claiming that neither Sardinia nor Corsica had any garrison, but they were almost certainly under-defended to ward off a full scale invasion. He subsequently notes that the campaign to retake Sardinia in 551 was unsuccessful, and that a further campaign was planned for the following year. He does not, however, note whether or not the Romans were ultimately successfully in retaking and holding Sardinia.

¹⁴¹³ John of Biclar (*s.a.* 569.2) identifies Theoctistus as *magister militum per Africam*. See also n. 644.

¹⁴¹⁴ *Ioh.* VII.199–208. Athanasius is attested organising reinforcements to support John Troglita following the Roman army's defeat at the battle of Marta (see pp. 229–30).

when the work was presented.¹⁴¹⁵ However, when a new decree was promulgated on 6 September 552, it was addressed to Paul as Praetorian Prefect; and, *Appendix 9*, promulgated on 22 September 558, is addressed to John as Praetorian Prefect.¹⁴¹⁶ One further Praetorian Prefect of Africa is known from Justinian's reign – Boethius, who was the addressee of a letter from Pope Pelagius I.¹⁴¹⁷ The date of the letter is uncertain – it claims that, at the time of writing, Italy had suffered from continuous warfare for more than twenty-five years.¹⁴¹⁸ Twenty-five years must, however, have been a convenient round number, since it would place the writing of the letter after Pelagius' death on 3 March 561.¹⁴¹⁹ Thus, Boethius should probably be assumed to have held the office of Praetorian Prefect of Africa in 560 or 561.¹⁴²⁰

Despite the claims made by both Corippus and Procopius that, after John Troglita's campaigns against the Berbers, Africa was at peace, there is evidence that there was at least one other period of significant conflict between the Eastern Roman Empire and the Berbers during Justinian's reign, which is unmentioned by either of the two major sources. The chronicle of John Malalas, which is almost entirely silent concerning events in Africa after the initial Roman campaign of conquest, notes that, in January 563, Cusina approached the Roman governor [ἄρχων] of Africa, John Rogathinus, requesting his customary payment of gold – intended to secure an arrangement of mutual benefit, which had presumably existed since 548.¹⁴²¹ John

¹⁴¹⁵ On the date of the presentation of the *Iohannis* see pp. 65–6.

¹⁴¹⁶ *J. Nov. App.* 6 and 9.

¹⁴¹⁷ *Epist.* 85. Aside from being the addressee of this letter, Boethius is otherwise unknown. It has sometimes been speculated that he is the son of the philosopher Boethius, but this remains uncertain. See *PLRE IIIA*, 236–7.

¹⁴¹⁸ *Epist.* 85: [post continuam XXV et eo amplius annorum uastationum bellicam in Italiae regionibus accidentem].

¹⁴¹⁹ *PLRE IIIA*, 236–7.

¹⁴²⁰ *Contra PLRE IIIA*, 236–7, which suggests that the dates 561 and 556 are equally plausible, given the lack of specific date for *Epistula* 85. However, it seems to be more plausible that the number of years might have been rounded up a year or two, to reach the figure of twenty-five, which would have more dramatic effect than, for example, twenty-two or twenty-three, than that it should have been rounded up by five years, when the round figure of twenty would have been accurate.

¹⁴²¹ Malalas, XVIII.145. An almost identical account is provided by the chronicle of Theophanes (*AM* 6055) (ed. De Boor, pp. 238–9), which almost certainly draws directly on Malalas' account (Mango & Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, 352 n. 19). The only difference between the two accounts is the date, with Theophanes placing the event in December 562. In fact, both chronicles introduce the episode with the set-phrase “in the same month” [τῷ αὐτῷ μηνί] with the actual date being provided

Rogathinus, whose precise office is not made clear,¹⁴²² for reasons which are not explained and are impossible to deduce from the text, decided to murder Cusina.¹⁴²³ This inexplicable action, reminiscent of Sergius' actions at Leptis Magna in 544,¹⁴²⁴ prompted a rebellion, orchestrated by Cusina's children, which appears to have posed a significant threat to Roman authority in Africa.¹⁴²⁵

Justinian's response was to send his nephew, Marcian, to Africa with an army.¹⁴²⁶ The need to send military forces suggests that John Rogathinus, whatever his official capacity, had insufficient regular troops at his disposal to entirely crush the Berber rebellion.¹⁴²⁷ Malalas' account of events is very compressed, but Marcian appears to have restored the region to *status quo ante bellum*, and, once again, the sources declare that Africa was at peace.¹⁴²⁸ Following this revolt, no further information is provided by the written sources concerning Africa during the reign of Justinian.

by the preceding entry – in the case of Malalas, January of the 11th indiction, which is 563 (Grumel, *La Chronologie*, 245). Theophanes, in reproducing Malalas' chronicle, his primary source for this section of his work, omits Malalas' entry for January 563 (XVIII.144) without emending the date for his subsequent entry, which is dependent upon it. Malalas' date is, therefore, to be preferred.

¹⁴²² ἄρχων could refer to either *magister militum per Africam* or Praetorian Prefect of Africa, or, given that the two offices were intermittently consolidated in the hands of one individual, both.

¹⁴²³ Malalas, XVIII.145; Theophanes, *AM* 6055 (ed. De Boor, pp. 238–9).

¹⁴²⁴ See pp. 216–7.

¹⁴²⁵ Malalas, XVIII.145; Theophanes, *AM* 6055 (ed. De Boor, pp. 238–9). It seems to be notable that the accounts claim that: ... part of Africa was seized by the Mauritians [... παρελήφθη μέρη τινὰ τῆς Ἀφρικῆς ὑπὸ τῶν Μαυριτανῶν], and subsequently reiterate this point. Malalas must either use the term “Mauritians” to refer to Berbers generally or be poorly informed about the political geography of Africa, as no other source connects Cusina with the provinces of Mauritania.

¹⁴²⁶ Malalas, XVIII.145; Theophanes, *AM* 6055 (ed. De Boor, pp. 238–9). On Marcian see *PLRE* IIIB, 821–3. As Mango & Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, 352 n. 19, argue, Marcian's involvement is testament to the fact that the revolt was regarded as serious by those at Constantinople.

¹⁴²⁷ *Contra PLRE* IIIA, 670, which suggests that John Rogathinus is more likely to have been Praetorian Prefect than *magister militum*, since he appears to have had no troops available to him.

¹⁴²⁸ Malalas, XVIII.145; Theophanes, *AM* 6055 (ed. De Boor, pp. 238–9). *Contra PLRE* IIIB, 821, which suggests that the phrase προσεργύσαν αὐτῷ means “they [the Berbers] welcomed him [Marcian]”, and thus that the Berbers saw a relative of the emperor as finally having the authority to address their grievances. The translations offered by Jeffreys *et al.* for Malalas (*The Chronicle of John Malalas*, 304); and by Mango and Scott for Theophanes (*The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, 350): “They went over to him...” more accurately reflects the sense of the statement.

Conclusions

The conquest of the former Roman provinces of Africa 533, after a century of Vandal rule, has been regarded as one of the defining successes of the reign of the emperor Justinian I. Justinian's self-representation rested heavily on his role as the restorer of the empire to its classical form and ideals, and the African campaign was presented as a first, but vital, step, in a programme of 'reconquest', culminating in the capture of Rome itself, three years later, which would see Eastern Roman Empire restored in the West. And, despite the misgivings of Justinian's advisers, the African campaign was a success. The Roman expeditionary force captured the Vandal capital, Carthage, within weeks, and victory was proclaimed within a matter of months, even before the formal surrender of the Vandal king.

However, Roman victory in Africa was short-lived. As the Roman military commander, Belisarius, prepared to depart from Africa, the Berber tribes, mere spectators in the conflict between the Eastern Roman Empire and the Vandals, began raids against the Romano-African population. As the Eastern Roman Empire attempted to consolidate its position in Africa, it became a part of the underlying conflicts which had resulted from the establishment of autonomous Berber polities within the frontiers of the former Roman provinces, and these conflicts, with one or another Berber tribe or tribes, would continue intermittently until the Berber tribes from the provinces of Byzacena and Tripolitania were defeated by the Romans, together with Berber allies, at the battle of the Plains of Cato in 548.

Despite the significance accorded to the initial campaign against the Vandals, the somewhat ignominious aftermath to these events has attracted comparatively little attention, a fact which must, at least in part, be explained by a comparative dearth of information on events in Africa in the 6th century, with the exception of that provided by Procopius and Corippus, as well as the problems inherent in the archaeological evidence - namely a lack of recent excavation,

the difficulty of identifying the sites named by the texts, and the problems of dating sites precisely.

The last two decades have seen an increasing focus on the foreign relations of the Eastern Roman Empire. The relationship between the Eastern Roman Empire and the Berber tribes, whose presence both within and without frontiers of the empire placed what was effectively a foreign relations dilemma within the borders of the empire itself, should undoubtedly be considered in this context. However, to date, studies of the Berber tribes of the 6th century have been dominated by the desire to gain an understanding of the tribes themselves - their localities, political structures, economy and culture. This is undoubtedly a vital preliminary step in the greater integration of the Berber tribes into an understanding of the wider Mediterranean world during the 6th century.

Nevertheless, relations between the Eastern Roman Empire and the Berber tribes provide interesting material about both the methods used to establish authority in a newly conquered region, which might profitably be compared with the process subsequently undertaken in Italy and in Spain; and the Roman approach to managing a divided tribal society, rather than a centralised state such as Sasanian Persia, which may further elucidate Roman strategy in Arabia, the Balkans and the north Caucasus. As scholarship on Justinianic foreign relations seeks to move away from an over-arching policy of *renovatio imperii*, an understanding of Roman policy in Africa in the post-Vandal period is integral to the creation of the broader picture.

This study has therefore provided a re-assessment of Justinianic policy in Africa and, in particular, in relation to the Berber tribes, in the light of both a more critical reading of Procopius' *oeuvre* and the evidence offered by such alternative sources as exist, including Corippus' *Iohannis*, Justinianic legislation, chronicles in Latin, Greek and Syriac, and epigraphy. Chapter 1 offered an overview of this source material, stressing the need to incorporate all

available written evidence, despite the tendency of previous scholarship to prioritize the information provided by Procopius as a result of the ostensibly classicizing nature of his work.

In the first instance, it is necessary to understand Justinian's motivations for invading Africa in 533, and to attempt to separate these motivations from the propaganda uses to which the events were subsequently put. Contemporary sources detailing the launch of the African campaign stressed religious and ideological motivations – namely the need to free the Nicene Christian population of Africa from its Arian Vandal rulers, and the desire to restore the Eastern Roman Empire to its classical form and ideals. However, such accounts, often produced by the Roman imperial government itself, undoubtedly fulfilled a propaganda function, justifying a drawn-out military campaign, which, with the exception of the moment of victory following the Vandal surrender in the spring of 534, lacked support at either Constantinople or among the African population.

Rather, as has been argued in Chapter 2, it is clear that the Roman invasion of Africa was not solely the result of the emperor's personal wishes, but also those of a number of distinct, influential, groups at Constantinople, and was motivated by variety of factors, not least of which was the need to secure key maritime positions in the western Mediterranean, an action with both strategic and commercial significance. The chapter concludes that, in the first instance, at least, the military campaign in Africa in 533 should not be seen as a campaign to conquer the former Roman provinces, but rather as an attempt to secure key positions along the African coast, as well as Sardinia, Corsica and the Balearic Islands and, in all likelihood, Sicily, although this was not captured until two years later. From these positions, as is argued subsequently, authority and influence could be projected into the African interior.

Understanding the more limited objectives of the initial campaign, the conquest of key coastal positions, it is then possible to reconsider the legislation establishing the civil and military administration of Africa, which has often been interpreted as indicating that the Eastern

Roman Empire held significant territory in Africa, in a new light. The campaign itself was carried out with remarkable speed and efficiency, although this was largely the result of good fortune and domestic problems within the Vandal kingdom rather than the superior strategy of the Eastern Roman Empire. With the city of Carthage secured, the immediate Roman priority was to secure key coastal positions which were the campaign's original objective. Following this, under direction from Constantinople, a framework was established for the incorporation of the region into the imperial administrative system. At this stage, however, the empire's territorial holdings in Africa are likely to have remained restricted to the littoral. Furthermore, there is little evidence to suggest that, in the short term, the Eastern Roman Empire made significant territorial gains in Africa, and individual cities appear to have continued to act in their own interests, and for their own defence, irrespective of their assigned position within the imperial administrative system. Thus, Chapter 3 has argued that, while the legislation establishing civil and military administration presents a picture of the conquest of the provinces of Africa which had existed prior to the Vandal conquest, in so doing, it merely demonstrates an awareness that Roman rule in Africa would develop. It attests to a degree of forward planning on the part of the Roman imperial government, but allows for a degree of territorial expansion which was ultimately never achieved.

Having considered the establishment of Roman administration in Africa, and its implications, in Chapter 3, Chapter 4 turned to the Berbers, and their position in Africa prior to, and immediately following, the Roman conquest. First official contact between the Eastern Roman Empire and the Berbers occurred in November 533, following the capture of Carthage, but before the decisive Roman victory over the Vandals at the battle of Tricamarum. At this point in time, with the Roman position in Africa still insecure, the Roman commander, Belisarius, was willing to grant those Berber embassies who requested it the insignia of office which was traditionally granted to Roman client rulers. The arrangement was undoubtedly mutually beneficial. Individual Berber leaders gained an endorsement from the new power in the region,

which would help elevate them in the competition for support from the local Romano-African population, which had begun during the Vandal period, as the vacuum created by declining Vandal authority on the frontiers of the former Roman provinces of Africa was filled by autonomous Berber polities. Equally, the Roman administration in Africa, as yet insecure, avoided the threat of Berber hostilities as it sought to consolidate its position against the Vandals.

The agreement was not, however, envisaged as long term, and in the spring of 534, the Berber tribes of Byzacena and Numidia began raids against the Romano-Africans. Given the limits of Roman expansion in Africa at this time, these initial raids should be interpreted in the context of tribal competition, rather than as revolts against Roman authority in the region. However, as the Eastern Roman Empire attempted to expand its territorial position, it increasingly came into direct conflict with the Berber tribes, whose willingness to accommodate Roman presence in the region undoubtedly decreased as the Romans encroached upon the territories of autonomous Berber polities.

Chapter 5 focuses on the increasing levels of conflict between the Eastern Roman Empire and various Berber tribes, and well as on the domestic concerns of the Roman administration in Africa which affected its ability to respond effectively to these circumstances. The chapter provides the reconstruction of events in Africa between 534 and 548 which is essential context for the analysis of Roman-Berber relations provided in Chapter 6. It also highlights the fact that the Eastern Roman Empire ultimately lacked the resources to consolidate its authority in regions significantly beyond the littoral as a result of ongoing disaffection within the Roman army in Africa, as well as inexperienced and incompetent leadership, and a growing neglect from the Roman imperial government at Constantinople, which increasingly appears to have viewed Africa as a lost cause. Consequently, the balance of power between the Roman administration in Africa and the Berber tribes is argued to have shifted significantly over the

course of the 530s and 540s, allowing the position of some Berber leaders, notably Antalas, to strengthen - a conclusion which is of vital importance for Chapter 6.

In 544, a Berber tribe or tribes (the Ilaguas), which had previously been based in Tripolitania moved west, into the province of Byzacena, destabilising the relations between the Berber tribes themselves, as well as between the Berbers and the Roman administration in Africa. With Roman attention refocusing on the threat in Byzacena, which was relatively close to Carthage and had been comparatively stable for the previous decade, Antalas pro-actively sought to assert his independence, presumably with the intention of further expanding his area of influence into an independent polity in Africa, and ultimately marching on Carthage itself. These events are considered in outline in Chapter 5, but are returned to in Chapter 6, with the intention of analysing the coherence of Roman responses to the situation.

Roman attempts to counter this unexpected destabilisation of the region were initially hampered by poor Roman leadership, and by the outbreak of mutiny within the African army, which, for a short time, resulted in two parallel Roman administrations in Africa. The Berbers sought to play off one against the other in order to achieve their own ends, while the two Roman administrations sought to play off the Berber tribes against one another, offering the incentive of a Roman endorsed position of pre-eminence among the Berbers. However, the arrival of John Troglita in Africa in 546 saw a return to a more traditional, but pro-active, military approach to the situation. John's initial campaigns against the Berbers were, however, unsuccessful. Chapter 6 argues that he appears to have become increasingly aware of the need to apply a 'divide and conquer' policy with respect to the Berber tribes, establishing formal alliances with those tribes which might be induced to halt the expansion of other tribes, as well as attempting to establish a Berber client ruler, Cusina, in the region. However, by this time, after two years of Roman military losses and discord within the Roman administration which was evident to the Berber tribes, the Eastern Roman Empire lacked the authority in the region

to effectively implement client rulers, and a system of frontier management which might have been expected to stabilise the African provinces only resulted in instability, since Cusina himself lacked the authority to hold the tribes surrounding his own in check.

Ultimately, Chapter 6 concludes that Roman actions in Africa across the two phases of the establishment of Roman authority in the region, before and after 540, do not exhibit a consistency. Nor does the second period show internal consistency in the manner in which the Roman administration sought to counter the increasing threat posed by the appearance of the Ilaguas in Byzacena in 544. Responses to the crisis which developed appear to have been *ad hoc* and circumstantially driven, most probably as a result of the general instability within the African administration, its constantly changing leadership, and the lack of trust which existed within the Roman army in Africa and between the army and the civil administration, all of which contributed to a lack of long term planning at Carthage, and insecurity which resulted in opportunistic responses.

A fifteen year period of peace appears to have followed the Roman victory over the Berbers at the battle of the Plains of Cato in 548. However, this may be an illusion of the sources, given that almost nothing is known of events in Africa during this period. Certainly, by the 560s, grievances must have developed, resulting in the murder of the Berber leader Cusina, by the Roman governor of Africa, and a renewed period of hostilities.

The over-arching conclusions which emerge from this study thus fall into two categories. First, it challenges the view that the Roman conquest of Africa must have been motivated by the desire to reclaim the former Roman provinces of Africa in their entirety. Instead, it argues that the initial Roman objective was to secure key coastal positions, which would provide strategic and commercial advantages, and that the Roman administration in Africa did not subsequently expand its area of effective rule to any significant extent. Rather, the empire sought to project its limited power into the interior from the coast.

Second, this study concludes that there was no coherent Roman strategy *vis-à-vis* the Berber tribes across the period of time considered. While the length of the African frontier, and the severely limited Roman military resources in the region would have made the establishment of Berber client rulers an obvious strategy to secure the stability of the region, attempts to implement such a strategy were unsuccessful. This was in part a result of the high level of competition between individual Berber leaders as they sought to establish and maintain independent polities within the frontiers of the former Roman empire. Equally, an increasing lack of willingness, on the part of the Roman imperial government, to commit resources to Africa, as well as the instability caused by constantly changing leadership, and distrust, within the African civil and military administrations prevented the development of coherent long term strategies for addressing the Berber threat.

These conclusions merit further consideration both in the context of attempts to understand the nature of provincial administration, and the relationship between the centre and the provinces during Justinian's reign, as well as within the wider context of Justinianic foreign relations. Furthermore, while the conquests of Africa and Italy, and the establishment of Roman authority in these regions, are often considered in parallel, as a result of the perception that they comprised the 'reconquest' of the West, the far more limited territorial position of the Eastern Roman Empire in Africa, together with the decentralised society on its frontier, suggests that more fruitful comparisons might be made with Spain and with the regions surrounding the Black Sea.

Taken in a broad chronological context, a detailed understanding of Roman policy in Africa in the 6th century and, in particular, the empire's actions with respect to the Berbers, may offer some insight into the reasons for the rapid fall of the African provinces to Islamic forces over the course of the 7th century. It has often been assumed that the Berbers' Christianity, or lack thereof, was chiefly responsible for the rapid fragmentation of Africa in the 7th century which

facilitated its conquest. However, this study has demonstrated that this fragmentation was the product of a long and complex process, which had begun during the Vandal period, but had been further facilitated by the actions of the Eastern Roman Empire in Africa during Justinian's reign. Consequently, the dynamics of the Islamic conquest of Africa would merit reassessment in light of the picture presented here.

Appendices

Appendix I: African cities in the *De Aedificiis*¹⁴²⁹

African cities identified by Procopius in *De Aedificiis* as having been refortified by Justinian. Those cities marked with an * are also attested in the geographical treatise attributed to George of Cyprus (see Appendix II).

ΤΡΙΠΟΛΙΣ	TRIPOLIS	TRIPOLITANIA	
Κιδαμή	Cidame	Cidamus	<i>Aed.</i> VI.3.9
Λεπτιμάγνα	Leptis Magna	Leptis Magna	<i>Aed.</i> VI.4.1
Σαβράθα	Sabratha	Sabratha	<i>Aed.</i> VI.4.13

Also noted as being in Tripolitania, but not as having been fortified by Justinian:

Τάκαπα	Tacapa	Tacape	<i>Aed.</i> VI.4.14
Γίργις	Girgis	Gigthis	<i>Aed.</i> VI.4.14

ΠΡΟΚΟΝΣΟΥΛΑΡΙΑ	PROCONSULARIA	ZEUGITANA	
*Καρχηδών	Carthage	Carthage	<i>Aed.</i> VI.5.2
*Βάγα	Vaga	Vaga	<i>Aed.</i> VI.5.12
Τούκκα	Tucca	Thugga ¹⁴³⁰	<i>Aed.</i> VI.5.15

ΒΥΖΑΚΙΟΝ	BYZAKION	BYZACENA	
*Ἀδράμυτος	Adrymetus	Hadrumetum	<i>Aed.</i> VI.6.1
Καπούτβαγα	Caput Vada	Caput Vada	<i>Aed.</i> VI.6.8
*Μάμμης	Mammes	(Unlocated)	<i>Aed.</i> VI.6.18
*Τελεπτή	Telepte	Thelepte	<i>Aed.</i> VI.6.18
Αύμέτρα	Aumetra	(Unlocated)	<i>Aed.</i> VI.6.18

ΝΟΥΜΙΔΙΑ	NUMIDIA	NUMIDIA	
*Πεντεβαγάη	Pentebagae	Bagai ¹⁴³¹	<i>Aed.</i> VI.7.8
Φλωρεντιανή	Florentianae	(Unlocated) ¹⁴³²	<i>Aed.</i> VI.7.8
*Βάδη	Bade	Badias ¹⁴³³	<i>Aed.</i> VI.7.8

¹⁴²⁹ See also Map VII.

¹⁴³⁰ Pringle, *Defence*, 244–6, 312.

¹⁴³¹ Following the argument of Desanges, ‘Un témoignage peu connu,’ 44–5, that Πεντεβαγάη should be read as two separate words πέντε [five] and βαγάη, with Procopius listing five cities, the first of which is Bagai.

¹⁴³² Morizot, ‘À propos des limites méridionales,’ 157. *Contra* Troussel, ‘Les limites sud de la réoccupation byzantine,’ 149; idem, ‘Les fines antiquae,’ 371; who identifies Florentiane with Mdila. This argument is tentatively followed by Duval & Saxer, ‘Un nouveau reliquaire africain,’ 262. *Cf.* n. 1442.

¹⁴³³ Pringle, *Defence*, 183, 306; Duval & Saxer, ‘Un nouveau reliquaire africain,’ 262; Morizot, ‘À propos des limites méridionales,’ 156–7; Troussel, ‘Les limites sud de la réoccupation byzantine,’ 146. *Contra* Diehl, *L’Afrique byzantine*, 248.

*Μέλεον	Meleon	Mileu ¹⁴³⁴	<i>Aed.</i> VI.7.8
Ταμουγάδη	Tamugade	Thamugadi	<i>Aed.</i> VI.7.8
Δάβουσιν	Dabusic	?Yabous ¹⁴³⁵	<i>Aed.</i> VI.7.8
Γαιανά	Gaeana	?Vaiana ¹⁴³⁶	<i>Aed.</i> VI.7.8
Φρίκη	Frice	Ksar el-Frigui ¹⁴³⁷	<i>Aed.</i> VI.7.9
*Σίτιφιν	Sitifis	Sitifis ¹⁴³⁸	<i>Aed.</i> VI.7.9
*Λαριβουζουδούων	Laribouzoudouon	Laribus/Lares	<i>Aed.</i> VI.7.10
Παρατουρών	Paratouron	?Ad Turres ¹⁴³⁹	<i>Aed.</i> VI.7.10
Κιλανά	Cilana	(Unlocated)	<i>Aed.</i> VI.7.10
Σικκαβενερία	Sicca Veneria	Sicca Veneria	<i>Aed.</i> VI.7.10
*Τίγισιν	Tigisis	Tigisis	<i>Aed.</i> VI.7.10
Λαμφουαομβά	Lamfouaomba	Obba ¹⁴⁴⁰	<i>Aed.</i> VI.7.10
*Καλαμάα	Calamaa	Calama	<i>Aed.</i> VI.7.10
*Μέδαρα	Medara	Ammaedara ¹⁴⁴¹	<i>Aed.</i> VI.7.10
Μέδελα	Medela	Mdila ¹⁴⁴²	<i>Aed.</i> VI.7.10
*Σκιλή	Scile	(Unlocated) ¹⁴⁴³	<i>Aed.</i> VI.7.11
Φώσαλα	Fosala	(Unlocated)	<i>Aed.</i> VI.7.11
ΣΑΡΔΙΝΙΑ	SARDINIA	SARDINIA	
Τραϊανουῦ Φόρον	Forum of Trajan	Forum of Trajan	<i>Aed.</i> VI.7.12
ΜΑΥΡΙΑΝΙΑ ¹⁴⁴⁴	MAURITANIA	MAURITANIA	
*Σέπτον	Septon	Septem	<i>Aed.</i> VI.7.14

¹⁴³⁴ Pringle, *Defence*, 219–20, 310. *Contra* Morizot, ‘À propos des limites méridionales,’ 158, who argues that Mileu is too far from the Aurès massif to be Meleum; and Troussel, ‘Les limites sud de la réoccupation byzantine,’ 149, who identifies Meleum with Gemellae.

¹⁴³⁵ Morizot, ‘À propos des limites méridionales,’ 158. *Contra* Troussel, ‘Les limites sud de la réoccupation byzantine,’ 146; idem, ‘Les fines antiquae,’ 371; who identifies Dabousis with Thabudeos. This argument is tentatively followed by Pringle, *Defence*, 307.

¹⁴³⁶ S. Lancel, *Actes de la conférence de Carthage en 411* (Paris, 1991), IV, 1323–6. *Contra* Pringle, *Defence*, 306, who identifies Gaiana with Diana Veteranorum.

¹⁴³⁷ See Laporte, ‘Zabi, Friki: notes sur la Maurétanie et la Numidie de Justinien,’ 161–5; Kaegi, *Muslim Expansion and Byzantine Collapse in North Africa*, 117. *Contra* Desanges, ‘Un témoignage peu connu,’ 63 n. 5, who tentatively suggests that Frice was Centenarium Aqua Frigida.

¹⁴³⁸ *Cf.* *Bella* IV.20.20, in which Procopius locates Sitifis in Mauritania Sitifensis.

¹⁴³⁹ See Pringle, *Defence*, 279, 310.

¹⁴⁴⁰ Desanges, ‘Un témoignage peu connu,’ 45, argues that the first part of Λαμφουαομβά should be discarded, leaving the reading Ὀμβά, an alternative reading for Obba. This is, however, somewhat tenuous.

¹⁴⁴¹ Following Desanges, ‘Un témoignage peu connu,’ 45, who plausibly emends the reading Μέδαρα to Ἀμέδαρα.

¹⁴⁴² Pringle, *Defence*, 283, 310. *Contra* Courtois, *Les Vandales*, 69 n. 6; idem, *Victor de Vita et son oeuvre*, 59 n. 290, who identified Medela with Medeli in Zeugitana.

¹⁴⁴³ Pringle, *Defence*, 311, suggests that Scile must be somewhere in the vicinity of Simitthu (mod. Chemtou, Tunisia).

¹⁴⁴⁴ The term Mauritania [Μαυριτανία] is never actually used in the *De Aedificiis*, but is used in the *Bella* (III.25.3; IV.10.29, 13.19, 14.20, 20.30, 31, 22.5).

Appendix II: African cities in the geographical treatise attributed to George of Cyprus¹⁴⁴⁵

African cities identified in the geographical treatise attributed to George of Cyprus. Those cities marked with an * are also attested in Procopius' *De Aedificiis* (see Appendix I).

	Honigmann (1939) ¹⁴⁴⁶	Gelzer (1890) ¹⁴⁴⁷	
639.	ΒΥΖΑΚΙΑ		BYZACENA
640.	*Καρταγέννα	Καρταγέννα	Carthage
641.	Προκονσουλαρίας	Πρυκουνσουλαρέα	Proconsularis
642.	Σούβιβα	Σούβιβα	Sufes ¹⁴⁴⁸
643.	Κάψα	Καμψία	Capsa
643a.	Κίλλιον	Κίλεως	Cillium
644.	Ίούγκα	Ίούγκης	Iunci
645.	*Τελεπτή	Ταλέπτης	Thelepte
646.	Κασακαλάναι	Κάσκαλα	(Unlocated)
647.	Καστέλλια	Καστέλλαι	(Unlocated)
648.	Πέτζανα	Πέτζανα	(Unlocated)
649.	*Μάμμα	Μάμιδα	(Unlocated)
650.	Μαδασοῦμα	Μαδασούβα	(Unlocated)
651.	Κούλουλις	Κολούλης	Cululis
652.	Θάψος (?)	Κάψης	Thapsus ¹⁴⁴⁹
653.	*Ἄδρῦμετον	Ἄδραμυττώ	Hadrumentum
653a.	Κάστρον Σουφήτιλα	Κάστρον Σουφίτηχα	Sufetula
654.	ΝΟΥΜΙΔΙΑ		NUMIDIA
655.	*Κάλαμα	Καλάμα	Calama
656.	Τεβέστη	Τεβέστη	Theveste
657.	Ίππων Νουμιδίας	Ίππων Νουζιδίας	Hippo Regius
658.	*Κάστρα Βάγαϊ	Καστραβάγαι	Bagai
659.	*Βάδης	Βάδης	Badias ¹⁴⁵⁰
659a.	*Μίλεον	Μήλεον	Mileu ¹⁴⁵¹
660.	*Λαρίβους	Ληράδους	Laribus/Lares
661.	*Κάστρα Ἄμμέδερα	Κάστρον Βέδερα	Ammaedara ¹⁴⁵²
662.	*Σκίλλι	Σκήλη	(Unlocated) ¹⁴⁵³

¹⁴⁴⁵ See also Map X.

¹⁴⁴⁶ E. Honigmann, *Le Synekdèmos d'Hiéroklos et l'Opusculum Géographique de Georges de Chypre: texte, introduction, commentaire et cartes* (Brussels, 1939).

¹⁴⁴⁷ H. Gelzer (ed.), *Georgii Cyprii descriptio orbis romani* (Leipzig, 1890).

¹⁴⁴⁸ Honigmann, *Le Synekdèmos d'Hiéroklos et l'Opusculum Géographique de Georges de Chypre*, 56.

¹⁴⁴⁹ Assuming that Honigmann's reading of Θάψος, which differs from that of Gelzer, is indeed correct.

¹⁴⁵⁰ See n. 1433.

¹⁴⁵¹ See n. 1434.

¹⁴⁵² Cf. n. 1441.

¹⁴⁵³ See n. 1443.

663.	Ἰζιριανήσιον	Ἦγηρινήσιον	(Unlocated)
664.	*Τίγισις	Τιτήσιν	Tigisis
665.	*Βάγα	Βάγης	Vaga
666.	Κωνσταντίνη	Κωνσταντίνη	Constantina
668.	MAYPITANIA A ¹⁴⁵⁴		MAURITANIA SITIFENSIS
667.	*Σίτιφις	Σίτιφονος ¹⁴⁵⁵	Sitifis
669.	Ῥουσοκούρου (?)	Ῥινοκουσούρων	Rusuccuru
670.	MAYPITANIA B		MAURITANIA CAESARIENSIS
671a.	*Σέπτον εἰς τὸ μέρος [Θένησος] Σπανίας		Septem

¹⁴⁵⁴ Honigmann, *Le Synekdèmos d'Hiérolès et l'Opuscule Géographique de Georges de Chypre*, 56, acknowledges that he has switched lines 667 and 668, presumably on the basis that Procopius places Sitifis in Mauritania in the *Bella* (IV.20.20). Cf. Duval, 'La Maurétanie sitifienne à l'époque byzantine,' 158–9, who suggests that this shift may not be entirely justified given that Procopius places Sitifis in Numidia in the *De Aedificiis* (VI.7.9).

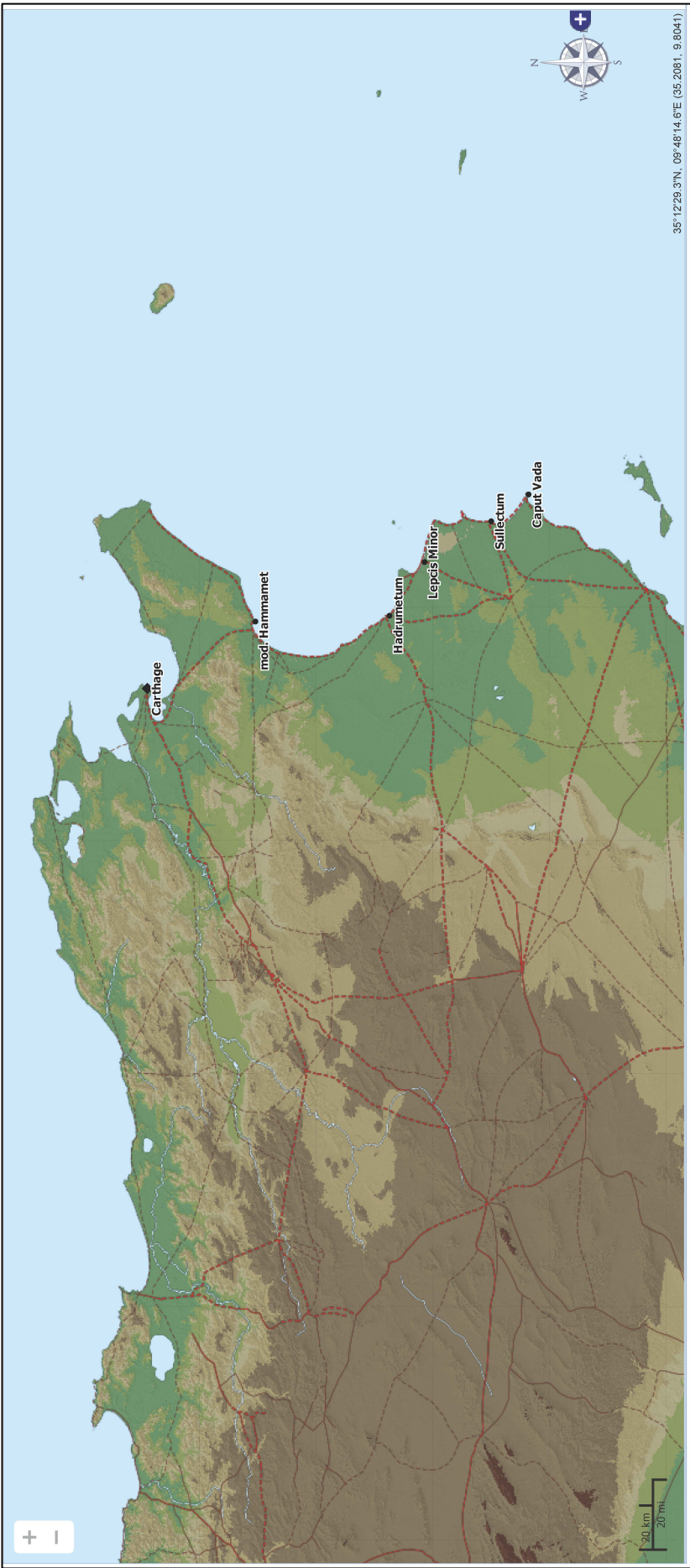
¹⁴⁵⁵ See n. 1438.

Maps

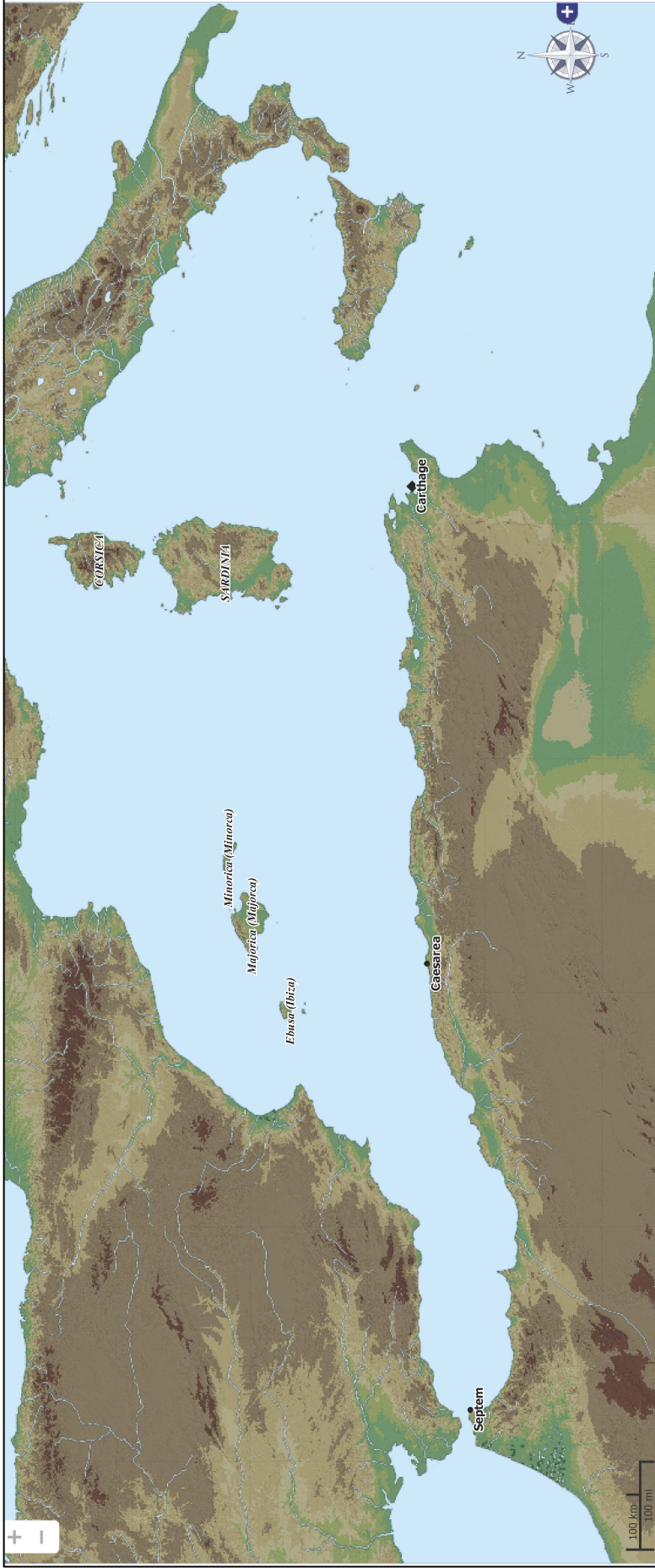
Maps were produced using the Ancient World Mapping Center's web-based 'Antiquity à-la-carte' application: <http://awmc.unc.edu/awmc/applications/alacarte/>

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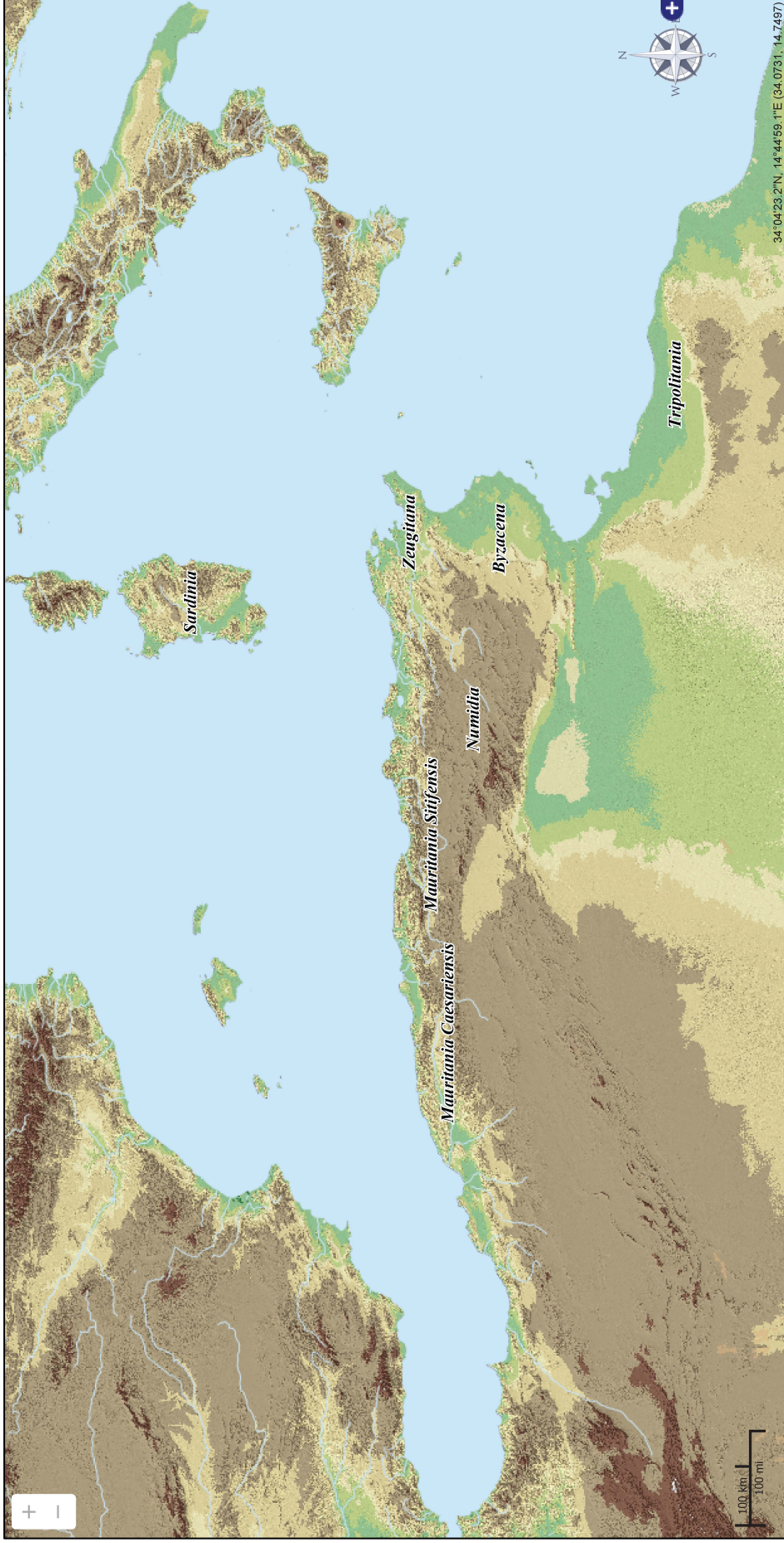
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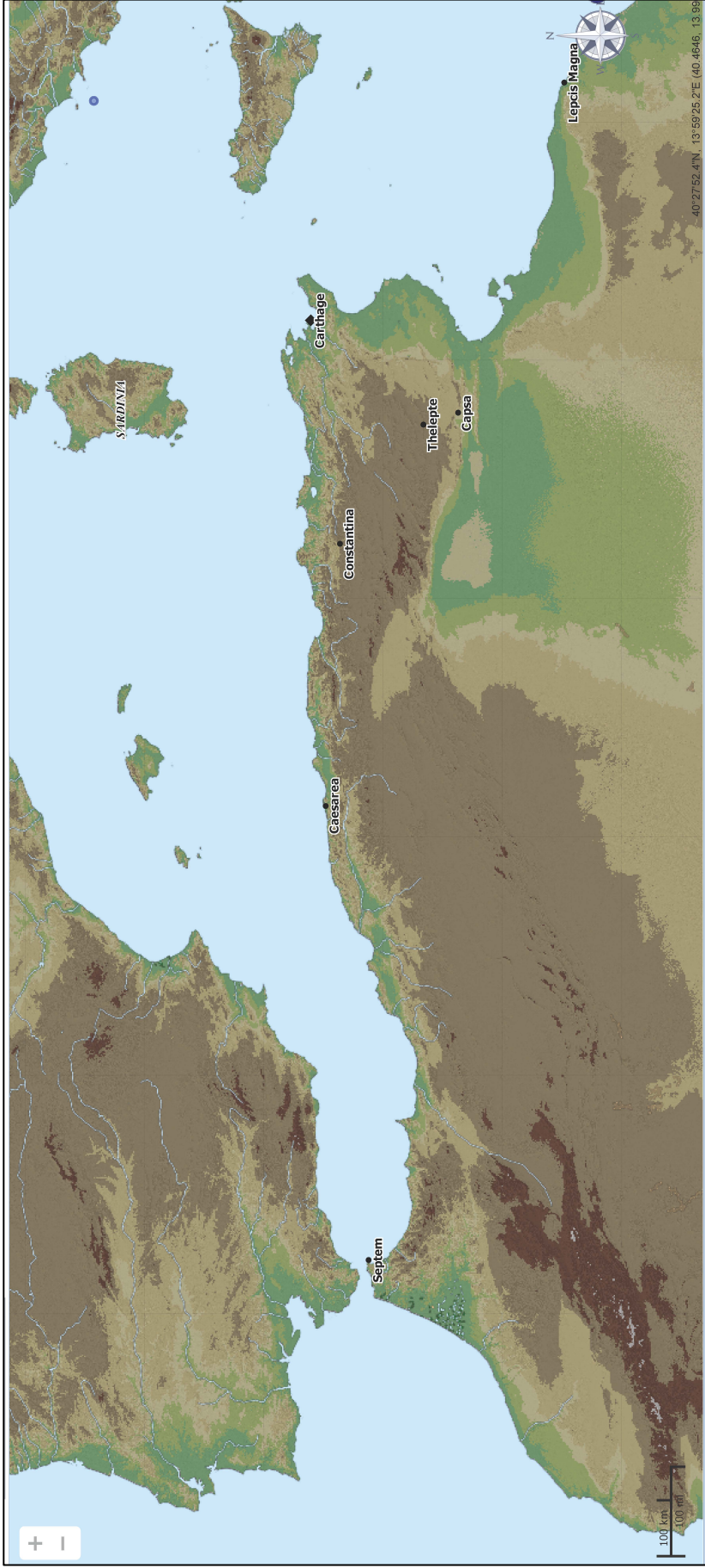
Map II: March from Caput Vada to Carthage



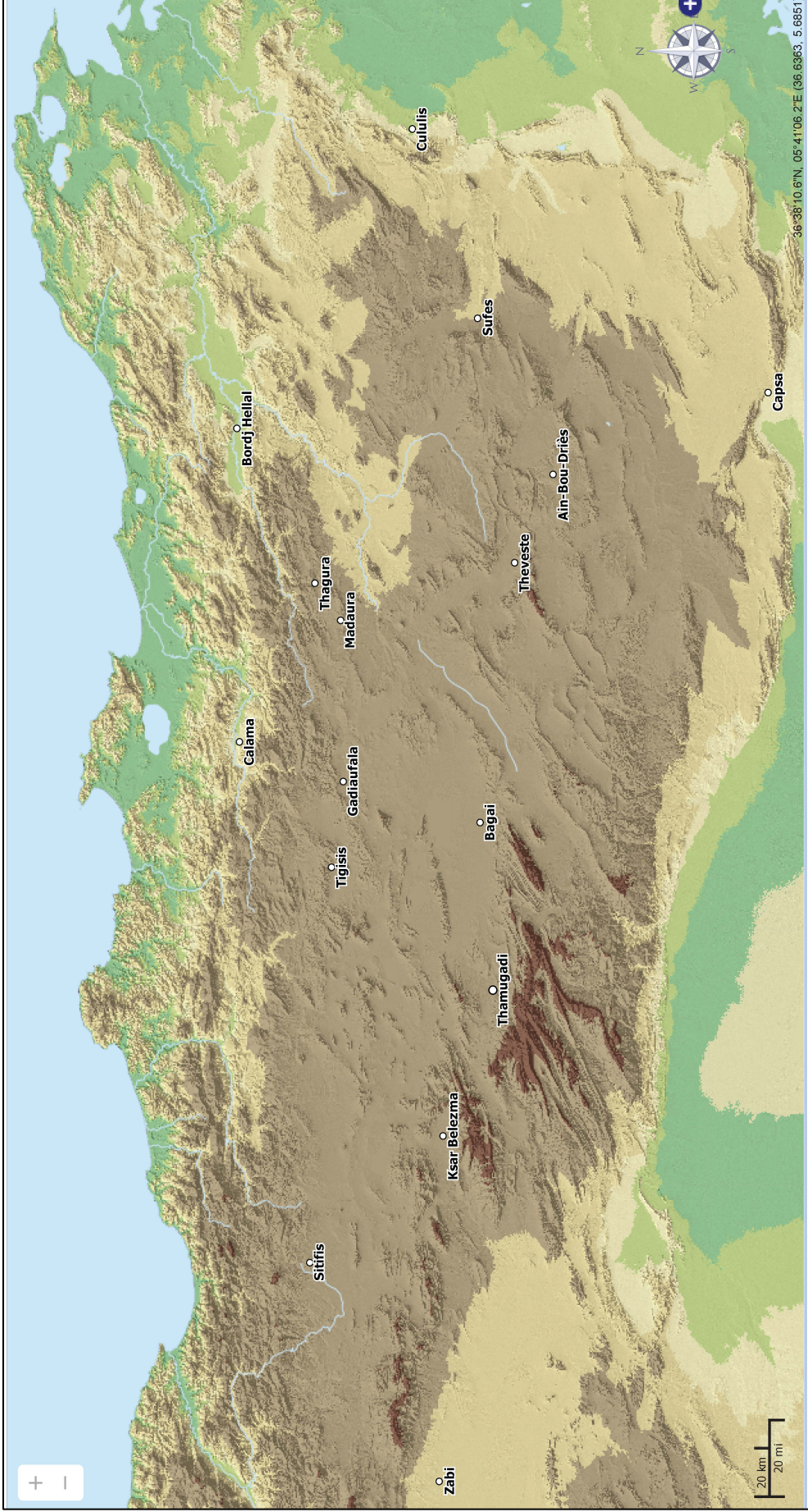
Map III: Key coastal positions in Africa (533 / 4)



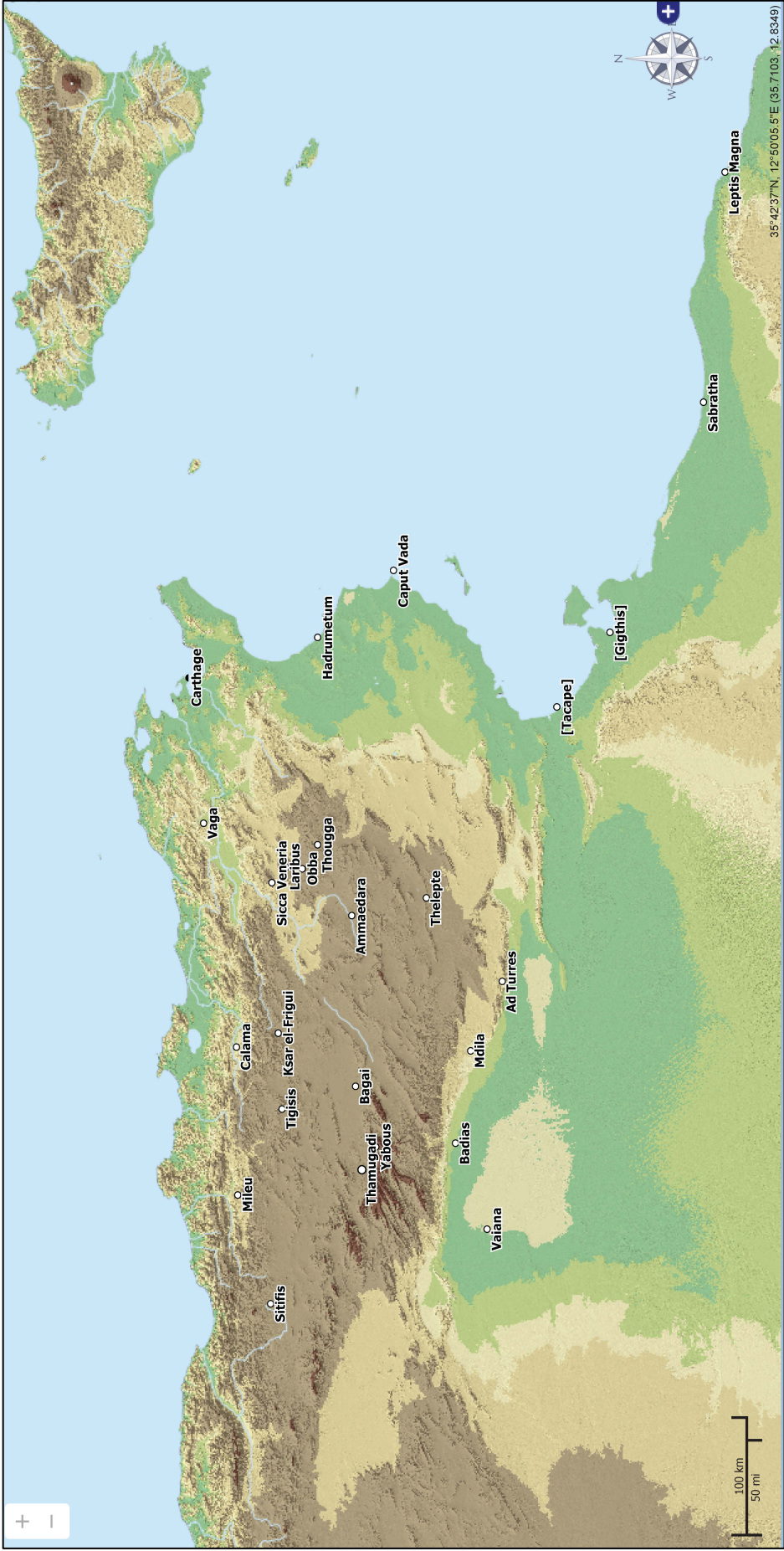
Map IV: African provinces under Justinian



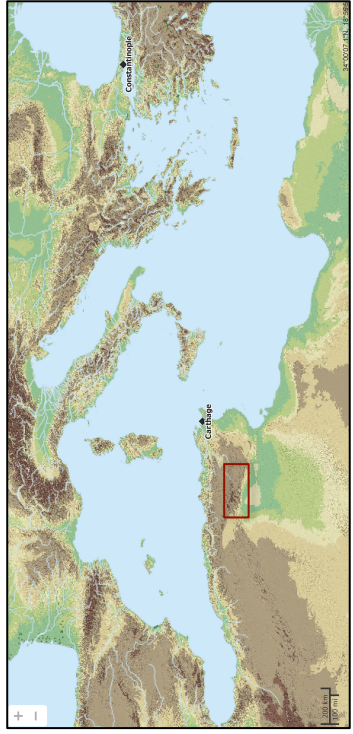
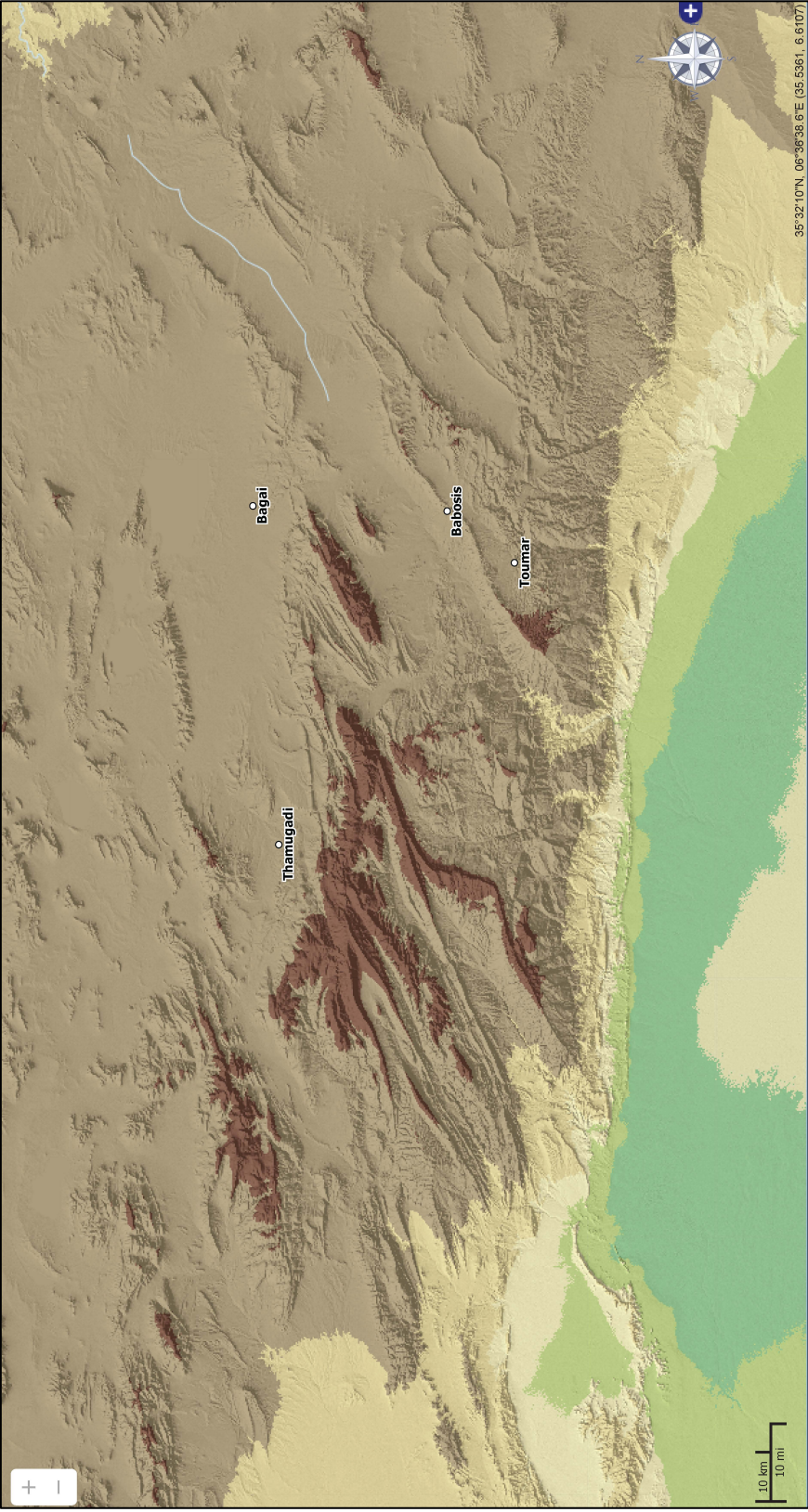
Map V: African military command positions following CJ1.27.2



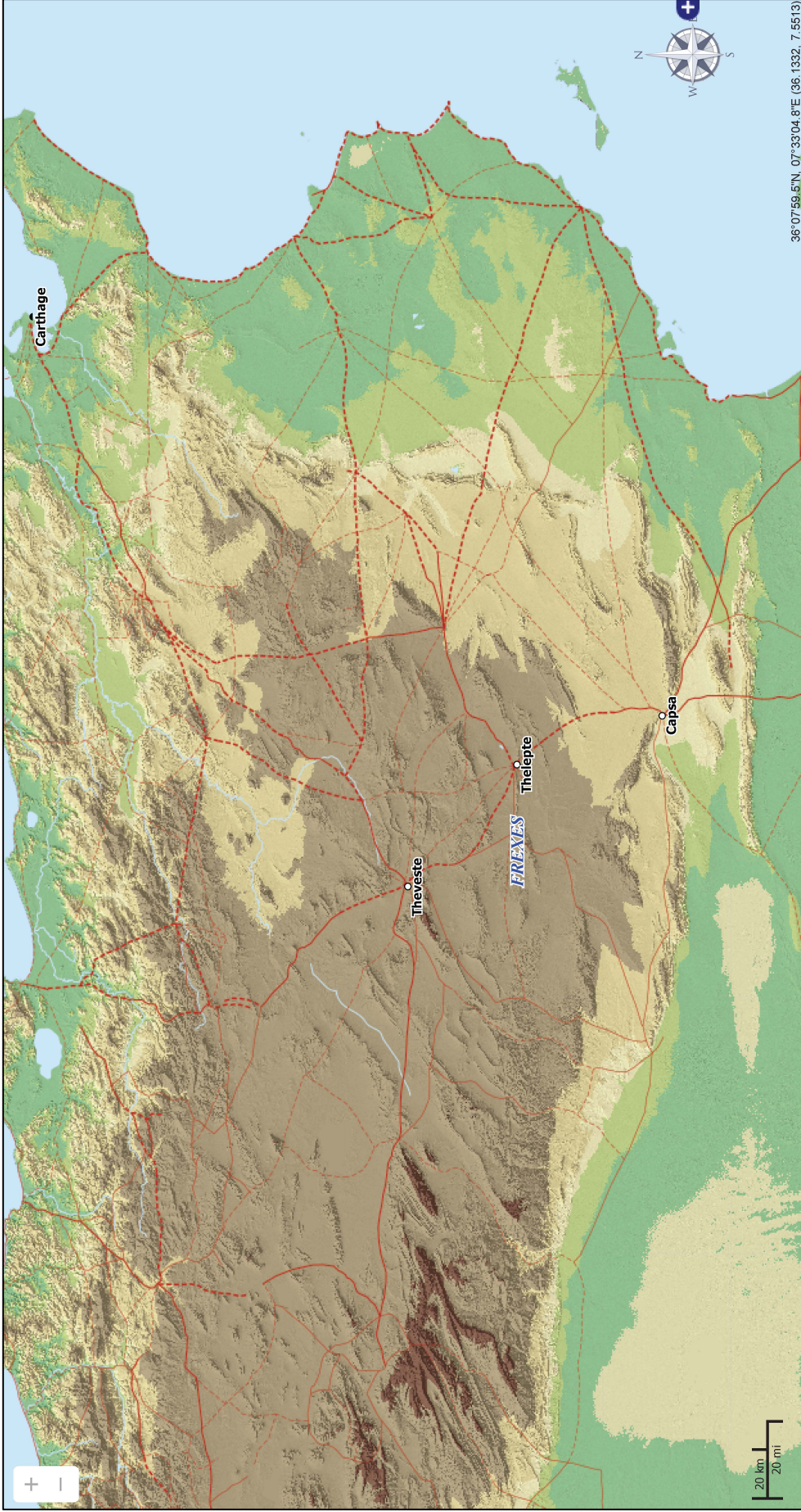
Map VI: Justinianic building inscriptions in Africa
 Following J. Durliat, *Les dédicaces d'ouvrages de défense dans l'Afrique byzantine* (Rome, 1981).



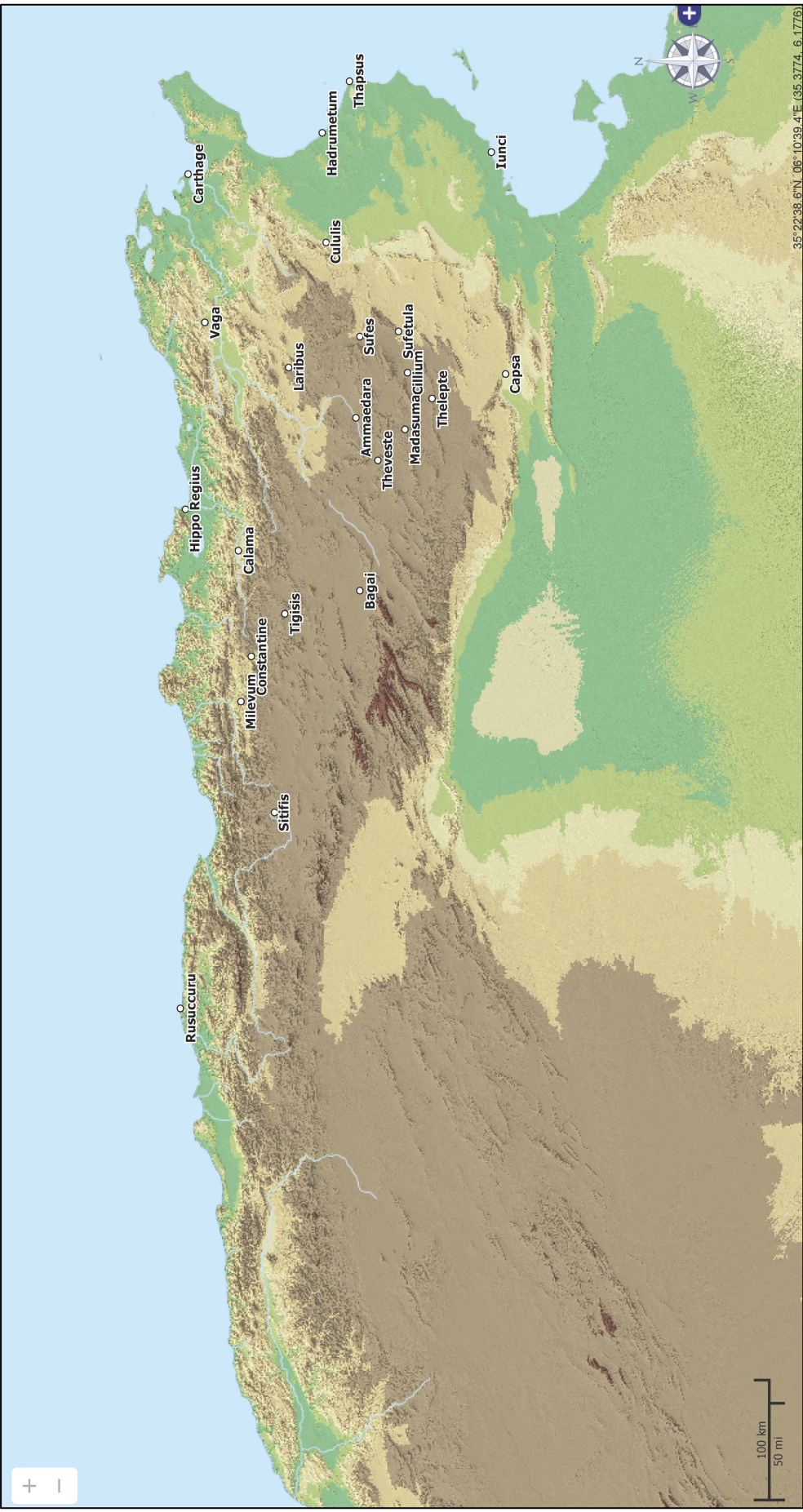
Map VII: African cities in the *De Aedificiis*
 (Forum of Trajan and Septem off map)



Map VIII: The Aurès campaign (540)



Map IX: Location of the Frexes
Following Y. Modéran, *Les Maures et l'Afrique romaine (IVe-VIIIe siècle)* (Rome, 2003).



Map X: African cities in the geographical treatise attributed to George of Cyprus

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