

**After Justinian: Foreign Policy in the Byzantine Empire
during the Reigns of Justin II and Tiberius II Constantine
(565-582)**

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Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Ancient History

St. Catherine's College

University of Oxford

Trinity 2019

Acknowledgements

This thesis has become a reality with the help of many individuals. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all of them.

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor, Philip Booth, for his unceasing support and advice during the course of my Dphil. The completed thesis owes a great deal to the critique and solid advice he provided. I am deeply indebted to the time and effort he put in to help make this thesis a reality.

I would also like to thank all those at the University of Ottawa, particularly Geoffrey Greatrex and Richard Burgess, who set me on this path. Their enthusiasm and joy for Classics was an inspiration and played a big role in the decision to pursue this path.

I cannot thank my parents, Kerry and Grace, enough for their encouragement and support over the course of my postgraduate studies at Oxford. The sacrifices they made to help me achieve this goal are greatly appreciated and will never be forgotten.

And last, but by no means least, thank you to the friends and colleagues who have been part of my time in Oxford. You have made this experience truly memorable.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	IV
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	V
INTRODUCTION.....	1
THE QUESTION	1
SHAPE AND CONTENT OF THESIS.....	3
TERMINOLOGY	4
POLITICAL COSMOLOGY.....	8
SOURCES	11
CHAPTER 1: ETHNICITY AND MIGRATIONS.....	29
ETHNICITY.....	29
MIGRATIONS	37
CHAPTER 2: JUSTINIAN REFORM PROGRAM AND ACCESSION OF JUSTIN II.....	50
JUSTINIANIC REFORMS.....	51
ACCESSION OF JUSTIN II.....	60
CHAPTER 3: FOREIGN POLICY - PART I.....	65
AVARS	67
SLAVS	76
LOMBARDS / GEPIDS	85
CHAPTER 4: FOREIGN POLICY - PART II.....	92
ARABS.....	92
ARMENIANS.....	125
TURKS.....	138
PERSIA.....	148
CONCLUSION.....	182
BIBLIOGRAPHY	195

Abstract

This thesis focuses on state and society in the reigns of two emperors which have not been fully explored by scholars, namely those of Justin II (565-578) and Tiberius II (578-582). It sets out to provide valuable insight about the transitional period the empire underwent in the late sixth century by examining the roles of emperors Justin II and Tiberius II in regards to foreign policy. By comparison, most of the scholarship of this period focuses on the policies and reforms of either Justinian (527-565) or Maurice (582-602). This thesis attempts to provide a necessary bridge in the scholarship between these two emperors and seeks to highlight the importance of this period to the wider development of Late Antique society in the sixth century. The dissertation takes a comparative approach, by focusing on the literary and archaeological evidence available, and determining the changes that took place after the reign of Justinian. It also adopts a wholistic approach. After an analysis of each set of policies separately, it will attempt to draw conclusions on how these policies influenced each other as a whole and how this contributed to the shifting frontiers that occurred during the late sixth century.

List of Abbreviations

Agath.	Agathias
Amm. Marc.	Ammianus Marcellinus
Chron. Ede.	Chronicon Edessenicum
Chron. 1234	Chronicle to 1234
Chron. Pasch.	Chronicon Paschale
Cod. Theod.	Codex Theodosius
De Cer.	Constantine Porphyrogenitus
Coripp.	Corippus
Evagr.	Evagrius
Greg. Tur.	Gregory of Tours
J. <i>Nov.</i>	Novels of Justinian
J. <i>Edict.</i>	Edicts of Justinian
J. <i>Cod.</i>	Codex of Justinian
Jac. Ede.	Jacob of Edessa
Joh. Ant.	John of Antioch
Joh. Bicl.	John of Biclär
Joh. Eph.	John of Ephesus
Joh. Epiph.	John of Epiphania
Joh. Lyd.	John Lydus
Joh. Mal.	John Malalas
Joh. Nikiu	John, Bishop of Nikiu
Lib.	Libanius
Marc.	Marcellinus
Men. Proc.	Menander Protector
Mich. Syr.	Michael the Syrian
Origo Gent. Lang.	Origo Gentis Langobardorum

Paul Deac.	Paul Deacon
Proc.	Procopius
Ps-. Zach.	Zacharias Rhetor
Tac.	Tacitus
Theoph.	Theophanes
Theoph. Byz.	Theophanes Byzantium

INTRODUCTION

THE QUESTION

On November 14th, AD 565, the long-reigning emperor Justinian died and passed on leadership of the Byzantine Empire to Justin II. Justinian had ruled for thirty-eight years and left a noticeable list of accomplishments in his wake. Much of the formerly held western territories had been reclaimed, peace with Persia had finally been obtained, and a massive codification of Roman law had been achieved. However, the political situation that Justin II faced upon his accession was a difficult one. New polities were emerging or changing along the Byzantine frontier. This was not an isolated incident but was wide-spread among several societies. In the Balkans, groups such as the Slavs and the Avars were developing more complex societies, in the West, the Lombards, Gepids and Franks, were becoming more formidable adversaries, and in the East, the Arabs were developing a more group-oriented identity. The common factor among these groups was a process of political centralization. This process was fostered over the sixth century through the relationships these groups had with the empire. The interactions with the Byzantines, particularly the tribute system, enabled certain members of these groups to achieve a level of wealth and prestige that encouraged centralization among elite strata of their societies. Conversely, the Byzantine aristocracy had become discontented with the centralization of power under Justinian. Justinian's ambitious reform program led to much conflict between the crown and the elites. The result of this was the support and coronation of an emperor that was more willing to accede to their demands and implement policies that were more in line with the interests of the aristocracy, namely Justin II. Over the following two decades the empire would undergo a drastic series of changes, both in the territories it occupied and the strength of the opponents it faced along its borders. Understanding these changes is a necessary step in determining the precarious position Byzantium found itself in at the end of the sixth century.

This thesis will focus on state and society in the reigns of two emperors which have not been fully explored by modern scholars, namely those of Justin II (565-578) and Tiberius II (578-582). Little has been written on these two emperors since Ernst Stein's 1919 study, *Studien zur Geschichte des Byzantinischen Reiches*, and Harry Turtledove's 1977 doctoral dissertation, *The Immediate Successors of Justinian: A Study of the Persian Problem and of Continuity and*

Change in Internal Secular Affairs in the Later Roman Empire during the Reigns of Justin II and Tiberius II Constantine (AD 565-582), which is primarily concerned with the Persian conflict. By comparison, most of the scholarship of this period focuses on the policies and reforms of either Justinian (527-565) or Maurice (582-602). Nevertheless, crucial insight about the transitional period the empire underwent in the late sixth century can be gained by examining the roles of emperors Justin II and Tiberius II in regards to foreign policy. Furthermore, although several regional studies exist that conduct surveys into the various groups that were emerging along the Byzantine frontiers, such as Florin Curta's *The Making of the Slavs*, Greg Fisher's *Between Empires: Arabs, Romans, and Sasanians in Late Antiquity*, Neil Christie's *The Lombards: The Ancient Langobards*, and Walter Pohl's *Die Awaren: ein Steppenvolk im Mitteleuropa, 567-822 n. Chr.*, there is nothing that looks at these developing polities from a global perspective and that looks to analyze trends that affected the development of their societies and how this in turn affected the state of the Byzantine empire in the late sixth century. This dissertation will be driven by the following two questions: First, how did the changes to foreign policy under the reigns of Justin II and Tiberius II contribute to the transformations that the empire underwent in the late sixth century? And second, how did these changes affect the development of the multitude of societies with which Byzantium came into contact?

The dissertation will take a comparative approach, by focusing on the literary and archaeological evidence available, and determining the changes that took place after the reign of Justinian. It will also adopt a holistic approach. After an analysis of each set of policies separately, it will attempt to draw conclusions on how these policies influenced each other as a whole and how this contributed to the political transformations that occurred during the late sixth century. This dissertation will enhance the existing body of knowledge by a) bringing together recent archaeological surveys with the existing literary evidence to provide a better understanding of the period; b) providing an analysis of how external influences (domestic and foreign) may have shaped the policies of different emperors in order to better understand the complexities of the decisions that were made by Justin II and Tiberius II; c) drawing together the conclusions of various regional studies into the transformations undergone in neighbouring societies in this period; and d) determining the effect that the foreign policies of an imperial center may have on the development of those societies and vice versa.

SHAPE AND CONTENT OF THESIS

The first chapter will look at ethnicity and migration in the sixth century. It will begin with a comprehensive analysis of the ‘ethnicity problem’ when attempting to understand the make-up of the peoples who operated in that period. This chapter will respond to three questions. When the ancient Roman sources talk about ethnic units, what are the potential pitfalls? What defines an ethnic group? And did these groups arrive in their respective regions as a whole through migration or emerge in local contexts (or a combination of the two)? Since the bulk of the thesis will consist of an analysis of foreign policy and the different polities that came into contact with the Byzantine empire, this chapter will provide a methodological lens onto later chapters. Furthermore, understanding ethnicity and migration in the various regions that will be discussed will provide an important backdrop for the political climate of the late sixth century.

The second chapter will look at several of Justinian’s domestic reforms and the circumstances that surrounded the elevation of Justin II. This chapter will provide the necessary background to a study of Justin II’s foreign policy. It will begin by analysing the domestic reforms and political centralisation that Justinian undertook within the provinces. It will provide the framework for the accession of Justin II and demonstrate the attitudes of the Byzantine aristocracy towards the imperial rule. This section will provide an examination of these policies in order to provide context for the political situation that Justin II found himself in when he ascended to the throne. Furthermore, the chapter will examine the elevation of Justin II himself. It will be argued that Justin II was indebted to the senate for their support in his coronation. This is vital to the overall argument because in garnering senatorial support Justin aligned himself with several views of the senate, such as their opposition to paying tribute to foreign polities.

The third chapter will discuss foreign policy in the Balkans and the West. The chapter covers the changes in foreign policy in relation to the peoples of the Balkans and the West, including the Avars, Slavs, Lombards, and Gepids. It will analyze how the changes in policy towards these peoples that were implemented under Justin II and Tiberius II affected their development and also influenced the overall makeup of the empire. By examining both the literary and archaeological sources, it will argue that Justin II abandoned the ‘inclusivist’

approach to foreign policy that was maintained by Justinian and adopted a more 'exclusivist' approach. It will look at each group in turn and argue that many of the conflicts that pervaded the late sixth century were largely the cause of changes in the foreign policies of the Byzantine Empire.

The fourth chapter continues the line of argument of the previous one but will focus on Byzantine foreign policy as directed towards the polities in the East. It will focus on the Byzantines relationship with four eastern powers, namely the Turks, Arabs, Armenians, and Persians. It will argue that Justin II attempted to establish a relationship with the Turks and Armenians in order to provide Byzantium with enough support to remove the tributary payments to the Persian Empire that had been established by Justinian. It will look at the situation in Arabia and determine how important the Jafnids and Naşrids were to the security of the empire and how 'proxy' states could be employed in the larger conflict between Byzantium and Persia. It will also analyse the renewed conflict with Persia. Although Persia, in contrast to other polities, represented a major empire with which Byzantium was engaged in diplomatic relations, it will argue that Justin II employed consistent principles of foreign policy towards them, and that this led to a major conflict.

These two chapters will work in tandem to provide an answer to the main research questions proposed in this thesis. These chapters will look at the ramifications of Justinian's foreign policy on the peoples with which they interacted and then explore the consequences for those peoples when that policy was abandoned. They will also discuss the degree of appropriation of Byzantine culture that these polities adopted due to this interaction, but also pay close attention to how they maintained their own cultural identities at the same time (as opposed to adopting Byzantine culture wholesale).

TERMINOLOGY

Before an examination of the literary sources that will be employed throughout the thesis, it is important to clearly define several terms that will be used throughout the study. The first is the term 'foreign policy' that will be discussed frequently. This term will encapsulate

two aspects that were employed when the Byzantines interacted with foreign peoples, namely war and diplomacy. War is most simply understood as the use of military aggression to obtain new territories or to enforce Byzantine authority. Although military aggression is more straightforward, several aspects of the Byzantine military should be observed when examining foreign policy. The maintenance of a viable military force was essential to providing a backbone to more diplomatic techniques. The Byzantines were able to maintain this force because of the taxation system they had in place in the sixth century, most prominently the *annona* (land tax).¹ The benefit of this taxation system was the availability of liquid funds in which they could commit to maintaining a regular military service. This provided a level of training and organization above many of the polities with which they came into contact and which were made up largely of tribal levies, volunteers, or impressed peasants.² The Byzantines were also interested in ways in which to employ their military without the risk of direct open conflict. The author of the *Strategikon* advises that it is better to attack ‘by means of deceptions, raids, or hunger’ as opposed to open battle. Furthermore, it goes on to recommend that the purpose of military force is defeat and disruption of the enemy not necessarily total destruction.³ The anonymous manual, *Peri Strategikes*, provides similar thinking. It praises defensive warfare over outright conquest. It also supports the use of other foreign powers in order to prevent enemy incursions whenever possible to avoid open combat.⁴

Diplomacy is slightly more complex to define and I believe it is most prudent to begin with Robert Blockley’s definition in regards to the sixth century,

Direct communication, state to state, comprehending all forms of activity throughout antiquity which can be broadly termed diplomatic and the art of managing the intercourse and adjusting the relations of states by negotiations.⁵

¹ Hendy 1985: 157.

² Luttwak 2009: 9-10. For a more contemporary source on the importance of maintaining a well-trained, full-time military, see Theoph. 435-436.

³ *Strategikon* 8.2.4, 8.2.92; Kaegi 1983: 9-10.

⁴ Dennis 1984: 103-113. There are several examples of the use of foreign powers to attack one another in order to preserve Roman troops, such as the use of the Burgundians against the Alamanni by Valentinian I, see Amm. Marc. 28.5.9-13; Zeno’s use of the Bulgars to attack the Ostrogoths in ca. 480, see Joh. Ant. fr. 211.4; Justin II’s attempt to play the Gepids and the Lombards against each other, see Men. Proc. fr. 25.

⁵ Blockley 1992: 1.

When one unpacks this statement, it appears that the Byzantines employed three main forms of diplomacy when interacting with foreign powers, diplomatic missions (through envoys being sent out or received at Constantinople), payments of tribute, and treaties. Diplomatic envoys were the primary form of communication between different polities in the sixth century, and were the means to establish the second two methods of diplomacy. Although these envoys were routinely sent with letters, it appears that these were mainly used to guarantee their credibility and it was oral communication that encompassed the majority of the diplomatic interaction.⁶ In general, diplomatic envoys were sent from sovereign to sovereign.⁷ Examples of this in the sixth century include, Justinian sending envoys to Khusro in 532, a Turkish embassy sent to Justin II in 568/569, a return embassy to the Turks shortly thereafter (it is recorded by Menander that this embassy left and returned to Constantinople by 571), an Avar embassy received by Justin II in 567 (which also indicates a similar embassy sent to Justinian prior to this).⁸ It is important to note that these envoys were not part of a professionalised group of ambassadors but were recruited from different backgrounds and careers based on who best suited the situation. There was, however, some consistent methodology to a diplomatic mission. There always was an exchange of gifts, normally a letter or series of letters establishing the validity of the envoy, and some freedom for the envoy to negotiate on behalf of the emperor.⁹ It does appear, however, that the emperor did play a significant role in the formation or acceptance of these missions and although the envoys had room to negotiate, final approval still had to go through the emperor himself.¹⁰

The primary goal of a diplomatic mission was to establish one of the two other mentioned forms of diplomacy, namely tribute payments or treaties. Tribute payments is a term that encapsulates several different forms of paying subsidies to different parties. R. Blockley identifies six different categories of payments that fit under this term: irregular payments for the service of troops or auxiliaries on request, regular payments to the leader of a group to

⁶ Gillet 2003: 4; Lung 2015: 39.

⁷ This is not always the case, however, in 585 for example, Gregory of Tours records Hermenegild (an usurper to the Visigoth throne) send Bishop Leander of Seville to request aid from the Byzantine Commander Corboda, see Wolfram 1997: 267.

⁸ For the embassy to Persia, see Proc., *Wars.* 1.22.1-8; for the Turkish embassies to Justin II, see Men. Proc. *fr.* 10.1, 10.3; for the Avar embassy to Justin II, see Men. Proc. 8.6-9.

⁹ Lung 2015: 45.

¹⁰ As evidenced by Rufinus' return to Constantinople to acquire permission from Justinian to concede forts in Lazica to Khusro in 532, see Proc., *Wars.* 1.22.1-8; Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 96-97.

provide border security or ongoing military obligations, valuable gifts which were part of diplomatic missions discussed above, payments towards a specific project, such as the defense of the Caspian gates with the Persians, mutual aid of men or money (which has only been found in relations between Rome and Persia), and annual payments that may or may not have a time limit made to guarantee a treaty.¹¹ The use of these payments also had different objectives. In the case of the first three categories, the Byzantines used payment to encourage neighbouring polities to attack one another, to refrain from attacking Byzantine territories, or to secure additional support in a specific campaign. The latter three categories, at least in the context of the sixth century, tended to be solely focused on securing peace or positive relations with Persia and were formalised in treaties. Treaties appear much less frequently and primarily between the Persians and the Byzantines in the sixth century. Although they may include tribute payments, they are formalised in writing in most cases.¹² It is however, important to understand the political cost of this form of diplomacy. As will be examined in further detail in this thesis, the use or denial of tribute could have negative repercussions to the ruling power. The use of tribute payments could result in the recipient attempting to continue to increase the size of the subsidy to ensure their cooperation. Furthermore, tribute payments could result in discontent and loss of internal support because of the perceived notion that the emperor was placing the empire in a lower standing than the polities to which he paid subsidies. However, refusal of these payments brought their own set of challenges as it could embolden rival polities to raid into Byzantine territories. A major point of this thesis will be to examine the effect of moving from an inclusive foreign policy, i.e. when emperors attempt to incorporate the use of polities within the context of their foreign policy, such as the use of the tribute system to encourage different peoples to attack each other or refrain from attacking Byzantium to an exclusive foreign policy, i.e. when the empire refused this line of diplomacy. Primarily when they refused to continue the tribute system and reasoned that foreign polities should fall in line because of the strength and prestige of the Byzantine Empire. It will be argued that although both of these lines of reasoning have their strengths, the removal of this method of diplomacy once it had already been

¹¹ Blockley 1992: 149-150.

¹² According to Menander, the treaty documents were written out in Greek and Persian and then Greek to Persian translations were done with the former and Persian and Greek with the latter, see *Men. Proc. fr.* 6.1.

established was one of the contributing factors to the precarious state the empire found itself towards the end of the sixth century.

The next term that will be employed throughout the thesis is ‘polity’. Although many of the peoples that will be discussed will have varying degrees of political organisation, ‘polity’ will be used as a neutral term to discuss them as a whole. As G. Fisher points out, our characterisation of terms such as tribe, state, small-state, kingdom, and empire are constantly evolving and as of yet there is no clear consensus on what exactly constitutes each form of government.¹³ The different groups discussed in this thesis are further complicated by notions of ethnicity and what that means to the formation of an independent group of people. The Byzantines interact with a multitude of different peoples during the sixth century and more complex definitions of these peoples will be explored on a case by case basis. The objective of each case will be to provide an understanding of the current state of the development of each group in the sixth century. The purpose of the use of a broad term such as polity will be to avoid confusion when looking at the different peoples discussed from a wider perspective. Thus, polity will be employed to indicate any grouping of people under a similar name or ethnic identification, i.e. Arabs, Slavs, Avars, Lombards, etc.

POLITICAL COSMOLOGY

A concept which is important to understand when discussing the foreign policy of the Byzantine Empire is what R. Payne has dubbed ‘late antique cosmological politics.’¹⁴ This concept encompasses two main polities, the Romans and the Persians, and how their ethnocentric views of themselves influenced their interactions with each other and the wider world. Firstly, in regards to the Persians, is the idea of *Ērānšahr* which was developed during the Sasanian period. The term was employed to represent ‘the territory of the Iranians,’ or more specifically, the political center of the world which was composed of seven *climes* (a center which was surrounded by six others), and was ruled by a king who oversaw the administration

¹³ Fisher 2011: 74-75; Szuchman 2009: 1-14; Millar 1993: 44-45; Khoury and Kostiner 1990.

¹⁴ Payne 2013: 3-33.

of political power in the world.¹⁵ The concept of an ‘Iranian’ empire instead of a ‘Sasanian’ brought about several implications. Ardashir I connected politics to a cosmological and religious framework. By employing the use of Ērānšahr, he connected the Sasanians within the context of Zoroastrian history as restorers of the sacred role of peace and prosperity of the world.¹⁶ His successor, Shapur I, took it one step further by introducing the title of ‘King of Kings’ of Ērān and Anērān (Iranian and non-Iranian) thus indicated the ideological prerogative of joining the whole world under the Iranian king.¹⁷ What is important to understand from these developments, is that during the Sasanian dynasty the Persians viewed themselves as the center of the world in both the religious and political spheres.

The Byzantines shared a similar attitude towards their empire. They viewed Constantinople as the political and religious epicenter of the world. Furthermore, similar to the concept of the ‘king of kings,’ they saw the emperor as God’s representative on earth who oversaw an empire that mirrored the kingdom of heaven.¹⁸ Their exceptionalism is best defined by the ideology of *taxis*, “an encompassing social, ecclesiastical, and political ideal denoting hierarchical order, stability and harmony – qualities that, by their lights, distinguished their society from others and signaled their proximity to the divine.”¹⁹ Therefore, when attempting to analyze the relationships and interactions between the Byzantines and the Sasanians, it is important to note that both empires considered themselves political epicenters and representatives of their respective religions on earth. This ideology was also a factor in how the Byzantines viewed neighbouring peoples. Their ethnographic perception of the world carried a clear tone of ‘them’ as opposed to ‘us.’ This can be seen in countless late antique literary sources where terms like ‘barbarian’ or ‘Germanic’ are commonplace.²⁰ The use of these terms in the sources helps to clarify Byzantine ethnographic ideology in the sixth century.

¹⁵ There are several studies that discuss the concept of Ērānšahr and Persian political cosmology. On defining Ēr, see Gnoli 1989. For the seven *climes*, see Gignoux and Tafazzoli 1993: 46-47. For Sasanian cosmology, see Daryaee 2005.

¹⁶ Payne 2013: 6-7.

¹⁷ Alram, Blet-Lemarquad, and Skjaervo 2007.

¹⁸ Maas 2005: 21; Ando 2000: 48.

¹⁹ Pazdernik 2010: 148.

²⁰ This literary practice was influenced by a longstanding Hellenistic legacy of ancient ethnography, such as Herodotus, Josephus, Arrian, and Ktesias to name a few, see Bourbouhakis 2014: lxxiii.

Furthermore, the inclusion of ethnographic digressions within the works of ancient historians also can be viewed from an ethnocentric viewpoint. A. Kaldellis argues that late antique historians used these digressions to analyse their own societies indirectly by contrasting them against the barbarians and thus can be seen to use common tropes that may not accurately reflect the barbarian polity under discussion.²¹ This does not, however, mean that no reliable information can be gleaned from these texts, but that the information that is presented must be understood as coming from an ethnocentric Byzantine viewpoint of the world. They employ these models as a means to frame conflicts and interactions from a Byzantine perspective and provide justification for actions taken against or sovereignty held over, non-Roman peoples.²²

What then does this mean for the sixth-century relations between these empires? During this period, we see two empires who believed in their own superiorities struggling for supremacy. First, it should be noted that with the exception of Husraw II in the seventh century, neither of these empires sought to conquer each other outright. It would be more apt to argue that they sought superiority over one another in order to justify their ethnocentric viewpoints. This is best understood when evaluating the tribute payments derived from the military conflicts in the sixth century. It has been argued, both by contemporary and modern historians, that the prime factor for the Persians securing tributary payments was for economic factors, namely to supplement their lack of resources and to aid in payoffs to their rivals in the East.²³ However, when one breaks down the amounts of these payments in relation to the annual revenues of the Persian Empire as a whole, it is clear that from an economic standpoint, these payments were largely insignificant.²⁴ The value of these payments, therefore, should be viewed in terms of a symbolic nature. Tribute indicted a sign of submission and inferiority to the receiving empire.²⁵ This symbolism was both necessary to the Sasanians political cosmology and degrading to the Byzantines.

²¹ Kaldellis 2013: 25.

²² Gillet 2011.

²³ Greatrex 2005: 488; Christensen 1936: 125. Contemporary sources include Procopius, John Malalas, and Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite.

²⁴ A standard yearly tribute payment was 30 000 *solidi*. The Persian Empire has been estimated to collect millions of *solidi per annum*, see Banaji 2016; Börm 2008. There is numismatic evidence that suggests that the gold coins gained from tribute payments was primarily used as symbolic gifts between the king of kings and the aristocracy, see Mosig-Walburg 2009; Gyselen 2004: 67.

²⁵ Payne 2013: 13; Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1989: 139.

These same thoughts that were developed by Iranologists around tribute and its symbolism should also be applied to the Roman cosmological viewpoint, first towards Persian but also towards the neighbouring polities with whom they interacted. The humiliation attached to tribute payments was not only fiscal but more importantly ideological. When presented against the backdrop of the Persian Empire, the ideological implications were that they were a submissive counterpart. When viewed in connection with smaller polities it was viewed as particularly degrading, as evidenced by Justin II's negative receptions of 'barbarian' embassies seeking tribute at the start of his reign. Thus, we see the negative light in which contemporary historians brand Justinian for these payments and the removal of the stigma of tributary status is one of the main ideological concerns in the foreign policy that Justin II employs towards the Persian Empire and the frontier societies he interacts with during his reign.

SOURCES

The sixth century boasts a wealth of written sources in a variety of languages to provide insight into the developments of the Byzantine Empire. However, all of these sources present particular problems and must be treated carefully and in concert in order to provide a clear picture of the political situation. Since they will be used throughout, the main Greek, Latin, and Syriac sources will be discussed here, and all other minor sources will be examined on a case by case basis when they appear in the dissertation.

Greek (Procopius of Caesarea, Menander Protector, Theophanes of Byzantium, Evagrius Scholasticus, Theophylact of Simocatta, Theophanes the Confessor)

Procopius of Caesarea is the principle source for the reign of Justinian. He compiled three major works, namely *Wars*, *Secret History*, and *Buildings*, and strove to follow in the tradition of the classical historians, particularly Thucydides. Since Justinian has dominated much of the literature produced on the sixth century, the bibliography for Procopius is quite extensive. For this thesis I will provide a brief summary of the works and the current debates surrounding them but to fully understand the complexities surrounding Procopius and his works

one must look to research devoted specifically to that task.²⁶ Note that any issues outside of the main debates that arise in the thesis, such as the issue of ethnogenesis and identity within Procopius, will be dealt with on a case by case basis throughout this study. The *Wars* covers the period 527-551 and primarily focuses on Justinian's campaigns against the Persians, Vandals, and Goths (with the inclusion of the Balkan raids by the Huns and Slavs). The first seven books are traditionally dated to ca. 550/551 with the eighth in 553 (or ca. 557). Procopius provides a unique view to imperial diplomacy and the campaigns because he was secretary to the general Belisarius and has present in the East, Africa, and Italy during these conflicts. The *Secret History* was finished ca. 550 (or ca. 558/559) and is an attack on Justinian and his regime. It dismisses the notion that Justinian was universally admired and provides a glimpse into the dissent towards Justinian by at least a portion of the elites (whether this dissent was ever present or grew over time is one of the controversies surrounding Procopius). The tone is clearly hyperbolic and the accounts exaggerated but when examined closely it is possible to tease out specific criticisms towards the Justinianic regime. The *Buildings* is in the style of a panegyric (though this is subject to modern debate) and is dated to either ca. 554 (or ca. 559).²⁷ Its primary focus is the construction or reparation of churches, fortifications, and public works during Justinian's reign.

There are three major debates surrounding Procopius' works that will be briefly outlined here: Neoplatonist or Orthodox Christian, growing or ever-present dissent against the Justinianic regime, and the relative dating of the three works. The Neoplatonic view, argued by Kaldellis, contends that Procopius was one in a line of crypto-platonists (followed by Agathias and Michael Psellos) and that orthodox Christianity was not as prominent in Byzantium as currently believed but rather there was a continuous non-Christian ideology which sought to undermine the imperial regime which he views as 'totalitarian and repressive' through political

²⁶ For three of the major works by solo authors discussed in much of the literature surrounding Procopius, see Kaldellis 2004; Brodka 2004 (also covers Agathias and Theophylact but devotes over half of the monograph to Procopius and is an important work that has been overshadowed by Kaldellis' book in the same year); Cameron 1985. There are several collected editions that cover recent conferences on Procopius, see Meier and Montinaro 2020 (forthcoming); and Lillington-Martin and Turquois 2017. For the *Wars*, see Whatley 2016; Kaldellis 2015; Kaldellis 2010; Kouroúmalis 2006; Greatrex 1994. For the *Secret History*, see Börm 2015; Mészáros 2013; Kaldellis 2010b; Croke 2005. For the *Buildings*, see Montinaro 2014; Greatrex 2013; Elsner 2007; Whitby: 2001; Jeffrey 2001. For a summary of the religious debate surrounding Procopius, see Whitby 2007. Finally, for an overview of the recent scholarship of the last ten years, see Greatrex 2014.

²⁷ Kaldellis argues that this is not a sincere panegyric and Procopius likely wrote it under pressure from the Justinianic regime, see Kaldellis 2004a: 45-61; Kaldellis 2010a; Kaldellis 2005.

philosophy.²⁸ A. Cameron is one of Kaldellis' main dissenters. She argues that he does not effectively look at all three works in relation to each other (she believes that he is too dismissive of the *Buildings*) in order to support this argument. Furthermore, she argues that Kaldellis fails to link Procopius to Neoplatonism in a wider sense by connecting him to other Justinianic writers such as John the Lydian and Agapetus).²⁹ The ideological implications of this argument are influential to this study because they reflect the second controversy mentioned above, namely was there an ever-present dissidence among elites or was it a phenomenon that grew towards the end of Justinian's reign? This question will be explored more fully in chapter two but I find Cameron's counter-arguments to Kaldellis compelling, particularly in light of the research presented later in this thesis, in which I will argue that the dissidence to Justinian grew over the period of his reign by comparing other sources and aristocratic reactions to policy alongside Procopius. The dating of Procopius' works is another issue of contention. There is general consensus that the first seven books of the *Wars* were written ca. 551 but the dating of Procopius' other works have been the cause of debate. Although R. Scott and B. Croke have argued for the later date of the *Secret History*, recent work by Kaldellis, following up on G. Greatrex appears to have finally set the date originally argued by J. Haury in 550.³⁰ There is much more debate concerning the dates of the *Buildings* and book VIII of the *Wars*. The arguments for each are numerous and there is not space to revisit and evaluate them here. For the purpose of this thesis I have accepted the general consensus on these dates.³¹ Finally, what is particularly important to this work is the crucial information he provides about the many different polities that Byzantium comes into contact with in the Near East, from Gaul to Yemen, and the steppes in Asia. However, although there is much to be gained from Procopius' accounts of the various military conflicts in the sixth century, caution much as be employed as he falls

²⁸ Kaldellis 2004a: 217-221; cf. Bell 2013: 9-13; Meier 2004, who also make these ideological claims to Justinian's reign by making comparisons between Justinian and Stalin, a concept which was originally conceived by T. Honoré, see Honoré 1978: 28-30.

²⁹ Cameron 2017: 13-27; Cameron 2016: 27-37.

³⁰ Haury 1891: 9-27. For the arguments for the later date, see Scott 1987: 215-221; cf. Croke 2005: 405-431. For the traditional dating, see Kaldellis 2009: 585-616; cf. Greatrex 2003: 45-57 and 1994: 101-114.

³¹ For the arguments for the date of Book VIII presented here, see Treadgold 2007: 188-190; Greatrex 1994: 105-107 and 2003: 52-57. For the arguments against, see Evans 1996a: 301-313; Croke 2005: 422-423. For the *Buildings* dating presented, see Cesaretti and Fobelli 2011; cf. Greatrex 1994: 107-113. For the later dating, see Roques 2011: 52-59; cf. Whitby 1985.

into the classical trope of describing ‘barbarian’ tribes in a manner similar to predecessors and is not free from using stereotypes when assessing their appearance and culture.

There is little known about the life of Menander Protector and what we do know mainly comes from the preface of his history.³² He wrote during the reign of Maurice and although he was trained in a legal career, he did not practice as an advocate. He wrote in Greek and his objective was to continue the history of Agathias which he believed would lead to a career of wealth and advancement. Menander’s work only survives in fragments from the tenth century compilations *Excerpta de Sententiis* and *de Legationibus* but there are also a number of his fragments preserved in the *Suda*. In as far as it is accessible, his work primarily deals with the diplomatic activity on the Persian and Balkan frontiers but he also provides some information about Byzantine relations in Italy. The only contemporary source cited by Menander is Peter the Patrician whom he cites for the treaty he supplies for the Peace of 562. One of the strengths of Menander’s history is his recording of treaty terms without following the classical historiographic device of rephrasing them with literary style.³³ However, one must be cautious when evaluating his descriptions of barbarian groups as he tends to fall into the trap of using common stereotypes when describing these groups. As for the emperors, Menander portrays Justinian and Tiberius II in favorable terms, often excusing Justinian’s missteps to old age, he does however, tend to portray Justin II in a more favorable light than other contemporary sources. This is most clearly seen through his treatment of the competing policies of subsidies. Menander is inconsistent on this front so must be handled carefully. He praises Justinian for giving subsidies to the Saracens but also Justin II for rejecting subsidies to the Avar embassy. Overall, as Cameron points out, Menander’s work is a valuable source for the wars and diplomacy of the period but it is difficult to reconstruct his personal aims. Nevertheless, he provides a comparative source to his contemporaries of the period, namely John of Ephesus, Evagrius, and Eustratius, all of whom wrote about the same period in different styles.³⁴

The *Histories* of Theophanes of Byzantium barely survives today. All that exists of his works are detailed in a review from Photius’ *Bibliotheca*. Although Photius’ review is brief (and

³² Baldwin provides further speculation on his life and activities, see Baldwin 1978a: 101-104.

³³ Cameron 1970: 136; Baldwin 1978a: 110.

³⁴ Cameron 1985: 283-284.

incomplete), we can ascertain that it began with the breakdown in relations between the Byzantines and the Persians in the second year of Justin II's reign (567) and ended with the tenth year of the war that resulted from this conflict (577-578).³⁵ Most of the knowledge concerning Theophanes' life is based on guesswork. His title 'of Byzantium' likely places him in Constantinople and this gives credence to his knowledge of diplomatic politics that would have been more difficult to come by in the provinces. This is supported by what does survive of Photius' summary, namely that Theophanes' work was focused on diplomatic relations such as Justin II's interactions with Khusro over the dispute of Suania and several of the diplomatic embassies exchanged between Justin II and the Turks. The source of Theophanes of Byzantium itself is brief given the manner of how we receive it, but it does provide details for the period of Justin II that can be cross-referenced with Agathias and Menander, who although are contemporaries, appear to be writing independently of each other.³⁶

Evagrius Scholasticus wrote his ecclesiastical history in the latter half of the sixth century. It covers the period from the First Council of Ephesus in 431 to the reign of Emperor Maurice (the work ends in 593). One of Evagrius' main values is his use of historical documents that no longer survive. These documents include copies of the *acta* of the councils of Ephesus I and II, Chalcedon, Constantinople and the Roman synod of 484. Furthermore, he quotes in full texts from the reigns of Basiliscus and Zeno, such as the *Encyclical*, the *Antencyclical*, and the *Henoticon* (whenever it is possible to check his quotes from these texts, such as the *acta* of Ephesus I, it is common to find that they were faithfully transcribed).³⁷ Evagrius also uses several historical sources which include John Malalas, Eustathius, Zachariah Scholasticus, Procopius, and John of Epiphania. Although he provides details of secular events during the reigns of Justin II and Tiberius II, he is particularly useful for ecclesiastical events in this period that are not recorded in other sources. Evagrius also provides details of doctrinal policies, such as a record of Justin II's edict abandoning Justinian's apthartodocetism which is only otherwise preserved in Syriac.³⁸

³⁵ Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 64.

³⁶ Treadgold 2007: 292-293.

³⁷ Allen 1981: 6-7.

³⁸ Turtledove 1977: 6.

Evagrius' main value to this study is his account of the revolt of the Christians in Persarmenia, particularly the actions of Paul, the bishop of Nisibis, in 572-573, for which Evagrius provides the only source.³⁹ Caution needs to be taken as Evagrius clearly has a negative view of Justin II due to his failure to recognise the merits of Evagrius' patron Gregory of Antioch.⁴⁰ This episode will be explored fully in the section of this study on Persian foreign policy, however, it is important to note that although Evagrius provides the only source and takes a negative view of Justin II throughout the source, the events he describes appear to be credible. There is evidence to suggest this credibility despite the event not being reported in contemporary sources. A. Lee points out that John of Ephesus, another major historian of the period, was a miaphysite and unlikely to have detailed knowledge of the actions of a Nestorian bishop. Furthermore, Garsoïan argues that it is plausible that John of Epiphania did not cover this incident as the 570s were only a background to his history and he treats them in a more cursory manner.⁴¹ Finally, Evagrius' close relationship to Gregory of Antioch suggests that he would have had access to accounts from Paul of Nisibis who established contacts with leading religious figures in Constantinople, one of which being Gregory.⁴²

Theophylact Simocatta wrote in the early seventh century during the reign of Heraclius. He is considered the last of the secular classicizing historians and continued the histories of Procopius, Agathias, and Menander Protector. His work focuses on military and political history during the period between 565 and 602. There are two main themes on which Theophylact focuses his narrative: the conflict in the Balkans against the Slavs and Avars and the war between Rome and Persia in the East. Although Theophylact provides a detailed narrative, his use of rhetoric tends to exaggerate events and his chronology can be obscure or simply wrong.⁴³ Theophylact's *Ecumenical History* was written thirty to sixty years after the fact and thus is largely reliant on written sources. It is possible to detect five major sources within the text: for the Eastern narrative John of Epiphania and a 'Heraclius' source, and for the Balkin narrative

³⁹ Evagr. *HE*. V. 6-11.

⁴⁰ Cameron 1976a: 10; Allen 1981: 221; Tinnefeld 1993: 46; Lee 1993a: 573.

⁴¹ Lee 1993a: 575; Garsoïan 1973: 119-138. Garsoïan also points out that it is not possible to be sure that Menander did not record the details of this event as his work only survives as fragments.

⁴² Evagr. *HE*. V.6.

⁴³ Turtledove 1977: 5.

the Constantinople Chronicle, a ‘Priscus’ source, and the hagiography of Maurice.⁴⁴ Theophylact must be treated with caution as although there are some positives to his narrative, it has noticeable limitations. His main value to the modern scholar was to bring together several eastern and western sources (mentioned above) into a single narrative along with incorporating Christian material that appears to have appealed to him.⁴⁵ Furthermore, his connections to the government in the seventh century provides potential insight into contemporary ideologies of the empire during the period he was writing.⁴⁶ The pitfalls of the text stem from his unreliability in relating the events during the reign of Maurice, his apparent lack of geographical and military knowledge, his shifts in narrative focus, a confusing chronology, and the repetitive use of rhetorical devices.⁴⁷

There is a current debate in Theophylact that is directly relevant to this thesis. It is surrounding the use of the word ‘*Sklavinia*,’ namely whether this pertains solely to a group of people or a geographical and political unit. This debate is relevant to this study as I argue that the Slavs were an emerging polity in the sixth century with which the Byzantines were interacting and did in fact inhabit a geographical location north of the Danube, even if there were ‘shifting’ borders to this location. On the one hand, E. Chrysos argues that the word *Sklavinia* is an adjective which modifies the English noun ‘horde.’⁴⁸ He argues this on two contentions. First, that the editors who have worked on the text, Whitby and Whitby and DeBoor, take this interpretation and secondly, that the use of the adjective *sklavinius* existed in the Greek version of the *Vita Methodii*.⁴⁹ F. Curta, on the other hand, argues against this interpretation. He dismisses this claim by arguing that *sklavinius* does not exist as an adjective in the Greek language at all.⁵⁰ Furthermore, he points out that *plethous* (horde) is never accompanied by an adjective in Theophylact’s *History*. Thus, Curta concludes, that Theophylact used this word as a proper noun to distinguish geographical areas controlled by particular ethnic

⁴⁴ Mary and Michael Whitby 1986: xiii-xxv; cf. Whitby 1988: 92-109 and 222-242; Whitby 1992: 50; Howard-Johnston 2010a: 143-145.

⁴⁵ Whitby 1992: 50-51.

⁴⁶ Howard-Johnston 2010a: 145-146.

⁴⁷ Efthymiadis 2010: 169-170; Wilson 1983: 59-60; Whitby 1988: 49-50. Whitby 1992: 46. For a more valued interpretation to Theophylact if compared to Agathias and Procopius, see Brodka 2004: 235-236. For criticism of Theophylact from an ancient source, see Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 65. I. 79-80.

⁴⁸ E. Chrysos 2007: 123-135; cf. A. Gkoutzioukostas 2015: 640; see also Koder 2002; Brubaker and Haldon 2011: 165; Whitby and Whitby 1986: 217.

⁴⁹ Chrysos 2007: 126.

⁵⁰ Curta 2011: 89; Curta 2016: 196.

groups north of the Danube (i.e. the land of the Slavs vs the land of the Avars).⁵¹ In this debate, I agree with Curta. Chrysos and Gkoutzioukostas' argument is mainly to support the claim that "prior to the end of the eighth century there were no references in the written sources to the Skalviniae as concrete geographical and political units."⁵² As will be demonstrated later in this study, it does appear that there is evidence for an emerging political Slavic political structure north of the Danube. Although this structure was still in its infancy, there were interactions between leaders of the Slavs and the Byzantines which had ramifications on the Byzantine Empire in the sixth century.

The *Chronicle* of Theophanes, written in the ninth century (between 843-872), is a continuation of the work of George Synkellos and covers the period from 284 – 813. Theophanes' relationship to Synkellos is relevant because there is debate as to the authorship of the *Chronicle*. According to the preface, on his deathbed Synkellos bequeathed to Theophanes "the book he had written and had provided materials with a view to completing what was missing."⁵³ This passage has become the center of debate on whether or not one can attribute the *Chronicle* to Theophanes himself or if the majority of the authorship should rest with George Synkellos. The debate stems from how the word *aphormai* should be interpreted. C. Mango argues that *aphormai* should be interpreted as 'written materials' and thus contends that although it is unclear the extent of these materials, they constituted the bulk of the *Chronicle* and that Theophanes' role was more of an editor.⁵⁴ This argument is countered by C. Zuckerman who argues that *aphormai* should be taken more literally, such as 'starting point, occasion, or opportunity.' Thus, he argues that Synkellos was giving Theophanes the opportunity to complete what was missing.⁵⁵ I believe that A. Kaldellis presents a plausible solution to the question when he argues that "he did edit the disparate materials but only as a starting point."⁵⁶ There is insufficient room in the current thesis to delve deep into this debate but Kaldellis' argument appears a logical conclusion when one considers the evidence presented by

⁵¹ Curta 2016: 197.

⁵² Chrysos 2007: 132; Gkoutzioukostas 2015: 646.

⁵³ Theoph. Preface. 3-4.

⁵⁴ Mango 1978: 16; cf. Hoyland 1997: 430; Kaldellis 2012: 212; Treadgold 2013: 39.

⁵⁵ Zuckerman 2015: 40. Zuckerman supports this line of reasoning by pointing out that the term is used seven times in the *Chronicle* and always is consistent with this context, see Zuckerman 2015: 40 fn. 24. See also Ševčenko 1992: 287-288 and Kazhdan 1999: 216-217 for this line of argument.

⁵⁶ Kaldellis 2012: 212.

Zuckerman alongside a comparison between the *Chronicle* and the myriad of other sources (ca. twenty) which have been detected, it does appear that Theophanes did edit the materials that he had at hand.⁵⁷ Putting aside this controversy, the accuracy of the events in the *Chronicle* must be treated with caution as the inclusion of conflicting sources creates a degree of confusion to the reader. When writing of the sixth century, Theophanes largely follow Malalas as a source for Justinian (with the occasional use of Procopius), however, as observed by R. Scott, several points need to be considered. Theophanes alters Malalas' narrative to show piety is rewarded by military success (likely a result of his dislike of iconoclasts in his period) and thus is quite favorable in his portrayal of Justinian. Furthermore, he presents the period of Justin I, Justinian, and Justin II as a success whereas Malalas provides a more non-judgemental account of the emperors. Finally, he changes the chronology and omits material from Malalas where he sees fit and should be compared with other sources when accessing the material's validity.⁵⁸

Syriac (John of Ephesus, Michael the Syrian, Bar Habraeus)

John of Ephesus was born at Amid, a city in the north of Mesopotamia around the year 516. His native tongue was Syriac and he employed this language for his *Ecclesiastical History*.⁵⁹ He provides unique insight into the workings of the sixth century as he was a Miaphysite and thus writes his history through the eyes of the religious opposition in the Byzantine Empire (most Greek sources, such as Evagrius, wrote from a Chalcedonian position). John wrote two works, *The Lives of the Eastern Saints* and the *Ecclesiastical History*. The *Lives* is a hagiographical collection which provides a glimpse into the Miaphysite religion in the sixth century. It consists of 58 lives of Miaphysite ascetics and illustrates their hardships in their fight to preserve orthodoxy (Miaphysitism) against the backdrop of Chalcedonian persecution.⁶⁰ The *Ecclesiastical History* is the work that is relevant to this study. Part I is completely lost and Part II only survives as fragments preserved in later chronicles.⁶¹ However, Part III is almost

⁵⁷ Rochow 1983: 459-474; Ljubarskij 1995: 317-322. For a detailed debate on both sides of the argument, see Treadgold 2015: 9-30; Zuckerman 2015: 31-52; Jankowiak 2015: 53-72; Kompa 2015: 73-92; Torgenson 2015: 93-118.

⁵⁸ Scott 2015: 253-254; Scott 1996: 20-34.

⁵⁹ Smith 1860: v.

⁶⁰ Van Ginkel 1995: 44. For a complete discussion of the *Lives*, see Harvey 1990.

⁶¹ These fragments are preserved in Michael the Syrian, the Chronicle of Zuquin, and Pseudo-Dionysius, see Nau 1897: 455-493; van Ginkel 1995: 46-48; Dickens 2016: 105-107.

completely preserved and covers the years 571-588.⁶² According to John, the sources he uses for Part III are only personal experiences (though it appears he included gossip both from the street and high ranking friends). He seldomly quotes documents and though he mentions letters from figures such as Jacob Baradaeus, he does not preserve what was in the text.⁶³ The focus of the surviving portion of his history is relevant to this study because it deals primarily with the beginnings of the Persian War under Justin II and the events surrounding it.

When evaluating the overall value of Part III as a military and political history, several considerations must be understood.⁶⁴ First of all, it lacks a clear and consistent chronology.⁶⁵ Whitby accounts that five dates in book VI are one year early and John himself provides two different dates for the embassy of 577.⁶⁶ Dickens argues that it is possible that these discrepancies are caused by the manner in which the work was composed, namely that various sections were passed on to friends once finished who concealed them for up to three years because of the potential backlash to a Miaphysite writer and thus made it difficult for John to go back and edit specific sections.⁶⁷ Van Ginkel, however, believes that this statement should be modified. He argues that since the majority of John's writings were done during the reign of Tiberius (a time when the Miaphysite community was largely without persecution), he would have had significant time to make amendments.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, it appears that John was not accustomed to making major edits to his previous writings and often chose to add material to later section rather than extensively merging new material with old. Thus, when dating specific events, particularly those earlier in his text, caution must be exercised and when possible compared to other sources for accuracy.⁶⁹ Finally, a note should be made on Book VI as it concerns military history and is the most relevant to this study. Book VI has a thematic shift.

⁶² The most extent manuscript covers 37 of the 49 chapters noted in the table of contents, however extracts of the missing chapters are preserved by Michael the Syrian (Book X, Chapter 21) and the Anonymous Chronicle of 1234, see Marquart 1903: 479-491; cf. van Ginkel 1995: 70.

⁶³ Van Ginkel 1995: 77-78.

⁶⁴ The military history is largely contained in Book VI.

⁶⁵ For John as a source for the military history of Justin II, Tiberius II, and Maurice, see Higgins 1939;

Turtledove 1977; and Whitby 1988. For political relations between Byzantium and Persia, see Lee 1993b.

⁶⁶ Whitby 1988: 246 and 251; cf. van Hinkel 1995: 78. For the incidents Whitby notes, see Joh. Eph. *HE*. VI 5, 11, 12, 14, 26. For the conflicting embassy dates, see Joh. Eph. *HE*. IV 35 and VI 12.

⁶⁷ Dickens 2016: 106-107.

⁶⁸ Van Ginkel 1995: 84.

⁶⁹ This unpolished form of writing is also a common occurrence in the *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, see Harvey 1990: 40-42.

According to John, the book is a ‘short record about wars, calamities, devastation and bloodshed which have happened in our day, for the knowledge of those who come after us, if indeed the world even goes on.’⁷⁰ This view of the impending biblical apocalypse is important to keep in mind when analysing the information John provides on geographical and cultural polities. John tends to use oversimplifications and generalities when discussing ‘barbarians’ as opposed to Menander, though not without biases, does provide a significant amount of information on customs.⁷¹ Thus, while modern scholars such as Cameron and van Ginkel agree that John is a solid source for the history of the sixth century, it is important to view it as a church history, namely not an ‘objective collection of facts but a selective and subjective narration.’⁷²

Michael the Syrian was the Jacobite patriarch of Antioch from 1166-1199. He provides a source for the history of the West-Syrian church and the historiography of the West-Syrian community. He structures his work into three parallel sections, the main one dealing with political history and the two others supplementing it with church history and a collection of miscellaneous items.⁷³ Furthermore, it contains fragments of works by several other authors (some well-known and some more obscure). These sources are presented in what L.I. Conrad has dubbed a ‘layering technique.’⁷⁴ This technique refers to the process of copying sections of previous works rather than writing a new history based on available sources. It purposefully includes excerpting what the author considers relevant to his audience while at the same time attempting to select excerpts that further his moral or religious agenda.⁷⁵ This process, while selective, does provide value as several of the sources excerpted by Michael have been lost to modern historians. Particularly important to the sixth century are the preserved excerpts from Pseudo-Zachariah of Mitylene and John of Ephesus but Michael also mentions that he takes material from John Malalas, Theodore Lector of Constantinople, Cyrus of Batna, Jacob of Edessa, Dionysius of Tel Mahre, and Ignatius of Melitene.⁷⁶ However, it appears that the three main sources of interest to one who is studying fragments within Michael’s text are Pseudo-

⁷⁰ Joh. Eph. *HE*. VI. 1.

⁷¹ Dickens 2016: 130-131.

⁷² Cameron 1975a: 421-426; van Ginkel 1995: 214-217 (quote on 216).

⁷³ Howard-Johnston 2010a: 195-196.

⁷⁴ Van Ginkel 1998: 351; van Ginkel 2006: 53; Palmer 1993: xxviii; Fiey 1984-85: 253-264.

⁷⁵ Van Ginkel 1998: 352-353; Chabot 1899 (repr. 1963): 1, n.1; Wiseman 1986: 1-6; Hildesheim 1988: 7-13, 39-122.

⁷⁶ These sources are listed in the introduction of Michael’s chronicle.

Zachariah, John of Ephesus, and Dionysius (the others are only preserved in short fragments and are difficult to connect to their original source).⁷⁷

The inevitable questions that then arise from a source that employs this layering technique are what is the value of Michael's chronicle to the sixth-century historian? And can the fragments of valuable sources, such as John of Ephesus be trusted? These questions are not answered simply but to summarize the prevailing view, the answer is yes with considerations. On a factual level, the chronicle does provide 'contemporary' evidence of events that transpired in the sixth century, however, caution must be employed when attempting to determine the motivation behind these events. It must be understood that we are viewing them through the perceptions of a twelfth century author whose attitudes and ideologies may have differed from those writing in the sixth century. Thus, when employing the fragments, one must first understand the characteristics and ideologies of the original author before one can make assumptions about the veracity of the motivations that Michael prescribes to events.⁷⁸

The Chronography of Bar-Habraeus is a Syriac chronicle that covers the creation of the world down to the year 1286. Bar-Habraeus wrote in the thirteenth century (died 1286) and studied at the great library at Marâghâh. On account of this, he had access to many different Syriac, Arabic, and Persian manuscripts to consult while compiling his history.⁷⁹ He compiled three major works, the *Chronicon syriacum* (80 year history from his present day and then worked backwards compiling a history that covered everything he could, including politics, warfare, famines, natural disasters, scandals, and gossip), the *Chronicon ecclesiasticum* (which covers the history of the Syriac Orthodox Church and the Patriarchs of Antioch, the Nestorian Patriarchs, and the Jacobite Maphrians)⁸⁰, and the *al-Mukhtaṣar fi-l-Duwal* (an abridgement of

⁷⁷ John of Ephesus is mentioned above. Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor wrote a Miaphysite Church history (in Greek) during the early sixth century. Here, however, Michael is referring to an anonymous chronicle from the 560s which contains among it's excerpts a portion of the church history of the true Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, see Greatrex, Phenix, and Horn 2011. Dionysius of Tel Mahre was the Jacobite patriarch from 818-845 and wrote a history of 582-842 in two parts, one dedicated to the church and one to the world. His work is largely lost to us with the exception of what is preserved in Michael and the Chronicle of 1234, see Palmer 1993: 85-104.

⁷⁸ Brunt 1980: 477-494; van Ginkel 1998: 351-358; van Ginkel 2006: 55-58; Romeny et al. 2009: 24-25.

⁷⁹ Budge 1932: vii.

⁸⁰ Note that while the *Chronicon syriacum and ecclesiasticum* are often presented as two texts they were originally compiled as one massive work known as the *Chronicon*.

the civil history of the *Chonicon syriacum* written in Arabic for Muslim scholars in Marāgha).⁸¹ Bar Hebraeus read Latin, Greek, Syriac, Persian, Arabic, and Mongol so had access to a wealth of sources. He does not always mention them, often simply stating phrases such as ‘as it was said by those concerned with the history of nations,’ but several sources that he does identify include Dionysius of Tel Mahre, Michael the Syrian, and Âta-Malek Juvayni.⁸² His work is relevant to this study because of his details on the war between Rome and Persia. Particularly, his attention to the leaders of pre-Islamic Arabia helps to provide insight into this conflict in the late sixth century.

Latin (Corippus, Gregory of Tours, Paul the Deacon)

There is little information preserved about the life of Flavius Cresconius Corippus. He appears to have been a small-town teacher in the province of Africa where he compiled his first poem, an epic entitled *Iohannis sive de bellis Libycis*, which celebrates Justinian’s general John Troglita and was likely finished soon after the year 548.⁸³ After which there is no evidence of his movements until he compiled his second poem, *In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris*, a panegyric celebrating the accession of Justin II in 565. It appears by this point he had risen to an imperial post in Constantinople that was in connection to the service of the *quaestor* Anastasius.⁸⁴ Corippus’ works are unique to the other sources discussed as they are a pair of poems rather than histories. However, relevant information from these sources can still be disseminated for the political historian.

The *Iohannis* has the benefit of being able to be compared to Procopius’ *Wars*. When comparing the events described by Corippus to that of Procopius, it appears that many of his details can be trusted.⁸⁵ Details for actions such as Belisarius’ campaign against the Vandals, the Roman general Solomon defeating the tribes of Byzacium at Mammes and Burgaon, and

⁸¹ There is dispute over whether or not this work was actually an abridgement of the civil history written for Muslim colleagues of Bar Hebraeus, for those supporting the argument, see Nöldeke 1892: 273; Duval 1907; Todt 1988: 60-80. For an argument against this position, see Conrad 1994: 319-378.

⁸² Bualwan 2001: 148-149. For Âta-Malek Juvayni, see *The History of the World Conqueror* (2 vols.) 1958.

⁸³ It should be noted that Baldwin has challenged the notion of Corippus’ profession as a teacher but has been convincingly disputed by Cameron, see Baldwin 1978b; Cameron 1980a.

⁸⁴ Hoffman 1989: 361-363; Cameron 1976a: 1-2.

⁸⁵ Several other sources such as Marcellinus Comes, Paul the Deacon, Jordanes, Victor Tonnennensis, and Marius Episcopus, also provide corroboration with Corippus’ accounts.

the Laguatan uprising all can be corroborated when comparing the two texts.⁸⁶ Furthermore, the *Iohannis* has been recognized as a reliable source for the Berbers' traditions, customs, and military stratagems which can be used to enlighten the reader of their culture.⁸⁷ Where caution must be exercised are in the accounts of Corippus' protagonist, John of Troglita. It appears Corippus was seeking favor to gain a post in Constantinople and can be seen to write his hero in a glorified light.⁸⁸ When discussing the Roman defeat at Scalae Veteres, Procopius talks of John and his men unable to maintain their position and eventually flee in defeat, while Corippus side steps the route and instead writes of the love and admiration the men had for John.⁸⁹ This theme also can be seen when comparing Procopius' account of the defeat of Nabedes at Nisibis. According to Procopius, John and Peter disobey Belisarius' commands and nearly cause the battle to be a failure, while Corippus plays John as one of the heroes and remarks on his daring and courage during the battle.⁹⁰

In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris is a poem in the panegyric style but it does not overtly praise Justin II and tends to have more of a narrative framework than a traditional panegyric. This work will be discussed fully later in this thesis in relation to Justin II's coronation. Although it must be taken with caution, this work adds unique insight into the ideology behind Byzantine accession ceremonies and the political events directly after Justin II's accession to the throne (particularly it gives a secondary source to the reception of the Avar embassy which he receives soon after becoming emperor and provides evidence for the aristocratic ploy to obtain an emperor more sympathetic to their ambitions).⁹¹

Georgius Florentius Gregorius or Gregory of Tours was elected bishop of Tours in AD 573. His major work is the *Ten Books of History* (*History of the Franks*) and is one of the main sources for the early medieval ages. There is currently a massive bibliography from those who have dissected his work. Scholars have written on a range of topics including his livelihood,

⁸⁶ For Belisarius' campaign, see Proc. *Wars.* 1.12-2.9 and Cor. *Ioh.* 1.366-408, 3.13-34. For Soloman's victory, see Proc. *Wars.* 2.11-12 and Coripp. *Ioh.* 3.291. For the Laguatan uprising, see Proc. *Wars.* 2.21-24 and Coripp. *Ioh.* 3.391-4.218.

⁸⁷ Gsell 1927: 24; Gautier 1927: 172; Cameron 1980a: 536.

⁸⁸ Shea 1998: 10-11.

⁸⁹ Proc. *Wars.* 2.17.16-17; Coripp. *Ioh.* 3.318-319.

⁹⁰ Proc. *Wars.* 2.18; Coripp. *Ioh.* 1.58-69.

⁹¹ Cameron 1976a: 51-67; Cameron 1980b: 62-84.

marriage, gender, anger, geo-political regions and peoples, attire, prose, religion, and superstition.⁹² Gregory wrote about events that take place during his episcopate in the Roman provinces of Gallia, Belgica, Germania, and the regions west of the Rhine and his sources focus primarily on “eye-witness” accounts.⁹³ Although early studies have argued that his information on the Eastern Empire was largely gained through these eye-witness accounts, Cameron argues that he may have had more reliable sources.⁹⁴ She contends that many of his passages are too closely related to Eastern sources for him not to have had access to written materials.⁹⁵ Cameron compares Gregory’s account to those of two contemporaries who share similar accounts, namely Evagrius and John of Ephesus. For example, according to Cameron there are too many similarities in the language between Gregory’s negative view of Justin II and favorable view of Tiberius II for it to be a coincidence.⁹⁶ On review of Cameron’s argument, I believe that Gregory’s information of the Byzantines does have merit and should be considered carefully when evaluating it as evidence.

Thus, Gregory’s *History* provides value to this study for several reasons. First, he was a contemporary of Justin II and records information from a perspective outside the Byzantine Empire (though caution must be taken from his presentation of Justin as a negative figure if we accept he is receiving information from sources who may have viewed him in a poor light). Secondly, he gives an account of the diplomatic relations between the Franks and the Romans. It is accepted that he used ambassadors from the east as a source for these encounters and thus had access to how the Franks viewed Byzantine diplomacy. Third, he provides information on the rise of Tiberius to Caesar (once again though caution must be observed), and finally he provides the sole account of the conspiracies of Justinian, son of Germanos, and Sophia against

⁹² To adequately delve into all these topics in this summary would require too much space. This summary will primarily deal with his relevance to the Byzantines, particularly Justin II and Tiberius II. For further information on his life, see Pietri 1983: 247-334; Goffart 1988: 112-118; Wood 1994: 4-12; Heinzelmänn 2001: 7-29; Brown 2002: 1-28; Heinzelmänn 2016: 7-34. On religion, see Yitzhak 2002: 229-240; Noble 2002: 145-161; James 2009; Choda 2014; Craig 2014; Grounds 2015. On Women, gender, and family, see Nie 2003: 1-13; McRobbie 2011; Dailey 2011 and 2015; Albanese 2012; Hemmer 2013.

⁹³ Goffart 1988: 118-119 and 257-258; Wood 1994: i-ii.

⁹⁴ Monod 1872: 108; Kurth 1919: 167; Wallace-Hadrill 1968; Goubert 1956.

⁹⁵ Cameron 1975a: 421-422; cf. Wattenbach-Levison and Löwe 1952-1990: 103.

⁹⁶ On the hostility towards Justin II, see Greg. Tur., *HF*. iv. 40; Evag. *HE*. v.1; Joh. Eph. *HE*. v. 20. On the favorable attitude towards Tiberius II, see Greg. Tur., *HF*. iv. 40 and v. 19; Evag. *HE*. v. 13; Joh. Eph. *HE*. iii. 15 and 22.

the Emperor Tiberius.⁹⁷ This conspiracy is alluded to in John of Ephesus but appears in none of the other available sources.

Paul the Deacon is an eighth century author who composed two works, the *Historia Romana* and the *Historia Langobardorum*. Little is known about his life as a whole but it appears that as a young scholar he attended the court of Ratchis, king of the Lombards (744-49) and late in his life he was one of the scholars in Charlemagne's court.⁹⁸ His work was well circulated during the Middle Ages and over one hundred copies of his manuscript have survived (*Historia Langobardorum*). The *Historia Romana* consists of ten books which are largely a transcription of Eutropius' *Breviarium* and six books of original writing. Paul makes little changes or subtractions to the *Breviarium* but does add a significant number of interpolations with different degrees of length.⁹⁹ There is no exact date for the composition of this work but scholars have placed it before the fall of the Lombard kingdom in 774 and several years after 763.¹⁰⁰ The sources for the final six books and the interpolations in the first ten are numerous. Crivellucci has identified forty known sources and several unknown throughout the work. The main sources that he used were Orosius' *Historiarum Adversos Paganos Libri Septem*, Jordanes's *Historia Romana* and *Getica*, the *Epitome de Caesaribus*, Ennodius' panegyric and *Vita Epiphanii*, Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*, and the chronicles of Jerome, Prosper and Bede.¹⁰¹ The *Historia Langobardorum* was composed when Paul was living in Monte Cassino after he had returned from the Carolingian court (ca. 785).¹⁰² It consists of six books and provides a combination of real and supernatural events which are loosely connected but does follow a chronological order. The *HL* is less comprised of outside sources than the *HR* but still lists a large number of extracts, such as the *Origo gentis Langobardorum*, the *Histories* of

⁹⁷ Turtledove 1977: 14-15.

⁹⁸ Goffart 1988: 333-337; Cornford 2006: 47-49.

⁹⁹ For a translation of the *Breviarium*, see Bird 1993. For details and discussion of the *Breviarium*, see Bird 1988: 51-60; Bird 1988b: 63-72; Bird 1990: 87-92.

¹⁰⁰ This dating is derived primarily through the births of the children of Adalperga and the fall of the Lombard kingdom. In Paul's first letter to Adalperga in 763 in which he promised to provide her with a history that would continue down to 'our times' she had one child and at the composition of the *Historia Romana* she had three. Furthermore, it is unlikely that the history which she commissioned him to write would have concluded with the downfall of her father's kingdom, thus it must have been completed before 774, see Dahn 1876: 14-15, 20; Goffart 1988: 337; Cornford 2006: 47 n.2.

¹⁰¹ Crivellucci 1921: 7-103.

¹⁰² Goffart 1988: 332.

Gregory of Tours, the *Liber pontificalis*, and most notably of the lost sources, the seventh-century *Historiola de gestis Langbardorum* by Secundus of Trent.¹⁰³

When evaluating the value of Paul for this study, several things need to be kept in mind. His narrative is presented through a Christian version of events and is interwoven with Germanic legends. These Germanic legends are interspersed within the text and must be taken cautiously as they appear to be based on a Germanic oral tradition and are frequently unreliable for facts. He often follows the imperial Roman point of view and takes a hostile attitude towards barbarians.¹⁰⁴ However, this is not always the case. Paul provides an important source for polities such as the western Slavs.¹⁰⁵ Paul does not present the western Slavs as barbarians (possibly because his family was in close contact with them and did not view them as enemies).¹⁰⁶ He avoids the same images and stereotypes that the Roman and Byzantine sources use to describe barbarians. Furthermore, he views them as a possible source of aid and provides significant information on their military practices.¹⁰⁷

The aim of this dissertation is to fully explore the foreign policies of Justin II and Tiberius II and the effects that they had on the political landscape of Byzantium and the developing polities surrounding the Byzantine Empire. It will attempt to draw overall assertions based on the presented evidence. It will discuss the regional studies from a wider perspective and will make several arguments. It will argue for the importance of Byzantium as a regional player during the regnal years of Justin II and Tiberius II. It also will argue that the emergence of the new polities on its borders and the level of strength they achieved can be largely attributed to the foreign policies the Byzantines enacted during this period. Finally, it will look forward to the activities of the late sixth century. It will argue that the groundwork for the rise of powerful polities, such as the Avars, Slavs, and Arabs, was laid due to their interactions with the successors of Justinian in the late sixth century. The final aim is to provide a comprehensive study that recognizes a series of trends that were taking place around the

¹⁰³ C. Heath provides a table which breaks down all the possible references and extracts within the *HL* to their original sources, see Heath 2012: 102-103. See also Chisholm 1911: 964-965; Goffart 1988: 381. For Secundus of Trent, see Gardiner 1983: 147-153; Garstad 2016: 218-266.

¹⁰⁴ Cornford 2006: 53. For this hostile attitude towards barbarians in the Roman sources, see Ladner 1976: 7-26; Bayless 1976: 70-76; Scott 1984: 23-33; Goffart 1989a: 111-132; Goffart 2006: 1-12; Heather 1997: 57-74.

¹⁰⁵ Reisinger and Sowa 1990: 18-20; Curta 1997: 141-142.

¹⁰⁶ Curta 1997: 160.

¹⁰⁷ Curta 1997: 166-167.

Byzantine Empire and to demonstrate the importance of the transitional time between Justinian and Maurice to Byzantium.

CHAPTER 1: ETHNICITY AND MIGRATIONS

ETHNICITY

The sixth century witnessed the rise of several powers that came into the sphere of influence of Byzantium along the Balkan frontier. The actions of these powers, namely the Avars, Slavs, Lombards, Gepids, and Antae, became a major concern for Byzantine Emperors and thus were a primary target for the foreign policies of sixth-century Constantinople. These policies, which changed considerably from one emperor to the next, had a significant impact on the landscape of the Balkans and the relationships between these groups themselves and the Byzantines. There are however, three questions that need to be considered before an analysis of these relationships can be undertaken. First, when the ancient Roman sources talk about these ethnic units, what are the potential pitfalls? Second, what defines an ethnic group? Finally, were such groups a new appearance, or development, within the Balkans? This discussion is particularly important to this dissertation because it is important that one has a clear understanding of what is meant when certain ‘barbarian’ groups are discussed later in the chapter.

Roman sources constantly refer to the different ‘barbarian’ groups they encountered by various ethnic names. This can be problematic for the modern scholar because these names often convey Roman ethnographic stereotypes rather than historical realities. In the sixth century alone, we see that Jordanes refers to the Huns as ‘a stunted, foul and puny tribe, scarcely human and having no language save one which bore but light resemblance to human speech,’ John of Ephesus refers to the Avars as ‘the filthy race of long-haired barbarians,’ and Procopius to the Slavs as those who ‘live in pitiful hovels which they set up far apart from one another.’¹⁰⁸ What these sources have in common, besides their negative view of outsiders, is that it is unlikely that any of their authors have actually witnessed the groups they describe and thus display a certain ignorance of their subject matter. Another problem that confronts the modern scholar is that at times the sources themselves seem confused on whether the groups they refer to are separate entities. In both Jordanes’ and Procopius’ description of the Slavs they use the term *Sclaveni* and *Antae* interchangeably and other terms such as ‘Germans’ and ‘Scythians’

¹⁰⁸ Jordanes, *Getica* 24.121; Joh. Eph. *HE*. 6.45; Proc. *Wars*. 7.14.24.

are used to denote a variety of peoples, the former for Lombards, Suevi, Gepids, and Goths and the latter for Turks and a general term for the Asiatic peoples from the regions of Scythia.¹⁰⁹

This problem is further compounded by the fact that there are virtually no written sources from the perspective of the groups described. The result of this, is that one has to determine whether or not ethnic self-identification was a concern of the various peoples within the Balkans or if these identities were the product of Roman sources attempting to understand and label those with whom they came into contact. It was once customary among scholars to take the various groups mentioned in the sources at face value and then to proceed to reconstruct the history of peoples such as the Avars, Slavs, Goths, Lombards, etc., based on these sources. The concepts of ‘ethnogenesis’ and ‘self-identification’ are not discussed in H. Pirenne’s *Mohammed and Charlemagne*, F. Lot’s *The End of the Ancient World and the Beginning of the Middle Ages*, J.M.Wallace-Hadrill’s *The Barbarian West 400-1000*, A.H.M. Jones’ *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602: A Social Economic and Administrative Survey* or E. Demougeot’s *La formation de l’Europe et les invasions barbares*.¹¹⁰ However, the degree to which self-identification played a role in frontier societies has recently led to much debate. W. Pohl, in particular, has written extensively in defence of the view that self-identification was a concern among barbarian groups even though the exact nature of that identification is difficult to pin down. Pohl defines self-identification as ‘a system of distinctions that allows defining social groups in relation to each other’ and that it ‘allows group members or newcomers to identify with a group, and outsiders to know with whom they are dealing.’¹¹¹ He argues that for self-identification to work there needs to be a continuous level of communication which would indicate that it was in fact a concern among barbarian groups. Furthermore, if there was a level of communication present in late antiquity it should be able to be identified within the sources. Pohl contends that the sources should be read “neither as simple reflections of reality nor as ‘opaque barriers’ between ourselves and that reality but as direct expressions of continuous efforts of social identification.”¹¹² Thus, he argues, self-identification can be viewed in the sources on several different levels, namely by looking for examples of inclusion and exclusion which help to determine the ethnic landscape, relating social actors to the strategies of

¹⁰⁹ Jordanes, *Getica* 35; Proc. Wars. 7.14.22.

¹¹⁰ Pirenne 1939; Lot 1931; Wallace-Hadrill 1952; Jones 1964; Demougeot 1969-1979.

¹¹¹ Pohl 2015: 255-256.

¹¹² Pohl 2013: 49.

identification present in the texts, reading the relative narratives available as an attempt to understand the communities to which agency is attributed, and occasionally to follow the interaction between the textual and political strategies of understanding and organizing social identities.¹¹³

Others are more sceptical and suggest that self-identities were less meaningful to these groups based on the lack of evidence in the sources. H.W Goetz, for example, argues that “it is difficult to investigate the structures of early medieval ethnogenesis based on the corresponding terminology used to describe these peoples because contemporary authors of that time did *not* perceive such a process.”¹¹⁴ To state this more simply, Goetz argues that because the authors of contemporary sources were not aware of ethnogenesis among the barbarians, their evidence is based on their own perceptions of these peoples and cannot be used to clarify how important self-identification was to the barbarians themselves. W. Goffart also takes up this argument and contends that self-identification should be viewed more as a literary convention of Roman sources than an actual occurrence.¹¹⁵

One of the main problems with this debate is the wide variety of definitions and parameters that are used to define ethnicity and thus to determine whether or not self-identification was a factor among frontier societies. The criteria as to how one defines different ethnic groups has been hotly debated and it is necessary for this study to clarify what is meant when one talks about the different groups who interacted with the Byzantines.

There are two schools of thought that have emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries on how one understands ethnicity, the ‘primordialist’ and the ‘instrumentalist.’ The primordialist view emerged in the nineteenth century and focused on the use of racial, linguistic, and cultural differences in order to differentiate between ethnicities. Although this approach has now largely been abandoned this viewpoint still emerges in recent works, such as J.R. Baker’s

¹¹³ Pohl 2013: 49. Pohl discusses the concept of self-identification in several other works, see Pohl 1997; Pohl 2013: 1-64; in relation to the Avars, see Pohl 1988. The concept has also been explored in relation to other ethnic groups which interacted with the Byzantines, for the Slavs, see Curta 2001: 6-35; for the Goths, see Heather 1996: 3-10; cf. Amory 1997: 1-42; for the Lombards, see Christie 1995: 1-30.

¹¹⁴ Goetz 2003a: 59.

¹¹⁵ Goffart 2006: 1-12, 230-240.

Race,¹¹⁶ and has been employed to justify further human atrocities during the dismantling of the communist bloc in the Balkans.

The instrumentalist view was first put forward in a seminal study by Fredrik Barth in 1969.¹¹⁷ This study, entitled *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, consisted of a series of essays which argued that ethnicity was something that one could adopt or abandon depending on certain social situations. Thus the notion of ethnicity is not something one is born into but is chosen by how the individual wishes to identify him- or herself.¹¹⁸ What makes this issue more complex is that there are different cultural factors which one may use to identify oneself with a particular group. Religion, class, law, language, boundaries, and heritage are several factors which may unite people under a common ethnicity. Furthermore, certain groups may put more emphasis on one of these factors in one situation, while another group fails to do so. The argument that needs to be clearly highlighted is that ethnicity is ‘multi-layered’ and ‘malleable.’¹¹⁹ This multi-layered facet of ethnicity can be seen in many societies today. In Canada, French Quebecers often view their culture as distinct from English Canadians because of a shared language and heritage that derives from France as opposed to England. However, according to circumstance they may place more or less emphasis on being Canadian, e.g. when travelling in other countries or celebrating a national sports team. In Northern Ireland, people who share a geographical location make distinct ethnic boundaries based on whether one is Catholic or Protestant.

The foundation for the modern concept of ethnicity was brought to the forefront of medieval studies by Reinhard Wenskus in his work *Stammesbildung und Verfassung*.¹²⁰ In this work Wenskus argues against the traditional ‘biological’ approach to ethnicity but tends to keep the framework for his argument within the model of *Germanische Stammeskunde*.¹²¹ He argues

¹¹⁶ Baker 1974.

¹¹⁷ Since the 1960’s there has been a large amount of scholarship which focuses on different interpretations of this instrumentalist viewpoint. Some notable works that have been done on the topic include: Halsall 2007: 35-62; Heather 1996: 3-7; Erikson 1993; Brather 2004: 29-96; Roosens 1989; Mitchell 1974; Geary 1999; Okamura 1981.

¹¹⁸ Barth 1969.

¹¹⁹ Halsall 2007: 38-39; cf. Wolfram 1987: 97-151; Goetz 2003b: 4-5; Pohl 2013: 2-3; see Jones 1997, for an archaeological approach to this concept.

¹²⁰ Wenskus 1961.

¹²¹ Pohl argues that he does not explore the Roman context of this argument sufficiently, see Pohl 1998a: 8. A. Murray challenges the concept that Wenskus has brought forth a new model and connects Wenskus’ work to pre-

that it was not blood, language, or customs which shaped the identities of the migrating Germanic peoples but rather the success of specific groups, such as the Lombards, Goths, etc., at conquest coupled with the perpetuation of a core of traditions or *Traditionskern* which may have originally only had relevance to a small percentage of the group. The main facet of this *Traditionskern* was the concept of *Heerkönigtum*, or war-leadership, as opposed to *Volkskönigtum*, or sacral kingship.¹²² This theory has been more recently argued within the Roman context by H. Wolfram and W. Pohl who continue to dismiss objective criteria for ethnicity, such as biology and linguistics, and focus more on subjective constructs, such as rulers who justified their power through association with historical traditions, and material culture.¹²³

Ethnicity in late antiquity can also be seen to be malleable. Religion can at times be a defining characteristic, as with Arianism and the Ostrogoths in the fifth century, but not a unifying factor in other circumstances (in the 360s, the Tervingi considered themselves distinct from Arian Goths who were viewed to have adopted a level of Romanization).¹²⁴ Geographical location is also difficult to use for identification, especially in the sixth century, as the borders between the Byzantines, Avars, Slavs, Lombards, Gepids, and other groups are constantly shifting. The malleability of the characteristics of ethnicity makes it exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, for the modern historian to construct an itemization of specific criteria to define an ethnic group.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, this does not mean that ethnic delineation should be dismissed as unimportant, it just needs to a nuanced approach which incorporates these shifting factors. Jonathan Hall puts forth a formal definition for ethnicity in his work *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* which encompasses this approach,

The criteria of ethnicity are a definitional set of attributes by which membership in an ethnic group is ultimately determined. They are the result of a series of conscious and

war arguments by exploring previous scholarship that have influenced his argument. He contends that Wenskus' monograph is a modification of these older theories rather than a new concept, See Murray 2002: 39-68.

¹²² There are, however, remnants of *Volkskönigtum* in several groups, such as the Vandals, Goths, and Heruls, which were incorporated into the concept of *Heerkönigtum*.

¹²³ Wolfram 1979; Pohl 1988.

¹²⁴ Photius, *Ecclesiastical History of Philostorgius*, 2.5; for translation, see Amidon 2007.

¹²⁵ The problem with the itemization of specific characteristics to determine ethnicity is further highlighted in Moerman's study of the Lue, see Moerman 1968: 153-169.

socially embedded choices which attach significance to certain criteria from a universal set while ignoring others.¹²⁶

To explore fully the shifting factors which make up the frontier societies of the sixth century, there is another concept associated with the instrumentalist view that should be examined, namely ‘situational ethnicity.’

This term was originally developed by John Paden in a study on ethnic categorization in urban Africa.¹²⁷ Paden argues that ‘situational ethnicity is premised on the observation that particular contexts may determine which of a person’s communal identities or loyalties are appropriate at a point in time.’¹²⁸ Although this argument has been interpreted in different ways, the interpretation that is relevant to this study is based on an argument put forth by J.C. Mitchell.¹²⁹ Mitchell asserts that situational ethnicity takes place on two levels, structural and cognitive. The structural level refers to the organizational realities in which one finds oneself, i.e. the political, administrative, or economic reasons for identifying with a particular ethnic group. The cognitive level refers to one’s subjective perception of ethnicity or with which group one identifies oneself. To put this in terms of the settlement of the Balkans, a migrant may join a movement because of the socio-political realities (war, displacement, etc.) but he also needs to make the cognitive decision to associate himself with that group (Avars, Slavs, etc.) before he can be considered a member of that ethnicity. It also refers to the perception of how others see that individual. Although the perception of the individual is important, he also needs to be recognized by the other members of the group. Once again there are several layers of factors which allow acceptance into a group. Familial relations, country of origin, and length of time within the new community can all play a role in the acceptance of the community. Ethnic groups are all exclusive on some level and it takes the recognition of the group as well as the perception of the individual in order to become fully integrated into that society.¹³⁰

There is debate as to whether or not the concept of situational ethnicity can be connected to the barbarian migrations. One example for the argument is presented in a paper by Patrick

¹²⁶ Hall 1997: 20-21.

¹²⁷ Paden 1970.

¹²⁸ Paden 1970:268.

¹²⁹ Mitchell 1974. For an overview of the different interpretations that sociologists and anthropologists have ascribed to situational ethnicity, see Okamura 1981.

¹³⁰ Heather 1996: 6.

Geary.¹³¹ In his paper, he focuses his argument primarily on the Western migrations in the fourth and fifth centuries and peoples such as the Ostrogoths, Vandals, Visigoths, and Alans (although he does briefly mention the Avars and the Slavs, they are not the main focus of his argument). Geary argues that ‘although Roman sources often presented barbarian peoples ethnic identities as fixed...new identities were constantly being established and transformed through contact with the Romans.’¹³² Geary supports this argument by examining the influence which contact with the Roman world had on the shifting identities of the barbarians. He demonstrates how groups could be polyethnic and how allegiances could shift based on the success or failure of their leaders. One case of this is the Hunnic leader Edika, who considered himself both a Hun and a Scirian, and who, after the downfall of the Hunnic Empire, went on to rule a Scirian group north of the Black Sea.¹³³

This approach is not universally accepted. In particular, Peter Heather, in his various works on the Goths, argues strongly against this.¹³⁴ He attempts to reassert traditional notions of the barbarian migrations based on recent developments in archaeology, anthropology, and history. He argues that ethnicities cannot be so easily abandoned or adopted based on circumstances. For example, he presents an analogy of one claiming US citizenship upon arrival to the United States without a US passport.¹³⁵ This is flawed on several accounts. First, the attempt to compare modern immigration practices, which have much more ordered policies and procedures with late antique situations is suspect, since there was no official means of recognizing citizenship to a particular group in late antiquity; second, it ignores the fact that the United States has been built upon the concept of uniting a ‘melting pot’ of different ethnicities who identify as Americans but also with their previous heritages (Polish, Jewish, Hispanic, etc.). Furthermore, the challenge that late antique societies had in erecting ethnic boundaries can be

¹³¹ Geary 1999. The notion that circumstance can influence the change of one’s ethnicity has been explored in several contexts. For the argument that ethnicities were not inherent but could be chosen and accepted in relation to the Pathans, see Barth 1969: 9-38. G. Halsall identifies the process of Romanization that takes place throughout late antiquity. Although the Romans placed people into different groups of ‘others’ those people could choose to adopt Roman society as their own, see Halsall 2007: 44-45. Another aspect that could influence identity change was one’s proximity to the processes of Christianization and Islamicization, see Pohl 2013: 5-6. W. Pohl has written extensively on the concept of shifting identities during late antiquity, see Pohl 2013: 1-64; Pohl 2005: 183-208; Pohl 1998b: 17-69.

¹³² Geary 1999: 128.

¹³³ Priscus Rhetor, *fr.* 4.8.

¹³⁴ Heather 1996.

¹³⁵ Heather 1996: 6.

seen when one considers the near universal acceptance of Gothic identity in seventh-century Spain or Frankish identity in Northern Gaul. Although Heather argues that in the West evidence suggests that many subordinate groups (for instance the Ostrogoths)¹³⁶ were never fully assimilated and have a tendency to disappear and re-emerge over time, and thus concludes that ethnicity was not adopted or modified based on an individual's circumstance, I believe that this evidence adds to the argument that ethnicity was in fact situational and was adopted or disregarded based on one's circumstance. For example, Heather argues that the reappearance of the Rugi in 541 after the collapse of the Ostrogothic kingdom demonstrates how ethnic groups persisted and were never completely absorbed into stronger kingdoms.¹³⁷ However, he also argues that the Ostrogoths, following an elite of Amals, were able to emerge as a newly formed unit after the collapse of the Hunnic Empire in the 460s.¹³⁸ He does not state why this would be possible for the Ostrogoths and Amals but not for the Rugi. His evidence for this discrepancy is that according to Procopius, Eraric claimed that the Rugi never intermarried with the Goths when he claimed leadership of the Rugi in 541.¹³⁹ Since there is no corroborating evidence that this was the case, I believe it is more likely a demonstration of how ethnicity was a situational construct. Eraric likely maintained his Rugian ethnicity within a larger Gothic framework which he reasserted when circumstance demanded it.

I believe the argument for situational ethnicity is more apparent in the Balkans since in most cases one does not have to account for the re-emergence of specific groups. As will be shown in the following analysis of the origins of different groups into the Balkans, the ethnic units that people leave do not re-emerge (Ogurs, Varchonitai, etc.), those who join a migrating movement do so based on socio-political reasons, being displaced by war or the opportunity to live in more prosperous areas, and they come to identify themselves with these new ethnic units.

The purpose of this section has been to provide a framework for the complexities one has to consider when attempting to understand late antique ethnicity. The frontier societies that the Byzantines interacted with in the sixth century were multi-layered and constantly in flux as they developed into the polities that are mentioned in the sources. As these polities play a major

¹³⁶ Heather 2003: 85-133.

¹³⁷ Heather 1996: 267, 302.

¹³⁸ Heather 2003: 85-106.

¹³⁹ Proc. Wars. 7.2.1.

role in the following chapter, it is important to fully grasp who in fact they were and how they were susceptible to change from contact with an imperial power. The following section will explore the origins of these polities and examine whether the hypothesis for *en masse* migration is a valid means to characterize the emergence of these groups.

MIGRATIONS

There are many maps of the early medieval migration period which show clear migration patterns of different barbarian groups.¹⁴⁰ These maps also tend to set-up boundaries which indicate specific geographical locations for these same groups. Although they can be helpful for a general orientation, they fail to take into consideration the complexities of the shifting settlement patterns and group make-ups of those who were present in the Balkans. This analysis of migration patterns is important to this survey because it will attempt, on the one hand to clarify whether these migrations occurred, and on the other to determine a more clear definition of what is meant when one refers to the different groups north of the Danube who interacted with the Romans in the sixth century.

The earliest reference to the people known as the Avars is recorded by Priscus the Rhetor. He states that around 463 the Saraguri, Urogi, and the Onoguri had been attacked by the Sabiri after having been driven out of their lands by the Avars.¹⁴¹ There is little mention of the Avars from this point until the end of Justinian's reign when they appear to the north of the Danube near the end of the 550s and establish themselves on the Hungarian plain between Tisza and the Danube during the mid to late 560s. The debate over the origins of the Avars who settled in the Danube in the sixth century centers on a controversial passage in Theophylact,

For it is by a misnomer that the barbarians on the Ister have assumed the appellation of Avars: the origin of their race will shortly be revealed. So, when the Avars had been defeated, some of them made their escape to those who inhabit Taugast [to different places. Next, the Turkish khagan subdued the Ogurs,]...The earliest leaders of this

¹⁴⁰ Mackay 1996: 6-9.

¹⁴¹ Priscus Rhetor *fr.* 40.1. Priscus also states that the Avars themselves were driven out of their homelands by a group of ocean dwellers who presumably lived near the Arctic Ocean, see Blockley 1981: 395 fn. 157.

nation were named Var and Chunni; from them some parts of those nations were also accorded their nomenclature, being called Var and Chunni. Then while the emperor Justinian was in possession of the royal power, a small section of these Var and Chunni fled from that ancestral tribe and glorified their leader with the appellation of khagan...When the Barselt, Onogurs, Sabir, and other Hun nations in addition to these, saw that a section of those who were still Var and Chunni had fled to their regions, they plunged into extreme panic, since they suspected that the settlers were Avars. For this reason they honoured the fugitives with splendid gifts and supposed that they received from them security in exchange. Then after the Var and Chunni saw the well-omened beginning to their flight, they appropriated the ambassadors' error and named themselves Avars; for among the Scythian nations that of the Avars is said to be the most adept tribe. In point of fact even up to our present times the Pseudo-Avars (for it is more correct to refer to them thus) are divided in their ancestry, some bearing the time-honoured name of Var while other are called Chunni.¹⁴²

Although scholars, such as Haussig and Czeglèdy, have attempted to provide a link between the Avars who migrated to the Balkans in the mid-sixth century and those who are mentioned by Priscus, this is unlikely the case.¹⁴³ They attempt to use this passage to differentiate between the 'true Avars' and the 'pseudo-Avars' who are mentioned by Theophylact. They contend that the 'true Avars' actually fled to the East and are connected to the Juanjuans of central Asia, while

¹⁴²ψευδωνύμως γὰρ Ἀβάρων προσηγορίαν οἱ περὶ τὸν Ἰστρον περιεβάλοντο βάρβαροι· ὅθεν δὲ τὸ γένος αὐτοῖς, ὅσον οὐπω εἰρήσεται. ἡττηθέντων γοῦν τῶν Ἀβάρων, (πρὸς γὰρ τὸν λόγον ἐπάνυμεν) οἱ μὲν πρὸς τοὺς κατέχοντας τὴν Ταυγὰστ τὰς ἀποφυγὰς ἐποιήσαντο... οἱ δὲ τούτου τοῦ ἔθνους παλαιᾶτοι ἕξαρχοι Οὐάρ καὶ Χουννὶ ὀνομάζοντο· ἐκ τούτων καὶ τινα τῶν ἐθνῶν ἐκείνων τὴν ὀνομασίαν ἀπεκληρώσαντο Οὐάρ καὶ Χουννὶ ὀνομαζόμενα. Ἰουστινιανοῦ τοίνυν τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος τὸ βασιλείου κράτος ἐπέχοντος, ἐκ τούτων τῶν Οὐάρ καὶ Χουννὶ ὀλίγη ἀποδράσασα μοῖρα τοῦ ἀρχεγόνου φύλου ἐκείνου ἐνδημεῖ τῇ Εὐρώπῃ. οὗτοι Ἀβάρους ἑαυτοὺς ὀνομάσαντες τὸν ἡγεμόνα τῆ τοῦ Χαγάνου προσηγορία φαιδρύνουσιν... Βαρσηλίτ καὶ Οὐννουγοῦροι καὶ Σαβίροι Οὐννικά τε πρὸς τούτοις ἕτερα ἔθνη, ὀπνηίκα τῶν Οὐάρ καὶ Χουννὶ ἔτι ἀπόμοιραν κατὰ τοὺς τόπους αὐτῶν ἀποδιδράσκουσιν ἐθέσαντο, εἰς μέγιστον καταπίπτουσι φόβον, ὑποτοπήσαντες Ἀβάρους ὑπεῖναι τοὺς ἐνδημήσαντας. διὰ τοῦτο δώροισι λαμπροῖς τοὺς φυγάδας τιμήσαντες ἔδοξαν ἀντιλαμβάνειν παρ' αὐτῶν τὴν ἀβλάβειαν. οἱ τοίνυν Οὐάρ καὶ Χουννὶ ὡς εἶδον τὴν τῆς ἀποφυγῆς ἐπιδέξιον ἑναρξίν, τὴν πλάνην τῶν πρεσβευσαμένων οικειωσάμενοι Ἀβάρους ἑαυτοὺς κατωνόμασαν· λέγεται γὰρ ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσι τοῖς Σκυθικοῖς τὸ τῶν Ἀβάρων ὑπεῖναι ἐντρεχέστατον φύλον. ἀμέλει τοι καὶ μέχρι τῶν χρόνων τῶν καθ' ἡμᾶς οἱ Ψευδάβαροι (λέγειν γὰρ οὕτως αὐτοὺς οικειότερον) ταῖς γενεαρχίαις διήρηνται, καὶ οἱ μὲν Οὐάρ ἀρχαιοπρεπῶς ὀνομάζονται, οἱ δὲ Χουννὶ προσαγορεύονται. Theophylact Simocatta, 7.7.10-7.8.5. trans. M and M Whitby 1986: 188-190.

¹⁴³ Haussig 1957; Czeglèdy 1954.

the ‘pseudo-Avars’ are the Varchonites who are mentioned by Theophylact.¹⁴⁴ Byzantine sources clearly had a negative view of the barbarian groups they encountered but, taking this into consideration, there are still several points that can be taken from this passage since it corresponds with the ethnogenesis of steppe powers. Newly formed nomadic powers were often a conglomerate of those who had been previously defeated and sought protection against those who were more powerful. These groups often were mixed of several defeated groups who came together under the leadership of a strong individual.¹⁴⁵ This individual was in turn essential to the newly formed group. In the case of the Avars, uniting under the leadership of the *khagan*, a recognizable title that helped in shaping the identity of the group.¹⁴⁶ Finally, these groups often adopted a prestigious name which did not necessarily affiliate them to the group from which that name derived.¹⁴⁷

The term ‘pseudo-Avars’ is incorrect because this conglomerate of peoples became recognized by those within who followed the leadership of the *khagan* (self-identification) and was recognized by outside groups who interacted with them over the next three centuries.¹⁴⁸ Even if there were multi-layered levels of ethnic identification (which there most likely was), this new group were in fact now identified as Avars. Although Theophylact provides evidence of many groups joining the Avars on their westward migration (he mentions the Curtigurs, Utigurs, Zaloi, Sabirs, Antae and later the Tarniach, Zabender, and Kotzagir)¹⁴⁹ it would be incorrect to assume that entire make-up of the group were those who had migrated from the East. There is archaeological evidence that they also assimilated people of Germanic origin, particularly the Gepids after their defeat to the Lombards in 567, who were already present in the Carpathian basin when they arrived.¹⁵⁰ Although there is a mixture of Germanic cultural items present in grave sites which are gradually phased out between 550 and 600, the Gepids are still mentioned at the end of Avar rule 250 years later. Once again these groups need to be

¹⁴⁴ The methodology employed by both scholars has been convincingly argued against by W. Pohl, see Pohl 1990: 113-124; cf. Pohl 1988: 27. D. Sinor has also demonstrated that the Avars mentioned by Priscus are a different group than the Juanjuans, see Sinor 1946-47: 35.

¹⁴⁵ Pohl 1988: 18-43; cf. Pohl 2003: 577-578.

¹⁴⁶ For a brief history of the development of the *khaganite*, see Dobrovotis 2003.

¹⁴⁷ Pohl 2003: 577-578.

¹⁴⁸ For a survey of the practice of name-giving to newly formed groups, see Haussig 1983.

¹⁴⁹ Theophylact Simocatta 7-8.

¹⁵⁰ Several studies on the Gepids under Avar rule have been published by A. Kiss who focuses on the cemetery at Kölked-Feketekapu, see Kiss 1987 and 1992.

viewed as multi-layered, still holding on to historic ties but also falling under the Avar sphere of influence.

It is difficult to speak about the Avars of the sixth century as an ethnic group in modern terms. The Roman sources were biased against the “outsider” but were also not entirely works of historical fiction. The most accurate way to consider these Avars is to view them through the context of situational ethnicity. They were a conglomerate of peoples made up of a variety of ethnicities who all recognized an over-arching ethnic denomination, namely the Avars, but also likely identified on various levels to the groups from which they originated. Furthermore, they adopted this newly formed identity because of economic, geographic, or political circumstance and thus represented a non-exclusive, multi-layered ethnicity.

The Slavs present a similar problem when one attempts to determine if they were a migratory group or if they were original inhabitants to the region. The difficulty to address this problem stems from many of the problems that were discussed in the early origins of the Avars as it tends to be focused around the question of ethnicity and what that implies. The problem is compounded by the mixed references to Slavic origins in the ancient sources. Procopius mentions the Slavs in relation to the Sclaveni, the Antae and the Huns and states that they originated from the Spori, while Jordanes connects the Sclaveni and Antae to a more ancient group called the Venethi.¹⁵¹ These sources also disagree in several other respects to the Slavs. Procopius states that they are nomads and reside along the Danube frontier and Jordanes puts them closer to the Vistula River and states that they live in swamps and forests.¹⁵²

Although Jordanes has been given more credence in the past for his description of the early history of the Slavs because of his use of Gothic oral sources, it is likely that Procopius provides a more accurate source for several reasons.¹⁵³ First of all, the validity of the Gothic oral sources used in Jordanes’ *Getica* has to be held in question. Peter Heather, in his work

¹⁵¹ Proc. Wars. 5.27.2; 7.14.2. Jordanes, *Getica*. 35. There is also a tradition of using studies of linguistics to identify the early ancestors of the Slavs. For a comprehensive summary of the linguistic arguments, see Curta 2001: 6-14.

¹⁵² Proc. Wars. 7.14.22; Jordanes, *Getica*. 35. It has been argued that these differences are because there was a polemic between Jordanes and Procopius and that Jordanes divergence was a result of this, see Goffart 1989b: 93-95, 101.

¹⁵³ For the argument that Jordanes should be taken as the more credible source, see Sedov 1978; cf. Eeckhaute, Garde, and Kazanski 1992. For a detailed survey of the sources used by Jordanes and Procopius, see the introduction of the present work.

Goths and Romans, demonstrates that there were conflicting accounts within the Gothic oral tradition and writers had to make decisions on what sources they wanted to incorporate.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, he shows that in several cases these oral traditions re-worked the past to coincide with their own circumstances and the image they wanted to project.¹⁵⁵ Although Heather analyzes the *Getica* in the context of Gothic history, the questionable accuracy of the oral tradition he was drawing from must be considered when weighing the value of this source for the Slavs origins. There is, on the other hand, evidence which suggests Procopius may have had more reliable sources when writing about the Slavs. His Slavic ethnographic *excursus* is the longest and most detailed in his works and it includes a range of topics such as political organization, religion, warfare, living habits, general appearance, and territories which indicates that he was at least interested in the Slavic population.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, his presence in Italy in the late 530s makes it possible for him to have had contact with Slavic mercenaries from whom it is likely he got much of his information.¹⁵⁷ Thus, it is likely that Procopius presents a version of events that is closer to what some Slavs may have thought about their own past.

Traditionally, it has been argued that the Slavs migrated to the Balkans from somewhere in Eastern Europe at the beginning of the sixth century. This argument has been largely based on linguistics and although debate has broken out between those who argue for a Polish *Urheimat* of the Slavs and those who argue that they came to Poland from an *Urheimat* in Subcarpathian Ukraine, they both contend that there was a migration from somewhere to the Balkans.¹⁵⁸ P.M Barford argues that the concept of Slavic migration is supported by the fact that there are Slavic languages being spoken in many areas of east-central Europe, with the heaviest concentration in the area between the Pripet and upper Volga, by the ninth century.¹⁵⁹ F. Curta is the main dissenter to the concept of a Slavic *Urheimat* in his recent work *The Making of the Slavs*. He argues that the appearance of the Slavs in the Balkans at the beginning of the sixth century is the product of an ethnogenesis of a new barbarian identity in the wake of Justinian's

¹⁵⁴ Heather 1991: 36-67.

¹⁵⁵ For example, highlighting the ancient pre-eminence of the Amals when Theodoric the Amal was in power.

¹⁵⁶ Proc. Wars. 7.14.22-30.

¹⁵⁷ Proc. Wars. 6.26.16-22. See Evans 1970: 219; cf. Anfert'ev 1991: 132.

¹⁵⁸ For a discussion of this debate, see Barford 2003: 121-155.

¹⁵⁹ Barford 2001. V. Sedov has argued for the Slavs to have been present in this area as early as the sixth or seventh century based on the homogenous development of a common Slavic language but this has been argued against by Barford as he states that it requires a model developed by nineteenth century philologists, see Barford 2008: 28-30.

policies along the Danubian frontier.¹⁶⁰ The core of Curta's argument is that the migrationist model should be abandoned. He asserts that there likely was a series of short distance population movements because of the Slavs 'itinerant agriculture' but there was not a period of migration.¹⁶¹ Curta's argument lies heavily on a re-interpretation of the archaeological data but also touches on the literary evidence. He dismisses the notion put forward by Joachim Werner that the presence of brooches and bow fibulae, which Werner classifies as 'Slavic,' along the amber trail (from Masuria to the lower Danube region) is indication of a Slavic migration.¹⁶² Curta argues that instead of a migrationist model it is more likely that the presence of these and other artifacts in the Danube region is an indication of long distance contact between these two communities and were not a Slavic invention but rather acquired as a symbol of social identity.¹⁶³ Curta also re-interprets Procopius' statement that the Sclaveni and Antae were a 'new' group in the region. He argues that Procopius was in fact referring to them as a new political force who now deserved the attention of Byzantium but not as a group that had recently arrived from somewhere else (even though Procopius constantly refers to them in conjunction with the Huns and other nomads).¹⁶⁴

Based on the trends of evolving ethnicity that were taking place all over the Balkans, I believe that the origins of the Slavs in the Danube region is more of a hybrid between these two positions. Although archaeological evidence does not suggest that a wide-spread migration took place, the references in the literary sources to the emergence of a new group and the archaeological trail indicates that it may have been possible for small population movements from the North to have integrated with those who were already present in the region. According to archaeologist David Antony 'cultures do not migrate, it is often only a very narrowly defined, goal-oriented subgroup that migrates.'¹⁶⁵ I believe that this fits into the model of situational ethnicity because it incorporates small scale migration from the North based on circumstance which then combined with the local population in response to these new arrivals.

¹⁶⁰ Curta 2001; cf. Curta 2008: 155-172.

¹⁶¹ Curta 2001: 337-338.

¹⁶² Werner and Fuchs 1950: 166, 172.

¹⁶³ Curta 2001: 227-310.

¹⁶⁴ Curta 2001: 348-349.

¹⁶⁵ Antony 1990: 909.

This hybrid approach to ethnicity has been highlighted by Michael Kulikowski in relation to the Goths in his work *Rome's Gothic Wars*. The gothic migration narrative, he argues, is too heavily reliant on the account provided by Jordanes. He points out that the Gotones mentioned by Tacitus, who were located somewhere in modern Poland would not be considered Goths if Jordanes' migration stories did not exist.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, he argues that when one uses this narrative as a baseline for a migrationist theory, it can lead to misjudgements when evaluating the archaeological evidence. This is best demonstrated when looking at how scholars have attempted to prove Gothic migrations by connecting Santa-de-Mures/Cernjackov culture (fourth-century Goths) to the Wielback culture of the North.¹⁶⁷ Volker Bierbrauer has argued that since the Santa-de-Mures/Cernjackov culture is Gothic and it shares similar characteristics to Wielback culture, Wielback culture must also be Gothic. Furthermore, he argues that since artifacts associated with Santa-de-Mures/Cernjackov culture have been found within the frontiers of the Roman Empire, they provide evidence of Gothic migration from the Danube to Italy and from Gaul to Spain.¹⁶⁸ However, Santa-de-Mures/Cernjackov culture contains a wide variety of elements, including Roman provincial culture, Wielback and Przeworsk culture, steppe cultures, and elements from the region itself.¹⁶⁹ The common misjudgement is to place too much emphasis on Jordanes' account and attempt to work backwards from Santa-de-Mures/Cernjackov culture to Wielback. There is, however, no indication as to why Wielback culture should be afforded more weight than any of the other elements which are present. This does not mean that the migrationist model should be completely abandoned but rather that a more nuanced view should be applied. The Santa-de-Mures/Cernjackov culture evolved through an intermingling of many different elements, some migratory and other indigenous. It was then dominated by a set of leaders who created stability in response to imperial power and would be identified by Roman sources as Goths from the third century onwards.

¹⁶⁶ Kulikowski 2007: 49-56.

¹⁶⁷ Wielback culture has been identified to have existed on the Vistula River from the first to the fourth centuries, for an example of this connection, see Heather 1996: 21-30.

¹⁶⁸ Bierbrauer 1994: 51-172; cf. Heather 1996: 21-30.

¹⁶⁹ Kulikowski 2007: 64. Kulikowski uses this evidence of converging cultures to argue that the "Goths" should not be identified as a polity prior to the third century. He contends that it is not until these elements are united under common leadership that they can be identified as the Goths that are cited by Roman sources, see Kulikowski 2007: 67-70.

What also needs to be clarified is why ancient sources refer to the Sclaveni and the Antae as the same people. This immediately creates confusion as at times they are referred to as one people, such as the examples of Jordanes mentioned previously, and at other times as distinct groups, such as when Theophylact refers to members of the Antae joining the Avars.¹⁷⁰ When looking at the sources it appears that although the groups did have some affiliation and perhaps were connected on some level, they were in fact different entities. The Antae are mentioned in several ancient sources and have contact with the Byzantine Empire in the period 518-602.¹⁷¹ There are several examples during this period which help to distinguish that the Slavs and the Antae were different peoples. The first several examples are attested by Procopius. He states that in 518 the Antae, ‘who dwelt close to the Sclaveni,’ crossed the Ister River and conducted raids against the Romans.¹⁷² He also mentions that in 539/540, the Sclaveni and the Antae ‘became hostile to one another and engaged in battle.’¹⁷³ Michael the Syrian provides another example of the Slavs and Antae in conflict. He states that in 587 the Antae came to an agreement with Maurice to raid Slavic lands in an attempt to persuade them to stop their campaigns into Byzantine territory.¹⁷⁴ Theophylact records the last reference to the Antae in 602. He states that Apsich, an Avar leader, was sent “to destroy the nation of the Antae, which was in fact allied to the Romans,” in retaliation for a Roman incursion against the Slavs who were allied with the Avars at that time.¹⁷⁵ When looking at the evidence it appears that although the Antae lived a similar lifestyle to the Slavs and were located geographically close to them, they did on occasion operate as separate peoples. However, this does not discount the possibility that members of the Antae did not also identify themselves at times with the Slavs, which would explain some of the confusion among the sources, it rather indicates that the region was in a state of constant flux and that their ethnicity was multi-layered and could evolve based on circumstance.

The final two groups that will be discussed in this chapter are the Lombards and the Gepids. Similar to the origins of the previous groups discussed, it is difficult to map the early

¹⁷⁰ Theophylact *Simocatta*, 7.8; cf. *Men. Proc. fr.* 5.3.

¹⁷¹ *Proc. Wars.* 7.14.7-10, 22-30; 7.40.5-6; 8.4.9. Agathias, *Hist.* 3.21; *Men. Proc. fr.* 5.3; *Strategikon.* 6.5; Theophylact *Simocatta*, 8.5; Theoph. 284.

¹⁷² *Proc. Wars.* 7.40.5-6.

¹⁷³ *Proc. Wars.* 7.14.7-10. There is also mention of a Byzantine-Antic alliance which takes place in 545/546, wherein the Antae were settled by the Byzantines in the city of Turrus as a means to provide a barrier between themselves and their enemies north of the Danube, for an analysis of this treaty, see Kardaras 2010: 74-85.

¹⁷⁴ *Mich. Syr.*, 10.21.

¹⁷⁵ Theophylact *Simocatta*, 7.5.8-13.

formation of the ancient groups that would be recognized by specific names in late antiquity and it is likely that the Lombards and the Gepids were comprised of different groups who identified themselves on different levels. What complicates the matter in the case of these two groups is that the available written sources are deeply suspect and their authenticity should not be given too much weight. The written history of these two groups that survives is primarily preserved in Paul the Deacon, Jordanes, and the *Origo Gentis Langobardorum*.¹⁷⁶ These sources present a similar picture, as Paul relies on Jordanes and the *Origo* as sources and these are based partly on Gothic oral tradition (along with the lost history of Cassiodorus in the case of Jordanes) and are concerned more with establishing an *origo* for a particular *gens* rather than describing a historically accurate version of events.

To provide a brief summary of what is stated in the sources, writing in the seventh and eighth centuries, they relate that the Lombards were originally called the ‘Winnili’ and changed their name after a victory over the Vandals in Scoringa.¹⁷⁷ According to Paul the Deacon, Scoringa was a small island and considering that there are several small Danish islands that connect Scandinavia to Germany and it is possible that one of these may have been the general homeland of some of those who would eventually identify as Lombards. According to Jordanes, the Gepids did not migrate from the Baltic with their “kinsmen,” the Goths because they were *pignum*.¹⁷⁸ Jordanes claims that they eventually migrated under the leadership of their king Fastida and crossed the lands of the Burgunds, eventually reaching the northern Carpathian range bordering the province of Dacia. Here he claims that they won a victory over the Burgundians but in doing so, provoked the Ostrogoths, and after a defeat at their hands retreated to the region between the Upper Tisza and Upper Dniester rivers.¹⁷⁹

Some scholars have attempted to corroborate this account through archaeological evidence,¹⁸⁰ Will Wegewitz, for example, has uncovered archaeological evidence in the form of urn cemeteries and weapons graves which may be able to connect the Lombards movements

¹⁷⁶ For a full analysis of these sources, see the introductory chapter of this work. For the abuse of Jordanes solely as a credible source, see Goffart 2006: 54-72.

¹⁷⁷ Paul Deac. *HL*. 1.7-10; cf. *Origo Gent. Lang.* 1.

¹⁷⁸ Jordanes, *Getica*. 95.

¹⁷⁹ Jordanes, *Getica*. 96-100. This battle likely took place between 249 and the withdrawal of the Roman troops from Dacia in the 270s, see Pohl 1998c: 131-140;

¹⁸⁰ Wolfram 1979; Pohl 1980: 239-305; cf. Kharalamieva 2010: 245-246.

from the lower Elbe region to Pannonia but this must also be examined with a level of caution.¹⁸¹ To define Lombard culture through material evidence, such as groupings of pottery, metal-workings, burial customs, and house plans, would require the Lombards to be a formed ethnic unit with unique stylistic and social characteristics.¹⁸² The earliest Roman sources who mention the Lombards (Velleius Paterculus, Strabo, and Tacitus), however, refer to many tribes, including the Lombards, as part of a wider network of tribes allied to or under the influence of the Suevi.¹⁸³ If they were part of a larger confederate or trading network there is the possibility of constant cultural-exchange which would suggest an interchange of goods and thus make it difficult to attribute specific materials to specific peoples.¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, as seen with the Hun confederacy, it is near impossible to track particular ethnic units once a larger conglomerate has been dismantled until they have settled in a particular region and even then it is implausible to say that a certain group migrated *en masse* (even if they take on an ancient tribal name) but rather that they merged elements of the broken confederacy with the local population to create a new polity. What is clear, is that in the early sixth century a group which the Romans called ‘Lombards’ is established in Pannonia, and archaeology also indicates changes in material culture at the same time (perhaps under the influence of migrants, but perhaps also in conjunction with more localised developments).¹⁸⁵ According to Procopius, it is soon after that they become entangled with Justinian and Byzantine diplomacy.¹⁸⁶

As for the Gepids, it is clear from meticulous studies by Ludwig Schmidt, Herwig Wolfram, and Walter Pohl that much of their early history is reliant on the archaeological data.¹⁸⁷ There is no mention of them in any fourth century source and reconstruction of their early movements is often heavily reliant on the account of Jordanes. However, as discussed above with the Goths, much of the archaeological data is used to attempt to verify Jordanes’ account. For example, the Gepids have been placed in the Upper Tisza region in the early fourth

¹⁸¹ Wegewitz 1964; 1988.

¹⁸² Wegewitz 1988; cf. Christie 1995: 4.

¹⁸³ Velleius 2.106; Strabo 7.1.3.291; Tac. *Hist.* 40.

¹⁸⁴ Christie 1995: 10-13; cf. M. Todd 1975: 19-21, 55.

¹⁸⁵ This is when literary and archaeological sources begin to coincide with each other. According to Paul the Deacon and the *Origo*, they annexed Herulia around 505/508 and soon after won a victory over the Suevi which allowed them to expand their lands towards the Danube. It is here where the Lombards incorporate the surviving Heruls and remnants of the Rugian tribe into their polity, see Paul Deac., *HL*. 1.19-21; *Origo Gent. Lang.* 4. For a survey of archaeological finds in Pannonia associated with the Lombards, see Christie 1995: 38 (fig. 4).

¹⁸⁶ Proc. *Wars.* 2.14.

¹⁸⁷ Schmidt 1941 (repr. 1969); Wolfram 1979; Pohl 1980: 239-305.

century based on cemeteries containing swords, lances, and shields considered to be ‘Gepidic,’ but there are no identifying differences between those assemblages and others associated with the Santa-de-Mures/Cernjackov culture connected to the Goths, leading to a misinterpretation of a mixed Gothic-Gepid culture. Eszter Istánovitis and Valéria Kulcsár have argued that ‘We do not have at our disposal any Gepidian material that can be dated to the 3rd century or first half of the 4th century.’¹⁸⁸

It does appear that the Gepids were a part of Attila’s Hun confederacy in the mid-fifth century. According to Jordanes, the Gepids, under a king named Ardaric, appear as one of Attila’s auxiliaries and after his death (ca. 453), led a battle against his sons (battle on Nedao River mentioned above). Although Jordanes is the main source for these events, there is sufficient evidence in other sources which connect the Gepids to the Hun confederacy to give it legitimacy.¹⁸⁹ Jordanes’ account appears to have more credibility after the Gepids separation from the Huns as it is describing the regions they inhabited at the time of his writing and were not dependant on oral traditions. According to his account, the Gepids settled in Transylvania or “the ancient Dacia, which the race of the Gepids now possess”¹⁹⁰ and there were recognized as federates of the empire.¹⁹¹ This is supported by a large number of excavated cemeteries in the region dated to this period, such as the Poroshát-Malajdok-Csongrád group and Csongrád-Kenderföldek group, which include burial grounds of several generations of warriors, peasants, and craftsmen (primarily warriors buried together with their weapons).¹⁹² From Dacia the Gepids expand their power base into Pannonia secunda and take over control of the city of Sirmium in the 480s.¹⁹³ When one considers that the Gepid polity formed out of the disintegration of the Hun confederation in the same region as the Hun’s previous seat of power (Dacia), it is likely to conclude that there was not a mass migration of Gepids but rather that strong individuals who identified themselves as Gepids joined different tribal elements together

¹⁸⁸ Istánovitis and Kulcsár 1998: 67-94 (quotation 68-69).

¹⁸⁹ For the Huns and Gepids being linked, see Salvian, *De gubernatione Dei*, 4.68, 1.290; for Attila as a Gepid Hun, see Chron. Pasch. p.77; as a Gepid, see Joh. Mal. 14.10. For Adaric and the Huns, see Thompson 1948: 166.

¹⁹⁰ Jordanes, *Getica*. 73.

¹⁹¹ “[they received] customary offerings from the Roman emperor that continued until today [ca. 550s],” Jordanes, *Getica*.263-264.

¹⁹² Bóna 1971: 265-336; Csallány 1961; Bóna and Nagy 2002; Cseh and Bóna 2005.

¹⁹³ Anon. Valesianus, *fr. pars posterior*. 49; Jordanes, *Getica*. 292; Ennodius, *Panegyricus dictus Theoderico regi*. 60.

to form a new ethnic group. It more likely indicates localised change (perhaps with some immigration) that would be recognized by the Byzantines in the late fifth and sixth centuries as a new power on the frontier.

Although it is difficult to trace the exact origins of the Lombards and the Gepids, it is important to note that by the mid-sixth century the Byzantines did perceive that these peoples were groups that warranted attention. I believe it is implausible to view the growth of these groups solely in terms of mass migration or regional development. It seems evident that portions of those who identified as Lombards and Gepids moved into areas of Pannonia and Dacia but it is likely that they merged with rather than outright displaced the local inhabitants. Furthermore, similarly to the Avars and the Slavs, as these peoples came together, a new form of ethnic consciousness emerged in response to political centralization, and then the Byzantines perceived the emergence of a new ethnic group.

Now that an analysis of the origins of the 'barbarian' peoples who operated in the Balkans has been presented, it should be understood that these groups were in a state of constant evolution. It would be incorrect to think of a group, such as the Slavs, as a single ethnic unit but rather as a mix of people who have come together with varying degrees of multi-layered ethnic ties that identify with an over-arching ethnicity because of circumstance. I contend that situational ethnicity is the most prudent way to characterize this development as it incorporates the shifting landscape of the Balkans, whether it be through migration, population movement, changing allegiances or regional development. As each group demonstrates, if migration does occur, it is not *en masse* as a sole ethnicity but rather different tribal elements that come together to represent the emerging polities that are present in the Balkans in the sixth century. Furthermore, it is implausible to argue that they simply displaced the local inhabitants but more apt to argue that they incorporated elements of the population into their fold. Thus, it is incorrect to think of these groups mentioned in sixth-century sources as pre-existent 'nations' until these groups arrive in the regions which their new ethnic formation takes place, a formation that is influenced by their own political centralization under a certain ethnicity as well as their development through contact with the imperial power in the region, namely the Byzantines.

The following chapter will provide the necessary background to a study of Justin II's foreign policy. It will begin by analysing the tribute policy that Justinian employed towards

various foreign polities. Although there have been extensive surveys on Justinian's wars of expansion, building programs, religious reforms, and domestic policies, it appears that there is a shortage of literature on his use of the tribute in regards to foreign policy. This section will attempt to provide an examination of implications of this policy to provide context for the political situation that Justin II found himself when he ascended. It will then examine how an inclusive policy which infused a steady stream of wealth into a given society could foster the development of that polity into a more stable and politically centralized society. The second section of this chapter will examine the elevation of Justin II. This analysis will be important to the overall thesis because it will demonstrate how Justin II was indebted to the senate for their support in his coronation. This is important to the overall argument because in garnering senatorial support Justin aligned himself with several views of the senate, such as their opposition to paying tribute to foreign polities.

CHAPTER 2: JUSTINIAN REFORM PROGRAM AND ACCESSION OF JUSTIN II

Justin II ascended to the throne in AD 565. His accession brought about a significant change in the relationships between the imperial office, the senatorial aristocracy, and the landowning elite. The focus of this thesis will be the changes in the relationships that the Byzantine Empire underwent in regards to the foreign polities that surrounded it. This chapter, however, will look at how these changes were not an isolated incident. Justinian conducted an extensive reform program in order to shore up what he saw as injustices being committed by the aristocracy and landed elite in the provinces. Although he had initial success in pushing through these reforms, as his reign went on he saw more and more push back from the aristocratic class. Justin II, alternatively, was much more in line with aristocratic concerns. This chapter will examine the circumstances that surrounded his accession to power, such as the attitude of the aristocratic class towards Justinian in the second half of his reign, the backing of his claim to the throne by the senate, and how that support may have influenced his foreign and domestic policies.

To fully understand the context surrounding Justin's accession, it is first necessary to briefly outline the attempt that Justinian made to limit the social and economic influence of the land-holding elite in order to improve imperial revenues. Recent scholarship has argued that Justinian's reforms set-out to reassert imperial control over the senatorial aristocracy and the provincial magnate elite. Peter Sarris argues that Justinian engaged in a concentrated effort to re-establish the authority and autonomy of the imperial office. Furthermore, he contends that in his attempt to crack down on fiscal and administrative injustices in the provinces he came into direct conflict with the aristocracy who had come to dominate the governance and politics of the provinces.¹⁹⁴ This argument is echoed by John Haldon who adds that Justinian's need for resources, both manpower and cash, coupled with his keen interest in the general governance

¹⁹⁴ Sarris 2006: 204-205.

of the empire on all levels, led to conflicts with the local governors who had become accustomed to having a certain level of autonomy within their spheres of influence.¹⁹⁵

JUSTINIANIC REFORMS

It is through his provincial legislation that we see a concentrated effort to establish imperial control over the fiscal operations. Justinian adopted several strategies that directly disadvantaged the traditional aristocracy in order to increase the imperial treasury, however, it should be noted that although his actions contributed to his unpopularity among the aristocracy, it seems as though that, in most cases, he was genuinely interested in rooting out corruption and fiscal malfeasance at the provincial level.¹⁹⁶ This motive is most clearly highlighted in the imperial edict *Imperatoriam Maiestatem* (533), wherein he states that the aim of the reforms was to ‘ensure that the emperor stood victorious over troublemakers, driving out their wickedness through the paths of the law.’¹⁹⁷

The overhaul of provincial administration was accomplished by several means. Justinian sought to reinvigorate the gubernatorial courts and thus make the reformed laws more accessible to his subjects. He also sought to remove local governors from their dependence on local patronage by substantially increasing their stipends.¹⁹⁸ To further reduce the reliance on local patronage, he reintroduced the prohibition of officials from acquiring property or goods by gift or purchase while they were in provincial office.¹⁹⁹ He also transferred ownership of the *res privata* and the *sacrum patrimonium* to the imperial household.²⁰⁰ Justinian’s reforms also

¹⁹⁵ Haldon 2005: 28-30. Stein 1949-1959 ii: 437, 446-483. Justinian’s move to assert imperial control over the legal and economic affairs of the empire was also mirrored in his religious policy. For an analysis of the source evidence of these policies, see Honoré 1978: 14-15. For a background on the Christological problems during late antiquity and the move to return to the imperial imposition of Chalcedonian Christianity during the age of Justinian, see Gray 2005: 215-238; cf. Noethlichs 2011: 49-51; cf. Bell 2013: 127-134. For his attempts at removing those who were in opposition to Chalcedonian Christianity, see Brock 1981: 87-121; cf. Bell 2013: 217-227. For his effort to reposition the ideological character of the empire within a framework of Chalcedonian Christianity with imperial authority (rather than the priesthood) as the principle arbitrator of spiritual life, see *J. Nov.* 6. *proemium*; Dvornik 1966: II, 817; cf. Dagron 1996: 312-313; cf. Leppin 2011: 78-99; cf. Uthemann 2011: 100-173.

¹⁹⁶ Maas 1986: 17.

¹⁹⁷ *C. Imp. Mai. proemium*. The image of the *imperator triumphans* was constantly deployed to display to emperor’s willingness to make imperial law more effective within the provinces. This image was particularly displayed at victory celebrations, such as the celebration of Belisarius’ conquest of the Vandals in Africa, see McCormick 1986: 64-68.

¹⁹⁸ *J. Nov.* 8.

¹⁹⁹ This prohibition had fallen into disuse under Theodosius II, see Jones 1964: 437.

²⁰⁰ *J. Nov.* 28.5 and 29.4.

imposed harsh penalties, such as the loss of a hand, on governors who abused their powers by failing to provide precise details of from where and whom their taxes came and what had been obtained. It also prohibited them from issuing licenses of fiscal exemption and implemented tighter controls on the sale of offices.²⁰¹ Justinian also attempted to improve oversight at the civic level. He not only increased the power of the *defensor civitatis* to give them more control to combat governors' malpractice but also employed local bishops to take a more active role in provincial management and to report any instances of abuse.²⁰² Finally, he adopted two policies of land confiscation. One on landholders who attempted to claim ownership of over estates or urban areas that were the property of others and two, he instituted a policy of direct land confiscation from those families whom he believed had questionable loyalty towards the crown.²⁰³ Although this second policy was used sparingly, it is easy to conceive of the distrust that he was cultivating among the aristocracy.

Although Justinian attempted to placate local governors by increasing their stipends, it is easy to apprehend how these reforms put the aristocracy into conflict with the emperor. This discontent among the aristocracy can be demonstrated by several events. The most significant was the Nika rebellion of 532.²⁰⁴ The Nika rebellion saw many of the dissenting senatorial elites influence the mob of Constantinople towards overthrowing the primary players in Justinian's reform programs, John the Cappadocian and Tribonian. Furthermore, they sought to replace Justinian with a descendant of the Anastasian household, Hypatius, and one whom they perceived as ideologically more in line with their interests. The rebellion was ultimately unsuccessful but does help demonstrate the growing discontent among the aristocracy towards the reform program. It should be noted, however, that in his survey of the Nika revolt, G. Greatrex dismisses the role of the aristocracy in orchestrating the riot.²⁰⁵ Greatrex argues that the prime motivator behind the riot was a breakdown in communication between the emperor and the populace and his indecision in properly handling the mob at the outset of the event. Alternatively, Gizewski argues that senatorial opposition to Justinian is crucial to the

²⁰¹ *J. Nov.* 17. Bell 2013: 99; cf. Sarris 2006: 209; cf. Jones 1964: 281-282.

²⁰² *J. Nov.* 15 and 17. Sarris 2006: 210; cf. Stein 1949: 399-400.

²⁰³ *Proc. Anec.* 12.1-13; cf. *Proc. Anec.* 19.11 where false charges of religious heresy were levied against landholders as context for these seizures.

²⁰⁴ For a full discussion of the Nika revolt, see Al. Cameron 1976: 259-276 and Greatrex 1997: 60-87.

²⁰⁵ Greatrex 1997: 83.

orchestration of the riot.²⁰⁶ In a more recent survey, Mischa Meier argues a different perspective for the motivations behind the events. He contends that Justinian consciously brought about the escalation of the situation to exert his control over the senate and to eliminate potential political opponents.²⁰⁷ Meier argues that Justinian would have been well aware of the consequences of denying communication to the populace, a situation that almost always led to violence.²⁰⁸

When one considers the different interpretations of the events of the Nika riot, I believe it is possible to view the growing conflict between Justinian and the senatorial class. Meier makes a convincing argument for Justinian's actions. He had the need to eliminate potential opponents and to shore up resources for the crown, on this he was successful on both fronts. There were eighteen patricians who had their property seized and were exiled in the aftermath of the riot.²⁰⁹ Gizewski admits that this is not a large number of senators to be punished and thus gives weight that there was not a senatorial conspiracy, however, when one examines the date of the riot against the backdrop of Justinian's provincial reforms it does appear to indicate the beginning of senatorial opposition to Justinian.²¹⁰ Furthermore, although I believe that Greatrex is correct in his summation that the cause of the Nika riot cannot be placed at senatorial opposition to the emperor, it does provide evidence of the growing discontent among the aristocratic class. The riot took place in 532 when Justinian was just beginning his provincial reforms, the bulk of his reforms did not go into effect until 535-539. The fact that there was already a growing faction within the senate opposed to his provincial policies in 532 demonstrates the hardening attitude of the aristocracy towards Justinian. Thus, it appears that the Nika revolt provides evidence of both the imperium and the aristocracy attempting to undermine each other in order to achieve their long term goals.

²⁰⁶ Gizewski 1988: 148, 177-178.

²⁰⁷ Meier 2003.

²⁰⁸ Justinian had served a major role in governance under the reign of Justin I and thus had close to fifteen years of experience in the seat of power. Furthermore, he would have witnessed the unrest of the year 520 and undoubtedly would have been aware of the Hippodrome riots in 498 and 507. For these earlier riots, see Joh. Mal. 396.16-397.6; cf. Al. Cameron 1976: 151.

²⁰⁹ Joh. Mal. 476-477; cf. Theoph. 185.27-186.2.

²¹⁰ Gizewski 1988: 183; cf. Jones 1964: 529 n. 5 and 1221-1222 n. 16.

A second indicator of the growing discontent among the aristocratic class was the propaganda program put forth by Justinian and his *quaestor* Tribonian.²¹¹ They sought to placate traditional aristocratic opinion by presenting the reforms as a restoration rather than a reform program. They maintained a general model for the structure of the laws, however, they introduced a new style in the prefaces for the presentation of the data.²¹² The difference was that these prefaces frequently included an assortment of details and facts about the province it was addressing and sought to emphasize ties between the province and the Roman Republic in past eras. Justinian attempted to accomplish this connection to the past in two distinct ways: he employed the use of old titles for new administrators of the provinces and frequently sought to tie them closer to the imperium by renaming the major cities within the provinces themselves after himself.²¹³ It is important to note that although these new administrative positions reflected past titles from the Roman Republic, such as *spectabilis*, the structure did not imitate any previous administrative system.²¹⁴ There is a multitude of evidence for the practice of renaming cities as well. Stein notes that at the least 27 cities were given Justinian's name.²¹⁵ Several examples of these are: a site near his birthplace in Macedonia (Honoré suggests that it could be Caričin Grad)²¹⁶ which was renamed *Iustiniana Prima*, Lipljan which was renamed *Iustiniana Secunda*, and Petra which was renamed *Iustiniana*.²¹⁷ The second means Justinian utilized the prefaces to propagate his restoration message was to create individual *ethne* for each province with specific histories and characteristics.²¹⁸ These histories, often fabrications, sought to create historical connections between the province and the Roman Empire.

²¹¹ Besides Justinian, the two main officials involved in the provincial reforms were Tribonian and John the Cappadocian.

²¹² Maas 1986: 17-31; cf. Sarris 2006: 216. The general model for the presentation of information in the Novels may be related to the time following the Second Sophistic movement, particularly the study of cities' histories, see Christ, Schmid, and Stālin 1924: 1040-41.

²¹³ For a complete list of officials, ranks, and salaries, see *J. Nov.* 8.3.

²¹⁴ Several other examples are the governor of Pisidia becoming the *praetor* *Iustiniana* and the vicarii of the province the *comites Iustiniani*. *J. Nov.* 24.4.5; cf. *J. Nov.* 25.1, for Lycaonia; *J. Nov.* 26.1.1, for Thrace; *J. Nov.* 28.3 for Helenopontus; *J. Nov.* 29.2, for Paphlagonia; *J. Nov.* 30.5, for Cappadocia; *J. Nov.* 31.1.2, for Armenia.

²¹⁵ Stein 1919: II. 277.

²¹⁶ Honoré 1978: 16-17.

²¹⁷ *Proc. Buildings*. 4.1.29. For Petra, *J. Nov.* 28. pr.

²¹⁸ Several examples for the creation (or modification) of an *ethne* in the prefaces include: Lycaonians, see *J. Nov.* 26; Pisidians, see *J. Nov.* 24; Thracians, see *J. Nov.* 26; Isaurians, see *J. Nov.* 27; Paphlogonians, see *J. Nov.* 29; Cappadocians, see *J. Nov.* 30.

The fact is that Lycaon, formerly king of Arcadia, in Greece, also came to live in the land of the Romans; and it was his annexation of the people formerly called Oenotri that formed the prelude to Rome's hegemony – these events to which we are referring being far further back than the times of Aeneas and Romulus. He sent out a colony to these parts, for which he took away part of Pisidia, and gave that region his own name, calling it Lycaonia after himself. It would accordingly be just to enhance it, also, with a post designated with ancient Roman marks of rank, and to combine the posts of present governors, that is to say the civil governor and military commander, into a joint one, adorning that with the distinguished appellation of 'praetor'.²¹⁹

When one looks at the actual historical connection between Rome and Lycaonia it appears that Justinian sought to use this fabricated history as a means to present his reforms in the context of a restoration and thus stem senatorial dissent.²²⁰ The use of the prefaces to present this image of a restoration was not limited to Lycaonia but was utilized in many of the provinces wherein Justinian was conducting reforms. Several other examples are Pisidia in Novel 24, Thrace in Novel 26, and Isauria in Novel 27.²²¹ Although Justinian sought to maintain aristocratic support by placing his reforms in the context of a restoration, as his reform program became more into effect, particularly the administrative and fiscal reforms in the provinces, it appears that any initial support he had garnered among the traditional elites was quickly evaporating.

The clearest indication to the loss of senatorial support is presented when one looks at the available written sources that covered Justinian's governorship in the 540s. The first source is in John Lydus' *De Magistratibus*.²²² John Lydus was a civil servant and antiquarian who lived during the first half of the sixth century. His work *De Magistratibus* contains a collection of data about the regalia and operation of civil service with a heavy focus on the Praetorian

²¹⁹ Λυκάονι γὰρ τῷ πρώην Ἀρκαδίας τῆς ἐν Ἑλλάδι βεβασιλευκότι καὶ τὴν Ῥωμαίων οἰκῆσαι γέγονε γῆν, καὶ τοὺς πρώην Οἰνώτρους προσλαβόντι τῇ Ῥωμαίων ἀρχῇ δοῦναι προοίμιον (φαμέν δὲ ταῦτα δὴ τὰ παλαιὰ τὰ πολλῶ τῶν Αἰνείου τε καὶ Ῥωμύλου χρόνων πρεσβύτερα), καὶ ἀποικίαν ἐπὶ τὰ τῆδε στείλαντι μέρη μοῖράν τινα τῆς Πισιδίας ἀφελέσθαι, ταύτη τε δοῦναι τὴν αὐτοῦ προσηγορίαν Λυκαονίαν τε ἐξ αὐτοῦ καλέσαι τὴν χώραν. Δίκαιον τοίνυν ἂν εἴη καὶ αὐτὴν ἀρχῇ κατακοσμήσαι τὰ παλαιὰ τῆς Ῥωμαϊκῆς τάξεως ἐπιγραφομένη σύμβολα, καὶ τοὺς νῦν αὐτῆς ἡγουμένους, τὸν τε ἄρχοντα φαμέν τὴν πολιτικὴν ἀρχὴν τὸν τε ἐφεστῶτα τοῖς ὄπλοις, εἰς ἓν τι συναγαγεῖν καὶ τῇ τοῦ πραιτόρος κοσμησῆαι προσηγορίᾳ. *J. Nov.* 25 (proemium), (195.5-18). trans. Miller and Sarris 2018: 285.

²²⁰ Lycaonia was annexed in the late second century B.C. and was governed by the governor of Asia, not as an independent province. See Martindale, Jones, Morris 1971: 126-146; cf. Hassall et. al. 1974: 202.

²²¹ For a detailed analysis of these prefaces, see Maas 1986: 19-25.

²²² Joh. Lyd. *De Magistratibus*. 3.57.

Prefecture (his position). His work is often vague and limited in his discussions, however, he does offer insight into how the bureaucracy and aristocracy viewed Justinian's reformation program.²²³ Lydus' initial assessment of Justinian is largely positive and frames him in the context of a restorer, however, as his work progresses it is clear that he is unhappy with the lack of progress towards this end. He provides a harsh criticism of John the Cappadocian and the policies that he enacted. Although he takes care to criticize John and his policies and not the emperor himself, it is difficult not to take the passage as a sign of the growing dissent for Justinian's reforms as John was one of the emperors two main actors in the propagation of reform. Furthermore, when one looks at the actions of Theodora in 541, namely the decision to move against John, it is possible to surmise that the emperor was attempting to placate the hardening attitude towards his policies and avoid a similar situation to the Nika Revolt.²²⁴

The second written source is from the anonymous author of the *Dialogue on Political Science*. The authorship and dating of the dialogue is still in question.²²⁵ The current theory is that the dialogue is a work referred to by Photius (patriarch of Constantinople 858-867, 877-886) in his *Bibliotheca* (which no author is named). Nigel Wilson argues that since only a portion of the *Dialogue* survives, it is unlikely that we will be able to make any firm conclusions on either the author of the text and that this anonymity is most likely due to the harsh criticism of Justinian's reign contained within the text.²²⁶ Although there is speculation to the identities of the two participants of the dialogue, it does appear that they represent two high ranking individuals in the administrative system who held a prominent social position and likely a large amount of wealth.²²⁷ Its critique is brief but indicates that there is a need for a sharing of power between the emperor and the other classes.²²⁸ This dialogue also makes the important assertion that it believes that the government could not operate without aristocratic support.²²⁹ It appears that the dialogue is expressing its interest in the continuation of cooperation between the

²²³ Maas 1992: 9-10.

²²⁴ Proc. Wars. 1.25.2.

²²⁵ It was originally proscribed to Peter the Patrician by Cardinal Mai, the librarian of the Vatican library in the early nineteenth century, who discovered and first published the text, see Mai 1827: 590-699. This theory has now been largely dismissed by more recent studies because of the different themes in the work to Peter and considerably different writing styles, see Mazzucchi 1978: 237-247.

²²⁶ Wilson 1996 (rev. ed.): 95-99. For the most recent translation and edition of Photius, see Wilson 1994.

²²⁷ Bell 2009: 13. For a full discussion on the possible identities of the two participants, see Bell 2009: 9-13; cf. Mazzucchi and Matelli 1985.

²²⁸ Fotiou 1981: 533-547.

²²⁹ O'Meara 2003: 173.

emperor and the aristocracy and suggests the author's distaste at the way Justinian's policies were headed.

The final written source that suggests a hardening against Justinian's rule is Procopius. Similar to Lydus, Procopius combines many passages complimenting Justinian himself while at the same time providing a critique of his policies.²³⁰ First of all, putting aside for a moment the *Anecdota*, a harsh yet biased critique of Justinian's policies, which was surely meant for circulation after the death of Justinian and for which the circulation during Justinian's reign is questionable. The *History of the Wars* certainly had a wide readership among the educated elites.²³¹ Procopius takes a similar tact to Lydus in that he frames his criticism towards officials rather than the emperor himself or are made by comparison or allusion, however, when one looks at speeches he inserts into the work it appears evident he is making a critique of Justinian's overall policies.²³² The *Anecdota*, while obviously biased against Justinian, more directly criticizes his laws and administration. As has been convincingly argued by A. Kaldellis, the last section of the *Anecdota* is largely a critique of the edicts of Justinian discussed above. Kaldellis argues that this final section denounces these newly created offices as an invention, and accuses the recipients of corruption as opposed to the restoration that Justinian was propagating it as.²³³ Furthermore, he argues that Procopius' aim was to demonstrate that edicts were largely beneficially to Justinian and his subordinates and that it was unjust towards the established aristocracy.²³⁴

What is important to extract from these sources is the underlying tensions that were growing among the aristocracy. It appears that the authors who operated in the latter half of Justinian's reign were either outright critical of his approach, such as with the *Anecdota* or the *Dialogues*, or were finding other ways to express their displeasure, such as through the critique of prominent officials who were nevertheless representatives of Justinian's policies. The attitudes of the authors here is important to understand as they represent a voice of the

²³⁰ Cameron 1985: 243. See also Carney 1971: II. 164-171, for a series of tables that combine the differing views of Procopius and Lydus on several aspects of Justinian and his policies.

²³¹ Kaldellis 2004b.

²³² For example, Proc. *Wars*. 8.35.35. Procopius attributes a speech to a Roman commander, John, which critiques the issue of overreaching ambition.

²³³ Kaldellis 2004a: 151-152.

²³⁴ For a full breakdown of the final section of the *Anecdota* and its relation to the edicts of Justinian, see Kaldellis 2004a: Appendix 1.

aristocratic class. The written evidence towards this growing dissent appears to gain weight when one looks at the situation during the final years of Justinian's reign and the circumstances surrounding the eventually coronation of Justin II.

The failure to maintain the comprehensive reform program is first evidenced through the frequency of the edicts themselves. There were 173 constitutions and edicts that were enacted between 533 and 565 yet only 31 date after 543. It appears that it is after this point that the aristocracy also began to reassert its influence. Furthermore, the edicts that were enacted in the 550s seem to be more focused on shoring up aristocratic support rather than providing a financial benefit to the crown. In 553, the first example of this is demonstrated in *Novel* 147. The Novel outlines that the crown will remit all taxes of those provinces that had fallen into arrears. Although it does state that all revenues that had already been collected should be sent to the public treasury, it is clear that the aristocracy was now regaining a measure of control over their finances.²³⁵

This trend towards financial independence and the growing divide between the emperor and the aristocracy can also be seen when one looks at the *oikoi* or land-owning estates. In the late 540s/early 550s, it appears from the papyrological record that certain *oikoi*, such as Aphrodito, had acquired the status of *autopragia* (self tax collection).²³⁶ There is debate, however, as to whether those who employed this practice were willing agents of the state or in fact attempting to undermine its power and authority. Gascou argues that the state had delegated roles that had traditionally been the responsibility of the civic *curia* to the great estates of the aristocracy, the Church, and the Crown.²³⁷ He argues that 'Rapportée au context particulier de la société égypto-byzantine, voire protobyzantine en général, l'opposition traditionnellement instituée entre la grande-propriété privée d'une part, la cite et l'état de l'autre me paraît revêtir peu ou pas de portée.'²³⁸ This line of argument has been followed by others, such as Banaji, who contends that this development was a logical progression and that there was little difference between the

²³⁵ *J. Nov.* 147.

²³⁶ *P. Cair. Masp.* 1 67019.

²³⁷ Gascou 1985: 1-90.

²³⁸ Gascou 1985: 60.

established pagarchy and the granting of *autopragia* to the landed elite.²³⁹ The main dissenter to this theory is Peter Sarris. He argues that there is no legal evidence that would suggest that imperial authorities initiated the system of *autopragia* on their own. Furthermore, he argues that growing aristocratic estates undertook this process on their own because it was more advantageous to themselves and the state in turn was forced to acquiesce.²⁴⁰ It should be noted, however, that Papaconstantinou argues that these two viewpoints are not necessarily incompatible. She contends that although the aristocracy was acquiring more wealth and territory and was using that to undermine the power of the central authority, it would not benefit them for that power to collapse completely as their own authority still depended on it.²⁴¹ I believe that Papaconstantinou highlights an important point when evaluating the growing discord between Justinian and the aristocracy. Although they were attempting to subvert his reform program, they still required imperial power to back their authority. Thus, when given the opportunity, they rallied behind a candidate for emperor (Justin II) who was more inclined to accommodate them.

Finally, one of the indicators of the deep unrest that had fostered during the last years of Justinian's reign is mentioned in the sources by John Malalas, Theophanes, and Paul the Silentiary. According to these sources, there was a failed assassination plot against him by several of members of the business class in Constantinople.²⁴² The plot was contrived by Ablabius, a former *monetarius*, Marcellus, an *argyroprates*, and Sergius, a curator of one of the imperial palaces.²⁴³ Both Malalas and Theophanes also connect Belisarius to the plot but given his lack of political ambition against Justinian over the previous forty years and the fact that Justinian absolves him of the crime several months later, it is unlikely that he was involved.²⁴⁴ There are few details that survive of the plot but it appears that they planned to kill Justinian in

²³⁹ Banaji 2008: 140. Support for Gascou's thesis, or the model for 'fiscal participation' has been argued several other scholars, see Hickey 2001: 42; Mazza 2001: 105; Kaplan 1992: 89-104; Palme 1989. It has also been extrapolated to be applied to the entire Eastern Empire, see Ward-Perkins 2000: 315-345.

²⁴⁰ Sarris 2006: 175-176. See also Liebeschuetz 1996: 395-396, who argues that Gascou's thesis would require an accompaniment of legal vocabulary by the imperial government to describe this process, which does not exist.

²⁴¹ Papaconstantinou 2012: 213-214.

²⁴² Joh. Mal. 18.141; Theoph. 349-350; Paul Sil. I. 22-32.

²⁴³ For Ablabius, see Martindale 1992: 2-3. It should be noted that it is possible that Ablabius was a musician attached to the factions. For Sergius, see Martindale 1992: 1128 (Sergius 8). For Marcellus, see Martindale 1992: 816 (Marcellus 4). Paul the Silentiary mentions the plot but does not provide any names or details on the conspirators, see Bell 2009: 189-212.

²⁴⁴ Evans 1996b: 257.

his dining hall. Ablabius was caught in the act, Marcellus killed himself upon discovery of the failure, and Sergius fled to the church of the virgin at Blackernae.²⁴⁵ The motives for the plot are unclear but it appears that Justinian's domestic and foreign policies were pressing heavily on the 'financial sector' of Constantinople. Justinian had requisitioned a heavy sum from them in order to cover the cost of the subsidies required for the truce with Persia and also required them to contribute a costly amount to the dedication of the new church of the martyr of Theodora.²⁴⁶ Although the plot was unsuccessful, it is apparent that Justinian's heavy-handed policies towards the elite class was driving a wedge between themselves and the throne.

Although Justinian made several attempts to make his policies more appealing, the strong push for centralization and imperial control over the aristocracy led to this growing divide between Justinian and the elite members of Byzantine society. This divide was demonstrated in the analysis of provincial administration and reform, the underlying tensions in the written sources, the conflicting motivations between the emperor and the provincial land-holding elite, and the tensions in Constantinople that ultimately led to an assassination plot. All these factors contributed to the desire to establish a pro-aristocratic emperor upon Justinian's death in AD 565, and set the stage for the elites to rally around Justin II.

ACCESSION OF JUSTIN II

Justin II ascended to the throne in 565. Since Justinian left no heirs to the throne, the choice for the next emperor was contested between two individuals. The first, Justin son of Germanus, was the Master of the Soldiers of Illyricum. He had experience fighting both the Persians and the Avars as well as fiscal acumen when dealing with military matters and appears to have been the more accomplished candidate.²⁴⁷ The second candidate was Justin son of Vigilantia (Justinian's sister). Justin II had an undistinguished career at this point but had several advantages over his rival. He was married to Theodora's niece Sophia, who was ambitious and

²⁴⁵ Joh. Mal. 18.141; Theoph. 349-350.

²⁴⁶ For the Persian subsidies, see Men. Proc. 6.1. For the dedication of the new church, see Joh. Mal. 18.137; cf. Macrides and Magdalino 1988: 72.

²⁴⁷ For his military campaigns against the Avars, see Agath. 4.22.7; cf. Evagr. HE. 5.1. In Persia, see Agath. 3.15.1; 3.17.4. In Armenia, see Agath. 4.21.1. For his financial capabilities, see Agath. 4.21.5-22.6.

a had a presence at court because of her close relationship to Theodora.²⁴⁸ More importantly, he was the *cura palatii*, a position that had been growing in prominence over the fifth and sixth centuries and put him at the center of imperial power within the palace. Furthermore, the only high official that was present at Justinian's death was Callinicus, the *sacellarius*, who declared that Justinian named Justin II (Vigilantia's son) his heir upon his deathbed.²⁴⁹ Justin II's coronation was unusual in that it was much more heavily reliant on the senate. According to Corippus, after Justinian's death, Callinicus immediately roused as many senators as he could to crown Justin as emperor. He was crowned inside the palace, acclaimed by the senate and the palace officials and not until after this is acclaimed by the people.²⁵⁰ Although Corippus presents this information in a panegyric, his account has generally been accepted and demonstrates how it differed significantly from the previous emperors of the fifth and sixth centuries.²⁵¹ The accounts of emperor accession preserved in *De Ceremoniis*, such as Leo I, Anastasius, and Justin I, all imply that these emperors were acclaimed by 'the people' (and presumably the army) within the Hippodrome and are preceded by the traditions of torques-crowning and shield raising.²⁵² As Cameron points out, the main difference here is that Justin II goes to the Hippodrome to address the people after being proclaimed emperor by the senate out of view of the people and the army.²⁵³

Justin II's political backing by the senate is important when evaluating the policies he enacted and the changes that took place in the empire after the reign of Justinian. In regards to domestic policy, Justin II declared in Novel 148 that he 'found the treasury burdened with many debts and reduced to utter exhaustion.'²⁵⁴ However, there is evidence that argues Justin II may not have been as economically crippled as his statement would suggest. Upon his accession, Justin II rewarded the land-owning aristocracy with a tax rebate and repaid the bankers whom the crown owed a significant expense under Justinian.²⁵⁵ Furthermore, Justin II engaged in many

²⁴⁸ Cameron 1975b: 5-21.

²⁴⁹ Coripp. *Iust.* 1. 75-88.

²⁵⁰ Coripp. *Iust.* 178 and 200. Justin son of Germanus was given the post of *augustalius* at Alexandria after Justin II ascended to the throne, however, it appears he was still considered too dangerous a rival to Justin II as he was executed on the order of Justin II and Sophia on October 3, 566, see Evagr. *HE.* 5.3; cf. John of Bicl. (a.568?).

²⁵¹ Cameron 1976a: 165 n. 165f.

²⁵² For Leo I, see *De Cer.* I.91. For Anastasius, see *De Cer.* I.92. For Justin I, see *De Cer.* I.93.

²⁵³ Cameron 1976a: 165 n.165f.

²⁵⁴ *J. Nov.* 148 proemium.

²⁵⁵ *J. Nov.* 148 proemium; Theoph. 257-258; Coripp. *Iust.* 360-404.

building projects, such as the rebuilding the public bath house of Tarsos, the improvement of the harbour of Julian (renamed the harbour Sophiani), the restoration of the great aqueduct, and the erection of statues of Sophia and himself around Constantinople.²⁵⁶ It is difficult to speculate without more intensive fiscal records but it appears that Justin II was appeasing the aristocracy both with his denouncement of Justinian and through the distribution of imperial funds. If this were the case, it is possible that the imperial treasury was not in as dire a situation as he had claimed.

Provincially, Justin II also abandoned Justinian's approach and in contrast to the heavy-handed administration from the crown, he granted much great autonomy to the provinces. The most significant reform to this end was in 569. In Novel 149, Justin II decreed that the governors were no longer going to be appointed by the crown but would now be elected 'by the great landowners and bishops of the provinces concerned.'²⁵⁷ This granted a level of power to the aristocracy that had not been observed since the reign of Anastasius. It was the capitulation of a long process through which imperial administrators and provincial landholders were becoming less distinct. It also reflects the issues with provincial management and tax collection previously discussed that Justinian was attempting to reform. Essentially what was taking place was a combination of the state becoming semi-private and the estate becoming semi-public.²⁵⁸

It appears that Justin II's domestic policy was in most cases working on behalf of the elites who had played a major role in awarding him the crown. In a few short years after Justinian's death, they no longer had to contend with the emperor appointing local officials who operated as 'the eyes and ears' of the crown and now were free to govern the provinces in a way that was largely beneficial to themselves. Individual estates grew more complex and profitable but it appears that they achieved this by binding the local populace more tightly to their control. As the populace became more easily exploited, their standard of living decreased. Furthermore, it appears that the rise of the aristocratic landholder made it more difficult to

²⁵⁶ For a survey of Justin II's building projects, see Cameron 1980b: 62-84; cf. Turtledove 1977: 404-419; cf. Theoph. 242, for an ancient account of Justin adorning churches and bestowing new forms of revenue to them.

²⁵⁷ *J. Nov.* 149.

²⁵⁸ Sarris 2006: 176.

collect taxes to fund imperial expenditures such as the military, a situation that would be costly to the emperors who operated in the last two decades of the sixth century.²⁵⁹

Justin II's foreign policy was also influenced by his desire to maintain aristocratic support. Justinian had consistently adopted an inclusive policy of 'tribute' in which he utilized cash subsidies and diplomatic gifts to subdue many foreign powers. This is frequently condemned by the contemporary sources who saw it as a sign of Byzantine weakness towards its neighbors. Procopius states that Justinian:

Never ceased lavishing great gifts of money on all barbarians, those of the east and those of the west and those to the north and to the south, as far as the inhabitants of Britain – in fact all the nations of the inhabited world, even those of whom we had never heard before, but the name of whose race we learned only when we first saw them. For they, of their own accord, on learning the nature of the man, kept streaming from all the earth to Byzantium in order to get to him. And he, with no hesitation, but overjoyed at the situation, and thinking it a stroke of good fortune to be dishing out the wealth of the Romans and flinging it to barbarians, or, for that matter, the surging waves of the seas, day after day kept sending them away, one after the other, purses stuffed with money.²⁶⁰

The purpose of the majority of this thesis will be to evaluate the effects that this change in foreign policy had on the landscape of sixth century society. As has been demonstrated in this chapter, the change in leadership from Justinian to Justin II brought about a significant change in the way the Byzantines conducted foreign policy. Although Justinian's reform program saw initial success, he was unable to adequately keep the senatorial class in line with his programs. His new policies put him in constant conflict with the elites, particularly in the provinces, who wanted to maintain a level of autonomy within their spheres of influence. Furthermore,

²⁵⁹ For the rise in complexity of individual estates, particularly the Apion estates, see Sarris 2006: 81-96. For the decrease in the value of coinage in the 560s, see Noeske 2000: III. Table 25 and Table 25A; cf Joh. Mal. 486, for the devaluation of coinage and the uprising of the people. For the issues with paying the military in the 580s and 590s, see Greatrex 2000: 274-275.

²⁶⁰ Τοὺς δὲ βαρβάρους ἅπαντας οὐδένα ἀνίεις καιρὸν χρήμασιν ἐδωρεῖτο μεγάλοις, ἐφόους τε καὶ ἐσπερίους πρὸς τε ἄρκτον καὶ μεσημβριαν, ἄχρι ἐς τοὺς ἐν Βρεττανίαις ὄκημένους καὶ γῆς πανταχόθι τῆς οἰκουμένης τὰ ἔθνη, ὧν περ οὐδὲ ὄσον ἀκοὴν πρότερον εἶχομεν, ἀλλὰ πρῶτον ἰδόντες εἶτα τοῦ γένους ὄνομα ἔγνωμεν. αὐτοὶ τε γὰρ πυνθανόμενοι τὸ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἦθος ἐπ' αὐτὸν διη ἐκ πάσης γῆς ξυνέρρεον ἐς Βυζάντιον. καὶ ὃς οὐδεμιᾶ ὀκνήσει, ἀλλ' ὑπερηδόμενός τε τῷ ἔργῳ τούτῳ, καὶ τι καὶ ἔρμαιον εἶναι οἰόμενος τὸν μὲν Ῥωμαίων ἐξαντλεῖν πλοῦτον, βαρβάρους δὲ ἀνθρώπους ἢ ῥοθίοις τισὶ θαλασσίοις προῖεσθαι, ἀεὶ καθ' ἐκάστην αὐτῶν ἕκαστον ξὺν ἀδροῖς χρήμασιν ἀπεπέμπετο. Proc. *Anec.* 19.13.1-16.1.

unpopular policies he enacted in order to secure more funds for the crown, such as the practice of land confiscation, and the attempt of the elites to support a new candidate for emperor during the Nika revolt help to demonstrate the underlying tensions that were growing among the aristocracy during the second half of his reign. Finally, the selection of Justin II to succeed him, as opposed to a much more experienced candidate, provides evidence that the elite class were seeking to support an emperor who would be more inclined to create policies that were in line with their own interests.

The following two chapters will now look at the foreign policies of the Byzantines towards these groups and determine what affect the changes that occurred between the reigns of Justinian, Justin II, and Tiberius II had on the Empire and on the groups themselves. They will seek to demonstrate how the changes to foreign policy played an impact on the development of these polities and also the way in which they interacted with the Byzantine state. Furthermore, they will seek to examine how these relationships fostered growth within their own societies which led to more powerful neighbours along the Byzantine frontiers and contributed to the precarious situation the empire found itself in at the end of the sixth century.

The first of the two will covers the changes in foreign policy in relation to the peoples of the Balkans and the West, including the Avars, Slavs, Lombards, and Gepids. It will analyze the changes in foreign policy that were implemented under Justin II and Tiberius II. By examining the literary and archaeological sources, I will argue that Justin II abandoned the 'inclusivist' approach to foreign policy that was maintained by Justinian and adopted a more 'exclusivist' approach. I will look at each group in turn and argue that many of the conflicts that pervaded the late sixth century were largely the cause of changes in the foreign policies of the Byzantine Empire. Furthermore, this chapter will look at the ramifications of Byzantine foreign policy on the polities with which they interacted and then explore the consequences for those polities when that policy was abandoned.

CHAPTER 3: FOREIGN POLICY - PART I

The latter half of the sixth century was a time of deep conflict for Byzantium. The period directly after Justinian's long reign (527-565) was one of instability and change. Over the following twenty years the empire would witness the succession of three different emperors, Justin II, Tiberius II, and Maurice, all of whom had conflicting views on how to govern. One particular element of government that would undergo drastic reforms was that of foreign policy. Justinian's wars of expansion have been the topic of much debate among contemporary and modern scholars.²⁶¹ Although he has been praised for his ability to manage delicate diplomatic relations along his frontiers, he has often been heavily criticized for the strain his wars of expansion left on the empire. Harry Turtledove, in his dissertation *The Immediate Successors of Justinian: A Study of the Persian Problem and of Continuity and Change in Internal Secular Affairs in the Later Roman Empire during the Reigns of Justin II and Tiberius II Constantine*, states that 'when Justinian died, he left behind an Empire far greater in territory than it had been on his accession, but with resources inadequate to defend his gains.'²⁶² But how limited was the treasury at the end of Justinian's rule? Was Justin II's frugality when dealing with foreign embassies the result of not having sufficient funds or did he make a concentrated effort to change the way that Byzantium dealt with foreign embassies? There is evidence that argues Justin II may not have been as economically crippled as his reluctance to pay out tributaries would suggest. Justin II engaged in many building projects, such as the rebuilding the public bath house of Tarsos, the improvement of the harbour of Julian (renamed the harbour Sophiani), the restoration of the great aqueduct, and the erection of statues of Sophia and himself around

²⁶¹ There has already been much scholarship on the history of Justinian's wars. See Proc. *Wars*, for a contemporary account of his campaigns. For a modern analysis of these wars which discusses the long term consequences of these wars of expansion, see Pohl 2005: 448-476; cf. Greatrex 2005: 477-509; for an analysis of the Persian wars and a collection of the relevant source material, see Greatrex and Lieu 2002; for an examination of the Gothic Wars, see Jacobson 2009; for the conquest and subsequent revolt in Africa, see Evans 1996b: 126-159; for recent works on Justinian's reign as a whole, see Meier 2011; Mass 2005; Moorhead 1994.

²⁶² Turtledove 1977: vi; cf. Norwich 1997: 84, who states that 'Justinian cannot be considered truly a great ruler because economically he leaves the empire prostrate.'

Constantinople.²⁶³ Furthermore, at the beginning of Tiberius' reign as Caesar (574), according to John of Ephesus, he distributed lavish gifts to the people of Constantinople and on his ascension to sole ruler 'saw with his own eyes the piles of money Justin and Sophia had gathered.'²⁶⁴

Twentieth-century scholars tend to judge Justinian's attempts to restore the empire in a negative light. They argue that the heavy use of resources involved during his campaigns in the West severely weakened the stability of the empire and that this focus on restoring the western territories caused him to ignore relations in the East.²⁶⁵ These arguments are supported by the fact that almost immediately after his death the empire was thrown into a myriad of conflicts which resulted in the loss of much of these reclaimed territories. But was it Justinian's over-expenditure of resources that weakened the empire in the years after his death or did his foreign policies allow certain groups to gain a level of prestige and stability that would enable them to interact with Byzantium on a more equal footing and to become more apt at exploiting Byzantine weaknesses?

The focus of the following chapter will be to analyze the changes on foreign policy enacted by Justin II and Tiberius II and to determine the effect that they had on the empire. It will analyze the specific changes in foreign policy in the latter half of the sixth century. It will argue that Justinian took an 'inclusivist' policy when dealing with foreign powers and that this changed to a more 'exclusivist' policy under Justin II.²⁶⁶ It will also argue that Tiberius II attempted to revert back to this 'inclusivist' policy and look at how these changes affected not only the Byzantine Empire but also how frontier societies that were less socially stratified and

²⁶³ For a survey of Justin II's building projects, see Cameron 1980: 62-84; cf. Turtledove 1977: 404-419; cf. Theoph. 242, for an ancient account of Justin adorning churches and bestowing new forms of revenue to them.

²⁶⁴ Joh. Eph. *HE*. 3.11. Translated by R. Payne Smith 1860: 186.

²⁶⁵ Jones 1964: 301; Evans 2005: 65; Norwich 1988: 266; Norwich 1997: 80-90.

²⁶⁶ The terms 'inclusive' and 'exclusive' foreign policy have been properly defined in the introduction of this thesis. Inclusive policy being Justinian's willingness to work with foreign powers on a more equal footing, either through tribute or political alliances. Exclusive policy being Justin II's refusal to work with foreign powers as equals and to operate from a perceived position of superiority.

less technologically advanced reacted and were developed in response to contact with an imperial power.

AVARS

“The Romans were suffering greater miseries from an abominable people, who, from their long hair, are called Avars.”²⁶⁷

The establishment of an Avar power base in 568 marks a significant turning point in the politics of the Carpathian Basin. The Avar horsemen represented a profound new threat to Byzantine security and would become a major political and military force in the region for the next two centuries. Once they entered the Byzantine sphere of influence, the manner in which successive emperors directed their foreign policy would have significant ramifications for the Empire. The Avars’ nomadic nature led their political leadership to be based more on the authority of the *khagan* than on any defined territories. The *khagan* achieved this authority both through military victories and the display of wealth.²⁶⁸ The development of a nomadic political structure is described in an eighth-century Turkish inscription discovered in the Orkhon region of central Asia which recounts the formation of a nomadic power.

My father, the khagan, went off with seventeen men. Having heard the news that [he] was marching off, those who were in the towns went up mountains and those who were on mountains came down [from there]; thus they gathered and numbered seventy men. Due to the fact that Heaven granted strength, the soldiers of my father, the khagan, were like wolves, and his enemies were like sheep. Having gone on campaigns forward and backward, he gathered together and collected men; and they all numbered seven hundred men. After they had numbered seven hundred men, [my father, the khagan] organized and ordered the people who had lost their state and their khagan, the people who had

²⁶⁷ Joh. Eph. *HE*. 6.24; trans. R. Payne Smith 1860: 428.

²⁶⁸ For a brief history of the development of the *khaganite*, see Dobrovits 2003.

turned slaves and servants, the people who had lost the Turkic institutions, in accordance with the rules of my ancestors.²⁶⁹

Although this inscription describes the beginning of a Turkish nomadic polity, it is likely the Avars were formed in a similar way.²⁷⁰ It demonstrates how a new power could form by bringing different elements of other groups together under the leadership and military success of a new *khagan*. The importance of wealth to the ‘elite class’ is also demonstrable in the archaeological record. Many Avar ‘funeral pyre’ assemblages have been discovered across the Carpathian Basin containing spearheads and horse gear within them, “princely graves” buried in separate family graveyards, which have been discovered at Kunbáony, Bosca, and Tépe, were lavishly decorated with various power symbols, such as gold covered carvings of bird-shaped heads (used on staff or scepter heads) and swords with P- and D- shaped suspension mounts of Eastern European type.²⁷¹

Justinian adopted an inclusive foreign policy when dealing with Avar embassies which aided this political development by supporting both of these means of authority. According to John of Ephesus, the first encounter between the Byzantines and the Avars occurred in 557,

Their first appearance in the Roman territories was in the days of king Justinian, who received their ambassadors with great honour, and made them rich presents of gold and silver and dresses and girdles and saddles ornamented with gold; and also send similar presents by their hands to their chiefs.²⁷²

The presence of this gold is supported by the archaeological evidence.²⁷³ The finds that are dated to the early Avar period do not consist of large coin hoards but are still abundant with Roman gold.²⁷⁴ Between 568 and 626 the Avars received around 6 million solidi from the

²⁶⁹ P. Geary 2001: 94; cf. Pohl 1988: 164-165, for translation of the inscription.

²⁷⁰ Pohl 2003: 574-575.

²⁷¹ Vida 2007: 15-16.

²⁷² Joh. Eph. *HE*. 6.24; trans. R. Payne Smith 1860: 428.

²⁷³ There are several comprehensive surveys which provide an overview of the archaeological finds related to the Avars in the Middle Danube region, see Daim 2003: 463-570; Vida 2007: 13-46.

²⁷⁴ There is a wealth of grave sites (ca. 60000) which have been identified as “Avar” because of their placement in Avar controlled regions dated to the period 568-804. Furthermore, the assemblages adhere to a uniform

Byzantines because of tribute payments and treaties, however, there have been very few coins discovered in Avar territories during this period.²⁷⁵ It is likely that much of the gold coinage that was given to the Avars was melted down to provide the materials for gold jewelry and other luxury items. There are many finds which contain large earrings, some having the weight of eight to ten solidi, and belt ornaments adorned with gold insignia that are decorated with Byzantine techniques. A prime example of this can be found in the grave at Konbábony. An individual was discovered buried with two belts with gold fittings, a gold pot, a few wooden vessels with gold mounts, and his funeral robe was decorated with pieces of gold foil. This site also produced various ‘pseudo-buckles,’ which were decorative fittings of pure gold which were made in the shape of buckles.²⁷⁶ Furthermore, the fact that these valuable items were predominantly found in ‘princely graves’ that were located outside of the normal burial patterns provides further evidence that the display of wealth was exercised by an elite strata of their society.²⁷⁷ The importance this influx of gold had on Avar society needs to be stressed. Gold tribute was often viewed by chiefs as a symbol of status and prestige among their people.²⁷⁸ Gold insignia could also give Avar leaders a level of authority among their people. These insignia could in turn be viewed as a sign of honor and proof that the Byzantine Emperor sanctioned their right to rule.²⁷⁹ This relationship was also important to the Byzantines as it placed a certain amount of dependence on Avar leaders to seek the approval of the emperor.²⁸⁰ However, while some, such as Justinian, viewed the use of gifts as a means to keep foreign

‘Central Asian’ type which has been connected to the Avar polity, see Daim 2003: 464 (fig. 1) and 466 (fig. 2); cf. Vida 2007: 14-16.

²⁷⁵ Curta 2001: 205. For a compilation of Byzantine treaties and payments to the Avars, see Pohl 1988: 502. For coin distribution, see Bóna 1990.

²⁷⁶ Tóth and Horváth 1992; Daim 2001: 490-495. Examples of these buckles were also found at Bósca and Tépe, see Garam 1990:253-272.

²⁷⁷ The best example of these princely graves is located east of the Danube in the Bósca-Kunbábony group, dated to the middle of the seventh century, see Garam 1990: 253-272. For the use of these objects to indicate the elite class of society, see Szénpeteri 1993.

²⁷⁸ Schmauder 2002: 1.218; cf. Hardt 2004. In fact when errors or perceived injustices among barbarians when distributing gifts occurred, it could lead to serious conflicts within their society, see Priscus Rhetor, *fr.* 11.2; Amm. Marc. 26.5.7; Agath. 5.11-12.

²⁷⁹ The use of prestige good by Byzantine Emperors to place dependence on foreign polities has been explored in several sources, see Pohl 1997: 83; Shanzer 1996-1997: 237; Hardt 2004.

²⁸⁰ Nechaeva 2011: 180.

groups subservient to Constantinople, others saw it differently. The act of bestowing gifts could also be viewed as a sign of Byzantine subservience. This issue was particularly a concern towards the end of Justinian's rule. According to Procopius, the Five-Year Truce made with the Persians effectively did the unthinkable, namely subjecting the Byzantines to Persia by way of tribute.²⁸¹ This issue is also discussed by Menander in relation to the Avars. According to Menander,

On this occasion the envoys of the Avars wished to come to try the Emperor and to see whether they would in the same way be able to obtain gifts, make mock of the Romans' inertia and turn their negligence to their own profit.²⁸²

The presence of this opposing view on the implications of bestowing gifts is significant when one considers the response of Justin II towards foreign powers (discussed below). It is likely that this had at least some influence on his changes to foreign policy, particularly if it was a concern among the senate, whom he owed a certain amount of allegiance.²⁸³

Justinian also supported the expansionist policy of the Avars. According to Menander, when a certain Kandikh was sent to Byzantium as an ambassador of the Avars, Justinian allied himself with them in order to attack his enemies that were along the frontier.²⁸⁴ Menander states that the Avars were successful in defeating the Unigurs, the Zali, and the Sabirs, and that they plundered the land of the Antae.²⁸⁵ These victories put the Avars in a powerful position and their sphere of influence as well as their ability to conduct successful campaigns continued to grow from this support.

²⁸¹ Proc. Wars. 8.15, 16.

²⁸² τότε δὴ οὖν οἱ πρέσβεις τῶν Ἀβάρων ἐς πείραν ἰέναι τοῦ βασιλέως ἐβούλοντο, εἴ γε οὐκ ἄλλως δῶρα λαμβάνειν αὐτοῖς καὶ τῇ Ῥωμαίων ῥαθυμίᾳ ἐπεντροφᾶν καὶ τὸ ἀμελὲς αὐτῶν οἰκεῖον τίθεσθαι κέρδος. Men. Proc. fr. 8.6-9; trans. Blockley 1985: 93. Agathias also expresses criticism of Justinian's policy of buying peace with tribute, see Agath. 5.14.

²⁸³ Pohl 1988: 209-215; Pohl 1997: 83; Nachaeva 2011: 175-182.

²⁸⁴ According to Menander, the treaty consisted of the Avars attacking several enemies who were currently an issue for the Byzantines (Unigurs, Zali, Sabirs) in exchange for "cords worked with gold, couches, silken garments, and a great many other objects." Men Proc. fr. 5.2.

²⁸⁵ Men. Proc. fr. 5.1-3.

When Justin II ascended to the throne in 565, in contrast to Justinian, he adopted a more exclusive approach to foreign policy. An account of his first interaction with the Avars is preserved in John of Ephesus, Menander, and Corippus,

Never again will you be loaded at the expense of this kingdom, and go your way without doing us any service: for from me you will receive nothing. And when the Avars began to threaten, he grew angry, and said Do you dogs dare to threaten the Roman realm? Learn that I will shave off those locks of yours, and then cut off your heads.²⁸⁶

According to John, the Avars were seeking tribute in return for not attacking Byzantine territories. Menander provides a more grandiose version of events (by adding several speeches from Justin and the Avars) but also provides more detail on the Avar's request. According to Menander, the Avars were also performing another service for the Byzantines. He states that they also supported the Empire by attacking neighbouring barbarians who were conducting raids in Thrace and also provide a buffer between these peoples and Byzantine territories.²⁸⁷ Corippus gives a similar account to Menander but, similar to John, focuses on the fact that Justin should pay tribute so that the Avars do not invade his territories.²⁸⁸ Although it is not mentioned by John and Corippus, it is likely that part of the Avars' tribute was to provide a defense against other barbarians along the frontier. This fits with Justinian's inclusive policy of employing allies to prevent attacks on his territories without having to commit his own forces.²⁸⁹

John does add one detail that is not present in the other accounts. He mentions that the senate and the people were not in favor of this policy, believing that he was 'stripping the whole kingdom, and giving it to barbarians.'²⁹⁰ This may provide some insight into one of the reasons why Justin II was inclined to reverse this policy. He had only recently been elevated to the

²⁸⁶ Joh. Eph. *HE*. 6.24; trans. Payne Smith 1860: 429.

²⁸⁷ Men. Proc. *fr.* 8

²⁸⁸ Coripp. *Iust.* 3.231-407. Corippus' speeches are much more filled with elaborate rhetoric. He creates a dichotomy between the calm, civilized nature of the Byzantines and the wildness of the Avars in order to present an image that would be more appealing his audience, see Cameron 1976a: 190.

²⁸⁹ In his account of Justinian's meeting with the Avars, John does mention that Justinian did see his tribute as a means to 'subdue all his enemies,' Joh. Eph. *HE*. 6.24.

²⁹⁰ Joh. Eph. *HE*. 6.24.

throne and his support was primarily senatorial.²⁹¹ It is plausible that this change in policy was one means to continue to receive that support.²⁹² This change in policy would have lasting repercussions for the Byzantines. Although the Avar did not attack the Byzantines directly after this encounter, they continued to increase their power base along the Balkan frontier by consolidating their hold over the region. Thus, they agreed when Alboin, the king of the Lombards sent envoys to the Avar leader Baian in order to create an alliance against the Gepids. Their strategy was to annihilate the Gepids and then to launch a direct attack against the Byzantines through Scythia and Thrace.²⁹³

Justin II's exclusionist policy is demonstrated again when looking at the events surrounding the siege of Sirmium. According to Menander, who is the main source for the conflict, the Avars laid siege to Sirmium in 568 and unable to take the city, attempted to sue for peace.²⁹⁴ He claims that Baian requested a small offering from the city but was refused by the commander Bonus, who did not want to offend the Emperor by offering gifts without his approval.²⁹⁵ This caused Baian to send the Kutrigur Huns, who were under his control, to conduct raids into Dalmatia, while he took his troops and established himself in the surrounding lands of Pannonia which were controlled by the Gepids.²⁹⁶ After they became the dominant power in Pannonia the Avars once again tried to negotiate a subsidies deal with the Byzantines. Baian requested that Justin hand over the city of Sirmium, the subsidies that had traditionally gone to the Kutrigurs and Utigurs (whom he now controlled), and Usdibad the Gepid, because

²⁹¹ Sarris 2011: 162; cf. Cameron 1985: 250; Evans 1996b: 264.

²⁹² Justin was highly critical of many of Justinian's policies which were anti-aristocratic, his changes to religious and domestic policy will be discussed later in this work.

²⁹³ Men. Proc. *fr.* 12.1.

²⁹⁴ John of Ephesus does not mention the siege itself but states that the Avars 'rapidly grew in wealth and importance by the conquest and plunder of many of the northern tribes.' He also corroborates Menander's claim that they took possession of the Gepid lands in Pannonia before they sent ambassadors to attempt a second round of negotiations with Justin II, see Joh. Eph. 6.24.

²⁹⁵ Menander notes that even the Byzantine commander, Bonus, is aware of Justin II's reluctance to give tribute and refuses Baian for fear of being punished by the emperor.

²⁹⁶ Men. Proc. *fr.* 12.5.

he claimed that the Gepids were now also under his control. According to Menander, Justin gave the following response,²⁹⁷

War rather than peace shall profit the Romans. It is more painful to be the friends of the Avars – nomads and foreigners – than their enemies, since their friendship is treacherous. It is better to suffer wounds to our bodies rather than to our spirits... peace is not to be preferred to our advantage.²⁹⁸

The exclusionist stance towards foreign policy alienated the relationship between the two peoples that had been established by Justinian. This is significant when one considers the means Avar *khagans* employed to maintain their power base, the display of wealth and warfare. The loss of a steady flow of gold led the Avars to take a more militaristic approach towards their neighbours. There were able to secure tribute payments from the Franks after a successful campaign against Sigisbert in 566.²⁹⁹ Furthermore, as the Lombards move west into Italy in 568, the Avars are able to consolidate their holdings in Pannonia and take over the territories of the Gepids. This effectively upset the balance of power in the region and resulted in the Avars being free to conduct a series of raids into Byzantine territories during the 570s. The result of which is that on Tiberius II's elevation to Caesar in 574, he had a much more dangerous neighbour to attempt to manage.

The growth in the Avar polity caused Tiberius to reconsider Justin's exclusionist policy towards the Avars. Upon his elevation to Caesar in 574, he began the process of reverting back to a more Justinianic policy of inclusion. Tiberius may have reverted to this policy out of

²⁹⁷ It should be noted that although Menander likely had a credible source for the events that transpired here, his inclusion of speeches is a literary device that he adopts from the classicising historians. John of Ephesus records the details of a second Avar embassy during the reign of Justin II but it is likely that he is confusing this event with a later embassy. The focus of this anecdote is how the Avars forced Byzantine engineers to construct a bridge across the Danube. This is more likely a description of the second siege of Sirmium in 581/582 when the Avars forced the engineers they still had after preventing a Slavic incursion to help blockade the Danube while they attacked Sirmium. Men. Proc. fr. 21; Theophylact Simocatta, 1.7.1.

²⁹⁸ λυσιτελήσει δὲ Ῥωμαίοις ἀντὶ τῆς εἰρήνης ὁ πόλεμος. Ἀβάρων γὰρ τῶν νομάδων τε καὶ ἐπηλύδων καθεστάναι φίλους τῆς ὡς αὐτοὺς δυσμενείας βαρύτερον, ἄλλως τε καὶ φιλίας ὑπούλου καθεστῶσης. κρεῖσσον ἐν τοῖς σώμασιν καὶ οὐχὶ ταῖς ψυχαῖς φέρειν τὰ τραύματα... οὐ γὰρ ἡσυχία τοῦ συνοίσοντος αἰρετώτερον. Men. Proc. fr. 12.6.72-79; trans. Blockley 1985: 141-143.

²⁹⁹ Greg. Tur. Hist. 4.29.

necessity. The events of 573/574 demonstrate that the Avar raids were becoming more than the Byzantines could handle. According to several sources, Tiberius was sent to deal with an Avar incursion after they crossed the Danube into Roman territories. Although this event is mentioned by Theophanes, Evagrius, and Menander, few details are given of the incident. Each source just relates that Tiberius was sent to meet an Avar attack and was defeated.³⁰⁰ Menander adds the detail that a treaty was finally made between the Byzantines and the Avars after this event and provides the sole source for the details of the treaty. He states that eighty thousand *nomismata* a year was to be paid to the Avars to secure the peace and that this was agreed to by Tiberius after he had been elevated to Caesar.³⁰¹

Even if Tiberius was forced into this treaty with the Avars through his defeat, his inclusive strategy can be more clearly seen when one examines his actions against the Slavic incursion of Thrace in 577/578.³⁰² According to Menander, Tiberius was overtaxed with the renewed conflict against Persia in the East and employed the Avars to make war on the Slavs.³⁰³

Greece was being plundered by the Slavs, and a succession of dangers was threatening there on all sides...since he [Tiberius] was unable to face them in battle because the

³⁰⁰ Men. Proc. fr. 15.5; Evag. 5.11; Theoph. 247. See Men. Proc. fr. 15.6.

³⁰¹ Men. Proc. fr. 25.1.1-10. See Blockley 1985: n. 295, for the dating of this treaty. It is likely that Tiberius was not yet Caesar at the time of the attack, Theophanes refers to him as the *comes excubitorum*, Menander as a general, and Evagrius indicates that he had been sent against the Avars earlier to when he administered the state.

³⁰² There is debate as to the exact date of this encounter, see Stein 1919: 105, for 578; Bury 1889 (repr. 1966): 117 n.2, for 577; and Doblhofer 1955:182, for 576. According to Menander the raids took place in the fourth year of Tiberius' reign as Caesar which would date it between Dec. 7, 577 and Dec. 7, 578, see Men. Proc. fr. 20.2. John of Biclar records that many of the attacks on the shores of Thrace were committed by the Avars, however he often confuses Slavs and Avars and more than likely does so in this instance, see Joh. Biclar 4-5. (a.576?). There is debate as to whether the presence of coin hoards in Greece can be used as sufficient evidence to corroborate these attacks. See Kroll et al. 1973: 304 and Hohlfelder 1975: 273 and 1976: 334-337, for the argument that the burial and non-retrieval of coin hoards is indicative of Slavic raids. See Curta 2001: 89-92, for the counter-argument that the hoards were more likely a response to inflation. This issue is discussed further below, see pg. 82.

³⁰³ Renewed hostilities broke out between Byzantium and Persia in 578 after Khusro began to conduct raids into Mesopotamia. Maurice, the *magister militum*, had a large contingent of troops with him to conduct raids on both sides of the Tigris, see Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 160-162. See also, Joh. Eph. HE. 6.1-2; cf. Theophylact Simocatta 3.10.1-3.

Roman armies were occupied with the wars in the East, he sent an embassy to Baian, chief of the Avars...Tiberius persuaded him to make war on the Slavs.³⁰⁴

John of Ephesus also records this incursion. Although he does not mention the involvement of the Avars, he corroborates Menander's statement that Greece was being overwhelmed by the Slavs and Tiberius was unable to respond because of his commitment of troops to the East. Tiberius sent John, the governor of the cities of Illyricum, to ferry an Avar army across the Danube in order to attack the Slavs. This strategy was successful and the Avars were able to push the Slavs out of Greece and liberate several thousand Byzantine prisoners. Tiberius' victory, however, was short-lived. The ability of the Empire to include different barbarian groups in their foreign policy and to balance the groups by playing them off on one another was deteriorating with the ascendancy of the Avars. There were fewer groups in the region and those who were there began to fall under the influence of the Avars. Despite the role they played in preventing the Slavic incursion, it is possible that they influenced the Slavs towards the siege of Thessalonica in 582 and at the same time the Avars became increasingly aggressive towards Byzantium.

This new Avar aggression resulted in the siege of Sirmium.³⁰⁵ The Avars forced the co-operation of the Byzantine engineers they still had at their disposal from the defense of the Slav incursion and managed to blockage the city while he built up ships to move the rest of his army.³⁰⁶ The *khagan* of the Avars continued to profess that he was not in fact there to take the city but instead to cross the river in order to put down another Slav incursion, however the inhabitants of the city still sent envoys to Tiberius to inform him of the events and to gain help in the defense of the city. Tiberius was unable to respond to this threat because the majority of his troops were still engaged in conflict with the Persians over Armenia in Mesopotamia and

³⁰⁴ Ὅτι κεραϊζομένης τῆς Ἑλλάδος ὑπὸ Σκλαβηνῶν, καὶ ἀπανταχόσε ἀλλεπαλλήλων αὐτῇ ἐπηρτημένων τῶν κινδύνων...οὔτε μὴν οἶός τε ὦν πολέμοις σφίσιν ὑπαντιάζειν τῷ ἀνὰ τοὺς ἐφους πολέμου τὰς Ῥωμαίων τετράφθαι δυνάμεις, πρεσβεύεται ὡς Βαϊανὸν τὸν ἡγεμόνα τῶν Ἀβάρων...καὶ πείθει γε αὐτὸν κατὰ Σκλαβηνῶν ἄρασθαι πόλεμον. Men. Proc. fr. 21.1-10; trans. Blockley 1985: 193.

³⁰⁵ Whitby 1988: 88 n. 56, who places the date of the siege late in 581; Stein 1919: 113, places it early in 582.

³⁰⁶ Men. Proc. fr. 25.1; cf. Joh. Eph. HE. 6.32. The beginning of this incident is likely what John confuses with the second embassy to Justin II, see n, 89.

had counted on the Lombards to check the growth of the Avars. All attempts at breaking the siege of the city failed and Tiberius eventually had to concede the city to the Avars. This was a major defeat for the Byzantines as Sirmium was of significant strategic importance. They could no longer directly attack Avar territories and this allowed the Avars to gain a bridgehead across the Danube.³⁰⁷

After an analysis of the interactions between the Byzantines and the Avars in the sixth century, it appears that the imperial center had a significant effect on the development of the Avar polity. Justinian's inclusive foreign policy towards the Avars enabled the Byzantines to subdue several groups that were becoming a problem on the frontier but had the consequence of aiding the development of the Avars into a more expansive and powerful polity. Furthermore, during this period the Avars became reliant on a steady stream of gold that was important to their socio-political organization. The result of this was that when Justin II came to the throne and removed both this supply of income and the treaties that targeted the Avars at other polities, they were strong enough to direct their campaigns for gold and conquest towards Byzantine territories.

SLAVS

The Slavs provide a unique example of foreign relations because of their difference in organizational structure and the consequences, perhaps unintentionally, of the fortification program that was implemented in the latter half of Justinian's reign. Politically, the sources attest that the Slavs operated under a form of democracy or more accurately, a decentralized form of organization which placed leadership in the hands of small familial groups rather than a central figure. This decentralized organization is attested in the sources by Procopius and Maurice's *Strategikon*,

³⁰⁷ It is interesting to note that although the Avars captured this strategic base of operations, they were only able to hold it for a little over a year. At that time the city was struck with a major fire and had to be abandoned, see Joh. Eph. *HE*. 6.33.

For these nations, the Sclaveni and the Antae, are not ruled by one man, but they have lived from of old under a democracy, and consequently everything which involves their welfare, whether for good or for ill, is referred to the people.³⁰⁸

The nations of the Slavs and Antes live in the same way and have the same customs. They are both independent, absolutely refusing to be enslaved or governed.³⁰⁹

The common thread that these sources appear to indicate is that the Slavs operated under a form of ‘military democracy.’ This concept was introduced by Lewis Morgan in his work *Ancient Society*, in which he describes it as a ‘transitional stage from kin-based societies to state societies.’³¹⁰ Karol Modzelewski has argued that this is a reference to a *wiec*, a common political institution among Germanic, Baltic, and Slavic peoples from North-Eastern Europe who had not been influenced by the process of Romanization.³¹¹ The *wiec* is described as a gathering of people in a sacred place to discuss particular issues and to arrive at a decision with unanimous consent.³¹² Adam Izdebski has recently argued that the Slavs maintained this form of government throughout the sixth and seventh centuries. He argues that the appearance of a group of Slavs on the Frankish frontiers in the 620s with a similar political organization, the *wiec*, indicates that they held onto some form of their archaic socio-political institutions and thus were not influenced by contact with Mediterranean civilization. Furthermore, Izdebski dismisses the notion that the development of powerful leaders within the Slavic community in the second half of the sixth century played a role in their ethnic formation process.³¹³ The main

³⁰⁸ τὰ γὰρ ἔθνη ταῦτα, Σκλαβηνοὶ τε καὶ Ἄνται, οὐκ ἄρχονται πρὸς ἀνδρὸς ἑνὸς, ἀλλ’ ἐν δημοκρατίᾳ ἐκ παλαιοῦ βιοτεύουσι, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο αὐτοῖς τῶν πραγμάτων ἀεὶ τὰ τε ζύμφορα καὶ τὰ δύσκολα ἐς κοινὸν ἄγεται. Proc. Wars. 7.14.22.1-5; trans Dewing 1924: 211.

³⁰⁹ Τὰ ἔθνη τῶν Σκλάβων καὶ Ἀντῶν ὁμοδιαίτᾳ τε καὶ ὁμότροπᾳ εἰσι καὶ ἐλεύθερα, μηδαμῶς δουλοῦσθαι ἢ ἄρχεσθαι πειθόμενα. *Strategikon*, 11.4.1. trans. Dennis 1984: 120. Maurice goes on to describe their guerilla tactics in battle and their tendency to conduct raids into ‘civilized’ territories.

³¹⁰ Morgan 1877. This concept was developed by Marxist scholars, such as Frederick Engels and S.P. Tolstov, who argued that this was the last step before developing into a class-based society, however, the notion of imposing rigid definitions for Slavic society has largely been abandoned after the Second World War, see Curta 2001: 312-313; cf. Barford 2001: 128-129.

³¹¹ Modzelewski 2006: 295-334.

³¹² Izdebski 2011: 53.

³¹³ Izdebski 2011: 65-68, 50.

dissenter to this viewpoint is Florin Curta in his work *The Making of the Slavs: History and Archaeology of the Lower Danube Region, Ca. 500-700*. Curta dismisses the concept of a ‘military democracy.’ He argues for a form of ‘anarchic’ political organization in the early sixth century and that the Slavs developed ‘warrior leaders’ beginning in the 560s in response to frequent contact with the Roman Empire.³¹⁴ This development of Slavic leaders is evidenced in the literary sources. The first reference to Slavic leaders is made by Pseudo-Caesar in the *Eratopokriseis*. He states that ‘Sclavene chiefs were often killed at feasts or on travels that is during peacetime.’³¹⁵ Individual chiefs are also mentioned with more frequency towards the end of the sixth century. Menander the Guardsman mentions ‘Dauritas and his fellow chiefs,’ Book II of the *Miracles of St Demetrius* refers to ‘Chatzon, the leader of the Sclavenes,’ and Theophylact Simocatta mentions ‘Ardagastus,’ ‘Peiragastas and his appointed officers’ and Musocius.³¹⁶ Curta argues that what is unique about the Slavic situation is that there were frequent intra-group conflicts. Rising political leaders could join together for specific campaigns but also contended for supremacy among one another. He argues that this is the organizational structure that the author of the *Strategikon* refers to when he states that ‘in the Slavic democracy...no one is willing to yield to another.’³¹⁷ The argument made by Curta is more compelling for the organizational structure of the Slavs. The ‘military democracy’ model relies heavily on the migrationist model and the import of a system from ‘outer-outer Europe’ (Heather) or ‘genuine *Barbaricum*’ (Modezelewski). Furthermore, it depends on the premise that Slavic society was not influenced by the process of Romanization and as will be discussed below, the rise of warrior leaders was heavily influenced by the implementation of Justinian’s building program.

The lack of any consistent centralized leadership made it difficult for Byzantine Emperors to use diplomatic tactics, such as the tribute system, to prevent them from raiding into

³¹⁴ Curta 2001: 311-334.

³¹⁵ Riedinger 1969: 302.

³¹⁶ Men. Proc. fr. 21; *Miracles of St Demetrius* 2.1.193; Theophylact Simocatta 6.9.1 and 6.10.13.

³¹⁷ *Strategikon* 11.4.14.

their territories. E.A. Thompson describes the difficulties Imperial authorities had when they attempted to bribe German leaders, 'If the tribesmen had seen Roman gold in such a chiefs personal possession without bringing any advantage to themselves they would not have submitted to his rule without ado.'³¹⁸ Although it would have been difficult to establish foreign relations with the Slavs because of this organizational structure, there is evidence to suggest that there was a significant amount of contact between them and the Byzantines during the first half of the sixth century.

The provinces south of the Danube were in need of sustenance as they underwent a significant change during the late fifth and early sixth centuries where rural villas and medium-size estates virtually disappear from the archaeological record and peasant settlements in the region become quite scarce.³¹⁹ This abandonment of rural settlements is supported in the sources by both Procopius, who states that '[Justinian] made the defenses so continuous in the estates, that each farm either had been converted into a stronghold or lies adjacent to one which is fortified,' and Agathias who in his description of the Cutrigur invasion of the Balkans in 558 states that 'as they moved through the northeastern provinces of Moesia and Scythia Minor, all they encountered in their way were deserted villages.'³²⁰ This abandonment of rural settlements is further supported by a noticeable absence of agricultural tools at archaeological sites dated to the sixth century.³²¹ When one considers the disappearance of the rural economy in the Balkans during this period, the question that inevitably rises is 'how were the inhabitants and soldiers in the region fed?'

Sixth-century emperors did attempt to address the situation through fiscal reforms that were designed to alleviate the situation. Emperor Anastasius introduced *coemptio* or the compulsory sale of provisions to the state in 505 in Thrace, a stipulation that was expressly

³¹⁸ Thompson 1965: 97; cf. Sarris 2011: 175-177. For a detailed survey of early Roman diplomacy with the Germans, see Thompson 1965: 72-108.

³¹⁹ Poulter 2007: 51-100.

³²⁰ Proc. *Buildings*. 4.1; Agath., *Hist.* 5.2.

³²¹ Popović 1994-1995: 67-75.

forbidden except under exceptional circumstances.³²² In 535, Justinian enacted legislation that attempted to stop the decline of the peasantry in Haemimons and Moesia Minor and in 545 he enacted another law which made farmers responsible for the abandoned lands of his neighbour.³²³ Furthermore, Justin II gave tax exemptions to peasants in Moesia and Scythia Minor twice in order to allow them to better provide food for soldiers who were stationed in those regions.³²⁴ Although the army's food supply was primarily supported from the central government, similar to the late fourth century, legislative and archaeological evidence suggests that prior to when Justinian's fortification program was complete there was regular exchange between north and south of the Danube.³²⁵

There is numismatic evidence that supports the claim that there was trade between the regions north and south of the Danube during the early sixth century. Multiple coin hoards have been discovered connected to the reigns of Anastasius, Justin I, and the early years of Justinian but there is a significant drop off after the completion of Justinian's fortification program.³²⁶ This coin circulation and the presence of Byzantine goods north of the Danube suggests that at least part of the Slavic economy was supported by the Byzantine Empire.

This system drastically changes with the implementation of Justinian's fortification program in the early 550s.³²⁷ Justinian constructed a heavily defensive frontier which consisted of three lines of interrelated fortifications.³²⁸ The result of this, whether it was intended or not,

³²² *Novel* 27.1-2, 5-10. For *coemptio* being forbidden in most circumstances, see Jones 1964: 235, 460.

³²³ *Novel* 32 (535). *Novel* 128 (545).

³²⁴ *Novel* 148 and 162.

³²⁵ The creation in 536 of the *quaestura exercitus* was used to connect economically inferior provinces, such as Scythia Minor, with rich provinces in the East, such as Cyprus. This is substantiated by finds of Phocaeen Red Slip wares that were produced in Asia Minor but are found primarily on the Black Sea coast and in Greece, see Curta 2006: 46-47.

³²⁶ Coin circulation virtually ceased on the northern Danube frontier between 545-560. Ninety-six Justinianic coins have been discovered from Eastern Europe, fifty-four are Romanian (forty of which have exact dates) but only eight were minted after 550, see Butnariu 1983-1985; cf. Curta 2001: 176. Furthermore, thirteen gold coins have been discovered north of the Danube dated to the first half of Justinian's reign while only seven have been found dated to the second half of his reign, and the reigns of Justin II and Tiberius II, see Butnariu 1983-1985; Huszár 1955; Kos 1986; Fiala 1989; Stolarik 1992; cf. Curta 2001:176-177. For a statistical analysis of these finds, see Curta 2001: 177 (fig. 7).

³²⁷ For the dating of the fortification program, see Montinaro 2012: 89-114; cf. Curta 2019: 35.

³²⁸ Around 600 forts were built or restored in three lines along the Danube, Stara Planina range, and the high ridges of Istranca Dağlar, see Proc. *Buildings*. 4.1.33.

was a reduction in coin circulation and strained economic relations between the regions north and south of the Danube (see n. 326). The loss of economic ties had socio-political implications on the Slavs. This new reality fostered social competition among clans and encouraged the rise of strong leaders, such as Ardagastus, who now were required to utilize warfare as a basis for their authority and as a means to acquire prestige goods from the Byzantines.³²⁹ The effectiveness of Justinian's fortifications was able to hold off Slavic incursions for most of the latter half of his reign (with the exception of several small raids in the late 540s and early 550s there was virtually no attacks by the Slavs during the last 15-20 years of his reign). However, once the defensive system was no longer able to be maintained, the Slavs begin to frequently take advantage of the Byzantine's weaknesses. Justin II had to contend with large scale raids by the Slavs in Thrace and Macedonia during the 570s and Tiberius II was plagued with widespread raids all over the Balkans.³³⁰ The political and military re-organization of Slavic society appears to be a direct result of the economic closure of relations between themselves and the Byzantines. This is supported by the fact that the first instance of a Slavonic raid is in 545 which coincides with the final stages of the fortification program and continue into their completion in the early 550s. Once again the removal of Byzantine coinage influenced the adoption of aggressive policies in order to maintain a steady supply of gold.

The relationship with the Slavs during the reign of Justin II is difficult to determine. At times they were used by the Avars to spearhead attacks into Byzantine territory, yet it would be incorrect to think of them solely as an extension of the Avar army. When the temporary peace with the Avars had been established in 574, there are still large groups of Slavs raiding Byzantine lands in Thrace and Macedonia.³³¹ For most of Justin II's reign they are effectively

³²⁹ Ardagastus fits the model of a warrior leader discussed in relation to the Avars. He brought together "Slavene hoards from abroad" and conducted a series of raids into Byzantine territories, note that this was a relatively new development among the Slavs, see Theophylact Simocatta, 1.7.3-6, 6.7.1, 3, and 5, 6.9.1 and 6.

³³⁰ Joh. Eph. *HE*. 6.25; cf. Men. Proc. *fr.* 21.

³³¹ According to Menander, the Slavs resumed raids in 577/578 and "devastated Thrace and many other areas," (this is also the first mention of a Slavic warrior leader, Dauritas, see Men. Proc. *fr.* 20.2. He also mentions that in 578 when the Avars attack the Slavs that their land was full of gold from raiding the Roman Empire, see Men. Proc. *fr.* 21. For the lack of Slavic raids between 552-577, see Whitby 1988: 88; cf. Soustal 1991: 71.

a wildcard, raiding at times in conjunction with groups, such as the Avars, at times against these same groups, and at times against the Byzantines.³³² They were a particularly difficult problem because whenever they came across areas that were not heavily defended; they tended to launch destructive raids. Thus, it made it difficult for Justin II to move his troops to deal with other conflicts without worrying about Slavic incursions.

Tiberius II had more direct conflict with the Slavs during his four years as sole emperor. These conflicts also had a more profound impact on the empire because of his need to commit most of his troops to the Persian conflict. The Slavs conducted a series of raids on throughout the Balkans from 577 to 581. They were a frequent problem for Tiberius as he simply did not have the resources to properly handle their incursions.

There is material evidence that supports the presence of Slavic raids in the region during this period. First, in regards to the numismatic evidence, coin hoards have been discovered in Dalmatia, the Morava Valley, the region of Cataracts, and several in modern Bulgaria.³³³ Furthermore, three hoards from Athens have been dated to Tiberius' reign as well as two hoards from Kenchreai which have been dated to 578-580.³³⁴ There is also archaeological evidence that supports the argument for Slavic raids during this period. Destruction layers at Argos and Porto Cheli, as well as the lower city of Athens, particularly the Athenian agora, would suggest that Slavic raids were taking place in the late 570s and early 580s.³³⁵ It is unclear whether the Slavs were eventually driven out of Athens or settled there permanently, but the material evidence does suggest that there were multiple raids in the region during the reigns of Tiberius and Maurice. The material evidence is supported in the literary sources, and it is the combination

³³² Obolensky 1971: 475-476.

³³³ Whitby 1988: 88; Popović 1975: 458, 466; Popović 1980: 233; Metcalf 1962a. For a full survey of the circulation of coin hoards in the sixth and seventh centuries, see Morrisson and Ivanišević 2006: 41-73. For a survey of the discoveries of coin hoards along invasion routes in the Balkans, see Ivanišević 2006: 75-93.

³³⁴ Whitby 1988: 88.

³³⁵ Note that the destruction layers alone cannot be considered evidence for raiding, as there are many explanations that could be put forth here and the fires could have been caused by other means. However, coupled with the numismatic and literary evidence, the evidence for the destruction of buildings fits with the theory for Slavic raiding parties, see Gandila 2018: 178-182; cf. Metcalf 1962b: 135, 143-146; cf. Thompson 1959.

of these different sources that allows one to conclude that there was in fact wide spread raiding in the Balkans during the late 570s / early 580s.

John of Ephesus corroborates this evidence in his *Ecclesiastical History*,

...an accursed people, called Slavonians, who overran the whole of Greece, and the country of the Thessalonians, and all Thrace, and captured cities, and took numerous forts, and devastated and burnt, and reduced the people to slavery, and settled in it by main force, and dwelt in it as though it had been their own without fear.³³⁶

The most influential of the Slavic incursions takes place in 581 and is attested in several of the ancient sources. This incursion is particularly important because it forces Tiberius II to bring a large contingent of Avars into Byzantine territory in order to respond to the crisis.

Greece was being plundered by the Slavs, and a succession of dangers was threatening there on all sides. Since Tiberius did not have a force strong enough to resist even a part of the invaders...and since he was unable to face them in battle because the Romans were occupied with the wars in the East, he sent an embassy to Baian, the chief of the Avars.³³⁷

Tiberius II was able to convince the Avars to help repel the Slavs from their Balkan territories, but it did not conclude the way he had hoped. By bringing the Avars across the Balkans, they realized how undermanned the Byzantines along the Danube. The result was that the Avars decided to take advantage of the situation and after repelling the Slavs, sacked the city of Sirmium (details discussed above).

Although Tiberius II adopted some of the foreign policies that Justinian employed so well, he was unable to maintain the delicate balance between force and diplomacy, upon his

³³⁶ Joh. Eph. 6.25.

³³⁷ Ὅτι κεραιζομένης τῆς Ἑλλάδος ὑπὸ Σκλαβηνῶν, καὶ ἀπανταχόσε ἀλλεπαλλήλων αὐτῇ ἐπηρητημένων τῶν κινδύνων, ὁ Τιβέριος οὐδαμῶς δύναμιν ἀξιόμαχον ἔχων οὐδὲ πρὸς μίαν μοῖραν τῶν ἀντιπάλων, μήτι γε καὶ πρὸς πᾶσαν, οὔτε μὴν οἷός τε ὢν πολέμοις σφίσις ὑπαντιάζειν τῷ ἀνὰ τοὺς ἐφόους πολέμοις τὰς Ῥωμαίων τετράφθαι δυνάμεις, πρεσβεύεται ὡς Βαϊανὸν τὸν ἡγεμόνα τῶν Ἀβάρων. Men. Proc. fr. 21.1-7. trans. Blockley 1985: 193.

death and the ascension of Maurice, the Byzantine's control of the Balkans was on the point of collapse.

The Slavic situation provides another example of how the imperial center could influence the development of a frontier polity. Justinian's fortification program appears to have been a factor in the centralization of Slavic power and although there was still conflict between elements of the Slavs, warrior leaders began to emerge who could bring together large numbers to operate in coordination. This claim can be made based on several factors. First, Slavic raids begin in 545 (as mentioned previously possibly as a response to the frontier being closed and the loss of economic ties that resulted from it) and continue to the early 550s when they suddenly cease.³³⁸ They do not resume again until the late 570s which coincides with the timeline for the effectiveness of Justinian's fortifications. Secondly, the sources support a shift in leadership in the latter half of the sixth century. There is no mention in the sources of Slavic leaders prior to 560.³³⁹ Although Procopius meticulously records the names of leaders of other barbarian groups, such as the Gepids, Herules, and Lombards, he never mentions Slavic leaders (despite the Slavic *excursus* being one of the most detailed in his entire work). Furthermore, the re-emergence of raids in the late 570s saw a distinct shift in both their ability to coordinate attacks and the focus on leaders in the sources (Slavic leaders, such as Dauritas, Ardagastus, Musocius, and Peiragastus, are now mentioned with frequency). Although implementation of Justinian's fortification program cannot be viewed as the sole factor for this development, and lack of sources make a more in depth examination of the political developments of the Slavs from the early 550s to the late 570s impossible, it does appear that it is during this period when the political centralisation of the Slavs begins to take place. This had the dual effect which created an elite class (warrior leaders) in Slavic society who could now organize much more effective raids into Byzantine territories and created a more dangerous adversary on the Danube frontier.

³³⁸ Curta 2005: 183-185.

³³⁹ Jordanes does mention a certain Boz but as king of the Antae and as discussed previously, the Antae were a separate polity to the Slavs, see Jordanes, *Getica*, 48.247. Procopius also mentions a certain Chilbudius, although again an Antae, but the veracity of this story is difficult to ascertain, see Proc. *Wars*. VII.13.26. For a breakdown of the episode, see Curta 2001: 76-83.

LOMBARDS / GEPIDS

Justinian used the Lombards as an effective part of his foreign policy. In them he found a way to resupply his armies for his expansive wars and kept the Goths from securing additional allies against him. However, this would not be the case for Justin II. Before analyzing the Lombards invasion of Italy in 568, it is necessary to look at the Lombard-Gepidic conflict.

The Lombard-Gepid conflict began in earnest when Justinian brought the Lombards into his sphere of influence in 546-547 when he allied himself with them to counter the growing threat of the Gepids. According to Procopius, ‘the emperor Justinian had bestowed upon the Longobards the city of Noricum and the strongholds of Pannonia, as well as many other towns and a very great amount of money.’³⁴⁰ The result of this support from Byzantium, according to Procopius, allowed the Lombards, under the leadership of Audoin, to gain the upper hand and after a victory on the Asfeld in 552 were in a position to secure control of the Gepid territories.³⁴¹ Justinian did send troops to aid the Lombards in this battle but the main part of the force was ordered to stop and suppress civil strife in Ulpiana which had been provoked by a religious dispute about the three chapters.³⁴² However, possibly out of fear of creating too large a polity along his frontier, Justinian negotiated a treaty between the two sides in 552 which lasted until his death in 565.³⁴³ The result was primarily beneficial to the Byzantines. Both the Gepids and the Lombards set-up alliances with the empire and were sufficiently weakened militarily to balance each other out.³⁴⁴

The Lombards and the Gepids remained in an uneasy peace for the remainder of Justinian’s reign until hostilities were resumed again in 566. According to Theophylact, while the Gepids, now under the leadership of Cunimund, were dealing with an incursion by the

³⁴⁰ Proc. Wars. 3.33.

³⁴¹ Proc. Wars. 4.18 and 25; cf. Paul the Deacon, *HL*. 1.23-24.

³⁴² Proc. Wars 8.25.14-15.

³⁴³ According to Procopius, the treaty consisted of the Lombards sending 2500 warriors and 3000 armed retainers to aid in Justinian’s Ostrogothic war in Italy (the Gepids also sent warriors but Procopius records them sending only 400), see Proc. Wars. 4.26; cf. Christie 1995: 35-36; Bóna 1976: 18-19.

³⁴⁴ Wozniak 1979: 152.

Lombards, Alboin (son and successor to Audoin) attacked their stronghold at Sirmium. Cunimund sought aid from Justin and not only sent him many gifts but also promised him control of the city of Sirmium, a prize that the Byzantines had their eyes on for some time.³⁴⁵ Justin II agreed and together with the Gepids was able to drive off the Lombard attack. Justin II's change in allegiance from the Lombards to the Gepids is notable here because it highlights his attitude towards foreign policy. He was unwilling to continue Justinian's inclusive policy of using tribute to bring groups into his sphere of influence but was only willing to accept terms when the proposed polity offered him significant gains. Although Cunimund sent Justin II many of the spoils from the conflict, he refused to give up control of the city. Faced with this new opposition Alboin sought a treaty with the Avars.³⁴⁶ Perhaps because of Cunimund's previous refusal to give up Sirmium, Justin II refused to offer aid to the Gepids against this new alliance.³⁴⁷ The Avar-Lombard alliance penetrated into the Gepid controlled lands, killed Cunimund, and effectively ended the Gepid polity.³⁴⁸

This was a major shift in the power base of the Balkans, now Justin II had to contend with the powerful Avars instead of the weakened Gepids and had fewer resources at his disposal due to the renewed conflict with Persia. It has been argued that this influx of Avar power in the region was primarily the cause for the Lombards decision to migrate to Italy. However, Christie points out that this was probably not the case. The Lombards and Avars had co-existed peacefully for several years and respected each other as allies. He argues that it is more likely that the Lombards, having served in Justinian's campaigns in Italy against the Ostrogoths, knew of its current state of weakness and ambitiously sought to take it over for themselves.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁵ Theophylact Simmoca 6.10.9-10.

³⁴⁶ Men Proc. fr. 12.1; the price of the treaty was high for the Lombards. The Avars demanded the Gepid territories, a tenth of the Lombards livestock, and half of the spoils gained from the upcoming conflict, see Christie 1995: 59; cf. Pohl 1997: 97-98. This new alliance penetrated into Gepid lands, defeat

³⁴⁷ Men. Proc. fr. 24 and 25.

³⁴⁸ Paul Deac. *HL*. 1.27; Joh. Bicl. (a.572?); *Origo Gent. Lang.* 5; *Hist. Lang. cod. Goth.* 5.

³⁴⁹ Christie 1995: 60-61. There is also an anecdote written by Paul the Deacon which suggests that the Lombards came to Italy at the invitation of Narses because of his vendetta against Justin II and his wife Sophia, see Paul Deac., *HL*. 2.5.

Just after Easter in 568, either at the insistence of Narses or on their own accord, the Lombards began their migration to Italy. Alboin called the Saxons to join him on his march and they came with an estimated twenty thousand men, accompanied by their women and children.³⁵⁰ According to Paul the Deacon, the march consisted not only of Lombards and Saxons but many other tribes that came together under the leadership of Alboin,

Therefore, when King Alboin with his entire army and a multitude of people of all kinds had come to the far edge of Italy...”³⁵¹

It is difficult to determine the exact number of troops but it has been estimated at around one hundred fifty thousand, including sixty to eighty thousand men along with their women and children.³⁵² The Lombards arrived in Italy either late in 568 or early in 569 and quickly consolidated their holdings. Paul the Deacon reports that uprooted the Roman nobility, killing many for their wealth and forcing the rest to give tributary payments out of their produce. When met with resistance they razed cities and dealt harshly with the population and by 575 they had subjugated the majority of Italy with the exception of Ravenna.³⁵³ However, the transition may not have been as destructive as he would suggest, the lack of archaeological evidence of such a displacement suggests that the transition to Lombard rule much less impactful.³⁵⁴

Little is recorded about the Byzantines response to their invasion. Agnellus of Ravenna records the events surrounding the assassination of Alboin in 572 and due to the fact that the perpetrators fled to Ravenna and sent Alboin’s daughter along with the royal treasury to Ravenna it appears that Justin played a role in it.³⁵⁵ Furthermore, Justin II sent an expedition to

³⁵⁰ Paul Deac., *HL*. 2.6.

³⁵¹ Igitur cum rex Alboin cum omni suo exercitu vulgique promiscui multitudine ad extremos Italiae fines pervenisset. Paul Deac., *HL*. 2.8. These groups likely included Pannonians, Noricans, and various German peoples, such as Suevi, Gepids, Slavs, see Hartman 1900: II.i.19; cf. Peters 1974: 64.

³⁵² Christie 1995: 64.

³⁵³ Paul Deac. *HL*. 2.28-31.

³⁵⁴ Christie 1995: 83.

³⁵⁵ Agnellus, *Lib. Pont. Eccl. Rav.* 96-97; cf. *Origo Gent. Lang.* 5; for an analysis of Agnellus’ portrayal of Rosamunda in his version of events, see Pizarro 1995: 119-141.

reconquer the territory under his son-in-law Baduarius in 576 but this campaign was aborted as a failure.

Tiberius II attempted a more diplomatic approach to restoring Byzantine rule over Italy. There is literary evidence of treaties between the Byzantines and the Franks as early as 576, likely in tandem with Baduarius' campaign and evidence that Tiberius II sought to buy certain Lombard leaders to aid the nobility in Italy or to come fight his wars in the East. According to Menander,

Caesar sent to Italy a large amount of gold about three thousand pounds, in the care of Pamphronius...in order that, if he were able, he might persuade some of the leaders of the Lombard people, out of desire for gain, to come over to the Romans with their followers. Thus, they would cease to trouble Italy and, if they were willing to fight in the east, they could aid the Roman Empire. If, as was likely, the Lombards turned him down, he should try another route and use the money to buy the alliance of some of the Frankish chiefs, and by this means to wear down and wipe out the power of the Lombards.³⁵⁶

Tiberius II's army was too heavily engaged in Persia to send troops and these measures were largely unsuccessful. The empire at this point was simply too overburdened to send much aid to Italy. It is not until the late 580's when a concentrated effort is made to remove the Lombards (although still unsuccessfully).

The relations between the Byzantines and the Lombards and Gepids provides another example of how the empire and frontier societies had an impact on one another. Justinian maintained control by not allowing either the Gepids or the Lombards to become too powerful

³⁵⁶Ὅτι ὁ Καῖσαρ ἔστειλε κατὰ τὴν Ἰταλίαν χρυσίον συχνὸν ἄχρι κεντηναρίων τριάκοντα, ἅτινά γε δῆπου Παμφρόνιος ὄνομα... ἐφ' ᾧ τινες τῶν ἡγεμόνων τοῦ Λογγιβάρδων ἔθνους, εἴ πῶς γε ἔσται αὐτῷ δυνατά, πείσοι τοῦ κέρδους ἰμείραντας μεταβαλέσθαι ὡς Ῥωμαίους ξὺν τῇ κατ' αὐτοὺς δυνάμει, καὶ τοῦτο μὲν τῇ Ἰταλίᾳ μὴ ἐνοχλεῖν, τοῦτο δὲ καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἑὼ πολεμῆσειοντας καὶ τῇ Ῥωμαίων ἐπικρατεία ἐπικουρήσαι. ἀπειθούτων δὲ τῶν Λογγιβάρδων, οἷα εἰκόσ, τὴν ἑτέραν ἰέναι, καὶ τινες τῶν Φραγγικῶν ἡγεμόνων διὰ τῆς τῶν χρημάτων ἐπιδόσεως ἐταιρίσασθαι. Men. Proc. fr. 22.1-18; trans. Blockley 1985: 197. The envoys to Constantinople appear to predate any conflict with the Avars, so it is likely that this transaction occurred in 579, see Blockley 1985: 283 n. 293.

but when Justin II allied himself with the Gepids, he inadvertently sent the Lombards into the hands of much stronger allies, namely the Avars. Initially, the Lombard-Avar alliance was able to be confronted but Justin II's refusal to send aid to the Gepids once he did not receive Sirmium led to the destruction of the Gepids and a power shift in the region. Once this power shift took place, the Byzantines could no longer control their frontiers. Tiberius, on the other hand, may have had some success at dislodging the Lombards with his Frankish allies if his armies had not been so committed to the Balkans and the East. Lack of Byzantine support could have an equally significant impact on the development of a frontier society. As seen with the Gepids, once support was removed, they could no longer stand against other polities in the region. This inadvertently affected Byzantium as the removal of this polity allowed the Avars to gain a much stronger position in the region and gave the Lombards the opportunity to direct their attention towards Italy.

Conclusion

The focus of this chapter has been to present an analysis of several facets of the socio-political organization and development in the sixth century. First, in regards to the foreign policies of sixth-century emperors, it has been argued that interaction with the imperial center brought about a significant amount of development in these societies as well as altered the frontier landscape of Byzantium in the Balkans. Justinian's inclusivist policy towards the Avars fostered the growth of a nomadic polity that was centered on conquest and the display of wealth. Early alliances with the Avars protected Byzantium from potential enemies but allowed the Avars to become a much more powerful entity in the region. Thus, when Justin II adopted an exclusivist policy towards them, they were strong enough to direct their aggression against Byzantine territories. The result of this was that Tiberius II was forced into unbalanced treaties which weakened the Byzantine's economic position and caused the loss of strategic territories.

The Slavs were also affected by Byzantine foreign policy. The implementation of Justinian's fortification program had the consequence of closing economic relations between

the northern and southern regions of the Danube. This in turn played a role in the centralization of Slavic power around strong warrior leaders who were able to conduct costly raids into Byzantine territories towards the end of the sixth century. Although there is little evidence of the Slavs relationship with Justin II, his refusal to entreat with foreign powers likely contributed to a further depletion of Byzantine resources, leaving the empire susceptible to Slavic raids. His exclusivist policy left Tiberius II in a difficult position because he had to contend with enemies on multiple fronts (detail of the Persian frontier will be discussed in the following chapter). Although Tiberius attempted to revert back to a similar policy to Justinian in regards to the Balkan frontier, the polities had grown much stronger and more confident in combatting the Byzantines and his attempt to use the Avars against the Slavs backfired, leaving the Balkan frontier on the point of collapse at the end of his reign.

Finally, the foreign policies towards the Lombards and the Gepids also had significant impact on the region. Justinian's inclusive policy had several benefits for the Byzantines. His alliance with the Lombards provided him a recruitment grounds for his campaign against the Ostrogoths in Italy and it managed to keep both the Lombards and the Gepids from establishing too large a power base by keeping them occupied against one another. After his death, following his policy of exclusion, Justin withdrew his support of the Lombards and gave it to the Gepids (note that it was not under the customary Roman tribute system but under the condition that the Gepids pay tribute to him). This had major consequences for both groups. The Lombards allied themselves with the Avars and without significant support from Byzantium, the Gepids were effectively destroyed. Furthermore, this defeat left Justin II vulnerable on two fronts and as the Avars took control of Pannonia, the Lombards moved to take control of Italy. Tiberius II did attempt to keep control of Italy by reverting to an inclusive policy with the Franks but without the majority of his troops engaged in Persia was unable to prevent the Lombards from seizing control of Italy.

In conclusion, it appears that the drastic situation the Byzantine Empire found itself in towards the end of the sixth century was not, as has been argued, the result of Justinian leaving

the empire financially prostrate. It seems likely that the situation was the result of more nuanced circumstances. The foreign policies of Justinian and Justin II, although quite different, fostered the growth of the polities along the frontier into powerful entities that could no longer be managed by the tribute system or by encouraging them to contend against themselves. When these polities then turned their attention towards Byzantium, often in alliance or loose coordination with one another, the empire was faced with more opponents than it could sufficiently handle.

The following chapter will continue this line of argument but will focus on Byzantine foreign policy that was directed towards polities in the East. It will focus on the Byzantines relationship with four eastern powers, namely the Turks, Arabs, Armenians, and Persians. It will argue that Justin II attempted to establish a relationship with the Turks and Armenians in order to provide Byzantium with enough support to remove the tributary payments to the Persian Empire that had been established by Justinian. It will look at the situation in Arabia and determine how important the Jafnids and Naşrids were to the security of the empire and how 'proxy' states could be employed in the larger conflict between Byzantium and Persia. It will also analyse the renewed conflict with Persia. This section will be treated slightly differently because Persia represented a major empire that Byzantium was engaged in diplomatic relations. However, it will argue that Justin II still employed his principles of foreign policy to them and that this led to a major conflict. Finally, this chapter will also discuss the degree of appropriation of Byzantine culture that these polities adopted due to interaction with Byzantium.

CHAPTER 4: FOREIGN POLICY - PART II

ARABS

The first obstacle to the modern scholar in presenting an analysis of the relationship between the Romans and the Arabs is to determine what is meant by the term “Arab.” This term has been widely debated by modern scholars with the central issue being a lack of agreement on what the set of parameters are that could define a pre-Islamic Arab. M.C.A. Macdonald argues that one cannot find obvious identifiers that link all the peoples who were called “Arab” in antiquity. He states that it is likely that at different times, in different places, people would identify as Arabs based on different criteria.³⁵⁷ This accentuates the problems previously discussed in defining ethnic identity because of its fluidity and the changing nature of how an individual may define him- or herself. This issue is further complicated when one looks at the ancient sources. Although there are few ‘insider’ sources for the Arabs and what does exist is largely epigraphic, there is evidence to suggest that the term was used as a self-identifier. The most identifiable example of this is the al-Namara inscription. This inscription mentions Imru’ l-Qays, son of ‘Amr, king of the Arabs’ and has been dated to AD 328.³⁵⁸ Another few examples of self-identification include: a graffito in the Hadramī script which is inscribed “‘*tybt* son of ‘*mr*, the Arab”³⁵⁹ and a third-century epitaph in Greek (found in Thasos) which a certain Rufinus son of Germanus set-up for his son who describes himself as Ἄραψ πόλεως Σεπτιμίας Κάνωθα.³⁶⁰ These sources do little to provide understanding as to what criteria an inhabitant of Arabia used to identify as an Arab, however it does indicate that there was self-identification on some level.³⁶¹

³⁵⁷ Macdonald 2009a: 277-278.

³⁵⁸ Dussaud and Macler 1902: 716-724. For an updated commentary on the inscription, including translation and photos of the original, see Bellamy 1985: 31-51.

³⁵⁹ Robin 1981: 320-321; Macdonald 2009b: 288. The inscription is not dated but it is just below the inscription of the king of Ḥadramaut Yd’l Byn which Robin has dated to the 240s, see Robin 1981: 320-321.

³⁶⁰ Robert 1948; Macdonald 2009b: 288, 302-303.

³⁶¹ Macdonald has compiled a list of all the available epigraphic inscriptions where the term ‘Arab’ appears, of the twenty-nine such examples only four have been dated to after the first century, see Macdonald 2009b: 286-290. See Hoyland 2014:267-280, for further discussion of ‘insider’ sources.

When one looks at ‘outsider’ sources, which are much more numerous, it appears that ancient historians also used the term as an identifier. However, similar to the problems of modern historians, there are no clear parameters as to what defined an ‘Arab’ and different sources used the term to convey different meanings. Several uses of the term include: those who practise a nomadic lifestyle, ethnic distinctions such as those who are a part of the Nabatean kingdom, and geographical distinctions to denote those who inhabit the region known as Arabia.³⁶² Furthermore, after the third century the terminology that ancient writers employed to refer to Arabs also became more varied. Latin and Greek sources tend to refer to them as ‘Saracens’ but there are still variations. For example, Evagrius refers to them at times as Skenite barbarians or Skenite Arabs; Theophylact refers to them as ‘nomadic barbarians; and although Procopius primarily refers to them as Saracens, he also uses the term to denote different polities, such as the Persians.³⁶³ Syriac sources tend to use the term *ṭayyāyē* but after the coming of Islam also refer to the *mḥaggrāyē* as an imitation of *muhājirūn*.³⁶⁴ Finally, to make the situation more complex, sixth-century authors tend to refer to specific groups who are under the leadership of certain elites rather than grouping Arabs together as a whole.³⁶⁵

Since this study will focus primarily on the two groups of elites who were addressed by Byzantine foreign policy, namely the Jafnids and the Naṣrids, it will adopt a neutral approach when it uses the term ‘Arab’. This approach, most recently put forward by J. Dijkstra and G. Fisher, uses the term as a reference to a people within a geographical region.³⁶⁶ This region or Arabian frontier, is marked by the deserts along the Euphrates and stretched south into the Ḥijāz

³⁶² Fisher 2011: 2-4.

³⁶³ For Skenite barbarians, see Evag. *HE*. 5.20. For Skenite Arabs, see Evag. *HE*. 6.22. For nomadic barbarians, see Theophylact Simocatta, 3.17.1. For Procopius referring to Saracens that are not the Arabs, see Proc. *BP*. 8.1.1.

³⁶⁴ *ṭayyāyē* is more closely related to Saracen with *mḥaggrāyē* being adopted in the seventh century to denote religious distinctions among the Arabs, see Penn 2015: 60-62.

³⁶⁵ For examples of contemporary authors referring to specific leaders rather than the Arabs as a whole, see Joh. Eph. *HE*. 6.3; Bar Habraeus, *Chronography*. 1.79-80; Men. Proc. *fr.* 9.3.

³⁶⁶ For the use of this neutral approach, see Dijkstra and Fisher 2014: 12-13. For the discussion on the use of the term Arab in pre-Islamic society, see Macdonald 2009a: 277-278 and 302-303; cf. Fisher 2011: 129-145 and 171; cf. Gawlikowski 1995: 83-92; Retsö 2003: 600-626, for religious identity; Honigman 2002: 43-72, for a ‘corporate’ identity; Shahīd 1995: 9; cf. Roschinski 1981: 27-60, for ‘settled’ Arabs in cities such as Petra and Hatra.

(modern Saudi Arabia). It is in this frontier that the Byzantines engaged in interactions with the Jafnids and the Naṣrids. Now that certain problematic terminology has been discussed, I will look at the rise of the Jafnid and Naṣrid elites in the sixth century (early contact between the Byzantines and the Arabs, early movements of the Jafnids and Naṣrids, and sixth-century relationships with Byzantium) and discuss the changes in foreign policy towards them under Justin II and the effects that these changes had on their society.

Once the evidence has been presented, I will argue two main points. One, that the Jafnids and the Naṣrids did play an important role in Byzantine-Persian relations. Not as significant as some scholars would suggest (Shahīd or Hoyland) because they do only operate in one region of these empires but more so than others (Whitby and Whittow) would argue because they do affect the outcome of several major conflicts in the region. Two, that the foreign policy of Justin II towards the Arabs reflects similarities to his exclusive policies towards other ‘outside’ polities and added to difficulties the empire underwent in the late sixth century. Although my argument follows Fisher’s line of reasoning that a more nuanced view of the Jafnids’ and Naṣrids’ importance in the sixth century, it will depart from him by providing a wider regional perspective. This wider view will demonstrate not only the impact that Justin II’s foreign policy had on the Byzantine empire but also, similarly to other polities discussed in this thesis, that interactions with the Byzantines led the Arabs to a certain level of Byzantine cultural appropriation which influenced the development of their society in the sixth century.

Jafnids and Naṣrids

Early contact between the Byzantines and the Arabs appears to be similar to the policies that the Romans employed when encountering new tribes. These policies primarily focused on a practice of indirect rule whereby they would support leaders with monetary gifts to whom they could then apply political pressure in order to make use of the tribe’s resources and manpower.³⁶⁷ From the second century onwards, it appears that contact between the Romans and the Arabs became increasingly more complex. Greek and Nabataean inscriptions that honor

³⁶⁷ Liebeschuetz 1990: 34-35; cf. Fisher 2011: 74.

Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus have been found at Ruwwāfa in the Hijaz and a Latin inscription dated to the same period has been discovered north of Hegrā.³⁶⁸ The exact nature of the relationship between the Romans and the Arabs at this time is unclear but Macdonald has theorized that these inscriptions demonstrate early examples of the Romans using the Arabs as military auxiliaries.³⁶⁹ There is also written evidence that suggests the Romans used the Arabs in a military capacity in their conflicts with the Sasanians. According to Ammianus Marcellinus, in 363 the Arabs offered military service to Julian and according to Malchus, and in c. 473 there was a treaty between the Romans and the Persians in which each agreed not to receive the Arab allies of the other.³⁷⁰ What this evidence would suggest is that over time the relationship between the Arabs and the Romans was not only becoming more complex but also that different tribes in Arabia were increasingly being recruited by the Romans and the Persians for military uses along their frontiers.

There were two main Arab polities that interacted with the Byzantine Empire during the late sixth century, namely the Jafnids (located in the eastern Byzantine provinces) and the Naṣrids (located in Sasanian Persia). I have chosen to use the terms Jafnids and the Naṣrids, as opposed Ghassanids and Lakmids, the terms dominant in later Islamic literature on these groups, because of the recent, persuasive arguments of Greg Fisher. He argues that the latter terms are problematic because they do not necessarily reflect the situation on the ground. According to Fisher, the Byzantines and the Sasanians fostered relationships with individuals not groups as a whole and it was through these relationships that Arab elites garnered a majority of their political power.³⁷¹ For example, al-Ḥārith (a Jafnid) obtained his power from his relationship with Justinian. However, to conclude from this that al-Ḥārith was the leader of a wider tribal group called Ghassān would be speculative. Other than a few examples,³⁷² there is no

³⁶⁸ For the Greek and Nabataean inscriptions, see Milik 1971: 54-58. For the Latin inscription, see al-Talhi and al-Daire 2005: 205-217.

³⁶⁹ Macdonald 2009a: 1-26; cf. Fisher 2011: 78-80.

³⁷⁰ Amm. Marc. 23.3.8; Malchus, *fr.* 1.

³⁷¹ Fisher 2011: 3-7; cf. Robin 2008a: 167-208.

³⁷² Ghassan is only referenced in two contemporary written sources, a letter written by Simeon of Beth Arshām and possibly again in the *Letter of the Archimandrites*. There is no contemporary written evidence for the Lakmids. The epigraphic record is also quite limited when referencing the Ghassanids and the Lakmids and I have only found one such example for each, a Nabataean Aramaic rock inscription, dated to the third-fourth centuries, from al-Qatī'a which makes a request for 'the kinsman Ḥārith son of Zaydmanāt, king of Ghassān, to

contemporary evidence for Ghassān, and the precise tribal make-up of the Jafnid confederation remains unclear. Furthermore, contemporary sources do not mention the groups themselves but tend to focus on individuals who acted as ‘brokers’ between the Byzantine or Persian empires and the Arab tribes and as a result gained a significant level of prestige and power.³⁷³ I have chosen to follow Fisher in the use of the terms Jafnid and Naṣrid because they provide a more apt description of these elites who often acted as intermediaries between the Byzantines or the Sasanians and the groups that they led.³⁷⁴ Although it is unclear whether the Jafnid elites had control over the Ghassanids as a whole in the sixth century and lack of contemporary evidence for Ghassān makes one unable to confirm how much control the Jafnid elite actually exercised, the epigraphic and archaeological record (discussed below) does connect Jafnid elites with the movements and interactions of at least some of those who inhabited areas associated with Ghassān. Thus, this study will focus on the Jafnid and Naṣrid elites as leaders of at least a portion of the Ghassanids and Lakmids.

The early movements of the Jafnids are difficult to determine. It is believed they originated from the Ghassān, who were located in South Arabia in the third century, and that they came into contact with Byzantium through a form of northern migration in the fifth century.³⁷⁵ Similar to the groups previously discussed, it is unlikely that the Jafnids engaged in a mass migration movement but rather came into contact with the Byzantines through a transitional period of smaller migrations. This theory of small movements is supported when one considers the nomadic nature of the Arabs and their dependence on seasonal resources for a portion of their sustenance and income. Robert Hoyland has argued that a northern migration was prompted by some form of natural disaster but this is contrary to recent studies of population movement and the unlikelihood of mass migration.³⁷⁶ Although the early movements of the Jafnids are subject to speculation, it is clear that they came into the sphere of Byzantine

be remembered’ and a third century Paikuli inscription from Kurdistan which mentions a certain “‘Amr, king of Lakhm.” For the Ghassanid inscription, see Robin 2008a: 183 (citing the Saudi epigrapher, S. al-Theeb). For the Lakhmid inscription, see Humbach and Skaervo 1983: 71. For earlier epigraphic evidence see Robin 2015a: 79-120.

³⁷³ Haldon 2004: 1-12; cf. Salzman and Rapp 2000: 315-468; cf. Wickham 2005: 153-258.

³⁷⁴ Fisher 2011: 3-4; cf. Robin 2008a: 167-208.

³⁷⁵ Fisher 2011: 6-7; cf. Hoyland 2009: 374-400. Hoyland places the Ghassān in South Arabia based on a third century inscription which refers to the “kings of the people of Ghassān,” dated to AD 260, that was found in this region. For inscription, see Hoyland 2009: 376.

³⁷⁶ Hoyland 2006: 225-226. For studies that dismiss the notion of mass migration, see Curta 2011; Macdonald 2003; Graf 2003.

influence in the sixth century. This is attested by several of the literary sources for the sixth century including Theophanes' mention of the Jafnid leader Jabala and Procopius' mention of his successors al-Ḥārith and al-Mundhir.³⁷⁷ There is also epigraphic evidence that places the Jafnids in this region during the sixth century, such as three inscriptions that identify al-Mundhir found *in situ*. These inscriptions include an acclamation of al-Mundhir at al-Ruṣāfa, the use of al-Mundhir in a dating formula at al-Ḥayyat, in the Hawrān, and the mention of al-Mundhir as a benefactor of a church at Tall al-ʿUmayrī.³⁷⁸

The origins of the Naṣrids' relationship with the Sasanians is much more unclear. However, it does appear to follow similar patterns previously discussed when describing the ruling relationship of a new elite in a particular region, namely that a new set of elite rulers came into leadership over a variety of peoples in a certain area. Similar to the Jafnids, the Naṣrids come into the literary sources in the late fifth / early sixth century and obtain political and diplomatic opportunities based on the influence and support gained from their connection to the Sasanian Empire.³⁷⁹ Furthermore, similar to the Jafnid-Byzantine relationship, it appears that the Naṣrids were the means that the Sasanians employed to try to influence the situation in Arabia. Where they differ from the Jafnids is that they had a stable base of operations at al-Hīrah (no such location has been discovered for the Jafnids). Al-Hīrah gave them a central location on a popular caravan route which also gave them access to the spice and silk markets connected to the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. Al-Hīrah is also likely one of the reasons the Naṣrids were able to maintain a separate political identity even while under the leadership of the Sasanians.³⁸⁰ The Naṣrids of the sixth century can thus be described as a developing political unit with familiar centralised aspects, such as army, court, and diplomacy, that operated within the borders of a late antique empire that in turn supported their ruling elites while attempting to utilize them to gain influence in the region.

Although there is little mention of these polities prior to the sixth century, they are players in the foreign policies of Justinian, Justin II and Tiberius II. However, one aspect that needs to be assessed is how significant they actually were. There are two schools of thought on

³⁷⁷ Theoph. 141. Proc. Wars. 1.17.46.

³⁷⁸ For a detailed analysis of these inscriptions, see Fisher 2015: 175-177 and 6.29, 6.23, 6.31.

³⁷⁹ Fisher 2011: 94.

³⁸⁰ Robin 2008a: 187-193; cf. Fisher 2011: 93-95.

this issue. The first theory, argued by Irfan Shahīd and Robert Hoyland, contends that the Jafnids and the Naṣrids were major players in a Byzantine-Persian cold war.³⁸¹ They argue that the Jafnid-Naṣrid border was crucial in defending Byzantine territories from Persian raids. Furthermore, Hoyland states that, “we should include them among the ‘inner core of client kingdoms’ that formed the essence of late Roman management of their provinces and border regions.”³⁸² This argument has been staunchly opposed by scholars such as Michael Whitby and Mark Whittow, who argue that the Jafnids and Naṣrids were minor players in Byzantine-Persian relations and largely insignificant to the overall conduct of these two empires.³⁸³ Whitby states that, “The lack of detailed information in Greek historians about Arab affairs in the sixth and seventh centuries accurately reflects their lack of importance in contemporary wars and diplomacy.”³⁸⁴ A more prudent argument, however, is that a nuanced answer lies in between these two theories. Recent studies by Greg Fisher have shined light on the complexities of the Jafnid and Naṣrid polities. He classifies them as ‘in-between empires’ who both benefitted from their respective patrons but also remained separate from them.³⁸⁵ Fisher has demonstrated that the competition between Byzantium and Persia gave opportunity for the Jafnids and Naṣrids to grow in political power and therefore influence regions controlled by the two empires.³⁸⁶

The relationships with the Arab elites would only get more complex in the sixth century when Justinian came to power. As they became more complex, Jafnid and Naṣrid elites came to the forefront of the tribes they represented through support of their respective imperial powers. These leaders were connected to and supported by the state through diplomatic contact, economic support and involvement in military affairs but also maintained a level of autonomy. The evidence for economic support is more difficult to ascertain than the diplomatic and military ventures through the available sources. It is clear that by the sixth century there was an established practice by the to grant subsidies either as a reward for good behavior or military

³⁸¹ Shahīd 1995; Hoyland 2007: 227-232.

³⁸² Hoyland 2006: 232.

³⁸³ Whitby 1992; cf. Whittow 1999: 207-224.

³⁸⁴ Whitby 1992: 80.

³⁸⁵ Fisher 2011: 92-100.

³⁸⁶ Fisher 2011: 127.

service, or as a promise of good behavior from an enemy.³⁸⁷ This imperial influence reflects a wider phenomenon that was taking place in many regions surrounding the Byzantine empire. As will be shown in detail below (and in the sections of this thesis on other polities where a similar process was taking place), these elites were becoming more important players in imperial politics and were appropriating a level of Byzantine culture within their own societies.

As we have seen, there was certainly contact between the Byzantines and the Arabs prior to the sixth century, but the first notable example of a Jafnid elite gaining imperial patronage was al-Ḥārith in AD 528/529.³⁸⁸ The opportunity for al-Ḥārith arose from the military reforms of Justinian. The *limitanei* had become largely ineffective against the Naṣrids and their duties were replaced by the *foederati*.³⁸⁹ Although the *foederati* had been used in the Byzantine army previously, their replacement of the *limitanei* made them more integral to the frontier defense of the empire, particularly in Arabia. The Jafnid elite capitalized on this development and increased their political influence in the region.

According to Procopius, Justinian supported al-Ḥārith in order to stop the Naṣrid leader, al-Mundhir (not to be confused with the Jafnid al-Mundhir discussed later) from conducting raids into Byzantine territories.³⁹⁰ It appears that Justinian chose an established leader among the Arab tribes as a means to bind him more closely to the state and to aid him in establishing his status among the Arabs. According to Procopius, Justinian aided al-Ḥārith's position by granting him the title 'dignity of the king' or 'supreme phylarch' and likely also by providing

³⁸⁷ For the refinement of this practice under Constantius II and Julian, and its development in the sixth century, see Blockley 1985b; cf. Isaac 2000: 231, 245, 248. For a reference to the protection of the Saracen (Arab) *foederati* from losing their subsidies, see *Cod. Theod.* 24.2; Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 45. For Justinian's use of 'booty' as a reward for the Jafnids' military service, see Joh. Mal. 18.35. For Justinian's use of subsidies to secure good behavior from the Naṣrids, see Joh. Mal. 18.59.

³⁸⁸ There is a brief mention of al-Ḥārith's father, Jabala, in connection with a military disturbance at the beginning of the sixth century but there is no evidence to suggest that he gained the imperial patronage that al-Ḥārith received, see Theoph. 141.

³⁸⁹ The *limitanei* were not directly eliminated but Justinian halted their pay and thus they were gradually phased out, see Shahīd 1995: 36. For the origins of the *limitanei*, see Liebeschuetz 2015: 63-68.

³⁹⁰ Proc. Wars. 1.17.46.

monetary support.³⁹¹ This was an important shift in Byzantine-Arab relations. Previously, local commanders of frontier provinces (phylarchs) could be ordered to combat enemy raids but this had proven ineffective against al-Mundhir. Now, al-Hārith had command over all the Byzantines' Arab allies and the ability to command the phylarchs of each of the eastern provinces.

Several points should be considered concerning the importance of the Arab tribes to the wider conflict between Byzantium and Persia. According to John Malalas and Theophanes, al-Mundhir conducted a series of raids into Byzantine territories between 527-529. They imply that these raids were encouraged by the Sasanians to disrupt the strengthening of Byzantine defenses that were undertaken under Justinian.³⁹² These raids reached deep into Syria and Palestine and almost made it to the city of Damascus itself.³⁹³ When considering the success of these raids, it is likely that Justinian chose to ally himself with the Jafnids in order to combat the Naşrid offensive and thus prevent the Sasanians from disrupting the construction of his defensive fortifications.³⁹⁴ This motivation is also expressed when Procopius describes events that led to al-Hārith receiving his new status.³⁹⁵ Furthermore, according to Procopius, the Byzantine-Sasanian supported conflict between the Jafnids and Naşrids led to direct conflict between Rome and Persia. War between the two empires broke out in 530 with a Persian assault on the city of Dara. Although it has been suggested by Shahīd that Jafnid and Naşrid forces were present at the battle, this should be viewed as a battle fought between the Byzantines and the Sasanians.³⁹⁶ While the proxy conflict between the Jafnids and the Naşrids may have been

³⁹¹ Proc. Wars. 1.17.47. This rise in status is also supported by an Arabic graffito found at Jebel Seis (approximately 100km south-south east of Damascus) dated to 528/529 which mentions 'al-Hārith the king,' for translation and analysis of the inscription see Fiema, Al-Jallad, et. al. 2015: 412-413. There is no direct mention of monetary support in the sources but considering Justinian's foreign policy towards his diplomatic allies and the previous use of subsidies towards the Arabs, it is likely that they were received.

³⁹² Joh. Mal. 18.32; Theoph. 178.

³⁹³ Joh. Mal. 18.16.

³⁹⁴ Edwell, Fisher, Greatrex, Whatley, Wood 2015: 229-233.

³⁹⁵ Proc. Wars. 1.17.40-48.

³⁹⁶ Shahīd 1995: 132. For details of the battle, see Proc. Wars. 1.13.9-14.

encouraged by their patrons, it is important to note that a conflict between the Arab tribes could be used as a pretext for war.

Another example of how conflict between the Arab polities could be used as a context for war are the events that took place in 539. According to Procopius, it was a dispute between al- Hārith and al-Mundhir that led to the end of the Eternal Peace, a treaty established in 532:

Not long after this Khusro, upon learning that Belisarios had begun to win Italy also for the Emperor Justinian, was no longer able to restrain his thoughts but he wished to discover pretexts, in order that he might break the treaty on some grounds which would seem plausible. And he conferred with Alamoundaras concerning this matter and commanded him to provide causes for war. So Alamoundaras brought against Arethas, the charge that he, Arethas, was doing him violence in a matter of boundary lines, and he entered into conflict with him in time of peace, and began to overrun the land of the Romans on this pretext.³⁹⁷

Once again, it is likely that this conflict was encouraged by the Sasanians to create a justification to break the treaty and resume hostilities against Byzantium. Several sources which seem to depend on Sasanian traditions suggest that they were aware that Justinian had moved a large portion of his troops to the West (North Africa and Italy were both under heavy pressure from Justinian's forces) and wanted to take advantage of the weakened state of the Byzantine's eastern border.³⁹⁸

These examples provide evidence to the importance of the Arab polities to the wider context of Byzantine-Persian relations, however, as stated at the beginning of this chapter this importance should not be overstated. There is also evidence of fighting among the Jafnids and

³⁹⁷ Χρόνω δὲ οὐ πολλῶ ὕστερον ὁ Χοσρόης μαθὼν ὡς καὶ Ἰταλίαν Βελισάριος Ἰουστινιανῶ βασιλεῖ προσποιεῖν ἤρξατο, οὐκέτι κατέχειν οἷός τε ἦν τὴν διάνοιαν, ἀλλὰ σκίψεις ἐπινοεῖν ἤθελεν, ὅπως δὴ λόγῳ τινὶ εὐπρεπεῖ τὰς σπονδὰς λύσειεν. ὑπὲρ ὧν κοινολογησάμενος Ἀλαμουνδάρῳ ἐκέλευεν αὐτὸν ξυμπορίζεσθαι πολέμου αἰτίας. ὁ δὲ Ἀρέθα ἐπικαλέσας ὅτι αὐτὸν περὶ γῆς ὀρίων βιάζοιτο, ἐς χειράς τε αὐτῶ ἐν σπονδαῖς ἦλθε καὶ γῆν τὴν Ῥωμαίων ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ σκίψει καταθεῖν ἤρξατο. Proc. Wars. 2.1.1-4; trans. Dewing 1924: 261.

³⁹⁸ Shāhnāmeh 8.45; al-Tabari 8.23. Edwell *et al.* 2015: 245; Dignas and Winter 2007: 171; Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 102-103; Fowden 1999: 66-67; Shahīd 1995: 210-218.

the Naṣrids which did not impact the status of a treaty between Byzantium and Persia. After a truce was established in 545, according to Procopius, the Jafnids and Naṣrids ‘waged a war against each other by themselves, unaided either by the Romans or the Persians.’³⁹⁹ Although some scholars have defined this conflict as a ‘proxy war’ as it was primarily conducted in the region of the Syrian steppes, the evidence suggests that the Arab polities could engage in conflict without upsetting the truce between Byzantium and Persia.⁴⁰⁰ They could affect the region in the wider context of the Byzantines and the Persians but they could also be ignored depending on the motivations of the empires at the time.

The Jafnids also proved effective in dealing with disputes within the Roman empire. According to John Malalas, when the Samaritans revolted in 529 under a certain Julian, the Arabs played a significant role in subduing them.⁴⁰¹ The Samaritan revolt provides further evidence of the economic gains that the Jafnids acquired through their relationship with Byzantium. According to Malalas, they acquired twenty-thousand boys and girls as booty during this revolt and they were permitted to sell them in Persian and Indian territories.⁴⁰²

What should be stressed before analyzing the reigns of Justin II and Tiberius II is the rising importance of the Arabs in the foreign policy of the East. This importance is best characterized when one looks at one of the stipulations of the treaty that was established between the Byzantines and the Persians in 561/562. The details of the Arabs’ role in the treaty are preserved according to Menander:⁴⁰³

³⁹⁹ Proc. Wars. 2.28.12.

⁴⁰⁰ Shahīd 1995: 236-266; Edwell *et al.* 2015: 248.

⁴⁰¹ Joh. Mal. 35.18. Ps. Zachariah also mentions the revolt but does not record Arab involvement. However, given al-Hārith’s current status in the region, it is likely that Malalas is correct in assessing the Jafnids’ importance in crushing the rebellion, see Ps. Zach. Chron. 9.8a.

⁴⁰² Joh. Mal. 18.35. Shahīd 1995: 82-95; Greatrex 1998: 161; Pummer 2002: 259-261.

⁴⁰³ Men. Proc. fr. 6.1.320-322.

The Saracen allies of both states shall themselves also abide by these agreements and those of the Persians shall not attack the Romans, nor those of the Romans the Persians.⁴⁰⁴

The important takeaway here is that this is the first time the Arabs are included as a provision in a treaty between Byzantium and Persia. Furthermore, the language that Menander employs also hints at the Arabs' rise in importance. His use of the term σύμμαχοι to define the Arabs is of note as this differs from the common terms which were used to denote subservience to the empire, such as *foederati* or its Greek counterpart ὑπόσπονδοι. Terms with prepositional prefixes such as κατά or ὑπό were used to demonstrate imperial superiority. In this instance, however, it appears Menander is recognizing the higher status of the Arabs by using the term σύμμαχοι. While this does not indicate that the Byzantines believed the Arabs were now equal partners, it does suggest that they had become a more influential ally by the end of Justinian's reign.⁴⁰⁵

The imperial backing of the Jafnid elite had a significant effect on the development of their society. Byzantine support influenced a political centralization as the Jafnids could consolidate their position around Damascus and the Haurān.⁴⁰⁶ This imperial patronage also allowed the Jafnids elites to establish a series of dynastic leaders (al-Ḥārith, al-Mundhir, al-Numan) who could exert influence over many of the inhabitants of the Byzantines' Arabian frontier. The influx of subsidies would have allowed them to hire more troops and finance various projects that increased their status in the region.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁴ ὡς ἂν οἱ σύμμαχοι Σαρακηνοὶ ἐκατέρως πολιτείας ἐμμένοιεν καὶ οἱ τοῖς βεβαιωθεῖσι, καὶ μήτε τοὺς Περσῶν κατὰ Ῥωμαίων μήτε τοὺς Ῥωμαίων ὀπλιζέσθαι κατὰ Περσῶν. Men. Proc. fr. 6.1.320-322; trans. Blockley 1985: 71.

⁴⁰⁵ For instances when Menander uses κατά or ὑπό to denote imperial superiority, see Men. Proc. fr. 9.1, 9.3.

⁴⁰⁶ Fisher 2011: 98-99.

⁴⁰⁷ The influx of subsidies are not mentioned outright when al-Ḥārith receive his title, however, it is likely that they were given to him. It was common practice for Justinian to supply his allies with subsidies to aid them against mutual enemies and as has been shown, he had elevated al-Ḥārith to combat the raids of the Naṣrids between 527 and 529. The status of supreme phylarch also gave al-Ḥārith the ability to acquire profit through booty when dealing with internal disputes such as the Samaritan revolt. Furthermore, once Justin II becomes

Justin II

Although it would be more accurate to classify the Naṣrids as Persian federates, there is evidence that they had received tribute from Justinian to refrain from raiding into Byzantine territories.⁴⁰⁸ Similarly to his policy concerning the Avars, once Justin II ascended to the throne these tributes came into contention. According to Menander, Justin II sent an embassy to Khusro in Ctesiphon to address the matter of these subsidies in July of 567.⁴⁰⁹ The details of the exchange between Khusro and the Byzantine ambassador, John, son of Domentiolus, provide evidence that once again Justin was unwilling to continue the tributaries that had been established by his predecessor:

We are unwilling to give anything in future to the Saracens [Naṣrids] as Justinian was most kindly towards them. The present Emperor wishes to be an object of the greatest fear of all. The Saracens, therefore, should not entertain these dreams, for our Emperor will see fit to do no such thing.⁴¹⁰

The second item dealt with at by this embassy was the status of Suania.⁴¹¹ Here, we see a different strategy by Justin II regarding foreign policy, as he gives John instructions to buy the province. However, Khusro outmaneuvers John by having him send envoys to the Suani (knowing that they would refuse Byzantine authority) in order to absolve himself from the refusal. Furthermore, he adds stipulations to the deal which Menander describes as “shameful and unworthy of Roman majesty” and then sends an embassy under the leadership of Mahbodh to Constantinople to solidify the agreement late in 567.⁴¹² Justin does not agree with the

emperor and begins interactions with the Arabs, it is clear that they had already become accustomed to receiving subsidies from Byzantium, see Men. Proc. *fr.* 9.1.

⁴⁰⁸ Men. Proc. *fr.* 9.1.30-36. These subsidies had been agreed upon in the treaty of the “50 Years Peace.”

⁴⁰⁹ For the dating of this embassy, see Shahīd 1995: 308 n.2. Michael the Syrian and Theophanes also record that this embassy was sent by Justin II but fails to provide any details of the event, however, his mention of the embassy aids in placing the date at 567 rather than 566, see Mich. Syr. 10.1; Theoph. 270.

⁴¹⁰ ἡμεῖς δὲ τοσοῦτον ἀπέχομεν τοῦ δίδοναι τι τὸ λοιπὸν Σαρακηνοῖς, καθ’ ὅσον Ἰουστινιανὸς μὲν καὶ πρὸς τοὺς βαρβάρους ἠπιώτατος, ὁ δὲ νῦν Ῥωμαίων αὐτοκράτωρ πρὸς πάντας εἶναι βούλεται φοβερώτατος. οὐ χρεῶν οὖν ταῦτα τοὺς Σαρακηνοὺς ὄνειροπολεῖν· οὐ γάρ τι τοιοῦτον ὁ καθ’ ἡμᾶς βασιλεὺς ἔλοιτο ποιεῖν. Men. Proc. *fr.* 9.1.85-90; trans. Blockley 1985: 101.

⁴¹¹ Further details about the request to recover Suania are recorded in Theophanes, see Theoph. 270.

⁴¹² Men. Proc. *fr.* 9.1.94-118; cf. Theoph. 270.

arrangements John had made and when the Persian embassy arrived in Constantinople he outright refused to discuss the Suania issue.

The reported negotiations between Justin II and this embassy help to reveal his attitude towards paying subsidies to “barbarians” and highlight his stance on foreign policy. Since he had rejected discussion of Suania, the primary goal of the embassy was to deal with the issue of restoring Justinian’s tributaries. According to Menander, the delegates attempt to address Justin II twice but are received poorly each time. He rejects precedents that had been established during Justinian’s reign, such as receiving all the members of the visiting delegation at the same time, and refuses to continue to grant the subsidies that they had been accustomed to receive.⁴¹³ It seems evident that Justin II was determined to eliminate all tributes that had been contracted under Justinian. These events not only had repercussions on Byzantium’s relationship with the Naşrids but also would lead to conflict with the Sasanians and his own federates, the Jafnids.

According to Menander, after these negotiations the Naşrids were ordered by the Persians to attack the lands of the Jafnids.⁴¹⁴ No details of this encounter survive but there are several points that should be considered. First, this was in violation of the treaty of 562, but the Naşrids were careful not to attack any Byzantine territories and thus avoid any major retaliation. Second, it is likely that al-Mundhir was the Jafnid who commanded the defense. He was the nominated successor of al-Hārith and in charge of the territories bordering the Naşrids. Although he did not yet have the authority to retaliate (al-Hārith was still an advocate of the peace achieved during Justinian’s reign), this action must have influenced his attitude towards both the Naşrids and the Byzantines, who did not come to his aid or retaliate, despite the violation of the treaty.⁴¹⁵ What is important to note from these affairs is the rising significance of the Jafnid and Naşrid actions in relation to the relationship between Byzantium and Persia. Both sides were reluctant to commit actions that would undermine the treaty between the two

⁴¹³ Men. Proc. fr. 9.3. Justin refusal to receive Mahbodh alongside his entourage, an act that was permitted under Justinian and likely was taken as an insult to the embassy, see Shahīd 1995: 310.

⁴¹⁴ Men. Proc. fr. 9.3.116-123.

⁴¹⁵ Shahīd 1995: 312-314.

empires. The fact that this was a possibility, without the approval of their ‘parent state,’ indicates that the Arab polities were becoming a more significant factor in the overall security of the empires. Furthermore, the Jafnids’ value to the security of Byzantium would become more apparent in the following years after their positive relationship with the Byzantines came into question.

When al-Hārith died and his successor al-Mundhir ascended to power in 569, war between the Jafnids and the Naṣrids, as well as the degradation of Jafnid-Byzantine relations, both became reality.⁴¹⁶ According to John of Ephesus, this breakdown in relations first takes shape in a communication between Justin II and al-Mundhir, following the Jafnids’ second campaign against the Naṣrids in 570. John account consists of Justin writing two letters, one to Marcian to have al-Mundhir put to death and another to al-Mundhir requesting him to go to Marcian immediately to confer on matters of importance. The result in John’s account is that the letters are mixed-up and sent to the opposite recipients, thus alerting al-Mundhir to the assassination attempt and causing him to retreat with his troops into the desert.⁴¹⁷

This detail of John’s account, however, needs to be treated with caution. John provides a failed assassination attempt as the main cause for the eventual split between Justin II and al-Mundhir, but there is no other evidence to confirm whether this assassination attempt took place.⁴¹⁸ Furthermore, it was common for Roman sources to use anecdotes such as this to provide clear-cut reasons for complex situations.⁴¹⁹ According to John of Ephesus, al-Mundhir achieved a significant victory against the Naṣrids at the end of this campaign but was well aware

⁴¹⁶ The details of the Ghassanid-Lakhmid conflict are covered extensively in in Shahīd’s survey of the Arabs in the sixth century and will not be discussed here. The focus of this chapter will be on the foreign policies of Justin II and Tiberius II with the Ghassanids and the problems that this caused for the Byzantine Empire. For the Ghassanid-Lakhmid conflict, see Shahīd 1995: 340-346.

⁴¹⁷ Joh. Eph. *HE*. 6.4.

⁴¹⁸ John also had an intense dislike of Justin II and was sympathetic to al-Mundhir because of shared religious beliefs (anti-Chalcedonian) and thus had cause to place the blame of al-Mundhir’s self-exile to the desert on Justin rather than himself.

⁴¹⁹ For example, the anecdote by Priscus on the assassination attempt of Attila the Hun, see Priscus Rhetor, *fr.* 15.3. It should be noted, however, that political assassination where also commonplace in Roman society, for a list of known attempts between 350-650, see Lee 2009: 10. Although Lee does provide this list of assassination attempts, he also questions whether the al-Mundhir episode was not a real event, see Lee 2009: 12.

that they were preparing a counter-attack into his territory. Thus, he wrote to Justin II in the hope of securing gold to hire more troops and to be prepared for the attack. It is upon hearing this that John believes Justin II refuses the request and plans to assassinate al-Mundhir.

For as Mundhir imagined that his success would be acceptable and extolled by the king, he wrote to him an account of all that he had done, and his complete victory; and added a request that he would send him gold that he might hire troops; because he expected that certainly they would gather their forces once more to attack him. And when King Justin heard that he had written to him to send him gold, he was angry, and very indignant, and reviled him, and vowed vengeance against him, and secretly determined in his heart to murder him.⁴²⁰

It is interesting to note that some scholars, while accepting this event as historically accurate, cannot comprehend Justin's motives in making this decision. Shahīd, for example, argues that the motives for this decision are incomprehensible and suggests that his actions are due to early onset of the mental illness that would plague him in his latter years.⁴²¹ Edwell and Fisher also question the motives for Justin II's actions stating that payment to foreign polities was a standard practice of late antiquity.⁴²² However, what these scholars fail to take into consideration is the wider evidence which suggests that this was a consistent element of Justin II's foreign policy. When presented against this backdrop and considering his recent refusal to continue payments to other Arab tribes such as the Naṣrids, it seems evident that this decision would fit into his line of reasoning.

Another note of contention among scholars is the assassination attempt. Shahīd has argued for a conspiracy of Chalcedonians in Constantinople who acted without Justin II's knowledge in this affair but this is unsupported by the evidence and is put forth purely as

⁴²⁰ Joh. Eph. *HE*. 6.3. trans. Payne Smith 1860: 370-371; cf. Bar Habraeus, 1.79-80; cf. Mich. the Syr. 2.308.

⁴²¹ Shahīd 1995: 349.

⁴²² Edwell, *et. al.* 2015: 257.

conjecture.⁴²³ Fisher also argues that the assassination attempt is plausible because he does not believe that the request for funds would be grounds for Justin II's anger and that it was Roman policy to grant these subsidies. Although the notion of an assassination attempt in and of itself was not particularly unusual in late antiquity and there are many examples between AD 350 – 650 of the state employing this means to eliminate potential political opponents,⁴²⁴ Fisher does not consider that Justin II's policy was a significant departure, and that the incident may be an anecdote which John uses to explain the break down in relations between Justin II and al-Mundhir, and to emphasise the bad faith of the former.⁴²⁵ Although we cannot be certain if there was an assassination attempt, the real cause for the dispute is nevertheless the subsidies issue, and this should not be dismissed as inconsequential.

Michael Whitby has called into question the veracity of this event but he too does not consider the wider context of Justin II's foreign policy when analyzing this incident.⁴²⁶ Whitby argues that the story was invented by al-Mundhir to excuse his treachery against the Byzantines by abandoning his position on the frontier and allowing Khusro a quick route to Nisibis.⁴²⁷ Once again that this fails to consider the wider context of the situation. Al-Mundhir was expecting retaliation by the Naṣrids and thus had reached out to Justin II for support. Justin II's refusal to provide neither troops nor resources provides the most likely reason why al-Mundhir would have abandoned his position on the frontier.

Regardless of the motivation behind the decision, the Jafnids withdrew from the service of Byzantium and retreated to the desert with their army for three years (572-575).⁴²⁸ Once the Persians learned of this development, they decided to take advantage of the empire's weakness. They spent these three years raiding into Byzantine territories, extracting a massive amount of

⁴²³ Shahīd 1995: 350. Another theory that has been dismissed among modern scholars is the argument for a pro-Chalcedonian faction among the Jafnids who plotted against al-Mundhir, see Stein 1919: 42.

⁴²⁴ For sixteen such attempts during this period, see Lee 2009: 12.

⁴²⁵ Fisher 2015: 257.

⁴²⁶ Whitby 1988: 257-258.

⁴²⁷ Whitby 1988: 258.

⁴²⁸ For the calculation of the date, see Shahīd 1995: 356. For the withdrawal of al-Mundhir's forces to the desert, see Joh. Eph. *HE*. 6.4.

wealth and slaves.⁴²⁹ There is evidence for the abandoned state of these territories in several sources. John of Ephesus provides the main narrative for this period but his account is supported by fragments of John of Epiphania and Evagrius. They both state that during this period the Persians were able to capture towns that offered little to no resistance.⁴³⁰ This provides further evidence to the value the Arabs provided to the empire. It appears that the Byzantines left the defense of this region largely to the Jafnids and when they were no longer there, they were vulnerable to attack.

According to John of Ephesus, after he realized how serious a miscalculation he made, Justin II sent many envoys into the desert to try and persuade al-Mundhir to come back. Al-Mundhir eventually received Justinian the patrician and was persuaded to re-ally himself with the empire, after which he reasserted himself against the Persians and reconquered many of the lands that had been plundered in his absence, as well as capturing and plundering the Naşrid capital, Hirah. Furthermore, al-Mundhir sent many of the spoils he won to the Byzantines, spreading them among churches and monasteries, and to the poor.⁴³¹

Now that an examination of Justin's foreign policy towards the Arabs has been discussed, it is necessary to evaluate the impact his policy had on the empire and the importance the Arabs played in the period. The result of the actions taken against al-Mundhir demonstrate the value he had to the empire. The three years he was alienated cost the Byzantines resources, troops, and territories. It also demonstrates how reliant they had become on the Jafnids' protection of their eastern frontier. This is supported by the testimonies of John of Epiphania and Evagrius to the abandoned state of the towns that the Persians raided during 572-575. The near immediate reclamation of these towns once Justin reconciled with al-Mundhir also lends support to the rising value of the Arabs during this period.

⁴²⁹ Joh. Eph. *HE*. 6.4.

⁴³⁰ John of Epiph., *fr.* 4; Evagr. *HE*. p.206.

⁴³¹ Joh. Eph. *HE*. 6.4. After his conquest of Hirah, al-Mundhir travels to Constantinople in 575 to bestow gifts to the empire. He is received favorably and meets Tiberius for the first time, who has been recently elevated to Caesar. These events are recorded in John of Biclar, see Joh. Biclar. 3 (a.575?); cf. Ferry 1990: 79.

The breakout of hostilities between the Naşrids and the Jafnids and the renewal of the conflict between Byzantium and Persia should also be considered. These events clearly cannot be considered the main cause of the outbreak of war between these two empires but it should also not be dismissed as a footnote to the event as it fits into the wider context of his exclusive foreign policy. War resumed with Persia in part due to Justin's stance to refuse tribute payment to the Sasanians (among other factors such as the situation in Persarmenia and the relationship with the Turks)⁴³² but the Jafnids' actions clearly were able to influence the terms of the 50 Year Peace as they were now written in as a stipulation to maintain peace.

The removal of an ally in Arabia during this conflict allowed Persia greater mobility in the region and likely was one of several factors that caused the failure of Justin's plan of attack against the Sasanians. As will be stated in the sections on the Armenians and the Turks, Justin had an offensive strategy against Persia that involved the ability to attack on several fronts. A Jafnid offensive in Arabia would have aided this strategy (which also included an uprising in Persarmenia and a Turkish offensive on Persia's eastern border) and it would have also prevented Khusro the freedom of mobility in Arabia that allowed him to send resources to Nisibis and Dara much faster than Justin II anticipated.

Tiberius II

Tiberius II's reign represents both the height of the Byzantine relationship with the Jafnids and the downfall. Tiberius received al-Mundhir in Constantinople once again on February 8, 580.⁴³³ On this occasion al-Mundhir was received with the full honors accorded to the valued ruler of an ally. John of Ephesus describes the lavish gifts that he received when he met with Tiberius:

He was received with great pomp, and endless honours conferred upon him by the king Tiberius, who made him large presents and royal gifts, and did for him all that he desired,

⁴³² These events are discussed in the sections of this thesis on the Turks and Persia.

⁴³³ Joh. Eph. *HE*. 4.39. This was the first occasion Tiberius II had received al-Mundhir as sole emperor, the previous encounter (discussed above) was when he had been elevated to Caesar.

and gave him everything he asked, even bestowing military titles on the two sons whom he had with him and giving him leave to wear a royal crown [*tāgā d-malkūtā*].⁴³⁴

This meeting is important for several reasons. First, it is clear that Tiberius displayed a positive attitude towards the use of tribute payments. This was the issue that caused the split between the Byzantines and the Jafnids in 572 and it is likely Tiberius wanted to assure al-Mundhir that he was a different emperor than Justin II. Although an agreement had been reached between al-Mundhir and Tiberius II (on Justin II's behalf) in 575, this event is significant because it indicates Tiberius' change back to a more Justinianic foreign policy (inclusive). Second, the crown and the status it symbolised was an indication of the level of support that al-Mundhir enjoyed from Constantinople, and a reaffirmation of his control over Byzantium's Arab allies.⁴³⁵

Finally, based on John's account, it appears that al-Mundhir had been recruited by Tiberius to attempt to settle the religious schism between the Jacobites and the Paulites at a council which met at Constantinople in March 580. However, the purpose of the meeting should be examined closely. According to John of Ephesus, al-Mundhir "labored with zeal and strength to end all these evils which lay between those who were the same in faith and the same in constitution."⁴³⁶ Shahīd argues that the main goal of this meeting was to utilize al-Mundhir as a mediator to unite the various miaphysite factions in Constantinople with the Chalcedonians.⁴³⁷ This argument that al-Mundhir and the Jafnids were *defensores fidei* has been largely accepted based on the passages of John of Ephesus.⁴³⁸ P. Wood argues that the crown given to al-Mundhir

⁴³⁴ Joh. Eph. *HE*. 4.42. trans. Payne Smith 1860: 304-305.

⁴³⁵ The exact nature of the crown is unclear but it bears striking similarity to Justinian's bestowment of the title of *Basileus* on al-Mundhir's predecessor, al-Hārith.

⁴³⁶ Joh. Eph. 3.4.39.

⁴³⁷ Shahīd 1995: 402-405. Beside the account of John of Ephesus, the evidence that supports the fact that the Jafnids were staunch Miaphysites is a letter that records a meeting between Peter of Callinicum and Damian of Alexandria in the presence of the phylarch Jafna at Jābiya in 587, see Mich. the Syr., 10.22.

⁴³⁸ There are other sources that portray the Jafnids as both mediators and Miaphysites. A series of letters written in monasteries near Damascus in the 560s recognize al-Hārith's role as mediator between miaphysite groups during the Tritheist controversies, see Hoyland 2009: 117-139; Millar 2009: 97-116. A letter that records a meeting between Peter of Callinicum and Damian of Alexandria in the presence of the phylarch Jafna at Jābiya in 587, see Mich. the Syr. 10.22. Cyrus of Batna, preserved in Michael the Syrian, praises both al-Hārith and al-Nu'mān as staunch Miaphysites, see van Ginkel 1998: 351-358; Wood 2014: 360-361.

had certain expectations attached to it, and that it was primarily to give him authority to act as a religious mediator.⁴³⁹ On the other side of the argument, M. Whittow and P. Allen have argued that to call the Jafnids ‘champions of Monophysitism’ goes far beyond the evidence.⁴⁴⁰ Whittow points out that it is too convenient that the evidence for Jafnid Miaphysitism appears during periods when emperors were attempting to unite various factions and had a role for secular brokers.⁴⁴¹ Even Shahīd concedes that the evidence towards the end of the sixth century is limited and that it is ‘possible or even probable that they were no longer champions of Monophysitism.’⁴⁴² It is not possible to say whether or not they were committed miaphysites, but it is clear they were long-standing patrons and used on multiple occasions as mediators.

Although it is difficult to determine the Jafnids commitment to Miaphysitism, it is clear that they did play a role in ecclesiastical affairs in Constantinople and that this role brought with it the potential for political influence. By the same token, it was mutually beneficial for Tiberius II to be able to appoint al-Mundhir to act as mediator to the Severans. Tiberius II had been much less concerned with reconciling religious disputes than the previous emperors. He was willing to allow an Arian temple in Constantinople to secure the support of the Goths and he was praised by anti-Chalcedonian sources for his tolerance.⁴⁴³ It appears his main focus was the external pressures from the war with Persia. It is only later in his reign, when the internal hostilities between the Jacobite, Paulianist, and Theodosian factions became more pronounced, that he convened a council to attempt to resolve the dispute.⁴⁴⁴ When we consider this hands-offs approach to ecclesiastical affairs, it makes sense why it would benefit Tiberius II to use al-Mundhir as a mediator. There was precedence for this in the recent past, and it would allow

⁴³⁹ Wood 2015: 327; Wood 2014: 358-365. The council in Constantinople was the second attempt by al-Mundhir to act as a mediator between Paul ‘de Beth Ukkama’ and Jacob Baradaeus, they first convened in Jabiya.

⁴⁴⁰ Whittow 1999: 218; Allen 1981: 21-40.

⁴⁴¹ Whittow 1999: 218.

⁴⁴² Shahīd 1995: 939.

⁴⁴³ Joh. Eph. *HE*. 3.3.20-22; Joh. Nikiu. *Chron.* 94.

⁴⁴⁴ Booth 2017: 170-171.

Tiberius to attempt to resolve the issue without being seen to patronise any specific faction too closely.

Al-Mundhir must have been aware of the benefit that imperial backing had in maintaining his position of leadership among the Arab allies of Byzantium. Given the loss of support in the early 570s, it is likely that he used this opportunity to reaffirm his status and gain the economic and military backing of the empire. Furthermore, it is possible to theorize the reasoning behind Tiberius II's reversal in position towards the Jafnids. The events of his predecessor must have impressed upon him the value of the Jafnids in military affairs.⁴⁴⁵ Tiberius II refrains from getting directly involved in religious affairs on several occasions.⁴⁴⁶ It appears his main concern was to garner troops for the myriad of conflicts he was facing once he was appointed emperor. Tiberius II's formal recognition of al-Mundhir was similar to that of Justinian's support of al-Hārith and demonstrates his abandonment of the exclusive foreign policy promoted by Justin II. While the recognition of a Jafnid leader in a formal setting likely was in part to mollify the past transgression of the Byzantines, it also serves to indicate that Tiberius II recognized the importance of these allies.⁴⁴⁷ Unfortunately for Tiberius II, this renewed alliance would not last and Maurice would have a much different situation in Arabia upon his accession to the throne.

The conspiracy that transpired against al-Mundhir in 580/581 had a profound effect on the relationship between Byzantium and its Jafnid neighbours. It not only caused the fall of a prominent frontier commander and in turn weakened the effectiveness of the Jafnids as a protective fighting force against the Persians, but it also had serious consequences for the reign of Emperor Maurice, a main player in the conspiracy, and his relationship with the Arabs.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁵ Fisher 2011: 121; cf. Shahīd 1995: 404-406.

⁴⁴⁶ He permitted the Arian Goths to construct their own church in Constantinople in exchange for their military service and he issued an edict of tolerance for the Miaphysite Arabs. For the Goths, see Joh. Eph. 3.13. For the Arabs, see Joh. Eph. 4.42; cf. Allen 1981: 26-27.

⁴⁴⁷ Fisher 2011: 122.

⁴⁴⁸ The reign of Maurice has been controversial in both contemporary and modern studies. Although J.B. Bury judged his reign ineffectual in his *History of the Later Roman Empire*, more recent works by scholars such as

The charge that was leveled against al-Mundhir was treachery or *prodosia* and was not just directed at him but at his people as well. It was brought against al-Mundhir by Maurice, at this time the *magister militum per Orientem*, and once again, much emphasis in modern scholarship has framed this charge in terms of religious ideology. Allen argues that Maurice's actions towards al-Mundhir display his anti-Miaphysite sentiment and she cites the persecutions that he permitted in 598/599 as evidence of resentment towards the Miaphysites.⁴⁴⁹ P. Wood also argues that the charges against al-Mundhir originated from religious matters, but he frames it in the context of al-Mundhir's failure to reconcile the aforementioned schism in the Severan church. Wood argues that the events in Mesopotamia made al-Mundhir's position worse but were not where the charges originated.⁴⁵⁰ It is incorrect to explain this charge through religious ideology for several reasons. Although Maurice is reported to have shown anti-Miaphysite attitudes later in his reign as emperor, these attitudes were not necessarily present early in his career. Whitby has argued that Maurice's religious tolerance only eroded after he suffered an illness in 596/597 and that he was much more tolerant early in his reign.⁴⁵¹ Even John of Ephesus, who writes with pro-Miaphysite leanings, praises Maurice for his resistance of accusations against Miaphysites.⁴⁵² Furthermore, while the dispute between the Jacobites and the Paulites likely damaged the support al-Mundhir had in Constantinople, it appears it was the failed attack on the city of Ctesiphon that originated the charge not vice-versa. The attack on the city of Ctesiphon is recorded by several ancient historians: John of Ephesus (twice), Menander, Evagrius, and Theophylact. However, the Greek historians need to be considered carefully. At the time, they were under the patronage of either the Emperor of Constantinople

Michael Whitby, George Ostrogorsky, and Paul Goubert have portrayed him in a much more positive light. For these perspectives on his reign, see Bury 1923: 86; Whitby 1988; Ostrogorsky 1968: 80; Goubert 1951.

⁴⁴⁹ Allen 1981: 26-27. For the Miaphysite persecutions of 598/599, see Mich. Syr. 10.23.

⁴⁵⁰ Wood 2015: 328-329.

⁴⁵¹ Whitby 1988: 21-22. For Maurice's illness, see Theophylact Simocatta, 8.2.8.

⁴⁵² Joh. Eph. *HE*. 5.21.

or the patriarch of Antioch and their record of events are noticeably derogative towards al-Mundhir and the Arabs.⁴⁵³

John of Ephesus records two accounts of the incident and he is the only source who mentions that the argument was over the destruction of a bridge. His view provides a more balanced description of events and although he never says it outright, he implies that it is Maurice who acted irrationally and was to blame for the outcome of the dispute.

When Maurice was in the East, as commander of the forces ... a convention was made with al-Mundhir that they should simultaneously invade the territory of the Persians. Accordingly, they made a march of several days in company; but on arriving opposite Mesopotamia...they found the bridge destroyed, over which they had expected to pass in order to capture the city. And this led to a quarrel between them, because Maurice imagined that al-Mundhir had given information to the Persians, upon receipt of which they had broken up the bridge.⁴⁵⁴

The passage goes on to state that both wrote to Tiberius II in order to explain their situation. Tiberius II first attempts to act as a mediator between the two but Maurice returns to Constantinople and 'wickedly and harshly brought accusations against king al-Mundhir.'⁴⁵⁵ Although Tiberius attempts to remain neutral, these accusations convince him to arrest al-Mundhir and bring him to Constantinople. Once the Arabs learn of the betrayal, the sons of al-Mundhir organize attacks against Roman holdings all over Syria and Arabia and blockaded the city of Bostra. This continues until Tiberius II is able to install one of al-Mundhir's brothers as ruler of the Arabs but in the interim the Byzantines suffered great losses of wealth and territory.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵³ For the negative attitude of contemporary scholars towards the Arabs, see Shahīd 1995: 331-337, 592-597. By the same token, al-Mundhir was a patron of the Paulites, and was received favorably by Syriac sources such as John of Ephesus.

⁴⁵⁴ Joh. Eph. *HE*. 3.40; trans. Payne Smith 1860: 236-237.

⁴⁵⁵ Joh. Eph. *HE*. 3.40.

⁴⁵⁶ Joh. Eph. *HE*. 3.40-42.

The second account has some notable differences:

Maurice and Mondir the son of Ḥārith king of the Arabs united their forces together, and marched into the Persian territories by the route through the desert.... But on arriving at the great bridge there, upon which they had relied for crossing over, and subduing the wealthy cities upon the opposite side, they found it cut away: for when the Persians had learnt their intentions, they had destroyed it.... As both [Maurice and al-Mundhir] were equally irritated, they wrote angry accusations against one another to the king; for Maurice thought that Mondir had sent information of their plans to the Persians, and had thus enabled them to break down the bridge to prevent his passage – a supposition which was false.⁴⁵⁷

In this account, John not only states outright that it was the Persians who destroyed the bridge, he also denies Maurice's claim that it was al-Mundhir's fault. Furthermore, John states that after the argument, when Maurice and al-Mundhir retreated to their respective territories, the Persians took advantage of the opportunity and raided into the Byzantine districts of Tela and Resainia. It is then that al-Mundhir, not Maurice, rallied his army and not only drove the Persians back but continued on to lay siege to the city of Hirah.⁴⁵⁸ In both accounts John demonstrates al-Mundhir's military prowess and value to the Byzantine Empire.

These two accounts are important when compared to that of the Greek historians who provide a different version of events. Theophylact begins by discrediting al-Mundhir and gives a pro-Maurician account of the conflict.

The Saracen tribe is known to be most unreliable and fickle, their mind is not steadfast, and their judgement is not firmly grounded in prudence...Then after Alamundarus had like a drone destroyed the beehives, or in other words had ruined Maurice's enterprise,

⁴⁵⁷ Joh. Eph. *HE*. 6.16; trans. Payne Smith 1860: 413.

⁴⁵⁸ Joh. Eph. *HE*. 6.17-19.

the maneuvers of the expedition against the Medes became unprofitable for the Romans.⁴⁵⁹

Menander also refers to the attack but records even less details:

Maurice, the Roman commander, seemed to have laid his plans well and, as far as a man could, to have taken precautions against unforeseeable developments. But the indiscipline of the other generals and their failure to follow his orders brought the Romans into the gravest danger.⁴⁶⁰

Evagrius provides an equally derogatory record of the attack:

Even though Alamundarus, the leader of the Scenite barbarians, was thoroughly treacherous, and refused to cross the Euphrates and fight alongside Maurice against the Scenite Arabs among the opposition.⁴⁶¹

There are several points that need to be considered when comparing the available evidence of this attack and its effect on foreign policy. First, the accusation of *prodosia* should be questioned. The fact that this was a joint effort between the Byzantines and the Arabs is important. It is possible that the accusation of treason was an invention of the sources to justify the defeat. There is some dissonance among the sources that would provide evidence for this scenario. Theophylact accuses al-Mundhir outright for providing intelligence to the Persians

⁴⁵⁹ ἀπιστότατον γὰρ καὶ ἀλλοπρόσαλλον τὸ Σαρακηνικὸν φύλον καθέστηκε πάγιόν τε τὸν νοῦν καὶ τὴν γνώμην πρὸς τὸ σῶφρον ἰδρυμένην οὐκ ἔχον. καὶ οὖν ἐκ τούτου ὁ τῶν Περσῶν βασιλεὺς ἐπὶ Καλλίνικον πόλιν τὸν πόλεμον μετεφύτευεν Ἀδορμαάνην χειροτονήσας τῆς ἐκτάξεως κηδεμόνα οὐκ ἀφυσέστατον. ἐπεὶ τοίνυν ὁ Ἀλαμούνδαρος κηφῆνος δίκην τοῦς τῆς μελίττης σίμβλους ἠφάνισεν, εἰπεῖν δὲ ταῦτόν τὰ Μαυρικίου ἐπίχειρα ἀνετρέψατο, ἀνόνητα γίνεται Ῥωμαίοις τὰ τῆς κατὰ Μήδων ἐπιστρατείας κινήματα. Theophylact, 3.17.7-9. trans. M. and M. Whitby 1986: 99-100.

⁴⁶⁰ Μαυρικός μὲν γὰρ ὁ τῶν Ῥωμαίων στρατηγὸς εὖ βεβουλεῦσθαι ἐδόκει, καὶ καθ' ὅσον οἶόν τε ἦν ἀνθρώπῳ προέγνω τὰς ἀδήλους τῶν πράξεων ἀποβάσεις, τῇ δὲ τῶν ἄλλων στρατηγῶν ἀκοσμία τῷ μὴ φυλάξαι τὰ πρὸς αὐτοῦ εἰρημένα τε καὶ παρεγγυηθέντα ἐς ἔσχατον κινδύνου τὰ Ῥωμαίων ἤλασε πράγματα. Men. Proc. frag. 23.11.8-12; trans. Blockley 1985: 215. Although the context of this passage is unclear, scholars such as Stein, Turtledove, and Blockley have identified it as a description of the attack of Ctesiphon. See Stein 1919: 98; Turtledove 1977: 332; Blockley 1985a: 283 fn. 292.

⁴⁶¹ καὶ ταῦτα Ἀλαμουνδάρου καταπροδόντος, ὃς τῶν Σκηνητῶν ἠγεῖτο βαρβάρων, καὶ τὸν Εὐφράτην οὐχ ἐλομένου διαβῆναι ποταμὸν καὶ συμμαχῆσαι τῷ Μαυρικίῳ κατὰ τῶν ἀπ' ἐναντίας Σκηνητῶν Ἀράβων. Evagr., HE. 5.20.216. trans. M. Whitby 2000: 282.

and thus betraying the Byzantines and Evagrius, while he does not accuse him of treason, blames al-Mundhir for the failure.⁴⁶² John of Ephesus provides a slightly more neutral account and states that al-Mundhir and Maurice blame each other for the failure. It is certainly possible that the charge of treachery was leveled at al-Mundhir by the sources as a means to justify the Byzantine defeat. Second, the religious inclinations of the sources should also be considered. It is possible that Theophylact and Evagrius, who are both Chalcedonian, may be presenting al-Mundhir in a more negative light and thus, the Greek historians appear to present a distorted view of the events. Even though John was a Miaphysite, his account is much more in line with al-Mundhir's previous actions. All records of al-Mundhir's actions imply that he had a great deal of respect for Byzantine authority and constantly acted in the best interests of the empire. The fact that he was a supporter of the Miaphysite confession did not seem to detract from his willingness to submit to the will of the emperor. Furthermore, according to John of Ephesus, when he was finally betrayed by Magnus, he answers the summons without any indication that he had done wrong, arriving with only a small contingent of soldiers to the banquet that was prepared for him as a trap.⁴⁶³ Based on this evidence, it appears that al-Mundhir was not acting as though he had betrayed the empire but rather that he was simply a part of a defeat shared by both sides. Furthermore, to levy the charge of treason against al-Mundhir would have effectively allowed Maurice to remove himself for the blame of the defeat. Considering his rising career and his ambitions to become emperor this would have allowed him to remove this black spot from his record and may have also been a factor in why Maurice set out to have him arrested. Although Tiberius was in favour of mediating the dispute, the charge of treason against a non-Roman that was supported by the commander of the East likely proved too much for him to deny the accusations against al-Mundhir.

Considering the mistreatment and exile of al-Mundhir after the dedication he had shown towards Byzantium, it is possible to see why the Jafnids reacted to this incident in such a

⁴⁶² Theophylact Simocatta, *HE*. 3.17.5-10; Evagr. *HE*. 5.20.

⁴⁶³ Joh. Eph. *HE*. 238-239.

negative way. According to John of Ephesus, after al-Mundhir was exiled, leadership of the Jafnids fell to his son, Nu'mān.⁴⁶⁴ There are several accounts of Nu'mān's actions after assuming leadership of the Jafnids that slightly differ on his motivations for his actions but all agree that he proceeded to conduct a series of devastating raids against the Byzantine territories in Arabia and Syria, the most significant being the defeat and death of the *dux* of *Provincia Arabia* following a siege of the capital, Bostra.⁴⁶⁵

Seen against the wider background of the reign of Tiberius II, it seems more prudent to frame the reconciliation and fallout with the Jafnids in terms of foreign policy. As has been shown, Tiberius had less inclination to mediate matters of religious dispute than Justinian and Justin II did. While he may also have taken the opportunity of having al-Mundhir in Constantinople to delegate the role of mediator in the Severan schism, it is likely his primary motivation was to re-establish the Jafnids' role as allies against the Sasanians and the Naṣrids along the Arabian frontier. Furthermore, the fallout with the Jafnids is better explained in such terms as well. The defeat at Ctesiphon was a potential embarrassment for Maurice and the charge of *prodosia* was a convenient means to pass the blame for this loss to the Jafnids. This would have also questioned the effectiveness of the al-Mundhir as a military commander and weakened his support in Constantinople. Maurice's lack of support for the Jafnid dynasty provides evidence to why Nu'mān took a different approach to Byzantium and was more of an enemy than an ally. If we look at the chronology of events leading up to the rebellion of Nu'mān, we see a Byzantine shift against the Jafnids that culminates with the accession of Maurice. Al-Mundhir's support in Constantinople was largely due to his father's status as phylarch coupled with his support from Tiberius II. The chain of events consisting of the failure of the religious council in 580, the defeat at Ctesiphon in 581, and the death of Tiberius II in 582, it is possible

⁴⁶⁴ Joh. Eph. *HE*. 173.

⁴⁶⁵ Evagr. *HE*. 6.2; Chron. 1234, p213; Moschus, *Prat. Spir.* 155; Michael the Syrian 10.19. The main difference in the accounts is that the later Syrian sources state that although he took much gold, silver, and property, he did not kill or take prisoner any Romans. This, however, should be treated cautiously as the division between the miaphysites and the chalcedonians had become much more pronounced when the Chronicle of 1234 and Michael the Syrian were writing and they were likely providing a biased account towards the Jafnids who were of their religion (Miaphysites).

to view how the popularity of al-Mundhir dropped such a short period of time after his reconciliation with Constantinople in 575. Although the rebellion of Nu‘mān likely happened just prior to Tiberius II’s death (August 582), it is possible to view this as a last option to hold off the inevitable.⁴⁶⁶ Finally, the chances of a second reconciliation drastically decreased because of al-Mundhir’s main opponent, Maurice, rising to the throne.

Impacts of Imperial Patronage

After an analysis of the foreign policies of Justin II and Tiberius II towards the Jafnids, it is necessary to look at the impact that imperial patronage had on Arab society. In regards to political centralization, the support of Byzantium allowed the Jafnid elites to establish a series of dynastic leaders (al-Hārith, al-Mundhir, al- Nu‘mān) who were able to exert influence and command over the Arab allies of Byzantium. It is interesting to note the importance of this backing to maintain dominance of the region. Justinian’s inclusive foreign policy allowed an elite class of the Arab peninsula, namely the Jafnids, the ability to rise to prominence and thus acquire a position of leadership among the Arab allies of Byzantium. This position was undoubtedly supported by the ability to receive funds and troops from the Byzantine empire. Furthermore, it allowed them to challenge the other prominent polity in the region, the Naṣrids, who were in their position due to support of the Persian empire. During the period when Justin adopted an exclusive foreign policy and withdrew his support of al-Mundhir (572-575) the region was quickly taken over by the Naṣrids and their Sassanian benefactors. Once Tiberius re-established Byzantine patronage of the Jafnids, they were able to reassert themselves in the region. The events of the 580s also support this line of reasoning. The shift in blame for the defeat against the Persians clearly lost al-Mundhir a significant amount of imperial support and thus significantly weakened the Jafnids control over the region.

It appears evident that as the relationship between the Jafnids and the Byzantines becomes more complex, the Jafnids appropriate a certain degree of Byzantine elite culture. However, this process is not strictly one-sided and it important to note that they were also developing an Arab culture alongside this process. This can be seen in the epigraphic record.

⁴⁶⁶ Tiberius II did make an attempt to subvert the situation by having Magnus appoint a new leader to the Jafnids but both he and Magnus died before they were able to make any progress, see Joh. Eph. *HE*. 3.3.41-43.

First, in regards to Byzantine appropriation, the accumulation of wealth and prestige allowed the Jafnids to adopt the practices of Roman elites, such as building projects and the use of inscriptions to celebrate elites. Near al-Burj, approximately 20km east of Damascus, an inscription was discovered that claims a structure was built by al-Mundhir, describes him as a *patrikios*, and adds Flavius to his name.⁴⁶⁷ At al-Ḥayyat, in the middle of the Haurān, a building inscription was discovered *in situ* which again refers to al-Mundhir as *patrikios* and states that it was built by a certain Flavius Seos.⁴⁶⁸ On the lintel of a former monastery between Damascus and Palmyra, the inscription ‘To Flavius Harith, *patrikios*...’⁴⁶⁹ At Ma’arrat al- Nu‘mān, on a bronze plate ‘Nu‘mān, the most illustrious, *stratêlatês* and *phylarchos*.’ On a Byzantine seal, ‘Jabala *patrikios*.’⁴⁷⁰ These inscriptions provide evidence for Byzantine appropriation for several reasons. They are in a Roman elite idiom and are all in Greek. Although there is evidence that they used Arabic amongst themselves (discussed below), it appears that it was important for the Jafnids to present an image of imperial allies in public. Furthermore, the titles that they used, particularly *patrikios*, connected them to Byzantium and the emperor in a public way. The frequency of these inscriptions in the vicinity of Damascus also provides evidence for centralization of power. It suggests that the Jafnids adopted a power base from which they could control those allied to them. Finally, in connection with this power base, it appears from the inscriptions that they also adopted a certain amount of building projects and, as Hoyland suggests, it is perhaps better to view them as an ‘inner core of client kingdoms’ rather than as nomads.⁴⁷¹

However, while the Jafnids were appropriating Byzantine culture, they were also developing a specifically Arab identity. Even though they were using Greek in their official inscriptions, there is evidence that suggests that the Jafnids were using Arabic script in other capacities. One example of this is the personal graffito of AD 528 at Jabal Says by an Arab sent there by al-Ḥārith.⁴⁷² As Macdonald argues, although there is no indication that he was a professional scribe, it is a possibility, and if he were, it would suggest a need for him to be sent

⁴⁶⁷ Wadd. 2562c; Lenoir 1996: 227-236; Fisher 2011: 100-102; Fiema, et al. 2015: 176-177.

⁴⁶⁸ Wadd. 2110; Fisher 2011: 101-102; Fiema et al. 2015: 176-177.

⁴⁶⁹ *IGLS* 2553bd.

⁴⁷⁰ Shahīd 2001.

⁴⁷¹ Hoyland 2006: 231.

⁴⁷² For the inscription, see Fiema, *et al.* 2015: 412-414.

there and thus a habitual use of writing in Jafnid administration and military correspondence.⁴⁷³ There are three other inscriptions worth noting. At Zebed, there is a short Arabic note added to a Greek-Syriac bilingual inscription which commemorates the founding of a martyrium for Saint Sergius dated to 512; at Jebel Says, a graffito dated to 529 by a Qayyim ibn Mughira who was sent to guard a watering hole on behalf of the chief of Ghassan; and a bilingual Greek-Arabic inscription from Ḥarran which records the building of a martyrium for a certain Saint John by Sharahil, son of Talemū dated to 569.⁴⁷⁴ Although only one of these three inscriptions has a clear connection to the Jafnids, the dating of them places them within the context of Jafnid superiority and the wide range of locations suggests that this was a phenomenon taking place throughout much of Arabia. Furthermore, the persistence of these Arabic inscriptions suggests that there was a prevailing Arab identity that was developing alongside the appropriation of Byzantine culture.

Although there has yet to be much evidence of an Arab written tradition before the Islamic period, it is nevertheless possible that a documentary culture existed among the Jafnids during the sixth century. When one considers the administrative practices and culture evident in the immediate aftermath of the Arab conquests, one must consider the influence that the Jafnids may have had on this development. It is necessary to still tread cautiously when attempting to draw conclusions on how much the Jafnids may have influenced the Umayyads. Whittow, for instance, questions how influential the Jafnids were in the Islamic political elite, and Hoyland admits that before Islam, it appears that Arabic was mainly employed in an oral capacity among inhabitants of the region.⁴⁷⁵ However, as Fisher suggests, there was a history of an Arab political elite before the rise of the Umayyads.⁴⁷⁶ The examples of Arabic presented suggest that they had a growing sense of connection and value to their own language.⁴⁷⁷ Furthermore, the inscriptions such as those found at Nemara and Jabal Says, which both praise Jafnid leadership, lend weight to the argument that it was the tribes who were being influenced

⁴⁷³ Macdonald 2009c: 23-24.

⁴⁷⁴ For these inscriptions, see Grohmann 1971: 14-17, Gruendler 1993: 13-14, and Hoyland 2006: 232-234. For Jabal Says, see also Robin and Gorea 2002.

⁴⁷⁵ Whittow 1999: 224. Hoyland 2006: 233-234.

⁴⁷⁶ Fisher 2011: 209-210.

⁴⁷⁷ It was certainly against the standard procedure of writing in the language of prestige in the region, namely Greek or Aramaic, see Hoyland 2006: 235.

by Byzantium who were making this practice more common.⁴⁷⁸ When one considers the broader context of what is occurring to other polities in the late sixth century because of their interactions with the Byzantine state, one must consider the aid this interaction had on the development of a given polity.

Thus, similar to other polities discussed in this thesis, it appears that the Jafnids provide another example of the broader effects Byzantine foreign policy could have on the development of a polity with which it interacted. When Byzantium allied itself with a new polity, it not only provided a new source of wealth to aid in that societies development but also gave legitimacy to those whom acted as intermediaries between the polity and the empire. Over the course of their relationship with Byzantium, the Jafnids received various titles and privileges. Audiences at Constantinople and monetary subsidies for the development of troops and defenses aided them in maintaining a position of wealth and prestige among their own tribes, and thus further influenced the stratification of their society.⁴⁷⁹ This legitimacy, coupled with military backing on campaigns, aided in the development of a ruling class in the polity. It encouraged political centralization under a dynastic elite class and fostered the growth of Byzantine style building projects. When the opposite was the case, namely an exclusive foreign policy, other means needed to be sought out to achieve authority among the developing polity. As with other tribal societies discussed in this thesis, this frequently included warfare to acquire both prestige and a source of income. The Arabs provide a clear example of this, when they lose imperial backing in 572-575 and again in 581-582 they immediately turn to conducting raids against the Byzantine Empire.

Conclusion

When looking at the evidence there are several conclusions that can be drawn. The foreign policies of Justin II changed the relationship that Byzantium had with those who inhabited the Arabian Peninsula. Justin's refusal to continue Justinian's inclusive policy of subsidies towards the Naṣrids opened territories along the frontier to attack. Furthermore, his decision to withdraw support for the Jafnids allowed the Sasanians unabated movement through Arabia and opportunity to attack Byzantine territories. Although Tiberius attempted to restore

⁴⁷⁸ Hoyland 2006: 235.

⁴⁷⁹ Fisher 2011: 72-80.

these relations, first by a reconciliation with al-Mundhir in 575 and then by an attempt to change the ruling family of the Jafnids, his reign was much too short to establish any lasting agreement. The importance of maintaining a relationship with the Jafnids and the Naşrids to Byzantine society is more difficult to pin down. It should not be overstated in that Arabia was one region on the borders of the Empire and Justin's refusal to continue subsidies did not threaten large areas of Byzantine territory like his exclusive policy towards the Avars. However, to argue that it was inconsequential would also be a mistake. Justin's decision to alienate al-Mundhir ended up costing the Byzantines resources, troops, and territories at a time when they were hard pressed on other frontiers. It also allowed the Sasanians the upper hand (albeit not a devastating one) in the renewed conflict with Persia which added to their expenditures.

Thus, when one places the Arabs into the context of the development of the other polities that interacted with Byzantium in the late sixth century, it produces a similar paradigm. It appears that although Justinian's inclusive foreign policy successfully managed the allied territories during his reign, it consequently fostered the rise of much more powerful polities. These polities were wealthier, more politically centralized, and had the ability to carry out larger and more destructive campaigns in the second half of the sixth century. His policy also encouraged the growth of an elite strata within these societies whose leadership was at least in part based on the prestige of imperial backing. When Justin changed the foreign policy to one of exclusion, it forced these polities to seek out new means to justify their position which in many cases led to raids upon the empire. What is important to note is that contrary to the notion that Justin mismanaged the empire, or that he led it to the precarious position it found itself in the last two decades of the sixth century, is that Justinian's inclusive policy created much more powerful opponents. Justin's exclusive foreign policy did have merit, and it might have been possible, were it successful, to weaken the strength of the polities that were growing around him. Thus, it is an oversimplification to place the blame for the weakening of the empire purely in the hands of Justin. When one considers that Tiberius went back to a more Justinian foreign policy and was largely unsuccessful, it would appear that the consequences of fostering the growth of those on the borders of Byzantium would be a more apt description of how the empire found itself in the state it was upon the ascension of Maurice.

ARMENIANS

The Persarmenian affair is another important event in the analysis of Byzantine foreign policy. The contact between the Byzantines and the Armenians during the late sixth century highlight Justin's ideology in regards to foreign powers and also led to the Romanization of many within the Armenian borders. The evidence in this section will present several aspects of Justin II's ideology. It will be demonstrated that he viewed the Persarmenian affair as one aspect of a strategy to remove Byzantium from the financial obligations Justinian had made to Persia. It will also demonstrate his desire to be a *defensor fidei*. This fits into the model of his exclusive foreign policy because it would present Byzantium as the superior polity in the relationship as opposed to one obligated to make tributary payments to another. Finally, it will be argued that success in Persarmenia and thus a Byzantine presence there would aid in the attainment of disputed territories such as Suania. As for Romanisation, it will be argued that the reforms initiated by Justinian led to an adoption of Roman laws and institutions within the province. Furthermore, the adoption of Christianity led to a natural reliance on Byzantium which further contributed to the development of a more Roman society.

Christianity and Justinianic Reforms

To properly understand the historical context of Armenia during the reign of Justin II, it is necessary to understand three significant developments in the region: the adoption of Christianity; the political divide between the East and West; and the series of organizational reforms under Justinian that introduced significant changes into their society.

The examination of the origins of Christianity in Armenia is difficult from a historiographical perspective. Outside sources rarely depict developments with Armenia unless their own people are directly involved so one is forced to depend on local sources for information. The problem with this is that the first documents written in Armenian post-date the conversion to Christianity by over a century and all available texts were composed by Christians (often Armenian clerics) who tend to present a distorted version of events.⁴⁸⁰ The main source for the conversion to Christianity is the *History of Armenia* which is attributed to a certain

⁴⁸⁰ Thompson 1988-89: 28-29. For an overview of Armenian literature as a whole, see V. Inglisian 1963; Thompson 1995; Thompson 2007.

Agathangelos (“good messenger”), which records the conversion of the country through the labours of saint Gregory the Illuminator.⁴⁸¹ According to the text, Grigor Lusavorich, the first patriarch of the Armenian Church, worked to spread Christianity among the people and nobles in Armenia. It states that after initial resistance Trdat the Great adopted Christianity as the state religion and established the Armenian Apostolic Church.⁴⁸² *The History of Armenia* presents a hagiographical and quasi-mythical version of events. In reality, it should be noted, it was likely a much more complex process. For instance, it appears that Christianity entered Greater Armenia from two sides, the south and the west. According to Eusebius, Christianity was first adopted by Abgar IX Ukama in Osroene and an Armenian bishopric was established in the Van region under the leadership of Bishop Mehruzhan.⁴⁸³ Although Armenian Christianity was for a long time exposed to influences from the south, it was traditions associated with the Roman west which came to dominate the Armenian historical memory.⁴⁸⁴

What is important to this study is the ramifications the adoption of Christianity would have on Armenia’s relationship with Persia and Byzantium in the sixth century. The adoption of Christianity bound the Christian regions of Armenia more closely to the Roman Empire. Furthermore, it would be seen by the Persian government as a threat to the security of its borders. This would lead to suppressionist policies by the Persian shahs (who were influenced by the Zoroastrian priesthood) and give the Romans an opportunity to claim the role of protector over these communities on the basis of supporting the universal mission of the Christian Church.⁴⁸⁵ One aspect of the relationship between the churches of Constantinople and Armenia should be noted, namely the Second Council of Dvin (554?) and the apparent rejection of Chalcedon. Although the Council appears to have severed this relationship, this may not have been the case. The Second Council of Dvin was called by the *Catholicos* Nerses II as a reaction to the Council

⁴⁸¹ For an overview of the main themes of the text, see Thompson 2010: 4.

⁴⁸² Payaslian 2007: 34-35. For translation of the text, see Thompson 2010.

⁴⁸³ Eusebius, *Church History*. 1.12. See Trimmingham 1979, for the establishment of Christianity in Edessa and the surrounding regions.

⁴⁸⁴ Blockley 1992: 10-11; Grousset 1947: 177; Chaumont 1969: 147. There is some debate as to whether the state declared Christianity its official religion in 301 or 314. Although traditionally it has been suggested that 301 is the preferred date as it takes place shortly after Trdat’s accession to the throne and coincides with his domestic reforms, V. Nersessian has convincingly argued for 314 by using a combination of three independent dates, namely the conversion of Tiridates III, Grigor Lusavorich’s release from prison, and the consecration of Grigor Lusavorich as the *Catholicos* of Armenia, see Nersessian 2007:23-25.

⁴⁸⁵ Blockley 1992: 11. This Roman policy of protecting its Christian neighbours is most notable by Constantine I, who sent a letter to Shapur concerning the matter, and Justin II, who will be discussed in detail below. For discussion of Constantine’s letter to Shapur, see Barnes 1981: 258 and 1985: 132.

of Chalcedon. The result of the Council was the adoption of Julianism as orthodox, the consecration of Abdisho, and not only the rejection of Chalcedon but also the anathematization of the Church of Constantinople for upholding that Council.⁴⁸⁶ The harsh rejection of the Church of Constantinople, however, may not have been the case. T. Andrews has convincingly argued that the sources for sixth century Armenia contained within the *Book of Letters* are primarily written after the schism between Byzantium and Armenia in the seventh century and thus are potentially the product of a later revision.⁴⁸⁷ She supports this by several arguments, namely that, according to John of Ephesus, when in 571 the *Catholicos* Yovhannēs accompanied Vardan to Constantinople, he and the other Armenian princes received communion with the Chalcedonian Church of Constantinople; also that the *Book of Letters* presents a polemical attack on Chalcedon rather than the expected theological discussion; and that the Armenian rebels are willing to seek support and refuge in Constantinople in 571.⁴⁸⁸ Based on these arguments and the interactions between Constantinople and Armenia discussed below, it does appear that the Armenian Church was at least willing to compromise with the Roman Church during the late sixth century and that the Second Council of Dvin does not constitute a drastic break in relations between Byzantium and Armenia.

The next development that would affect Armenia's relations with their imperial neighbours (Byzantium and Persia) was the political divide between the East and West which took place towards the end of the fourth century. The Peace of Acilisene (387) between the Byzantine and Persian Empires effectively divided Armenia into eastern and western kingdoms.⁴⁸⁹ The geographical boundaries set out in this treaty would remain largely intact (with the exception of the administrative reforms under Justinian which will be discussed below) until the late sixth century and the period that has been the focus of this study.⁴⁹⁰ One of the effects of this treaty was that each partition would be influenced into adopting a model of government that was largely influenced by the corresponding Empire to which it was closest. However, it is important to note that Western Armenia was not uniformly incorporated into

⁴⁸⁶ Greenwood 2008: 672. For the events of the Council of Dvin preserved in the *Book of Letters*, see Garitte 1952: 130-175.

⁴⁸⁷ Andrews 2013.

⁴⁸⁸ Andrews 2013: 32-35.

⁴⁸⁹ Faustus 6.1.

⁴⁹⁰ For an excellent map depicting the partition between the eastern and western kingdoms, see Hewsen 2001: 85.

Byzantium with this treaty. There were three distinct regions that, according to the Byzantines, were distinguished according to their degree of submission to the authority of the Empire, namely the autonomous principalities (*satrapiae*), Interior Armenia (*Armenia Interior*), and Lesser Armenia (*Armenia Minor*).⁴⁹¹ The varying degrees of administration over these regions was complex and changed over time because of relations with Persia and as new regions of Armenia were brought into the empire. I will provide a brief overview before discussion of the reforms that were made by Justinian.

Lesser Armenia was annexed in AD 72 as part of the province of Cappadocia but was made into a separate province by Diocletian as part of his strategy to reform larger provinces into smaller more manageable ones. Lesser Armenia was further divided during the reign of Theodosius II, who broke it into the two smaller territories of Armenia I and Armenia II which lasted until the reign of Justinian.⁴⁹² These provinces were full provinces within the Byzantine Empire and as such were governed by Roman governors and the troops were under the command of a military duke (*dux Armeniae*).⁴⁹³ However, it is important to note that although there was a process of de-Armenization taking place within these provinces, the ethnic character of the general populace remained largely Armenian.

Interior Armenia was obtained by the Byzantines as part of the treaty of 387. It consisted of former Arsacid lands between the Euphrates and the line of demarcation. However, this region maintained a special status and was governed by a civilian official known as the *comes Armeniae* who conducted affairs from Karin/Theodosiopolis.⁴⁹⁴ Interior Armenia was classified as a *civitas stipendiaria* which meant that it had some autonomy but still paid taxes and supplied soldiers to the *dux Armeniae*.⁴⁹⁵

The autonomous principalities or *satrapies* maintained the largest amount of autonomy of all the Byzantine controlled provinces. They had the status of *civitates foederatae* for close to one hundred years after the partition in 387 and were only required to send troops and the occasional tribute to the emperor.⁴⁹⁶ They were located between the Tigris and the Euphrates

⁴⁹¹ Adontz 1970: 27-74.

⁴⁹² Hewsen 2001: 72.

⁴⁹³ Garsoïan 2004a: 93.

⁴⁹⁴ The exact details of the obligations and privileges of the *comes Armeniae* are unfortunately largely unknown.

⁴⁹⁵ Garsoïan 2004b: 103-104.

⁴⁹⁶ Adontz 1970: 25-27; Garsoïan 2004b: 104-105.

and according to Procopius (who referred to them as “the Other Armenia”) were permitted to be governed by their hereditary rulers.⁴⁹⁷ They maintained this status until their participation in the revolt of 485 against Zeno when they lost the right to have hereditary rulers and were demoted to the status of *civitas stipendiaria*.

The administration and governance of Armenia was completely changed through a series of reforms under Justinian. The first major administrative reform enacted by Justinian was to change the form of leadership within all the Armenian provinces. Fortunately, the decree which enacted these changes has been preserved in the *Codex Justinianus*, it states that,

We have, after considering the matter with careful scrutiny and cautious diligence, observed that We must by this law appoint a Master of Soldiers also for the regions of Armenia and Pontus Polemoniachus and the Nations; and in the confidence that Your Greatness, which has been excellently recommended to Us by your past deeds, would be suitable for such a position. We have chosen you and entrusted to your care certain provinces, that is, Greater Armenia, which was formally called Inner Armenia, and the Nations – namely, Anzetana, Ingilena, Asthianena, Sophena, Sophanena, in which Martyropolis is located, and Balabitenam – First and Second Armenia, and Pontus Polemoniachus, together with their Dukes. The (office of) Count of Armenia has been abolished, and We have placed under your command certain units, not only new units that We have just formed but also some taken from the soldiers at court (*praesentales*), from those serving in the Orient, and from other troops, without, however, diminishing their number.⁴⁹⁸

John Malalas also provides an historical account of the decree and clarifies that a certain Sittas was sent to Armenia as the *magister militum per Armeniam*. He also confirms that all the former

⁴⁹⁷ Proc., *Buildings*. 3.1.17.

⁴⁹⁸ Sollicita cura cauta diligentia pertractantes perspeximus oportere etiam partibus Armeniae et Ponto Polemoniaco et gentibus proprium magistrum militum per hanc legem constituere, tuamque magnitudinem, quae nobis ex ante gestis optime commendata est, idoneam ad talem fore dignitatem confidentes elegimus certasque provincias, id est Magnam Armeniam, quae interior dicebatur, et gentes (Anzetanam videlicet, Ingilenam, Asthianenam, Sophenam, Sophanenam, in qua est Martyropolis, Balabitenam) et primam et secundam Armeniam et Pontum Polemoniaco tuae curae cum suis ducibus commisimus, comite Armeniae penitus sublato, certosque subdidimus numeros, non in modo quos in praesenti novos constituimus, sed etiam de praesentalibus et orientalibus et aliis agminibus segregatos, non tamen quantitatem eorum agminum minuentes. J. *Cod.* 1.29.5; trans. Blume rev. Frier 2016: 345-347.

powers of the Armenian dukes and counts were abolished and transferred to the newly created position.⁴⁹⁹ What is evident from this reform is that Justinian removed the existing structure which allowed Armenian leaders some autonomy and placed control of all of Roman Armenia under the leadership of a single Roman commander who also had control of the army in those same regions.

The second major reform that was enacted by Justinian went even further and effectively solidified the Armenian provinces as imperial territories. This reform was enacted on March 18, 536 by the imperial *Novella XXXI*, “On the Establishment of Four Governors for Armenia.”⁵⁰⁰ This reform completely Romanized the Armenian provinces from an administrative standpoint. The special status that Armenia Interior and the Satrapies had previously held was completely removed and four new provinces (Armenia I, II, III, and IV) were established to take over the administration of the region.⁵⁰¹ Byzantine governors were now appointed to administer these new provinces and as a result all previous autonomy that Armenian leaders had held was removed and the provinces were now considered officially Byzantine.⁵⁰² Although West Armenia was officially Byzantine in governance, the de-Armenization of the population was much more difficult to evaluate.⁵⁰³ The final two reforms made perhaps the greatest attempt to influence change on a social level but it is still difficult to judge the level of success they had.

These were two adjacent reforms that were enacted to influence Armenian inheritance laws. The first was an edict titled ‘Concerning the order of inheritance among Armenians,’ and was designed to achieve a level of equality between men and women.⁵⁰⁴ The main focus of this edict was to give women a measure of equality in the share of family estates. Coupled with this edict was *Novella XXI*, namely ‘That the Armenians should follow Roman laws in all ways.’⁵⁰⁵

⁴⁹⁹ Joh. Mal. 18.10. Procopius also provides an account which is less detailed but mentions the abolishment of the position of Satrap and that two Dukes were appointed to govern the *satrapies* who would report to the *magister militum per Armeniam*, see Proc., *Buildings*. 3.1.28-29.

⁵⁰⁰ J. Nov. 31.

⁵⁰¹ Armenia I was comprised of Armenia Interior with areas of the former Armenia I and some Pontic territories, Armenia II was made up of western half of the former Armenia I with additional Pontic territory, Armenia III consisted of what had previously been Armenia Minor, and Armenia IV was comprised of the regions of the abolished Satrapies, see J. Nov. 31

⁵⁰² It should be noted that the Governors of Armenia I and III outranked those of II and IV because they had military as well as civilian authority, see Garsoian 2004b: 105-106.

⁵⁰³ East Armenia (Persarmenia) which was under the control of the Persian government still maintained many of its traditional institutions.

⁵⁰⁴ J. *Edict* 3, see Miller and Sarris 2018: 1037-1038; cf. Kruegar 1895: III.760-761.

⁵⁰⁵ J. Nov. 21.

The goal of this *novella* was to replace local traditions and customs with Roman law. More specifically, these two reforms were meant to fragment the power of the leading families. By ensuring that family estates would be divided between men and women and inheritance open to sons and daughter via sanctioned wills, Justinian was attempting to take away the legal ownership of estates from the local families and to transfer it to the individual.⁵⁰⁶ These reforms not only established a more Roman form of government but also introduced Roman law into Armenian society. This is significant when one considers Roman inheritance laws. Previously, traditional *nakharar* law excluded land ownership being passed from father to daughter and women were prevented from holding land. Justinian's reforms condemned this practice and made sons and daughters both eligible to inherit.⁵⁰⁷ The result of this was that daughters were now able to transfer their inheritance to foreign husbands and thus fostered the fragmentation of the traditional Armenian social structure and the *nakharar* system.⁵⁰⁸ Although Justinian enacted reforms that were designed to have far-reaching implications, the actual results are more difficult to determine. It is unknown how widely it was dispersed, how severely it was enforced, and how well it was received among the populace.⁵⁰⁹

What would have a significant effect on the de-Armenization of Western Armenia and the relationship between Byzantium and Eastern Armenia (and by extension the Persian government) was the foreign policy of Justin II in the years after the death of Justinian.

Justin II – Persarmenian Affair

It is important to first analyse is the cause and effect of the foreign policy Justin II enacted in response to the Persarmenian revolt in the early 570s. At the beginning of his reign, Justin II had enacted an edict which abandoned the doctrine of aphtartodocetism that had been favored by Justinian in his late reign. According to John of Ephesus, the Persians interpreted this edict as a means to enforce doctrinal unity on the Empire under penalty of imprisonment,

⁵⁰⁶ Previously, succession was distributed more collectively by the leading prince (*tēr*) and was only eligible to male members of his extended family. Upon his death, all ownership transferred to the new *tēr* who would then reallocate the properties, see Greenwood 2012: 130-132.

⁵⁰⁷ Payaslian 2007: 45-46; Adontz 1970: 103-111, 133-136; Garsoian 2004: 104.

⁵⁰⁸ The *nakharar* system and Armenian noble houses were able to survive much longer intact in Persarmenia were these reforms did not take place.

⁵⁰⁹ Procopius notes that there was negative reaction to the reforms in Armenian during the late 530s but notes it was over taxation and not necessarily legislation, see Proc. *Wars*. II.3.1-31.

confiscation, and death.⁵¹⁰ The Persian *magi*, therefore, believed that Persia should enact similar legislation that would enforce Zoroastrian on their own empire.⁵¹¹ They were successful in convincing Khusro to adopt this policy and as a result, set the stage for the unrest that would follow in Persarmenia. According to John of Ephesus, the inhabitants of Persarmenia made natural targets for this new policy. Christianity was the predominant religion in the region and they were thought to be disloyal because of their adherence to the faith of Persia's main rival.⁵¹²

Although there is little documentation in the sources, it is likely that the Armenian Christians were being persecuted by the Persian *marzbans* prior to the policies implemented by Khusro. According to Stephen of Taron, the Christian persecutions began in earnest in the late 540s. He mentions a certain Denshapuh (548) who forced the Christians to worship Zoroastrian practices, and that this continued under Varazdat (558).⁵¹³ However, the persecutions intensified to the point where they sought out protection from Justin II with the implementation of the policies enacted by Khusro under the *marzban*, Čihor-Wšnasp. According to Evagrius, The Byzantines and the Armenians agreed to a secret pact in 570 before they went into open rebellion in the summer of 571,

The [Persarmenians] revered (the practices) of the Christians and were being cruelly treated by the Persians, especially with regard to their faith, sent an embassy to Justin in secret. They begged to become subject to the Romans, in order that they might freely perform the honours (due) to God without anyone hindering (them). When the emperor had admitted (their overtures), and certain points had been agreed by the emperor in writing and guaranteed by solemn oaths, the Armenians massacred their governors; and with their whole army, bringing (with them) their neighbours, both of kindred and foreign race, they united themselves to the Roman empire.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹⁰ Joh. Eph. *HE*. 2.18.

⁵¹¹ Joh. Eph. *HE*. 2.18.

⁵¹² Joh. Eph. *HE*. 2.19. It should be noted, however, that Christianity had been the state religion in Armenia since 314, much earlier than the Edict of Thessalonica (380) which made Christianity the official religion of the Byzantine Empire.

⁵¹³ Stephen of Taron, 84.23-86.7. Although the Christian persecutions are mentioned in other sources when they intensify, only Stephen of Taron provides details for the early stages of these persecutions in the mid-sixth century.

⁵¹⁴ τὰ Χριστιανῶν πρεσβεύοντες, ἐπεὶ παρὰ Περσῶν κακῶς ἔπασχον καὶ μάλιστα περὶ τὴν οἰκείαν νόμισιν, ἐν παραβύστῳ ἐπρεσβεύοντο πρὸς Ἰουστίνον ἰκετεύοντες κατήκοοι Ῥωμαίοις γενέσθαι, ὡς ἂν ἐπ' ἀδείας δρῶεν τὰ εἰς θεὸν γέρα μηδενὸς αὐτοῖς ἐμποδῶν γιγνομένου. Τοῦ δὲ Ἰουστίνου προσηκαμένου, καὶ τινῶν ἐν γράμμασι

This episode is corroborated in several other sources. Stephen of Taron, Sebeos, and the *Narratio de rebus Armeniae* provide similar accounts but add that it was Vardan, son of Vasak who killed Čihor-Wšnasp.⁵¹⁵ Furthermore, the other sources that describe the events, namely John of Ephesus, Michael the Syrian, John of Biclar, and Theophanes of Byzantium, provide several more details. The most relevant being that the main cause for the revolt was that Khuro forced the Christians to worship fire.⁵¹⁶

The persecution of Christians in Armenia was a bold move by Khosro as it went against previous legislation. The Treaty of Nuvarsak in 485 had guaranteed the status of Christianity in the region and forbade the construction of fire temples in Persarmenia.⁵¹⁷ Khosro appointed the Persian marzban, Čihor-Wšnasp, to begin construction of fire temples within the region and to force the conversion to Zoroastrian among the inhabitants.⁵¹⁸ According to John of Ephesus and Stephen of Taron, Čihor-Wšnasp marched to Dvin with two thousand cavalry and ordered the *Catholicus* John to convert to Zoroastrian and to begin the construction of fire temples.⁵¹⁹ John's refusal set the stage for the conflict that would attract the attention of Justin II.

We are indeed servants of the king of kings, and to him we pay tribute; but we are Christians, and in matters of faith we can yield him no obedience, even though we have to die for our faith's sake. For this same thing was attempted in the days of Sapor, king of kings, who also wanted to build here a temple for his worship, but the people of the land gathered themselves together and a war ensued, which lasted seven years, and at the end he made terms, and published an edict, commanding that no one should meddle or interfere with us as regards our being Christians for ever.⁵²⁰

πρὸς τοῦ βασιλέως διομολογηθέντων ὄρκοις τε δεινοῖς κατασφαλισθέντων, ἀποσφάττουσι μὲν οἱ Ἀρμένιοι τοὺς σφῶν ἄρχοντας, προστίθενται δὲ πασσοῦδι τῇ Ῥωμαίων ἀρχῇ μεθ' ὧν προσειλήφεσαν πλησιοχώρων, ὁμοεθνῶν τε καὶ ἀλλοφύλων. Evagr. *HE*. V.7. trans. M. Whitby 2000.

⁵¹⁵ Stephen of Taron, 84.23-86.7; Sebeos p.2; *Narratio de rebus Armeniae*, 77-78.

⁵¹⁶ Joh. Eph. *HE*. II.20; Michael Syrian, X.1; Joh. Biclar. 211.18-21 (567?3); Theoph. Byz. 3.

⁵¹⁷ Grousset 1947: 226-229;

⁵¹⁸ Joh. Eph. *HE*. 2.19. Kramers 1936: 612-618. Note that other sources refer to Čihor-Wšnasp as Suren from his family name (Suren), see Stephen of Taron, 60.

⁵¹⁹ Joh. Eph. *HE*. 2.20; Stephen of Taron, 59.

⁵²⁰ Joh. Eph. *HE*. 2.20; trans. Payne Smith 1860: 121-122. It is important to note that according to John of Ephesus the catholicus displayed an edict from Shapur II or Shapur III but there is no contemporary record of such an edict. It is more likely that he is referring to the Treaty of Nuvarsak but attempting to attribute the concession to a more prominent ruler in Persian history (the treaty was signed by Valesh who was relatively unimportant).

Despite the objections of John, Čihor-Wšnasp continued his operations at Dvin and the Armenians began to assemble an armed force in opposition to this under Vardas and Vardan Mamikonian.⁵²¹ According to John of Ephesus, the Armenian resistance forced Čihor-Wšnasp to retreat back to Khosro. Upon hearing about the resistance, Khosro sent Čihor-Wšnasp back to Dvin with an army of fifteen thousand men.⁵²² However, the Armenians had continued to prepare for Čihor-Wšnasp's return and on February 2, 572, they were able to kill Čihor-Wšnasp and completely defeat the Persian force that was sent against them.⁵²³

Although this account is primarily derived from the account of John of Ephesus, there is reason to believe in its basic facts.⁵²⁴ John of Ephesus claims to have heard the account first hand from the *Catholicus* John, and when other sources do mention the event, their facts corroborate John's account. However, there is reason to believe that he exaggerated the extent of the Christian persecution within the Persian Empire.⁵²⁵ The Persians sent a Perso-Christian ambassador, Sebukht, to negotiate with Justin in order to convince him to honor the terms of the fifty-year truce. The presence of Sebukht was likely a tactic by Khusro to demonstrate that Christians could still hold influential positions within the Persian Empire and try to raise doubt on the veracity of the claim of Christian persecution.⁵²⁶ Although it has been suggested that the level of persecutions may have been overstated, it is indisputable that there was a level of unrest among the Christians in Armenia. Whether this was caused by the *magi* persecution, the Persian military colonialization in the region, or a combination of the two, it seems likely that at least some Persarmenians rose in opposition to the actions of the Persian government.⁵²⁷

⁵²¹ Theoph. pg. 78; Sebeos p. 4-6; Evagr. *HE*. 5.7.

⁵²² Joh. Eph. *HE*. 2.20.

⁵²³ Joh. Eph. *HE*. 2.20; Mich. Syr. X.1; Joh. Bicl. 211.18-21 (567? 3); Theoph. Byz. 3; Joh. Epiph. 2; Theophylact Simocatta. III. 9.3-10. John of Epiphania and Theophylact Simocatta only mention the uprising briefly in their summary of the causes for the outbreak of the Persian war, however, they do still mention the killing of the Persian governor during the rebellion and shifting their allegiance to the Byzantines.

⁵²⁴ The other available sources largely agree with the picture of events. Michael the Syrian, John of Biclair, and Theophanes of Byzantium, all relate that the uprising was primarily due to Persian religious persecution and that there was a deal with Justin II against the Persians. Theophanes and John of Biclair add that the Iberians which appears to be reliable as the Iberians are mentioned later as being a part of the Armenian conflict (John of Biclair states that Justin made both Armenia and Iberia Roman provinces but this is unlikely as he is the only source that mentions this and he is writing from Spain).

⁵²⁵ Although it may have been the Armenians that related the events to John of Ephesus who exaggerated the account in order to gain Byzantine support.

⁵²⁶ Whitby 1988: 251-252.

⁵²⁷ For Persian military colonialization in the region, see Kramers 1936: 613-618.

Following the death of Čihor-Wšnasp, there was a rapid succession of changes in the region. There Armenians were initially able to seize control of Dvin but it was quickly retaken by the Persians. However, later in the year (572), the Armenians were able to re-capture the city with the assistance of Byzantine forces under Justinian wherein they successfully expelled Persia from the region.⁵²⁸ The following year, Khusro replaces Vardan Vshnasp with Golon Mihran and attempts to reassert control in the region but only achieves modest gains.⁵²⁹ It is important to note that the Byzantine gains in Armenia up to this point were quite significant. They now had full control of the region, the potential to launch an attack into Azerbaijan, and leverage in their peace negotiations with Persia.

The negotiations for peace with Persia briefly ceased hostilities in Armenia following 574 (discussed below in Persia subsection), however there was one more major campaign in Armenia during the reign of Tiberius. This came in 576 when Khusro invaded Armenia.⁵³⁰ According to Menander, Khusro marched his forces to Theodosiopolis via Persarmenia with the intention of destroying Byzantine controlled towns in the region before taking Theodosiopolis itself.⁵³¹ Although he was successful in destroying the Persarmenian towns, he failed at Theodosiopolis. John of Ephesus provides the most detailed survey of the following events. According to John, Khusro had several initial successes but was largely defeated by the Byzantines. The most significant defeat taking place west of Melitene, near the Armenian mountains, after which he was forced to flee across the Euphrates and lost nearly half his army.⁵³² There are several significant points that should be considered regarding this campaign. First, the Persian retreat allowed the Byzantines to conduct a counter-attack deep into their territory (likely through Azerbaijan all the way to the Caspian sea). Second, the defeat shook Khusro so heavily that he made a decree that Persian kings should not go on expeditions except

⁵²⁸ Sebeos p. 6-7; Joh. Bicl. 212.20-21; Joh. Eph. *HE*. 6.1. Note Justinian only remains in control of the Byzantine forces for the remainder of the year. He is replaced by John, likely as a result of the Byzantine destruction of the Church of St. Gregory during the re-capture of Dvin.

⁵²⁹ Sebeos p. 7, 10-11.

⁵³⁰ Although there are discrepancies in the sources in regards to the dating of the invasion, Whitby has convincingly argued for the date of 576 by comparing Menander's statements that the invasion occurred in the same year as Valentinian's embassy to the Turks and the late arrival of pay for the Roman Eastern army, see Whitby 1988: 262-263.

⁵³¹ Men. *Proc. fr.* 18.6

⁵³² Joh. Eph. *HE*. 3.8-9; Evagr. *HE*. 5.14; Sebeos p.7-8; Theophylact Simocatta, 3.14.1-9. Stein considers this to be one of Rome's greatest victories in the sixth century, see Stein 1919: 66-68. For a full description of the individual battles, see Whitby 1988: 265-266; cf. Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 153-156.

against another king.⁵³³ Most importantly, however, was that this victory forced Khusro to re-open negotiations with Tiberius II (discussion of these peace talks below in Persia subsection).

The final campaign for the reign of Tiberius took place between 578-582 but was largely conducted outside of Armenia so will be discussed in relation to Persia below.

Conclusion

The death of Čihor-Wšnasp was the official beginning of the Armenian revolt and it presented an opportunity for Justin II. As has been previously discussed, Justin II had adopted a foreign policy that was opposed to paying tribute to foreign nations. Justin II had been conducting secret negotiations with the Persarmenians since the first year of the patriarchate of Gregory of Antioch (569/570) and likely had sent the patrician Justinian to Armenia to monitor the events leading up to the revolt.⁵³⁴ It does not appear that Justin was sending money or troops into Perarmenia but that he was offering support to Christian Armenians to create unrest within Persia's borders. It should not be assumed, however, that Justin II acted purely out of interest for the Christians in Armenia. While it is likely that he viewed himself, and Byzantium, as defenders of the Christian faith, it is more plausible to assume that he also acted out of political interest and employed the use of 'soft' diplomacy, by emphasising a common Christianity to achieve political goals. Strategically, Persarmenia was very important in the ongoing conflicts with Persia. Its location near the Black Sea provided economic and military value both by being able to defend any attacks towards Constantinople and being able to strike into Azerbaijan. Furthermore, it provided a means to encourage rebellion, by providing the inhabitants with a shared enemy based on their religious beliefs. The Persian conflict as a whole will be discussed in the subsequent section but when one looks at the situation wherein Justin found himself in the 570s, it is possible to deduce his reasoning for supporting the Armenians, despite the fact it was in direct violation of the fifty-year peace.

As has been the theme of this study, Justin II was attempting to project an image of Roman superiority to other states and polities through his foreign policy.⁵³⁵ Although certain

⁵³³ Joh. Eph. *HE*. 6.9. For variations on the decree, see Theophylact Simocatta, 3.14.11, who states that Khusro prohibited all campaigns by the king; and Evagr. *HE*. 5.15, who states that the ban was only against Rome.

⁵³⁴ Evagr. *HE*. 5.7, 14-15.

⁵³⁵ Note that this ideology is also reflected in his coinage and building projects, see Cameron 1980: 71.

ancient historians, such as Theophylact, attempt to explain Justin's actions with reference to the early stages of his mental illness, it is arguable that his actions resulted from an assessment of risk versus reward when attempting to implement his strategy towards foreign polities. It appears that Justin had three potential gains had his strategy been successful. First, he wanted to remove Byzantium from the financial constraints of the Fifty-Year Truce and the appearance of being tributary to Persia. Second, he wanted to protect fellow Christians against Zoroastrian persecution and demonstrate that he was the protector of the Christian faith. Finally, he had several territorial objectives that he hoped to acquire from a weakened Persian state.⁵³⁶ When one considers the results of the embassy with the Turks (discussed below), namely that they were prepared to launch a joint offensive against Persia and that the inhabitants of Persarmenia were prepared to revolt, it is justifiable to assume that Justin would have believed he had a sound foreign strategy to potentially achieve substantial gains for the Byzantines. Thus, although he overestimated the Turks and the Persarmenians and his stratagem was ultimately a failure when Tiberius II had to negotiate peace with the Persians in 577/578, it would be incorrect to shrug off Justin's actions as the erratic behavior of a mentally unstable man rather than a clear strategy that was in line with his foreign policy.

In regards to the influence the Byzantines had on the process of Romanization of Armenia, several conclusions can be made. Administratively, the transformations to Armenian society initiated by Justinian are difficult to value. The goal of these reforms was not only to establish a more Roman form of government but also introduced Roman law into Armenian society. This is significant when one considers Roman inheritance laws. Justinian's reforms made an attempt to move traditional *nakharar* law to a Roman system of law. The difficulty in measuring the overall impact comes from not having sufficient sources on the attempted transformation. Furthermore, the fact that Persia reclaims many of the lands that revolt during Justin II's reign and in Persia controlled provinces the *nakharar* system was much more prevalent. Finally, the presence of the *nakharar* families during the reigns of Heraclius and Constans II provide evidence that at the least it wasn't as wide-spread as Justinian had hoped.

⁵³⁶ These territorial objectives included the Caucasian region of Suania and several areas in Upper Mesopotamia such as Nisibis and Arzanene; for the Caucas territories, see *Men. Proc. fr.* 9. 2-3; for the regions in Mesopotamia and Justin II's revival of Roman claims to ownership within it, see *Chron.* 1234. 65.

Armenia's adherence to Christianity naturally led to many followers living within Byzantine controlled lands and thus coming under the influence of Byzantine society. During the Persamenian revolt many of the religious elites migrated to Byzantium as refugees and part of the treaty that was eventually established by Tiberius allowed indigenous Armenians the option of residing within Byzantium.⁵³⁷ Although this did not lead to widespread migration it did contribute to intermingling with the Byzantine population. As with Justinian, it is hard to put a definitive mark on how much Justin II influenced the Romanisation of the territory. What can be said is that during both their reigns they did make an attempt at Romanisation and this attempt reflects their ideologies on foreign policy. Justinian with an inclusive approach, which focused on subsidies and reforms, and Justin II with an exclusive approach, which would see Armenia allied but subservient to Byzantium.

TURKS

The origins of the Turkish polity that engaged in diplomatic relations with the Byzantines during the sixth century is difficult to determine. According to Chinese dynastic annals, namely the *Chou-shu*, the *Sui-shu*, the *Pei-shi*, and the *Yu-Yang tsa-tu*,⁵³⁸ the Turks were an independent branch of the Xiongnu who originally were located on the right side of the 'West Sea.'⁵³⁹ Although these annals place the Turks in this region, their evidence must be taken with caution. The annals are full of folklore elements and motifs that were common in the establishment of an ethnic polity's ethnogenesis and cannot be taken as solid fact. D. Sinor connects these motifs with Iranian elements and interprets the similarities as an indication that there was Iranian influence on the development of the Turks.⁵⁴⁰

Turkish Khaganate

What is of primary concern here is the formation of the first Turkish *khaganate* (ca. 552-581) which was established under the *khagan* Bumin in the mid-sixth century. The elements

⁵³⁷ Men. Proc. 20.2.41-56.

⁵³⁸ The *Chou-shu* was completed c. AD 629, the *Sui-Shu* c. AD 629-636, the *Pei-shu* c. 659, and the *Yu-Yang tsa-tu* c. 860. For translations see Liu 1958: 5-6, 40-41; Sinor 1982: 223-231; Ögel 1957: 84-88.

⁵³⁹ Liu believes that the Caspian Sea is meant by the term 'West Sea,' see Liu 1958: 459 fn. 41.

⁵⁴⁰ Sinor 1982: 236.

that would come together to shape this dynasty were primarily influenced by the formation and collapse of two nomad-based imperial polities, namely the Xiongnu and the Hun confederacies. The dissolution of these polities did not instigate a ‘mass migration’ of Turkish peoples but rather a series of small population movements which brought Turkish tribes together in Western Siberia and the Caspian-Black Sea steppes.⁵⁴¹

The Xiongnu are believed to have been predominantly nomadic in nature.⁵⁴² A general description of their mode of living is provided in the *Yan tie lun* (*Discourses on Salt and Iron*):⁵⁴³

The Hsiung-nu live in the desert and grow in the land which produces no food. [They are the people who] are abandoned by Heaven for being good-for-nothing. They have no houses to shelter themselves, and make no distinction between men and women. They take the entire wilderness as their villages and the *ch’iung-lu* tents as their homes. They wear animal’s skins, eat meat raw and drink blood. They wander to meet in order to exchange goods and stay [for a while] in order to herd cattle.

This description is in agreement with other sources, including the *Shih-Chi*, which states that they ‘move and migrate following water and grass and have no walled cities, places for permanent settlement or agriculture’.⁵⁴⁴ It also reports later in the text that they had no walled cities nor granaries.⁵⁴⁵ Although there were predominantly a nomadic society, it is clear from literary and archaeological evidence that they adopted sedentary and agricultural elements.⁵⁴⁶ What is important to note, in regards to the organizational structure of the Xiongnu, is that they established the foundation for the form of government that would be adopted by the confederacies that were formed as a result of their dissolution. This consisted of an economy that relied on three principles (outside of pastoral agriculture), namely acquisitions from conquered peoples, tributes from friendly states, and trade with foreign polities.⁵⁴⁷ The Xiongnu suffered several defeats to the Han Empire between 1BC and AD 2. These defeats brought about

⁵⁴¹ Golden 2010: 9-10; Czeglédy 1983: 32-35.

⁵⁴² For agricultural and sedentary elements, see Golden 1992: 66.

⁵⁴³ *Yan tie lun* 70; trans. Gale 1931: 40.

⁵⁴⁴ *Shih-Chi* 110:1b. Translated by Watson 1961: 2.155.

⁵⁴⁵ *Yan tie lun*, 90.

⁵⁴⁶ Lattimore 1962: 524; Golden 1992: 66.

⁵⁴⁷ Gale 1931: 41.

a series of westward movements from the diverse members of their confederacy.⁵⁴⁸ It was these defeats that propelled the first wave of Turkish nomads westward.

The Hun confederacy shared many similarities to that of the Xiongnu. They were both ethnically diverse, shared Inner Asian cultural elements, and acquired Iranian elements as they gained control over Iranian nomadic regions.⁵⁴⁹ As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Huns were a dominant power in the region of Pannonia until the death of Attila in 453. Attila's death led to the dissolution of the Hunnic confederacy. The result of this was that many of the Hunnic tribes of nomadic origin moved back into the steppes and were incorporated into new tribal units. The origins of these new tribal units is difficult to determine and each could warrant an independent discussion on their ethnogenesis, but what should be noted is that the Western Eurasian steppes was now filled with a multiplicity of nomadic peoples. These peoples included the Sabirs, the Avars, the Hephthalites, the Kutrigurs, the Oğurs, the Onoğurs, and the Bulğurs.⁵⁵⁰ There would be complex interplay and mingling between these groups over the next century. What is important to note before examining the establishment of the first Turkish *khaganate* is that the dissolution of larger confederations put the ethnic foundation in place for the amalgamation of the Turkic peoples of Central and Western Eurasia. Furthermore, there was not a massive and drastic movement of people who could trace their origins to clear Turkish roots but rather a gradual shifting of allegiances coupled with small scale migrations that set the stage for the rise of the Turkish polity.

The first Turkish *khaganate* was established by Bumin, son of T'u-wu, in the year 552. The Turks began to rise as a power on the Asian steppes in the late 540s. They became the dominant polity after they won a major battle against the Rouran in 552.⁵⁵¹ Although Bumin established the Turkish *khaganate*, he and his son and successor Ko-lo would both die in the same year.⁵⁵² The solidification of their rule came under Ko-lo's younger brother Muqan and his uncle Ištemi.⁵⁵³ The Turks pursued the Rouran across the steppes until 555, when they most likely reached the Aral Sea, until they came into contact with the Hephthalites and were in close

⁵⁴⁸ Grousset 1970; Golden 2010.

⁵⁴⁹ Golden 1992: 88-89; Maenchen-Helfen 1973: 364.

⁵⁵⁰ For a survey of the ethnogenesis of these groups, see Golden 1992: 84-113.

⁵⁵¹ Howard-Johnson 2010: 46-47.

⁵⁵² Mau-tsai 1.17, 35.

⁵⁵³ Mau-tsai 1.7-8.

proximity to the Sasanians (close to the Sogdian heartlands). The rise of this *khaganate* is preserved in the inscriptions of the Orkhon:⁵⁵⁴

When high above the blue sky and down below the brown earth had been created, betwixt the two were created the sons of men. And above the sons of men stood my ancestors, the khaghans Bumin and Ištemi. Having become the masters of the Turk people, they installed and ruled its empire and fixed the law of the country. Many were their enemies in the four corners of the world, but, leading campaigns against them, they subjugated and pacified many nations in the four corners of the world. They caused them to bow their heads and to bend their knees. These were wise khaghans, these were valiant khaghans; all their officers were wise and valiant; the nobles, all of them, the entire people were just. This was the reason why they were able to rule an empire so great, why, governing the empire, they could uphold the law.

Huan Wang has argued, based on Chinese sources, that the Turkish *khaganate* was administered by a quadripartite confederation.⁵⁵⁵ He asserts that the polity was divided into four regions, namely Central, Eastern, Western, and Western Frontier, and that the Central, based in Mongolia, was considered the supreme authority under the leadership of Muhan.⁵⁵⁶ The Western Frontier, which had the most contact with Byzantium and Persia, was under the leadership of Ištemi. According to the Chinese chronicles, the Turks were specialists in metallurgy. Denis Sinor argues that “Beyond A-na-kui's disdainful reference to his ‘blacksmith slaves’ there is ample evidence to show that the Türks were indeed specializing in metallurgy, though it is difficult to establish whether they were miners or rather blacksmiths.”⁵⁵⁷

The Turks expanded their new power base by negotiating an alliance with the Sasanians against the Hephthalites.⁵⁵⁸ The Hephthalites were defeated by this alliance ca. 559-560 and their lands were divided amongst the Turks and the Persians.⁵⁵⁹ The Turkish conquest of

⁵⁵⁴ Translation of inscription in Sinor 1990: 297.

⁵⁵⁵ Menander also states that the Turks were governed in four principalities, see Men. Proc. fr. 10.3.

⁵⁵⁶ Wang 1983.

⁵⁵⁷ Sinor 1997: 101-102; cf. Parker 1924: 130. Menander also states that the Turks came from a region that provided iron, see Men. Proc. fr. 10.3. Although there is reference to ‘blacksmith slaves’ it is likely that the Turks served in some form of vassalage to the ruling class, the Hephthalites, see Nachaeva 2011.

⁵⁵⁸ Men. Proc. fr. 4.2-3; al-Tabari 150.

⁵⁵⁹ Howard-Johnson 2010b: 47. The Persians gained territories in southern Bactria and lands from Arachosia to the Indus plain and the Turks gained the eastern territories of the Hephthalites, namely Kashgar, Urumqi, and

Sogdiana provides interesting insight into the process of a foreign polity taking over a new region. Although the Turks became the dominant power in the region, they integrated rather than displaced the local population. As will be shown in the subsequent relations between the Turks, the Persians, and the Byzantines, the Sogdian merchants became an integral part of the Turks administration. This phenomenon corroborates the argument of the previous chapter, namely that when conquest or migration occurred, it was more likely that the immigrants combined with the local population who accepted a new overarching hierarchy.

The addition of the Sogdians to the Turkish *khaganate* is important to examine for several reasons. First of all, they added a level of commercial administration that allowed the Turks to export goods to China. Furthermore, they were able to supply agricultural and craft products as well as literate personnel that could serve Turkish governors in diplomatic embassies.⁵⁶⁰ These embassies are of particular importance to this study because their failed negotiations in Persia ultimately brought the Turks into the sphere of Byzantium. According to Menander, at the request of the Sogdians, the Turks sent two diplomatic embassies into Persia to establish the right to sell raw silk to the Persians.⁵⁶¹

When they [Sogdian merchants] reached the king of Persia, they asked to be given permission to sell the raw silk there without any hindrance. The Persian king, who was not at all pleased by their request, being reluctant to grant free access from there to that area of Persia, put off his reply until the next day and kept postponing it...[Katulph] advised the king not to return the silk but to buy it, paying the fair price for it, and to burn it in the fire before the very eyes of the envoys...So the silk was burned, and the Sogdians returned to their homeland not at all pleased with what had happened.⁵⁶²

Karashahr, in addition to the entire region of Sogdiana. It is difficult to determine who played the larger role in the conquest of the Hephthalites. Al-Tabari credits the Turks in one passage, Tabari 152, and the Persians in another, Tabari 160. According to Menander, it is the Turks who take the primary role, see Men. Proc. fr. 4.2. The general consensus among scholars is that the Turks played the larger role, see De la Vassière 2003: 119-132; Howard-Johnson 2010b: 47 n. 41.

⁵⁶⁰ De la Vassière 2005: 97-152, 159-167, 199-215; Marshak 2001: 227-264.

⁵⁶¹ Men. Proc. fr. 10.1.

⁵⁶² ἀφικόμενοι δὴ οὖν παρὰ βασιλέα Περσῶν ἐδέοντο τῆς μετάξης πέρι, ὅπως ἄνευ τινὸς κωλύμης αὐτοῖς προέλθοι ἐπ' αὐτῇ τὰ τῆς ἐμπορίας. ὁ δὲ Περσῶν βασιλεύς (οὐδαμῶς γὰρ αὐτῶ ἤρεσκε τὰ τοιάδε, ὡς ἂν μὴ ἐνθένδε ἄδεια ἔσοιτο τούτοις τοῖς Περσῶν ἐμβατεύειν ὀρίοις) ἀνεβάλετο ἐς τὸ αὐριον... παρήνεσε βασιλεῖ τῶν Περσῶν τὴν μέταξαν οὐδαμῶς ἀποπέμψασθαι, ἀλλὰ γὰρ καὶ ὠνήσασθαι, καὶ τὰ ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς μὲν καταθέσθαι τιμήματα, θεωμένων δὲ ἄλλως τῶν πρέσβειων ταύτην ἀφανίσαι πυρί... καὶ ἡ μὲν μέταξα ἐπυρπολήθη, αὐτοὶ δὲ ἐς

When the second Turkish embassy arrived, the king, after discussion with the Persian high officials and with Katulph, decided that because of the untrustworthy nature of the Scythians it was completely against Persian interest to establish friendly relations with the Turks. At this he ordered some of the envoys poisoned, so that henceforth they would refuse to come there. The majority of the Turkish envoys, all but three or four, were murdered by a deadly poison mixed in with their food.⁵⁶³

According to Menander, this was the main cause of strife between the Turks and the Persians. It appears that the Persians were hesitant for two reasons: they feared that the Turks had ambitions to expand the territories southwards, and they wanted to keep the profitable silk trade confined to their southern routes now that the Hephthalites, who were used as intermediaries on the northern route, were no longer in power.⁵⁶⁴ It should be noted that these accounts were likely supplied to Menander by the Turks themselves and should be taken with caution. It was common for powers at the time to distort the truth of events in their public announcements. What can only be discerned for certain is that a trade treaty that was largely beneficial to the Sogdians was rejected on two occasions by Khurso. However, the request to gain free access to Iranian trading routes was unlikely to ever succeed because of security concerns and the desire to keep trade routes to China under their control. Based on this premise, James Howard-Johnson and Étienne de La Vaissière have argued that it is more likely that the Turks used the pretext of Persian treachery as an excuse to cut ties with Persia and seek new alliances elsewhere.⁵⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the result of the failure of these two embassies was that the Turks, again under advice from the Sogdians, looked to Byzantium to establish an alliance.⁵⁶⁶

τὰ πάτρια ἦθη ἀνεχώρησαν τῷ γεγενημένῳ ἥκιστα χαίροντες. Men. Proc. fr. 10.1.8-26; trans. Blockley 1985: 113.

⁵⁶³ ἐπεὶ δὲ ἡ Τούρκων πρεσβεία αὐθις ἀφῆκε, ὁ βασιλεὺς ἅμα τοῖς ἐν τέλει Περσῶν καὶ τῷ Κατούλφῳ ἐγνωμάτευε, πάντη ἀξύμφορον εἶναι Πέρσαις φιλίαν θέσθαι ὡς Τούρκου· τὸ γὰρ Σκυθικὸν εἶναι παλίμβολον. ταύτη τοι καὶ παρενεγύησε δηλητηρίῳ φαρμάκῳ ἐνίους διαφθαρήναι τῶν πρέσβεων, ὅπως ἀπέποιεν τῆς ἐκεῖσε μετέπειτα παρουσίας. καὶ δὴ οἱ πλείστοι τῶν πρεσβευσασμένων Τούρκων τῇ περὶ τὴν ἐδωδὴν μίξει τῶν ἀναιρετικῶν φαρμάκων αὐτοῦ ποῦ τὸν βίον κατέλυσαν πλὴν τριῶν ἢ τεσσάρων. Men. Proc. fr. 10.1.29-37; trans. Blockley 1985: 113.

⁵⁶⁴ Blockley 1985: 262 fn. 115; cf. Christensen 1936: 380;

⁵⁶⁵ Howard-Johnson 2010b: 49; De la Vassière 2005: 181-184, 227-232.

⁵⁶⁶ Note that the first appearance of a Turkish embassy in Byzantium is recorded to have taken place in 562-563, however, there are no details recorded about this exchange and seeing as that there is no previous agreement mentioned when the Turkish embassy arrives to meet Justin, it is likely no treaty of consequence came from this exchange, see Theoph. 351. Furthermore, it is possible that relations between the Sogdians and the Byzantines

Justin II

The relationship between the Turks and the Byzantines in the latter half of the sixth century provides interesting insight into Justin II's foreign policy. Although Justin maintained his policy of exclusivity in circumstances where he was required to pay tribute to a foreign power, it appears that when the state could benefit from an alliance without this requirement, he was more willing to enter into negotiations. It is also possible that due to tensions he was facing in the senate, in regards to the payments that were being made to Persia (which were viewed by many of the elites as tributary), he was attempting to find allies for the inevitable conflict that would arise when he ceased making these payments (hostilities arise with Persia in the following year).⁵⁶⁷

According to Menander, in late 568, early 569, a Turkish embassy arrived in Constantinople under the leadership of Maniakh (a Sogdian official) to meet with Justin.⁵⁶⁸

Then the envoys enumerated the tribes subject to the Turks and asked the Emperor for peace and an offensive and defensive alliance between the Romans and the Turks. They added that they were also very willing to crush those enemies of the Roman state who were pressing upon their territory.⁵⁶⁹

This embassy opened up a long series of negotiations between the Turks and the Byzantines. The Turkic alliance presented a unique opportunity for Justin II to change the dynamic in the long-standing conflict with the Persians. The venture, however, was not without risk. The Byzantines had been engaged in open warfare with the Persians for much of the sixth century and failure to capitalize on this endeavour would undoubtedly result in renewed hostilities at a time when Byzantium was engaged in conflicts in Italy with the Lombards and in Greece with the Slavs. According to Menander, Justin sent an embassy back to the Turks under Zemarchus which implies that, at least in principle, he was prepared to consider a joint offensive against

had begun twenty years earlier, but this would have been prior to the Sogdians being a part of the Turkish polity, see Hannestad 1955-1957: 450; Blockley 1985: 262 fn. 117.

⁵⁶⁷ Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 135-138.

⁵⁶⁸ Men. Proc. fr. 10.1.

⁵⁶⁹ εἶτα ἀπαριθμησάμενοι οἱ πρέσβεις ἔθνη κατήκοα Τούρκων τὸ λοιπὸν ἠντιβόλουν τὸν αὐτοκράτορα εἰρήνην τε ξυνεστάναι καὶ ὁμαιχμίαν Ῥωμαίοις τε καὶ Τούρκοις. προσετίθεσαν δὲ ὡς καὶ ἐτοιμότητα ἔχουσι καταπολεμησαί τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἐπικρατείας τὸ δυσμενές, ὅποσον ἐς τὴν κατ' αὐτοὺς ἀγελάζονται ἤπειρον. Men. Proc. fr. 10.1.84-88; trans. Blockley 1985: 117.

the Persians.⁵⁷⁰ While Zemarchus was with the Turks, Menander accounts that a Persian envoy approached the Turks to dissuade them from attack.⁵⁷¹ This envoy was dismissed by the Turks and they sent a return envoy (Tagma because Maniakh had died), in order to coordinate a joint assault against Persia (although the details of Zemarchus' negotiations are not recorded, it is likely a plan of attack was agreed upon).⁵⁷²

The embassy returned to Constantinople towards the end of 571 and it appears that Justin's foreign strategy against the Persians was about to be executed. This stratagem had several facets and the time of its execution in 572-573 falls in line with Justin's policy of exclusion. According to the Fifty-Year Truce, the Byzantines were required to begin making annual payments to the Persians in 572 and these payments were likely viewed as a direct tribute to Persia (which Justin adamantly opposed). His strategy included a pincer movement between himself and the Turks on Mesopotamia and the far-north east, a Persarmenian uprising, and Byzantine intervention in Armenia (it is also likely that he encouraged conflict between Jafnids and Naşrids in Arabia but this did not come to anything of consequence).⁵⁷³ The situation in Persia is described by al-Tabarī, although it has some notable deviations,

In the eleventh year of his [Hormizd] reign, Shabah, the supreme ruler of the Turks, advanced against him with three hundred thousand warriors until he reached Badhghis and Harat: that the king of the Byzantines moved into the outer districts of his empire with eighty thousand warriors heading towards him: and that the king of the Khazars moved with a large army toward al-Bab na-al-Abnab, wreaking damage and destruction. (They further state) that two men from the Arabs, one called 'Abbas the Squinter' and the other 'Amr the Blue-Eyed One,' encamped with a mighty host of Arabs on the banks of the Euphrates and mounted raids against the inhabitants of the Sawad [lower

⁵⁷⁰ Men. Proc. *fr.* 10.3.

⁵⁷¹ Men. Proc. *fr.* 10.3. John of Ephesus also records the event and adds the detail that the Persians tried to weaken the Byzantines position by claiming that they were a tributary of theirs, see Joh. Eph. *HE.* 6.23.

⁵⁷² The Persians attempted to ambush this envoy on their way back to Constantinople but failed, see Men. Proc. *fr.* 10.4.

⁵⁷³ For the attack of the Turks and the Byzantines on Persia, see Men. Proc. *fr.* 13.5. Justin had been negotiating with the Persarmenians in secret from the first year of Gregory of Antioch and had given them assurances of his support in a rebellion, see Evag. *HE.* 5.7.14-15. For the start of the Persarmenian revolt, see Joh. Eph. *HE.* 2.20. Full details of the Armenians and their agreement with Byzantium will be discussed later in the chapter. The events are also described by Theophylact but he includes several speeches and a fictitious battle, thus does not provide a firm military narrative, see Theophylact Simocatta 3.9.1-18.

Mesopotamia]. His enemies became emboldened against him and raided his lands. They so encompassed his lands that these last became known as a sieve with many holes. It is further said that the enemies had encompassed the land of Persia from all sides like a boasting over the two curved ends of the bow...⁵⁷⁴

Unfortunately for Justin II, Khusro put together a masterful defense to this offensive and it failed for several reasons. First of all, the Persarmenian uprising was not as drastic as the Byzantines anticipated and it was mostly contained by the autumn of 572.⁵⁷⁵ Secondly, the Byzantines failed to take the city of Nisibis. Marcian was placed in control of the armies of the East and although he was able to make initial gains in Arzanene, he was not able to launch a major offensive into Mesopotamia until the following year which gave Khusro adequate time to prepare a proper defense.⁵⁷⁶ Marcian did make gains in the spring of 573 when he achieved a significant victory at Saragathon but then failed to take Thebothon in a short-lived siege and was required to retreat back to Dara. Shortly after Easter of 573, Marcian was ordered by Justin to continue the offensive against Nisibis.⁵⁷⁷ His siege at Nisibis was a complete failure but there are conflicting reports in the sources as to the cause of this defeat.⁵⁷⁸ Furthermore, the speed Khusro with which was able to respond to Nisibis with his relief force was largely due to the withdrawal of al-

⁵⁷⁴ Al-Tabari, vol. 5, p.298-301. There are several anachronisms that should be highlighted in this text. Ištemi has been changed to Shabah, the Perarmenian uprising has been changed to a threat from the Khazars, there is no indication in the sources that the Arabian threat in the south was a reality, the number of warriors threatening Persia is greatly exaggerated, and the conflict has been moved to the late 580s when Hormizd IV is king instead of Khusro (the account has been moved from 572 to the 580s due to errors in the course of transmitting the text over several centuries and across a language barrier, the conflicts under discussion, the Persarmenian uprising and the mobilization of the Turks clearly takes place in 572), see Howard-Johnson 2010b: 51-52.

⁵⁷⁵ Details of this uprising and its containment are discussed in the previous section on the Armenians.

⁵⁷⁶ Joh. Epiph. 3. Evagrius provides a hostile account of these events and blames the failure on Justin II's inability to make proper preparations for the assault, see Evagr. *HE*. 5.8.28-33. The Syrian chroniclers differ and rather provide anecdotes that the *marzbanin* Nisibis tricked Marcian into delaying his attack, see Chron. 1234, 65; Mich. Syr. 10.8. Whitby suggests that the delay is better accounted for when one takes into consideration the period of time that would be needed between the Arzanene raids and Marcian's advance to Saragathon in the spring of 573, see Whitby 1988: 254-255.

⁵⁷⁷ Joh. Epiph. 3; Chron. 1234, 65.

⁵⁷⁸ Evagrius continues his narrative of Justin II's incompetence and bases the defeat solely upon him, see Evag. *HE*. 5.8.2-4. The Syriac chroniclers report that he pursued the siege ferociously but failed due to Marcian being dismissed as general at the same time that Khusro arrived with a relief force, see Joh. Eph. *HE*. 6.2; Chron. 1234, 65. It is likely that Marcian's failure at Thebotan caused Justin to order his dismissal. If one takes into consideration the amount of time it would take for word to reach Constantinople of this defeat and then orders for Marcian's dismissal to reach the field, it is possible that Marcian would have received these orders during his siege of Nisibis. Evagrius' account that Justin II immediately heard of Nisibis not falling and immediately being able to inform Marcian of his dismissal is an unlikely scenario, see Whitby 1988: 257.

Mundhir from the conflict in Arabia.⁵⁷⁹ Thirdly, the Persian counter-strike at Dara in the middle of 573. Khusro was able to raid up the Euphrates and capture the siege engines that the Byzantines left when they fled from Nisibis. He then proceeded to Dara and after a six-month siege was able to capture the city and divert the water supply.⁵⁸⁰ This was a major loss for the Byzantines because Dara was their main staging area for their incursions into Persia.⁵⁸¹ Finally, the effectiveness of Khusro's troops in the West allowed him to re-allocate his forces and deal with the Turkish invasion. Although there is no mention in the sources of Khusro's strategy in the East, whether he employed an offensive or defensive stratagem, some conjecture can be made. According to Menander, upon elevation of the new *khagan*, Ištemi's son Tandu, on the Turks western frontier in 576, the Turks ended their alliance with the Byzantines.⁵⁸² The reason Menander gives is that the treaty that was established between the Avars and the Byzantines voided their agreement. However, it is likely that the re-establishment of peaceful relations between the Turks and the Persians may have played a role in the decision and Tandu was merely using the Avars as a pretext for ending the treaty. Nevertheless, upon Tiberius' elevation to Caesar in 574, the Byzantines were in a much weaker position along their eastern border and a new strategy in regards to foreign policy had to be adopted.

Although Justin II's relationship with the Turks ended up as a major failure, it is possible to see his line of reasoning and how it fits into his stance towards foreign policy. His exclusivist stance towards foreign polities required him to abstain from appeasing foreign powers by means of tribute. The Persians were clearly the biggest challenge to this policy because of the Fifty-Year Treaty and the payments that the Byzantines were required to make to maintain it. The Turks presented an opportunity for Justin to rid himself of these tribute payments without having to become indebted to any other polities. If his stratagem were to have worked, Persia would have likely been sufficiently weakened to the point where Byzantium could refuse to pay tribute and still establish a peace treaty. Furthermore, combining a successful strategy with the Turks with success in Persarmenia, would have allowed Justin to regain control of strategic territories

⁵⁷⁹ Joh. Eph. *HE*. 6.3-4. The details of Mundhir's withdrawal will be discussed in the subsequent section on the Arabs.

⁵⁸⁰ Evag. *HE*. 5.10.14-15; Joh. Eph. 6.5.

⁵⁸¹ Evagrius and Theophylact attribute the loss of Dara as the cause for Justin losing his mind in 574, see Evag. *HE*. 5.2.20-23; Theophylact Simocatta, 3.2.3. John of Epiphania, however, asserts that the cause was a bodily illness, see Joh. Epiph. 5.

⁵⁸² Men. Proc. *fr.* 19.1-2.

that had been the subject of conflict through most of the Persian wars of the sixth century, such as Suania.⁵⁸³ Justin II's failure to execute his plan did result in a significant loss of territory but to blame it on incompetence and neglect as Evagrius does would be incorrect. He undertook a well thought out plan based on his stance on his exclusivist foreign policy which failed more because of a combination a factors, some of which were beyond his control.

PERSIA

The Persians must be treated in a slightly different fashion than the other polities discussed in this thesis as they were not a developing polity but an empire in their own right. However, as will be shown, there are strict parallels in the means Justin II employs towards them with those of the other groups with which he interacts. This section will briefly examine the background of the ruling dynasty in sixth-century Persia, namely the Sasanians, before moving to look at the diplomatic treaties that were put in place during the reign of Justinian, and the changes that were made to these policies when Justin II came into power.

The rise of the Sasanian dynasty marks a significant change in the structure of governance in the Persian empire. The later Parthian period was largely made up of a more 'feudal' society consisting of semi-independent polities and varieties of religious worship. Conversely, the Sasanians established a centralized court, a form of bureaucracy, and a central state religion (Zoroastrainism) which mirrored this hierarchal structure.⁵⁸⁴ The founder of the dynasty, Ardashir I (224-240), and his son, Shapur I (240-270/2), solidified their hold over Mesopotamia largely by turning their attention west against the Romans rather than east as had been done in the past. There are conflicting narratives surrounding the origin of Ardashir. In the Persian narrative, the *Karnamak* lists him as the son of Papak, while the *Shahname* and Agathias list him as the son of Sassan who they state was the husband of Papak's daughter.⁵⁸⁵ The

⁵⁸³ Trade routes to the Turks would have enabled Constantinople with a source of iron and silk as well.

⁵⁸⁴ Frye 2005: 463-465; Howard-Johnson 2016: 592-594.

⁵⁸⁵ The *Karnamak* is a glorified version of Persian history and cannot be seen as a legitimate source, see Antia 1900. The *Shahname* is an eleventh century epic poem composed by Firdosi, see Aghaee 1993. Agathias provides slightly more credibility as he had access to the royal yearbooks at the archives in Ctesiphon during his lifetime, however, it appears that he used colloquial sources in his account of Ardashir, see Agath. *Hist.* IV; Cameron 1969-1970: 67-183.

Bundahishn, a Middle-Persian creation narrative that consists of Zoroastrian cosmogony and cosmology, claims that Sassan was the father-in-law of Papak.⁵⁸⁶ The available inscriptions do little to clear up the confusion. The *Res Gestae* of Shapur, an inscription in three languages (Middle Persian, Parthian, and Greek) on a stone structure at Naqsh-e Rostam lists Papak, Ardashir, and Shapur in succession. Although it does mention Sasan, it appears to list him apart from the others.⁵⁸⁷ The *Paikuli* inscription of Narses mentions a king Shapur, son of Papak, however, due to a long lacunae it is unclear why he mentions this (though it has been suggested that Narses was attempting to emulate his succession to that of his grandfather, Ardashir).⁵⁸⁸ The primary source for the period under discussion is al-Tabari, however, he does little to clarify the situation.⁵⁸⁹ According to al-Tabari, Sassan was the grandfather of Papuk and Ardashir revolted against a son of Papuk, so-called Shapur. Shapur then marches against Ardashir but dies along with Papuk accidentally at Persepolis, which allows Ardashir to take power.⁵⁹⁰ Unfortunately, the conflicting materials surrounding the start of the Sassanian dynasty make it difficult to determine the early lineage of the dynasty for certain. Frye hypothesizes that Sāsān could have been the father of Ardashir but died when he was young which led to Papuk adopting him becoming his legal but not biological father.⁵⁹¹ What we can determine is that Ardashir founded the dynasty in 224 and Shapur was his successor in 240 and during these reigns the Sassanians began to consolidate the Persian territories and to bring the semi-independent principalities under their control, thus becoming a much more legitimate threat to the Roman Empire than the Parthians had been.

The Sasanians during this period established the Persian Empire as much more of an equal to the Romans. They had several significant victories including: taking Nisibis and *Carrhae* c. 235/236, *Hatra* c. 240/241, the defeat of Gordian's counter-offensive in 244, defeating the Roman army at Barbalissus and in turn capturing Hierapolis and Antioch in 253,

⁵⁸⁶ Hale 2004: 764. For the mention of Ardashir in the *Bundahishn*, see Anklesaria 1956: ch. 35.

⁵⁸⁷ For the *Res Gestae* of Shapur, see Huyse 1999.

⁵⁸⁸ For the *Paikuli* inscription, see Humbach and Skjaervo 1983.

⁵⁸⁹ For translation of al-Tabari, see Bosworth 1999.

⁵⁹⁰ al-Tabari, vol.5 p.3-12.

⁵⁹¹ Frye 2005: 464-465.

and perhaps most significantly defeating and capturing the Emperor Valerian in 260 near Edessa.⁵⁹²

The events that would finally place the Sasanian empire on equal footing with the Romans and establish the borders that would be largely those of the sixth century took place during the second half of the fourth century. They consisted of Julian's Persian war, the subsequent settlement made under Jovian, and the division of Armenia. Julian's Persian campaign began with grand ambitions. It was propagated as a return to 'classical' warfare against the traditional enemy in the East. According to Libanius, Julian rejected all attempts by the Persians at diplomacy and sought to achieve against Persia the total victory that had been accomplished against the Germans.⁵⁹³ The invasion was a disaster for the Romans. According to Ammianus Marcellinus, they had brief success outside of Ctesiphon, but could not breach the city. Following this the army attempted to retreat but on June 26 Julian died near Samarra with his army in disarray.⁵⁹⁴ What would be consequential for the empire in the sixth century were the conditions of the settlement that took place after Julian's death. The treaty was negotiated by Salutius and Arinthaëus presumably under the direction of the new emperor, Jovian.⁵⁹⁵ According to Ammianus, the Romans agreed to a thirty-year treaty with four main stipulations: 1) in the Transtigritane regions, the Persians would acquire Arzanene, Moxoene, Zabdicene, Rehimene, and Corduene together with fifteen forts, 2) the Persians would also acquire Nisibis, Singara, and Castra Maurorum, 3) the Romans would be allowed to withdraw their troops from Nisibis and Singara, 4) the Romans would not help Arsak (Armenians) against the Persians.⁵⁹⁶ This treaty was a major defeat for the Romans.⁵⁹⁷ It effectively shifted the borders of the frontier from its signing in 363 until the reign of Justin II. The final adjustment of territories that should be noted is the partitioning of Armenia in 387. The partition effectively recognized the division the Armenians had placed upon themselves by the appointment of two

⁵⁹² Howard-Johnston 2006: 159-162; Howard-Johnston 2010b: 37-38; Frye 2005: 465-466.

⁵⁹³ Lib. *Or.* 12 and 13.

⁵⁹⁴ Amm. Marc. 24.6; Lib. *Or.* 13.250-270. For a full account of the campaign, see Hunt 1998: 73-77.

⁵⁹⁵ There is some debate in the sources as to whether or not Jovian was engaged in the negotiations. Ammianus states that Jovian directed the encounter, while later sources, such as the *Chronicon Paschale* suggests that Arinthaëus was in full control, see Amm. Marc. 25.7.10; *Chron. Pasch.* 533.

⁵⁹⁶ Amm. Marc. 25.7.9-12; cf. Zos. 3.31, who is in general agreement with Ammianus. For a discussion of the terms, see Blockley 1992: 27-30.

⁵⁹⁷ For a compilation of the positive, negative, and neutral sources that refer to the treaty, see Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 1-9.

kings, Khosro supported by the Persians in the east and Arsak supported by the Romans in the west. The details surrounding the partition are unclear, but it was likely a gradual process that began with the treaty of 363 and concluded in the early to mid-fifth century.⁵⁹⁸ The result of which, however, was that by the sixth century there were clear delineations in Armenia. The Roman controlled regions that Justinian reformed and the Persian controlled regions that the sources would refer to as Persarmenia.

Another significant aspect that is necessary to understand in the relationship between Byzantine-Persian relations is the development of their diplomatic culture. This process evolved and from the late third to the seventh centuries as the two powers began to interact more frequently through diplomatic communications. This process can best be viewed through the use of embassies and the ceremonial that grew around them. Ceremonial adopted language and ritual that attempted to display superiority and friendship in equal measures.⁵⁹⁹ One of the earliest indicators of this development was the process of notifying one another at the time of an accession. The beginnings of this development appeared in the reign of Narseh and can be seen alongside the dual language can be seen in the Paikuli inscription of Narseh, “the Caesar and the Romans stood in supplication, peace and friendship towards us.”⁶⁰⁰ Embassies evolved over the following centuries into increasingly complex vehicles for diplomatic exchange. The two courts developed diplomatic language, art, rituals, and architecture that surrounded the sending and receiving of embassies, which included gift exchanges, throne room rituals, entertainment, and culinary displays.⁶⁰¹ Furthermore, both empires adapted techniques from the other essentially causing a hybrid of cultures to emerge in these rituals. The result of this is that by the sixth century there was a very defined system of protocols in place that encompassed all aspects of diplomatic exchange. Peter the Patrician provides a detailed account of these protocols “On receiving a great embassy of Persians,” which is preserved in Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus’ *De Ceremoniis*.⁶⁰² The language and ritual of diplomatic embassies provides

⁵⁹⁸ Blockley 1992: 42-45; Blockley 1987.

⁵⁹⁹ Canepa 2009: 122-123.

⁶⁰⁰ Narseh, *Paikuli*, H16.02-H17.02. Humbach and Skjaervo 1983.

⁶⁰¹ Canepa 2009: 127-128.

⁶⁰² *De Cer.* 1.84-95.

interesting insight into the balancing act that the two powers sought to achieve by preserving the appearance of equality while subtly insinuating superiority.⁶⁰³

Thus, by the sixth century a complex, diplomatic process was in place with a shared history of conflict and regional disputes. This set the stage for the conflicts between the Persians and the Byzantines. Now I will look at the treaties that Justinian put into place as a background to Justin II's foreign policy and once again we see an inclusive approach under Justinian that was abandoned by Justin for a more exclusive approach.

Justinianic Treaties

During the first years of Justinian's reign, he had restructured the organization of the East and begun defensive fortifications in order to secure the frontier. This included a change in the leadership structure. He appointed a *magister militum per Armeniam* in command of Roman Armenia and added several *duces* at Tzanzaken, Horonon, Artaleson, Citharizon, Martyropolis, and Melitene.⁶⁰⁴ He also began fortifying a number of places along the frontier, such as Palmyra (527) and Thannuris (528).⁶⁰⁵ This fortification project was one of the causes for the outbreak of war in 530 that would lead to the Eternal Peace treaty, however, it should not be seen as the sole cause as other factors such as the refusal to send funds to Persia to maintain defenses at the Caspian gates were undoubtedly also at play. The following thirty years of Justinian's reign would be marked with war along the frontier and attempts to establish a treaty. Since there has been much scholarship already completed on the wars, this section will focus primarily on the attempts to create a lasting treaty and the terms Justinian was prepared to accept. It will then compare these methods to those of Justin II.

The Eternal Peace treaty of 532 was the first attempt by Justinian to establish a peaceful solution to the Persian conflict.⁶⁰⁶ According to Procopius, the treaty was negotiated in two

⁶⁰³ There were several other mechanisms employed by both empires to control the environment around their rulers and highlight their sacred nature, such as prostration, appearing behind a veil, and commanding silence until the emperor spoke, see Canepa 2009: 128-130 and 148-150.

⁶⁰⁴ Proc. *Buildings*. III.I.27-29; Joh. Mal. 18.10; *CJ*. I.29.5. Toumanoff 1963: 133-13; Adontz 1970: 106-111; Garsoïan 1998: 249, 260-262; Greatrex 1998: 154; Howard-Johnston 1989: 218-220; Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 83-84.

⁶⁰⁵ For Palmyra, Joh. Mal. 18.2. For Thannunis, Ps. Zach. *HE*. IX.2. Gregory 1997: II, 194-195; Greatrex 1998: 151; Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 85-87.

⁶⁰⁶ The major battles in the direct lead up to the Eternal Peace treaty included: Dara (June 530), see Proc. *Wars*. I.14.34-55; Zach. *HE*. IX.3. Satala (530), see Proc. *Wars*. I.15.1-17. Campaign of Callinicum (531), see Joh. Mal.

phases.⁶⁰⁷ The first saw the Roman envoys, Rufinus, Hermogenes, Alexander, and Thomas, meet Khusro in Persia, where they came to the following terms: 1) the Romans would pay 110 *centenaria* (11000 pounds of gold);⁶⁰⁸ 2) the Romans would withdraw the headquarters of the *dux* of Mesopotamia from Dara to Constantia; 3) Khusro would maintain the forts at Lazica, namely Sarapanis and Scanda; and 4) Khusro would regain the forts Pharangium and Bolum in Armenia.⁶⁰⁹ Originally, Justinian agreed to these terms but decided against giving up the two forts in Lazica and thus sent Hermogenes and Rufinus to renegotiate. According to Malalas, an agreement was finally agreed upon during the summer of 532 which added the stipulation that the Romans would recover the Lazic forts.⁶¹⁰ This treaty marked the end of a thirty-one year conflict with the Persians. The importance for our purposes is Justinian's success at using an inclusive strategy towards foreign relations. Although he could be seen by some as paying tribute to the Persians (as those who supported Justin II would eventually claim), he managed to secure his Eastern border so that he could focus his attention on the Western frontier. It should be noted, however, that although Justinian was paying out funds to the Persians, the tribute was intended to be used for the maintenance of the Persian forts along the Caucasian passes and to assure mutual defense of Roman and Persian territories.⁶¹¹

The second treaty established by Justinian was a truce in 545 after the renewal of hostilities between the two powers in the summer of 540.⁶¹² The Truce of 545 (or the Five-Year Truce) was more of a temporary ceasefire than a lasting treaty. According to Procopius, it was negotiated by Sergius and the new *magister militum*, Constantianus, with Khusro at Ctesiphon. The terms stated that the Romans would send Tribunus (a physician who was loved by Khusro) and a sum of twenty *centenaria* to the Persians.⁶¹³ It is important to note that Lazica was more

18.59-60; Proc. Wars. I.17.1-3, 29-39, 18.1-13; Zach. HE. IX. 4. Campaigns in Armenia (531), see Joh. Mal. 18.65-66; Proc. Wars. I.21.11-16; Ps.-Zach. HE. IX.5-6.

⁶⁰⁷ Proc. Wars. I.22.1-8.

⁶⁰⁸ Equivalent to 20 years military subsidies, see Howard-Johnston 2010b: 39.

⁶⁰⁹ Proc. Wars. I.22.1-8.

⁶¹⁰ Joh. Mal. 18.76; Chron. Ede. 104. There is also a column from Hierapolis that commemorates the treaty, see Roussel 1939: I-IV.

⁶¹¹ Proc. Wars. I.22.1-8.

⁶¹² Several of the major conflicts leading up to the 545 Truce included: the Persian invasion of Roman territories in late 539, see Joh. Mal. 18.57; Evag., HE. IV.25; Proc. Wars. II.7.36-37. The sack of Antioch in June of 540, see V. Sym. Styl. Iun. 57; Joh. Lyd., De Mag. III.54; Proc. Wars. II.10.19-24. The Roman invasion of Assyria in 541, see Coripp. Ioh. I.56.67; Proc., Wars.2.25. Khusro's campaign against Edessa in 543, see Jac. Ede. Chron. p321.

⁶¹³ Proc. Wars. II.28.1-6; Marc. Com. Addit. a.546.4; Jordanes, Rom. 377.

than likely not included in the treaty. Although there is no record of such a stipulation, hostilities continued there throughout the late 540s and neither side gave any complaint about it.⁶¹⁴ Here once again, we see Justinian using the inclusive system to secure his eastern border. However, as will be seen at the attempt to prolong the treaty upon its completion, these methods were beginning to grow unpopular among the aristocracy, as they gave the appearance of paying tribute to Persia.

Connected to the discussion of the five-year truce is the attempt to secure a lasting peace upon its conclusion and the surrounding perceptions by those in Constantinople. According to Procopius (and perhaps Peter the Patrician),⁶¹⁵ Justinian sent Peter the Patrician to Persia in order to complete the negotiations for a lasting peace. All talks were refused initially but soon afterwards Khusro sent Yazdgushnasp to Constantinople to settle the truce. Procopius recounts that after extensive negotiations another five-year truce was agreed upon. The agreement consisted of the Persians receiving twenty *centenaria* of gold for the five-year truce along with an additional six for the elapsed period between the former and current agreements. Furthermore, according to Agathias, it seems clear that this treaty specifically neglected to include Lazica which is supported by the continued conflict within the region between 551-556 and the lack of response by either side over concern of breaking the treaty.⁶¹⁶ Procopius notes the growing dissidence among Constantinopolitans at the proceedings – both the treatment of the embassy and the terms of payment in gold to Persia. According to Procopius, the Romans believed that embassies should be respected, but it was becoming public opinion that Justinian was treating them with too many ‘great honors.’⁶¹⁷ In regards to the payments, Justinian attempted to pay the financial settlements in installments in order to ensure the Persians’

⁶¹⁴ Evans 2005: 13-14; Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 113; Stein 1949: 502. It is also worth noting that hostilities continued in Arabia in a form of ‘proxy’ war between the Jafnids and the Nasrids, for full details see the section of this thesis on the Arabs.

⁶¹⁵ Note that the account of Peter the Patrician is recreated in Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus’ *De Ceremoniis* and it is in question whether or not it refers to the embassy under discussion, see *De Cer.* 89-90. For the interpretation that the account is the mission of 547, see Tinnfeld 1993: 195; Stock 1978: 167. For the mission of 551, see Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 124-128. For the mission of 556-557, see Antonopoulos 1990: 203-204. Because of this the details of the embassy will be primarily drawn from Procopius, however, the perceptions of the elites can be utilized from *De Ceremoniis* as regardless of the date of the embassy portrayed, it displays the attitudes of the 540-550s.

⁶¹⁶ Agath. *Hist.* 11.18.3; Whitby 2017.

⁶¹⁷ Procopius was concerned both with the sums of money that were being given to the ambassador and the unprecedented level of freedom the members of the embassy were allowed in the city, see Proc. *Wars.* VIII.15.21-25.

continual co-operation but eventually decided against this in favor of making payment in one large sum to avoid appearing as though he was paying annual tribute to the Persians.⁶¹⁸ Although Procopius' Book VIII portrays Justinian in a negative light, this example suggests the growing unpopularity of Justinian's inclusive approach among the elite.

The final treaty of Justinian's career came at the conclusion of this five-year truce. This time a general armistice was agreed upon across the entire frontier (including Lazica) and in 562 a 'fifty-year truce' was implemented. The negotiations took place at Dara and were spearheaded by Peter the Patrician and Yazdgushnap. The main points addressed were the status of the territories of Lazica and the amounts of the Roman payments to the Persians.⁶¹⁹ The details of this treaty have been recorded in detail by Menander:⁶²⁰

The Persians wanted a treaty without a time limit and a fixed amount of gold every year from the Romans in return for their not taking up arms. Moreover, as a condition for laying down their arms they demanded that they first receive in a lump sum forty, or at least thirty years' instalments of the money to be paid. The Romans for their part wanted the treaty to be a short one and proposed to pay nothing for peace. There was a long dispute over this in which many words were expended, but finally it was agreed that the peace be for fifty years; that Lazica be ceded to the Romans; that the terms of the treaty be firmly adhered to and prevail on both sides, not only in the East and Armenia but also in Lazica itself; that under these conditions the Romans pay thirty thousand golden *nomismata* per year to the Persians for peace. It was also agreed that the Romans should make a lump-sum payment of ten years' instalments as follows: those for seven years would be made immediately, and at the end of the seven years the three remaining

⁶¹⁸ Proc., *Wars*. VIII.15

⁶¹⁹ There is some dispute over the dating but it is generally agreed upon that the treaty was completed in 562. While Blockley argues for the earlier date of 561, it has been convincingly argued by Greatrex, Lieu, and Antonopoulos that although the negotiations began in 561, the fact that they took place on the frontier with intermediaries, the time requirements for these negotiators to travel to and from their respective capitals for ratification would have made the process too long to complete in 561, see Blockley 1985: 259 n79; Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 277 n44; Antonopoulos 1990: 102-106.

⁶²⁰ Menander's source for the treaty is an account from Peter the Patrician himself. The treaty was recorded in several parts, in addition to the material discussed above were stipulations that included the mutual defense against barbarians, trade relations (specifically conduct of merchants), embassy procedures, frontier fortification guidelines, and military restrictions along the frontier, see Men. Proc. *fr.* 6.1.314-397.

instalments would be paid without delay. Thereafter the Persians would receive annually the payment due.⁶²¹

Here once again, we see several recurring themes in the application of Justinian's foreign diplomacy. In order to secure his eastern frontier Justinian is more than willing to send payment to the Persians on a yearly basis. Furthermore, after multiple attempts at attaining full control over Lazica, Justinian appears willing to purchase the territory outright. It is clear that Justinian's inclusive foreign policy is the principle means of his diplomacy.

After an examination of Justinian's diplomatic relations with the Persians, there are several outcomes that can be observed. Firstly, all of the diplomatic solutions with the Persians can be seen as attempts at an inclusive solution. Although war breaks out at several points during his tenure as emperor, it is primarily during break downs in negotiations or at the end of treaties while new agreements are being made. Secondly, all the treaties involved payment of gold to the Persians as a main stipulation. While these payments had several functions, such as the mutual defense of common enemies and the maintenance of forts, they undoubtedly had the appearance of tribute from the perspective of at least some members of the Byzantine elite. Although this tactic may have proven effective for securing periods of peace along the eastern frontier (and successfully freed up resources for Justinian's conquests in the west), it contributed to a growing discord among the aristocracy which fueled their support for Justin II's appointment to emperor and his changes to foreign policy. Now we will look at the change to diplomatic relations with the Persians under Justin II. As seen with the other polities with which he interacted there is a decisive shift from the policies of Justinian.

⁶²¹ Πέρσαι μὲν διηνεκεῖς ἤξιουν ἔσεσθαι τὰς σπονδάς, πρὸς δέ γε καὶ χρυσίον ῥητὸν ἐφ' ἑκάστῳ ἐνιαυτῷ ὑπὲρ τοῦ μὴ κερῆσθαι τοῖς ὅπλοις κομίζεσθαι ἀπὸ Ῥωμαίων· καὶ τεσσαράκοντα μὲν ἐτῶν, τὸ γοῦν ἐλάχιστον τριάκοντα, προειληφότας ἐκτὸς συντελεσθησομένῳ ἐν ἐνὶ συναθροισμῷ, οὕτω βούλεσθαι κατατιθέναι τὰ ὄπλα. Ῥωμαῖοι δὲ τοῦναντίον ὀλιγοχρονίους τὰς ξυνηθήκας εἶναι ἐβούλοντο, πρὸς τοῖς μῆτε μὴν κατατιθέναι τι ὑπὲρ τῆς εἰρήνης. ἀμίλλης πρὸς τοῖς μῆτε μὴν κατατιθέναι τι ὑπὲρ τῆς εἰρήνης. ἀμίλλης δὲ περὶ τούτου ἐπὶ μέγα κινήσεως, καὶ λόγων προελθόντων ἤκιστα ὀλίγων, τέλος ἔδοξεν ὥστε ἐπὶ ν' μὲν ἔτη ξυνεστάναι τὴν εἰρήνην, Ῥωμαῖοι δὲ ἀποδοθῆναι τὴν Λαζικήν· στερράς τε εἶναι καὶ ἐρρωμένας τὰς συνθήκας καὶ κρατεῖν ἑκασταχόσε, τοῦτο μὲν κατὰ τὴν ἔω, τοῦτο δὲ καὶ ἐν Ἀρμενίᾳ, ἀλλὰ γὰρ καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ δήπου τῇ Λαζικῇ, οὕτω μέντοι ὡς λ' χιλιάδας ἐτησίας χρυσίου νομίσματος ἀποφέρεσθαι Πέρσας τῆς εἰρήνης ἕνεκα ἀπὸ Ῥωμαίων. ἐβεβαιώθη δὲ τοῦτο ὥστε Ῥωμαῖοις ἐν ὁμάδι δεκαετίας ποσότητα προπαρασχεῖν οὕτω· παραχρήμα μὲν ἐνιαυτῶν ἑπτὰ, καὶ μετὰ τὴν τῶν ζ' ἐτῶν παραδρομὴν οὐκ ἐς ἀναβολὴν κατατιθέναι τῶν λοιπῶν τριῶν ἐτῶν τὴν συντέλειαν· εἴθ' οὕτω καθ' ἑκάστον ἔτος πορίζεσθαι Πέρσας τὸ ὀρισμένον ἐνιαυσιαῖον. Men. Proc. fr. 6.1.134-154; trans. Blockley 1985: 61-62.

Justin II – Road to War

There are several facets that need to be examined when attempting to understand Justin II's actions against the Persians. As mentioned previously, he clearly had an ideology of Roman superiority and viewed the payment of subsidies to foreign polities as a sign of inferiority. However, if all his actions against Persia (and those done in coordination with the surrounding polities) are taken as a whole, it appears that he had a 'grand strategy', which if successful, would have neutralized Persia to a degree where peace could have been achieved without the need to continue to pay tribute. Before summing up this 'grand strategy' as a whole, we will look at the individual diplomatic conflicts that the Persians and the Romans had with the Caucasian tribes (Suania), the Himyarites, the Central Asian Turks, and the Persian Armenians during Justin II's reign.

The first indirect factor for the outbreak of war was the situation among the Caucasian tribes. According to Procopius, both states were attempting to establish security networks of allies though the Caucasus, in order to prevent incursions into their own territories and to influence them into their rivals.⁶²² The two empires had legitimate concerns over the region as Persian control of Lazica would allow them a spearhead on the Black Sea and Roman control would give them a route to Azerbaijan and greater influence over Persarmenia.⁶²³ Throughout the fifth century, the Byzantines had largely left the defense of the Caucasian passes to the Persians, but the constant conflict and maneuvering between the two empires during the sixth century helps to demonstrate the level of importance they put on the region (see above).

The first conflict Justin II attempted to resolve was the issue of Suania. Suania was a dependency of Lazica and held strategic value to both Rome and Persia. It was contested between the two sides as to whether it should be included in the treaty of 562 as part of Lazica, and was eventually left out when an agreement could not be reached.⁶²⁴ According to Menander, Justin II sent John, son of Domnentiolus, to meet with Khusro and both announce his succession and settle the matter of Suania.⁶²⁵ Justin authorized John to buy Suania outright from Khusro.

⁶²² Proc. Wars. II. 28.22.

⁶²³ Whitby 1988: 216-217; Toumanoff 1963.

⁶²⁴ Men. Proc. fr. 6.1.239-287.

⁶²⁵ Men. Proc. fr. 9.1; Mich. Syr. X.1; Theoph. Byz. 1. Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 135-136; Turtledove 1983: 293-295.

According to Menander, John argued that since the Persians had ceded Lazica to the Romans, Suania should therefore be ceded as well (even though this issue clearly was avoided in the 562 treaty). Khusro eventually agreed to withdraw from Suania but attached several unspecified conditions to the agreement.⁶²⁶ Furthermore, Khusro also forced John to receive a pro-Persian embassy of Suanians while at his court and upon their rejection of Roman rule, provided a further means to contest Roman control over Suania.⁶²⁷ The result of these negotiations was a counter-embassy sent by Khusro to Constantinople to complete the treaty. Justin, however, was in complete disagreement with the actions of John and thus sent a letter to Khusro while his embassy was en route to Constantinople repudiating all the actions of John's embassy. Negotiations continued slowly as John and the Persian Zikh, Yazdgushnasp, died while transporting messages back and forth between the two rulers. According to Menander, Khusro made one final attempt to settle the issue by sending Mebodes with an embassy to Constantinople. This embassy, however, ended quickly and never properly was able to broach the subject of Suania.⁶²⁸ This appears to be the final diplomatic effort to settle the Suania issue. No further actions were taken until war broke out in 572. At first sight, it might be supposed that in this instance Justin II went contrary to his customary actions in regards to foreign policy in that he authorized John to buy Suania outright from the Persians. However, the purchase would have required a one-time payment to acquire a strategic location and thus it would have been unlikely that he (or the aristocracy) would have viewed this on the same level as continual tributary payments with no territorial gain.

The Suania embassies also demonstrate Justin's shift towards an exclusive foreign policy concerning the Arabs. When John originally arrived at Khusro's court, the first matter discussed was the subsidy payments that the Byzantines made to the Saracen tribes (Arabs) under Justinian. According to Menander, Justin II had cut off all subsidies that Justinian was making to the Arab tribes (not just the Nasrids but the Jafnids as well), and John argued that they had no intention to resume payments on the grounds that there were no treaty stipulations requiring it. Furthermore, he argued that Justinian had paid such heavy subsidies to them because of their involvement in the Byzantine-Persian war and since they now had peace, they

⁶²⁶ According to Menander these conditions were 'shameful and unworthy of the Roman Empire', see Men. Proc. *fr.* 9.1.

⁶²⁷ Men. Proc. *fr.* 9.2.

⁶²⁸ Men. Proc. *fr.* 9.2.

were no longer required.⁶²⁹ This issue of the Arab subsidies came up again during the final negotiations around Suania. Menander reports that Mebodes arrived at Constantinople with a number of Nasrids in his embassy, who made another appeal to receive the subsidies they attained under Justinian. Justin II's harsh refusal demonstrates his mentality towards foreign policy: "the Romans would be laughing stocks should they become tributary to the race of Saracens and such nomads."⁶³⁰ Through the Suanian embassies we see a clear picture of Justin II's exclusive stance towards foreign policy. His willingness to purchase Suania demonstrates that a lack of funds were not the issue but rather the impression of the Byzantines being tributaries to a lesser people.

A further perspective on the outbreak of war between Rome and Persia is provided from the Red Sea. The Axumite and Ḥimyarite kingdoms became woven into Byzantine politics in the early sixth century. The most significant player for the Axumites during this period was their king, Kālēb (Ella Asbeha), who reigned from c. 510-540.⁶³¹ The event that prompted the Byzantines to take a hand in the politics and religion of the region was the massacre at Najrān and the subsequent persecution of the Christians in Ḥimyar which was launched by the Jewish Ḥimyarite king, Yūsuf As'ar Yath'ar.⁶³² The sources for the siege and the Christian persecutions are difficult to decipher. They consist of a series of interrelated texts that have varying degrees of reliability alongside a plethora of epigraphic material. Included in these texts are the *martyrion* of St. Arethas, the letter (or letters) of Symeon from Beth Arsham, and the fragments of the *Book of the Ḥimyarites*.⁶³³ The lead up to the intervention began in 522 when Yūsuf rebelled and killed 300 Christians in Zafār. Following this, he stationed his army at Makhāwān and sent a contingent to besiege Najrān.⁶³⁴ In June/July 523, Yūsuf joined the contingent he had

⁶²⁹ Men. Proc. fr. 9.1.

⁶³⁰ Men. Proc. fr. 9.1-9.3.

⁶³¹ Kaleb is perhaps one of the best documented rulers of Axum. He appears in literary sources, coinage, and inscriptions. For a summary of literary sources, see Kobishchanov 1979: 90-94 and Munro-Hay 2011: 99-104. For numismatics, see Munro-Hay 1991: 84-94; cf. Munro-Hay and Juel-Jensen 1995. For the inscriptions, see Bernard *et al.* 1991; Munro-Hay 1991: 221-232.

⁶³² Yūsuf appears under a variety of names in the sources depending on the tradition. For the purpose of clarity he will be referred to as Yūsuf in this paper. For a list of his names under different sources, see Bowerstock 2013: 85. For his background, see Robin 2008b: 1-124.

⁶³³ Shahīd has attributed the two letters and the *Book of the Ḥimyarites* to Symeon, however, D. Taylor has recently argued that all three are by different authors based on a stylistic comparison of the Syriac texts, see Shahīd 1971; Taylor 2010: 143-176. For a survey of the epigraphical sources, see Robin 2015b: 127-170; Robin 2014: 33-79; Robin 2005a: 281-287; Robin 2005b 1-51.

⁶³⁴ Gajda 2009: 87-96; Robin 2015b: 147-149.

previously sent at Najrān, and according to letter ‘C’ of Symeon offered to spare the lives of the inhabitants if they surrender to him but afterwards went back on his promise and massacred many of the Christians within the city.⁶³⁵ According to the martyrdom of St. Arethas, Justin I used the massacre of Najrān to extend his political sphere into southern Arabia (Ḥimyar). It states that he employed Timothy, the archbishop of Alexandria, to compel Kālēb to take action against the Ḥimyarite king, and offered to send ships and troops to aid in the expedition.⁶³⁶ The Axumite campaign began in 525 and was supplemented by Justin I.⁶³⁷ The Axumites captured a number of cities including Zafār, Ṣan ‘ā’ and Marib, the cities of Jawf and Najrān, and Yūsuf was defeated and killed sometime between 525 and 531.⁶³⁸ Furthermore, they slaughtered a large portion of the Jewish population, founded a number of churches, and established an ecclesiastical hierarchy.⁶³⁹ Although the extent of Justin I’s support in the campaign is unclear, the Ḥimyarite king, Yūsuf, was sympathetic to Persia and by supporting his opponent, the Byzantines made the situation in southern Arabia more favorable. Furthermore, it opened the door for Justinian to exploit the situation against the Persians, upon his elevation in 527.

War had escalated to a full conflict with Persia when Kavadh attacked Dara in June of 530, and Justinian sought measures to strengthen his southern frontier.⁶⁴⁰ According to Procopius, Justinian sent an ambassador c. 531 to these polities with two main objectives: an alliance for the war against Persia and a mean of subverting the Persians in the silk trade,

⁶³⁵ For letter ‘C’ of Symeon, see Ps. Zach., *Chron.* 8.3 a-b and d.

⁶³⁶ Martyrdom of St. Arethas, 27.

⁶³⁷ J. Beaucamp has argued against the involvement of the Byzantines in the region before the reign of Justinian. She convincingly argues that Justinian was the first to lobby the Axumites and the Ḥimyarites against the Persians. However, There are records of diplomatic missions into the region under Anastasius (Euphrasius) and Justin I (Abraham, who also conducts the first missions under Justinian). Furthermore, it is clear that the Persians were supporting the Jewish rulers in Ḥimyar and that Anastasius and Justin I were aware of it. If we consider these fact, it is likely that Justin I sent troops (perhaps with encouragement from Justinian who was involved in imperial politics at this point) to maintain the Christian presence in the region, even if he did not lobby them against the Persians, see Beaucamp 2010: 197-218. See also Bowerstock 2012: 282-290 for the diplomatic embassies and a similar line of argument to that presented here.

⁶³⁸ The dating is obscure because it is only preserved in two fragmentary inscriptions that are unclear as to the exact date of his death, for a comparison of the inscriptions, see Robin 2015b: 160-163. For another South Arabian inscription which mentions the death of Yūsuf, see Gadjia 2009: 107-108.

⁶³⁹ Robin 2015b: 149-150. The success of the invasion is preserved in several inscriptions. For the fragmentary remains of a great inscription, see RIE vol.1 1991: 284-285.

⁶⁴⁰ For the battle at Dara, see Proc. *Wars.* I.13.9-14. For modern analysis of the battle, see Greatrex 1998: 168-185.

At that time, when Hellesthaeus [Kālēb] was reigning over the Aethiopians, and Esimiphaeus [Sumūyafa‘ Ashwa‘] over the Homeritae, the Emperor Justinian sent an ambassador, Julianus, demanding that both nations on account of their community of religion should make common cause with the Romans in the war against the Persians; for he purposed that the Aethiopians, by purchasing silk from India and selling it among the Romans, might themselves gain much money, while causing the Romans to profit in only one way, namely, that they be no longer compelled to pay over their money to the enemy.⁶⁴¹

This one was of two embassies that Justinian sent during the reign of Sumūyafa‘ Ashwa‘ (who was the ruler that Kālēb installed to lead the Ḥimyarites after capturing their territories). The first, mentioned above, was led by Julianus and clearly had the objective of using their common religion to elicit political gain. The second, dispatched around the same time, was led by Nonnosus.⁶⁴² There are few details available about Nonnosus’ embassy, as all the information we have is in fragments. However, it does appear he also had the objective of establishing diplomatic ties with Kālēb and Sumūyafa‘ Ashwa‘ with whom he met.⁶⁴³ Unfortunately for Justinian, Kālēb was at the end of his career, and upon his retirement (it is unclear if he was overthrown or retreated to a saintly life at a monastery), Abraha, who was not sympathetic to Justinian’s agenda, overthrew Sumūyafa‘ Ashwa‘ and took control of the throne and declared Himyar an independent kingdom from Axum. Abraha’s focus instead was on distancing himself from the Axum court and establishing an independent state in Arabia.⁶⁴⁴

Both the Ḥimyarites in Yemen and the Axumites in Ethiopia had been cultivated as Christian allies by Justinian to aid against the Persians – the former to help break the Persian

⁶⁴¹ Τότε δὲ Ἰουστινιανὸς [ὁ] βασιλεὺς ἐν μὲν Αἰθίοπι βασιλεύοντος Ἑλλησθαίου, Ἐσιμιφαίου δὲ ἐν Ὀμηρίταις, πρεσβευτὴν Ἰουλιανὸν ἐπεμψεν, ἀξιῶν ἄμφω Ῥωμαίοις διὰ τὸ τῆς δόξης ὁμόγνωμον Πέρσαις πολεμοῦσι ξυνάρασθαι, ὅπως Αἰθίοπες μὲν ὠνούμενοί τε τὴν μέταξαν ἐξ Ἰνδῶν ἀποδιδόμενοί τε αὐτὴν ἐς Ῥωμαίους, αὐτοὶ μὲν κύριοι γένωνται χρημάτων μεγάλων, Ῥωμαίους δὲ τοῦτο ποιήσωσι κερδαίνειν μόνον, ὅτι δὴ οὐκέτι ἀναγκασθήσονται τὰ σφέτερα αὐτῶν χρήματα ἐς τοὺς πολεμίους μετενεγκεῖν. *Proc. Wars.* I.20.9; trans. Dewing 1924: 189-191.

⁶⁴² Nonnosus was a much more well known diplomat and the third generation of a family that the Byzantines had employed for diplomacy in Arabia, see Bowerstock 2012: 282-290.

⁶⁴³ The information available provide more details about the lavish nature of Kālēb’s court rather than the details of the embassy itself. The description of the court and the elephants Nonnosus saw there are preserved in fragments of Photius and the meeting with Kālēb is preserved in fragments of Malalas, see *Frag. Hist. Graec.* IV: 178-180.

⁶⁴⁴ *Proc. Wars.* I.20.3-7. Gadjia 2009: 111-115.

monopoly on the silk trade sea routes and the latter to aid the Maddane Arabs in attacks on Persian territories.⁶⁴⁵ Shortly into Justin II's reign, c. 570, Khusro sent troops to aid the native Ḥimyarite Saif ibn Dhû Yazan to recapture control of Yemen from Axumite control.⁶⁴⁶ Although this wasn't a direct against the Byzantines, it still had repercussions on the state of the treaty. Article 9 stated that the two powers could not attack each other's satellites and the Byzantines claimed that this was a Persian maneuver against a pro-Roman polity (and in some sources an attack against Byzantine subjects which they claimed the Ḥimyarites were).⁶⁴⁷ According to Theophanes of Byzantium, Khusro countered the claims of wrongdoing by citing Justin's contact with the Turks.⁶⁴⁸ While this incident did not cause a break in the treaty itself, it does demonstrate that both sides continued to court regional allies, and to test the limits of each other's willingness to maintain the treaty.

The final three factors that led to the end of the treaty and renewal of war between the two empires can be considered more direct or more serious infractions. The first is the relationship that Justin II began developing with the Central Asian Turks in 568. The details of the embassies and eventual alliance between the Byzantines and the Turks has been discussed above. However, from Khusro's point of view this alliance would have been particularly dangerous. Since the Hephthalites had been defeated in 558-560, he no longer had a buffer state between his territories and the expanding influence of the Turks. His growing concern is demonstrated in the work, the *Life of Anuširuan*.⁶⁴⁹

I did not want to him to see that I was alarmed by his friendship with the Caesar, and that I was afraid of such a move on his part. I showed my complete lack of interest in all

⁶⁴⁵ Justinian was in regular contact with both groups during the sixth century. There are records of embassies to both polities in 530/1, see Proc. Wars. I.20.9-11; Joh. Mal. 456; Theoph. 244; and likely embassies sent to Constantinople in 550/1, see Joh. Mal. 477.7-8; *De Frag. Hist. Tusc.* 23-24; Theoph. 226.33-227.

⁶⁴⁶ al-Tabari 220-237; Theoph. Byz. 78.

⁶⁴⁷ For article 9, see Men. Proc. fr. 6.1. For the sources claiming this was an attack against Byzantine subjects, see Joh. Epiph. 1.2; Theophylact Simmocata 3.9.

⁶⁴⁸ Theoph. Byz. 78.

⁶⁴⁹ The *Life of Anuširuan* is a document that has been preserved in the eleventh-century text by Ibn Miskawayh, *Tarārib al-Umam*, which claims to be an extract of Khusro's autobiography. Although there are some questions to its value, and the text is at best a translation as it is in Arabic, it does have more reliability when discussing issues surrounding the Turks. The inclusion of credible population statistics, dates, and elaborate details when dealing with the Turks, provides justification to the use of this text to provide reasonable views of Khusro's state of mind, see Whitby 1988: 218; Grignaschi 1966: 16-28.

that had passed between them. Then I made haste to prepare the defenses of the eastern forts and cities.⁶⁵⁰

Although this is a later work, it does express reasonable views of the state of mind of Khusro. Furthermore, according to Menander, the Persians tried to ambush the Byzantine embassy twice on its return from the meeting with the Turks. Both attempts failed which likely would have given Justin more confidence in his position against Khusro.⁶⁵¹ The second direct factor for the outbreak of war is the situation in Persarmenia. Again, the details of the Persarmenian affair are discussed above, but the building tension between the two powers was reaching its limit. Persarmenia held much more strategic importance than Yemen and was thus much more difficult to ignore. Furthermore, both sides had justification to break the truce over this conflict. The Byzantines believed that the Christians in Persarmenia deserved their protection, and the Persians viewed the Byzantines as interfering in their internal affairs.

The final factor that led to the break of the truce and renewal of war between the two powers was the result of an embassy sent by the Persians to Constantinople to settle the Persarmenian affair. In 572, Khusro sent an embassy led by a Christian ambassador, Sebokht, to Constantinople to receive their annual payment and to ensure that Justin still intended to maintain the treaty.⁶⁵² According to Menander, Khusro saw the tribute payments as a symbol of peace between the two empires and might have been willing to compromise on the Persarmenia situation if Justin II was prepared to continue them.⁶⁵³ There are several records of the events of the embassy in the sources. The principal source, Menander, reports that the Persians were prepared to accept that Justin II was accepting refugees from Persarmenia even though this was in violation of article 6 of the 562 treaty. Furthermore, he states that Justin II was unwilling to continue to pay tribute to Persia because “true friendship was evenly balanced with no eye towards profit,” and “to have friendship secure by money was shameful and servile.”⁶⁵⁴ There are a few further details added by other sources. Evagrius, adds that Justin would not refuse the

⁶⁵⁰ Trans. Grignaschi 1966: 24-25.

⁶⁵¹ Menander views the Turkish alliance as one of the main causes for Justin to eventually break the treaty, see *Men. Proc. fr.* 10.1; *Joh. Epiph.* 2.

⁶⁵² *Men. Proc. fr.* 16.1.

⁶⁵³ *Men. Proc. fr.* 13.5.

⁶⁵⁴ *Men. Proc. fr.*

requests of Christians in times of war.⁶⁵⁵ According to Michael the Syrian and Bar Hebraeus, Justin II responded that since the Persarmenians had appealed to him for protection both they and the lands were his by right and that he would not end his aid until the Persians returned Nisibis to the Byzantines.⁶⁵⁶ Finally, John of Epiphania and Theophylact Simocatta add that Justin did not think it worthy of the empire to be permanently tributary to the Persians.⁶⁵⁷ Thus Justin II was unwilling both to compromise on his actions in Persarmenia and to continue the tribute system. Although the fiscal demands of the payments likely would not have caused a concern to the Byzantines, the political and cultural implications did. As discussed previously, the political and cultural perceptions surrounding tribute payments which presented the appearance of subordination of one to the other were likely the dominant motivator to Justin's desire to remove the tribute system.

All these factors played a role in the war that would take place in 572. Before examining the events and results of this conflict it is important to restate what could be called Justin's 'grand strategy' when entering into the war with Persia. First, it should be noted that it is unlikely that Justin came to the throne with a masterplan to handle the tributes to Persia but rather a coherent strategy. While it is clear from his other foreign policies that he was planning to remove the empire from all tributary systems, I argue that Justin II's goal was to secure Suania as an extension of Lazica and to sufficiently weaken Persia to the point where a stable peace could be established without the requirement of Byzantium to pay yearly tribute. His strategy had several fronts that at the outset of the war appeared quite promising. He would encourage the Christian population in Persarmenia to continue to rebel against Persia (supported by the Iberians) and eventually come under Byzantine rule; maintain a strong front on the Arabian peninsula with his Jafnid allies (al-Mundhir had won significant victories in 570 and 571 as shown above); and launch offensives along the eastern frontier while the Turks did the same along their border with Persia. Overall, it appears Justin II had a coherent strategy to accomplish

⁶⁵⁵ Evagr. *HE*. V.7.

⁶⁵⁶ It is important to note that these sources are much later than the other contemporary ones and ascribe the details to letters between Justin II and Khosro rather than an embassy in Constantinople. This is technically possible but considering the contemporary sources all speak of an embassy that is more likely the case. Although they should be viewed cautiously, their accounts do mostly coincide with the contemporary accounts. Furthermore, the request for Nisibis would not have been out of the question as the Persians failure to return it in 483 was one of the causes for the war between Anastasius and Kavad, see Mich. Syr. II; Bar Hebraeus 77.

⁶⁵⁷ Joh. Epiph. 1.2; Theophylact Simocatta III.9.

his goals. Now I will analyze the implementation of this strategy and the ramifications of this aggressive foreign policy.

Justin II – War with Persia

The failure of Sebokht's embassy led Justin to declare war in 572. He adopted an aggressive strategy that was in line with his previously stated beliefs.⁶⁵⁸ Justin II appointed his cousin, Marcian, as the *magister militum per Orientem* and struck quickly into Persian territory. According to John of Epiphania and Theophylact Simocatta, Marcian dispatched 3000 troops under the command of Theodore, Sergius, and Juventius who made a successful attack into Arzanene where they plundered what they could and retreated.⁶⁵⁹ There is some discrepancy in the sources as to why the Byzantines did not continue the attack for several months after this victory. Evagrius presents a hostile view of events and states that this was due to Justin's failure to prepare adequately for the war and that the months after the victory were spent preparing the eastern defenses for possible counterstrikes.⁶⁶⁰ However, the need to maintain defenses is stated as a priority by Justin II in *Novel* 149 and according to Menander, Justin had been maintaining the upkeep of the eastern defenses since 566.⁶⁶¹

There is not sufficient evidence to determine for certain the reason for this delay. Michael Whitby speculates on two theories, either that Evagrius could be correct in his summation or that it could have fallen in the period between the raid into Arzanene and the advance to Sargathon in the spring of 573.⁶⁶² I would argue that Menander and *Novel* 149 present a more neutral position on the state of the defenses and make it seem unlikely that the attack was delayed for the maintenance of defenses. Thus, it seems the most likely explanation

⁶⁵⁸ Justin II proclaimed in a Novel that he believed the best strategy for the defense of the empire was constant attack, see *Novel* 149.1 (569).

⁶⁵⁹ Joh. Epiph. 3; Theophylact Simocatta III.10.1-3.

⁶⁶⁰ Evagr. *HE*. V.8.28-33. There is also a story in the Chronicle of 1234 and Michael the Syrian where the Persian *marzbān* in Nisibis tricks Marcian in order to adequately prepare for the attack but this story is likely embellished to explain the four month delay and paint a negative picture of Justin's leadership, see *Chron. 1234.*, 65; Mich. Syr. X.8.

⁶⁶¹ Men. *Proc. fr.* 9.1; also *Novel* 149.2 (569), where Justin II makes a general claim for the need to maintain defenses.

⁶⁶² Whitby 1988: 254.

for the four months is the time it took to travel from Arzanene and conduct the attacks on Sargathon and Thebothon before preparing for the siege of Nisibis.⁶⁶³

The first major confrontation in the war was the siege of Nisibis in the spring of 573.⁶⁶⁴ According to John of Epiphania, the attack began by Marcian attempting to isolate the city. He defeated the Persians at Sargathon and then besieged the city of Thebothon unsuccessfully for ten days before returning to Dara.⁶⁶⁵ After a brief pause, Justin II ordered Marcian to besiege Nisibis itself. It is clear that the siege of Nisibis was unsuccessful, but the details surrounding it are more difficult to determine. There are differing accounts to the siege between the Greek and Syriac sources. The main Greek source, Evagrius, presents a negative view of events for the Byzantines:

As the general of the East he sent out Marcian, who was related to him, giving him neither an army fit for battle nor any other equipment for war. He reached Mesopotamia, for the manifest peril and ruination of everything, trailing after him a very few soldiers, and those unarmed, having also some farm workers and hersmen who had been drawn from the tax-payers. And do he had a few engagements against the Persians near Nisibis, since the Persians were not yet prepared either. Gaining the upper hand he invested the city, though the Persians did not judge it necessary to shut the gates, but rather hurled extremely shameful insults at the Roman army.⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶³ Evagrius does not mention the prior attacks on Sargathon and Thebothon which would have added to the delay before attacking Nisibis.

⁶⁶⁴ At this point in Armenia the rebels had re-captured Dwin supported by the Romans and the Colchian, Abasgian, and Alan tribes (the Sabir, Daganes, and Dilimainites had went to support the Persians), see Theoph. Byz. 4.

⁶⁶⁵ Joh. Epi. 3.

⁶⁶⁶ Στρατηγὸν δὲ τῶν ἐφῶν ἐκπέμπει Μαρκιανόν, συγγενὴ αὐτῷ καθεστῶτα, οὔτε στρατείαν ἀξιόμαχον δοὺς οὔτε τὴν ἄλλην τὴν ἐς τὸν πόλεμον παρασκευήν. Ὅς ἐπὶ προὔπτῳ κινδύνῳ καὶ ἐπ' ἀνατροπῇ τῶν ὅλων τὴν μέσῃν κατελήφει τῶν ποταμῶν, ὀλίγους κομιδῆ στρατιώτας καὶ τούτους ἀνόπλους ἐπισυρόμενος, ἔχων καὶ τινας σκαπανέας καὶ βοηλάτας ἐκ τῶν συντελῶν ἀφηρημένους. Συμπλέκεται μὲν οὖν ὀλίγα πρὸς Πέρσας περὶ τὴν Νίσιβιν, οὐπω οὐδὲ τῶν Περσῶν παρεσκευασμένων. Καὶ τὸ πλέον ἐσχηκῶς περικάθηται τὴν πόλιν, οὐκ ἀξιοσάντων [*] τῶν Περσῶν ἀποκλείσαι τὰς πύλας, ἐνυβρίζοντων δὲ καὶ μάλα αἰσχροῦς ἐς τὸ Ῥωμαίων στρατεύμα. Evagr. HE. V.8. (203.27-204.4); trans. Whitby 2000: 265. John of Epiphania and Theophylact Simocatta both mention the siege but don't give any details beyond that it took place, see Joh. Epi. 3; Theophylact Simocatta, III.10.4-5. It should be noted that Menander Protector adds an obscure passage on the siege, "For this reason he did not concern himself with the siege of Nisibis." There is no context for this statement as the fragment which contains the referent for αὐτῷ is missing, so it is impossible to tell if it is referring to Marcian, the Persian *marzban*, or someone else entirely, and thus sheds no insight on the siege, see Men. Proc. fr. 16.2.

Conversely, the Syriac sources present a much more contested affair:

Burning with zeal for the nation of Christians, he [Marcian] gathered his army and descended and laid siege to the city of Nisibis, which until now was held by the Persians. He attacked vigorously in order to take it. He built against her ramparts all around, and because he also had engineers with him, he raised her siege engines, namely lofty towers and strong bulwarks. The city was in distress. And its inhabitants together with the Persian garrison despaired of their lives, seeing that at that moment it was on the verge of being captured by the Romans.⁶⁶⁷

It thus appears that Evagrius offers a more negative account.⁶⁶⁸ It is likely that he uses this assessment to reflect his picture of Justin II's inadequacy in military preparations that he mentions previously. The idea of a major Persian city leaving its defenses completely open seems quite far-fetched and thus more weight should be attributed to the Syriac sources. According to John of Ephesus and the *Chronicle of 1234*, the failure of the siege was due to the general confusion caused by Marcian being dismissed as general at the same time that Khusro arrived with a relief force. This seems the most plausible chain of events – all the sources agree that the siege only lasted around 10 days and the loss of the commander coupled with the city receiving aid from a relief force would give suitable reason for the Byzantine army to retreat to its base of operations for the invasion (Dara).

The last conflict in the sources in regards to Nisibis, is the cause for Marcian's removal. John of Ephesus reports that the cause for his dismissal was the failure to kill al-Mundhir in the assassination attempt discussed above in the section on the Arabs.⁶⁶⁹ The *Chronicle of 1234* places the blame on a deception carried out by the Persian commander which delayed the siege by four months and allowed them time to adequately prepare.⁶⁷⁰ John of Epiphania (and Theophylact Simocatta following him) state that Adarmahan invaded Syria prior to the failure of the siege at Nisibis and that his success at doing so was the motivation for Justin removing

⁶⁶⁷ Joh. Eph. *HE*. VI.2; trans. Payne Smith 1860: 367-368. The *Chronicle of 1234* follows the same outline as John for the siege, but states that after the siege began, Marcian gave the Persians four months of respite out of mercy after speaking with the *marzban* of the city, see *Chron. 1234*, 65.

⁶⁶⁸ Turtledove 1977: 199; Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 282 n.45; Whitby 1988: 256.

⁶⁶⁹ Joh. Eph. *HE*. VI.4

⁶⁷⁰ *Chon. 1234*. 65.

Marcian.⁶⁷¹ Lastly, Evagrius places establishes Adarmahan's invasion after Marcian's dismissal but gives Marcian's inability to take Nisibis as the cause for his removal.⁶⁷² There is also some debate among modern scholars on this issue. H. Turtledove follows John of Ephesus and places the blame on Marcian's failure to kill al-Mundhir, while speculating that the cause could be the failure to sack Nisibis in a timely manner, and the subversion of a potential rebellion orchestrated by Marcian. But if Justin II were set to remove him from his position, it would make sense for it to happen before giving him the lead on the Persian expedition. G. Greatrex and S. Lieu argue that it was likely due to the failure to press the siege hard enough.⁶⁷³ However, as M. Whitby points out, the relatively short length of the siege (approximately ten days) makes it unlikely that a message could have been sent to and from Constantinople to inform Justin on the progress of the siege and receive his instructions on how to proceed.⁶⁷⁴ Taking all the available information into consideration, the most plausible explanation is that Justin received reports of Marcian's failed attempt to lay siege to Thebotan and decided to remove him from command. This would allow for messages to be dispatched and fit into the time frame of Marcian being relieved during the siege of Nisibis.

The failure to take Nisibis is when Justin II's foreign strategy begins to unravel. The Persian counterstrike was largely successful and weakened him significantly in several areas. The Persian attack consisted of two fronts. After leading his army up the Euphrates, Khusro split his forces and sent Adarmahan with a detachment to invade Euphratesia and Syria, while he led the main force up the Khabur in order to relieve Nisibis and then besiege Dara. The details of the detachment with Adarmahan are recorded by John of Ephesus, Evagrius, and John of Epiphania, who are all similar in their descriptions. According to these sources, Adarmahan was largely successful with his invasion. He advanced with little opposition and captured many of the lands and forts between Circesium and Apamea (he was unsuccessful at Antioch but only had sent a contingent of his forces there).⁶⁷⁵ Adarmahan's invasion culminated at Apamea, where according to John of Ephesus and John of Epiphania, he tricked the bishop of the city

⁶⁷¹ Joh. Epiph. 4; Theophylact Simocatta, III.10.8-11. Adarmahan's invasion of Syria will be discussed below, but was clearly after the siege of Nisibis.

⁶⁷² Evagr. *HE*. V.9.

⁶⁷³ Turtledove 1977: 195; Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 283 n.59.

⁶⁷⁴ A distance of approximately 1000 miles which at best could have been covered in ten days for each leg of the journey, see Whitby 1988: 256 and n.9; cf. Ramsay 1925: 60-74.

⁶⁷⁵ Evagr. *HE*. V.9; Joh. Eph. VI.6; Joh. Epiph. 4; cf. Theophylact Simocatta, III.10.6-11.

into opening the gates by promising not to harm the city, but then sent in his army in full force once the gates were open who looted and burned much of the city.⁶⁷⁶ While it is possible this is merely an anecdote to explain the sack of the city, there is some cause to believe the bishop of Apamea may have reasoned that opening the gates could have preserved the city. In 540, after Khusro had conquered Antioch, he besieged Apamea and eventually made a similar deal where he did not destroy the city (though he still did extract a large amount of wealth from it).⁶⁷⁷

There is archaeological evidence available to corroborate widescale destruction in Apamea in 573. A. Vokaer examines Brittle Ware found in dumps caused by the Persian attack that have been dated to 573 by the abundance of second-half sixth-century coins and the presence of Phocaeian Red Slip Hayes Forms 3 and 10 and Cypriot Red Slip Hayes Form 2 pottery.⁶⁷⁸ Furthermore, C. Foss has surveyed several buildings, including the Atrium Church and the so-called Cathedral of Apamea. The dating for the destruction of these buildings is more tenuous but there is evidence that supports the literary narrative that they were destroyed by fire in 573. Foss argues that the destruction of the Atrium Church is supported by the numismatic evidence, namely that all the coins found in the northern buttresses are pre-573.⁶⁷⁹ The evidence for the so-called Cathedral is more tenuous. Foss argues that if it was a Cathedral, it was burned down in 573 (as the literary record states), but there is no supporting material evidence to support this and he hypothesizes that it may not have been a cathedral at all.

The second front of the attack, led by Khusro himself, was even more devastating to Justin II's strategy. After Khusro dispatched Adarmahan to Syria, he continued up the Khabour river to provide relief for the siege at Nisibis.⁶⁸⁰ It is worth noting, (and will be discussed when evaluating the outcome of Justin's foreign policy) that Khusro was able to advance unopposed through the southern frontier because of the withdrawal of al-Mundhir and the Jafnids.

⁶⁷⁶ Joh. Eph. VI.6; Joh. Epiph. 4

⁶⁷⁷ Proc. Wars. II.2.1-38; Evagr. HE. IV.26.

⁶⁷⁸ For Brittle Ware, see Vokaer 2009: 121-136 and Vokaer 2005. For coins, see Napoleone-Lemaire and Balty 1969: 110. For pottery, see Hayes 1972.

⁶⁷⁹ Foss 1997: 213-216; Balty and Napoleone-Lemaire 1969: 110.

⁶⁸⁰ There are several sources that mention the size of Khusro's force that besieged Dara. Michael the Syrian states that he had 104 000 infantry and 123 000 cavalry, Theophanes of Byzantium puts the figure at 100 000 infantry and 40 000 cavalry, and the *Chronicle of 1234* puts the figure at 40 000 infantry, 23 000 cavalry, and 120 000 farmers, see Mich. Syr. II; Theoph. Byz. 79; *Chron. 1234*, 66. These figures are all likely exaggerated, though the *Chronicle* perhaps provides a more realistic figure. For the inclusion of laborers in the siege, see Turtledove 1977: 207; cf. Magoulias 1976: 11-35.

Furthermore, it is likely that the Byzantine army was in some form of disarray on his arrival because of the change in leadership mid-siege. The sources are unclear on who actually assumed command after Marcian, whether it was Acacius Archelaus or Theodore Tzirus, son of Justinian, but they do agree that it caused a level of turmoil among the soldiers.⁶⁸¹ On his arrival, Khusro was able to capture the Byzantines siege equipment and then turned his attention to Dara.

The siege of Dara is preserved in some detail in several of the available sources. The first aspect of the siege that should be noted is concerning the water supply. According to John of Ephesus, Khusro accomplished a significant feat of engineering to deal with the city's water supply,

His first act was to command the stone-cutters and others to make a cutting through a hill which lay on the east of the city outside the aqueduct, in order to divert the water, and when, as was said, they found the stone hard, they lit fires upon it, and cooled it when hot with vinegar, and so made it soft for working.⁶⁸²

This feat, also mentioned in the *Chronicle of 1234* and John of Epiphania, was a major factor in the siege as Justinian had fortified the city in a way that allowed Dara to receive a continuous water supply but deny it from any potential invaders.⁶⁸³ The second feat of engineering that Khusro is recorded employing was the construction of two mounds, upon which he could place his siege engines. These mounds were also eventually fortified with brick walls in order to prevent Byzantine counterattacks against them.⁶⁸⁴ These construction jobs lend weight to the number of farmers pressed into service mentioned by the *Chronicle of 1234*. The number suggested (120 000) is still no doubt an exaggeration but a significant amount would still have been required to achieve the tasks. The presence of these engineering feats in the literary sources begs for more archaeological research to provide corroboration. It is worth noting that recent developments in satellite and field photography has led C. Lillington-Martin to use these images to provide context and details on the battle between the Byzantines and the Persians in 530, and

⁶⁸¹ According to John of Ephesus, Acacius was placed in charge but according to Theophanes of Byzantium, Acacius was just the messenger and it was in fact Theodore. The lack of further evidence or corroborating sources makes it unclear who was correct, see Joh. Eph. *HE*. VI.2 and Theoph. Byz. 79.

⁶⁸² Joh. Eph. VI.5; trans. Payne Smith 1860: 379-380.

⁶⁸³ *Chron. 1234*. 66; Joh. Epiph. 5; cf. Theophylact Simocatta, III.10.2. For Justinian's construction of the water supply system at Dara, see Proc. *Buildings*, II.I.14-27.

⁶⁸⁴ Joh. Eph. VI.5; *Chron. 1234*. 66; Evagr. *HE*. V.10; Joh. Epiph. 5.

to examine that information in conjunction with the accounts of Zachariah, John Malalas, and Procopius.⁶⁸⁵ A similar study on the siege of 573 utilizing these techniques with the accounts of John of Ephesus, John of Epiphania, and the *Chronicle of 1234* would prove quite valuable.

The siege lasted for six months and finished with seven days of intense fighting once the Persians breached the city before it fell in mid-November of 573.⁶⁸⁶ There are some reports (Evagrius and John of Ephesus) of the city being betrayed by the commander of the defense, John, son of Timostratus, but this is often the case among sources to explain a major defeat.⁶⁸⁷ Although it has been argued that this was not the case in Apamea, there is a significant difference between the two. As stated above, Apamea had a history of a successful surrendering of the city and had more cause to believe in its success. Dara, on the other hand, had been under siege for the past six months and thus was less likely to receive favorably treatment. The fall of Dara marks the end of Justin II's control of the Byzantine forces. Although he remained emperor until his death in 578, Tiberius II along with Justin's wife Sophia, effectively took over operation of the empire from this point. Ancient sources claimed that the loss of Dara was what drove Justin insane.⁶⁸⁸

Success in the war on the Persian frontier was an integral aspect to Justin II's overall foreign strategy. The Byzantines were most successful at removing the tribute system when they had a military advantage along the frontier. The capture of Nisibis would have significantly contributed to this strategy. It would have given the Byzantines leverage in negotiations that could have swayed Khusro into a treaty without the need for subsidies to be a part of it. As will be discussed below, the transfer of territories was one proposal that Khusro was open to receiving instead of tribute payments. The failure to capture the city was a major defeat for

⁶⁸⁵ Lillington-Martin 2007.

⁶⁸⁶ Two dates are recorded for the fall of the city, Agapius of Manbij records the fall on November 11 and Michael the Syrian on November 15, see Agapius 436; Mich. Syr. II.312. Michael the Syrian records that 90 000 were captured and 150 000 were killed but as stated above, he is not a reliable source for numbers and these are also likely inflated.

⁶⁸⁷ Evagr., *HE*. V.10; Joh. Eph. *HE*. VI.5.

⁶⁸⁸ Evagrius and Theophylact Simocatta both state that the loss of Dara is what drove Justin mad, see Evagr. *HE*. V.II.20-23; Theophylact Simocatta, III.II.3. This idea has also been argued by prominent modern scholars, who place the loss of Dara as the event that broke Justin's mind, see Whitby 1988: 227; Cameron 1976: 161; Stein 1919: 47. J. Kroll and B. Bachrach provide an interesting study on Justin's madness from a medical point of view. They discuss the possibilities of Justin as a manic-depressive or the victim of hyperparathyroidism (which they lean more towards). They provide a convincing argument that a diagnosis of hyperparathyroidism is more prudent than an onset of madness and that the loss of Dara was merely the catalyst of an ongoing illness from which he was suffering, see Kroll and Bachrach 1993.

Justin II. It not only removed this possibility from the bargaining table but also moved the Persians into position to lay siege to Dara. The subsequent loss of Dara effectively ended Justin II's foreign strategy against Persia. Whether or not this was the event that triggered his madness is irrelevant, what is important is now Persia held the strategic advantage along the frontier and they could demand much more favorable terms in diplomatic negotiations.

Tiberius II – Diplomacy and Conflict

The change in leadership to Tiberius II and Sophia marks another shift in the foreign policy of the empire. Here we see Tiberius adopt more of a middle ground between Justinian and Justin II. He was much more open to the use of tribute to resolve military conflicts, but it does appear that he made an effort to avoid it when possible.

Early in 574, they restarted diplomacy with Khusro, first by receiving a Persian embassy in Constantinople and then by sending Zachariah to continue negotiations. Furthermore, under Tiberius, the use of tribute as a diplomatic tactic once again becomes an option. According to Menander,

The Empress Sophia, the wife of Justin, sent [Zachariah], who ranked among the court physicians, as envoy to the Persian king Khusro. When he arrived there offering 45000 *nomismata*, he made a one-year agreement in the East, so that there might be a truce. He said that during this period a major embassy would be sent by the empress, which would discuss everything in greater depth, and which would in addition put an end to the war, if it should also happen that the Roman emperor in the meantime returned to health. Thus Zachariah made a one-year truce in the Roman dominions in the East, but not for those in Armenia, paid over the 45000 gold *nomismata* for this (concession) alone, and departed.⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸⁹ Ὅτι ἡ βασιλὶς Σοφία Ἰουστίνου <Ζαχαρίαν> πρέσβιν στέλλει ὡς τὸν Περσῶν βασιλέα Χοσρόην ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις ἰατροῖς καταταττόμενον. καὶ οὗτος μὲν αὐτοῦ ἀφικόμενος τεσσαρακονταπέντε χιλιάδας χρυσοῦ νομίσματος παρασχὼν τίθεται τὰς ξυνηθήκας ἀνά τὴν ἕω ἐνιαυσιαίας, ὡς ἂν ἔσοιτο ἐκεχειρία. ἐν τοσοῦτῳ γὰρ ἔφασκε σταλήσεσθαι πρὸς τῆς βασιλίδος μέγιστον πρεσβευτὴν τὸν τελεώτερά πως περὶ ἀπάντων διαλεχθισόμενον ἕτι μῆν καὶ τὸν πόλεμον διαλύσοντα, τυχὸν ἐν μέσῳ καὶ τοῦ Ῥωμαίων βασιλέως μεταβαλόντος ἐς τὸ ἔρρωμένον. οὕτω μὲν τὰς ἐπ' ἐνιαυτὸν ποιησάμενος σπονδὰς περὶ τῆς κατὰ τὴν ἕω Ῥωμαίων ἐπικρατείας, οὐ μὴν καὶ περὶ τῆς ἐν Ἀρμενίᾳ, καταθέμενος δῆπουθεν αὐτοῦ καὶ μόνου ἕνεκα με' χιλιάδας χρυσοῦ νομισμάτων ἐπανῆκεν. Men. Proc. fr. 18.2.1-13; trans. Blockley 1985: 159.

This passage is significant in several ways. Although John of Epiphania (and Theophylact Simocatta) state that this treaty was undertaken by Justin and that it was on his prerogative that a truce be initiated, this is likely not the case.⁶⁹⁰ The fact that Menander mentions Sophia and not Justin II in the description of the truce indicates her increased presence in diplomatic decisions. Furthermore, according to Menander, the Empress Sophia played a role in the negotiation process, and when one considers that Zachariah was her personal diplomat, and that she was instrumental in Tiberius being chosen as Caesar, it would appear more likely that she had a prominent hand in the affair.⁶⁹¹ Although Tiberius II was not declared Caesar until the end of 574, he was effectively running the administration of the empire with Sophia from the fall of Dara at the end of 573. Finally, the quote by Menander that refers to the ending of the war if the emperor returns to health is unfilled. The result of this is that Tiberius would take over full negotiations with Persia and he sends an embassy in late 574 to establish a more lasting peace.

The embassy in late 574 was led by the *quaestor sacri palatii* Trajan, and Zachariah. The goal of this embassy was to secure a three-year truce in order to give the Byzantines some respite on the eastern frontier. According to Menander, the Persians were not willing to accept this – they wanted to consolidate their gains in Mesopotamia and thus wanted a longer five-year truce to be accepted.⁶⁹² The disagreement over the terms of the truce caused a delay as letters were sent to Tiberius for advice on how to proceed. Although Trajan and Zacharia had conditionally accepted the five year truce proposed by the Persians, Tiberius II refused.⁶⁹³ According to John of Epiphania, the result of this was that the Persian negotiator, Mahbodh, ordered Tamkhusro to attack the Byzantine territories along the frontier.⁶⁹⁴ The Byzantines forced the Persians back to the negotiating table with the arrival of Justinian commanding a

⁶⁹⁰ Joh. Epiph. 5; Theophylact Simocatta III.11.3-5.

⁶⁹¹ Men. Proc. fr. 18.2. Evagrius corroborates Menander's account that Sophia was involved in sending this embassy to Khusro, although the other contemporary sources, namely John of Epiphania and Theophylact Simocatta do not mention her and claim that Tiberius was responsible, it is plausible that she played a role considering she had a hand in the decision to adopt Tiberius II as Caesar and appears to be involved in the transition, see Evagr. HE. V.12; Joh. Epiph. 5; Theophylact Simocatta, III.12.2-5.

⁶⁹² Men. Proc. fr. 18.4.

⁶⁹³ Men. Proc. fr. 18.4.

⁶⁹⁴ Joh. Epiph. 5. It is likely the previous one-year truce had expired at this point so it appears that Mahbodh was not breaking any treaties, see Whitby 1988: 260.

mercenary army and a standoff along the frontier.⁶⁹⁵ The arrival of Justinian persuaded Mahbodh to accept Tiberius II's terms for the truce. It consisted of a three-year truce (excluding Armenia) where the Byzantines would pay 30,000 *nomismata* each of the three years.⁶⁹⁶

Before discussing Tiberius' next diplomatic encounter with the Persian, it is worth noting the situation in other parts of the East for context, namely that the Byzantines had reconciled with the Jafnids and now had their cooperation in Arabia and fighting reignited in Armenia. These developments have been discussed previously, but should be kept in mind as they influenced the relationship between Tiberius II and Khurso. It is interesting to note Tiberius II's foreign policy towards Persia when placed against these other developments. Already in his second set of negotiations with Persia we see several examples of Tiberius II's willingness to use tribute to achieve his goals. It is difficult to determine how this reversal was received in Constantinople, but the fact that Mahbodh refused to accept the payment at the frontier and instead required the Byzantines to present the money at Nisibis demonstrates that the Persians were acutely aware of the perceptions surrounding the payments and wanted the Byzantines to appear as the subordinate empire.⁶⁹⁷ Furthermore, it does appear that Tiberius II was aware of the cultural impact that tribute payments had to the overall image of the empire because of the fact that he did not want to enter into a lengthy tributary commitment despite his desire for peace. As we evaluate the following chain of events, it will be argued that Tiberius II continues to seek a middle ground between Justinian and Justin II, he is willing to employ tribute payments to achieve his overall goal of peace with Persia but he does attempt to avoid it whenever possible.

Tiberius II sent another embassy, led by Theodore, son of Bacchus, in late 575 or early 576. Khusro accepted the embassy but little would come of it as he led his army north into Armenia. The details of the Armenian theatre won't be reiterated but what is important for the negotiations between Tiberius and Khusro was that he was opposed by the Byzantines at

⁶⁹⁵ Justinian, son of Germanus, had been named the commander of the East by Tiberius and he received a mercenary army mainly comprised of Germans from the tribes north of the Balkans, see Evagr. *HE*. V.14; Theoplylact Simocatta, III.12.3-4.

⁶⁹⁶ Men. Proc. *fr.* 18.4. Greatrex and Lieu state that the truce agreed upon was five years, however it appears that they have confused the acceptance of the truce by Trajan and Zacharia with the eventual treaty that was established, see Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 152.

⁶⁹⁷ Men. Proc. *fr.* 23.1. The treaty was concluded sometime after July 575, see Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 286 n.11; cf. Whitby 1988: 260-262; Stein 1919: 82 n. 6.

Theodosiopolis, and then appeared to re-open negotiations rather than engage in battle.⁶⁹⁸ Khusro had forced Theodore to accompany him on this campaign and now requested that he go and return with another embassy within thirty days. There is some debate as to why Khusro offered this period of respite. On the one hand, Whitby argues that Khusro was likely dealing with poor weather conditions, such as mud-soaked roads and flooded streams. On the other hand, Blockley argues that this is not plausible because the Byzantines were not prevented from mustering on their side.⁶⁹⁹ It is possible to explain this disparity between the two armies. The Byzantines were preparing a city to defend a siege and thus would have likely been not as affected by the weather and more willing to endure it. Furthermore, the movements of the army under Justinian were in fact delayed and struggled with late deployments throughout the spring.⁷⁰⁰ It is possible that Khusro's request was a ruse to buy time but nevertheless, it does not appear that any embassy was sent. Following the respite, Khusro proceeded to attack regions in Armenia (discussed above) but was largely unsuccessful. According to John of Ephesus, the result of this failure was that Khusro was forced to retreat in disgrace through Arzanene and issued a decree that the king of Persia should only go on campaign to fight another king.⁷⁰¹ According to Evagrius, Tiberius did take the opportunity to retaliate by invading lands around the Caspian sea, however it does appear that peace was his main goal as he reopened negotiations with Persia in 577.⁷⁰²

The next phase of negotiations were initiated by Khusro in 577. According to Menander, Tiberius sent Theodore son of Peter the Patrician, John, Peter and Zacharia to Constantia to negotiate with the Persian envoy, Mahbodh.⁷⁰³ Although the Persians were at a disadvantage, they still pursued a substantial settlement to obtain peace. Menander records that they proposed that the Byzantines would have to resume their payments of 30,000 *nomismata* per year, cede

⁶⁹⁸ Men. Proc. fr. 18.6.48-116; Joh. Eph. HE. VI.8

⁶⁹⁹ Whitby 1988: 264-265; Blockley 1985: 274 n. 214.

⁷⁰⁰ Men. Proc. fr. 18.6.27-28.

⁷⁰¹ Joh. Eph. HE. VI.9. There are variations as to what they actual degree stated. Theophylact states that he banned the king from undertaking any foreign expedition, see Theophylact Simocatta, III.14.11. Evagrius states that only expeditions against the Romans were banned, see Evagr. HE. V.15. For the reforms of Khusro, see Rubin 1995.

⁷⁰² Evagr. HE. V.14; cf. Theophylact Simocatta III.15.1-2. According to John Biclár, Tiberius also acquired the lands of the Suani during this invasion by capturing their king, his family, and his treasury, and bringing them to Constantinople, see Joh. Bicl. 214.25-27 (576?.2).

⁷⁰³ Men. Proc. fr. 20.1.

Persarmenia and Iberia, and hand over all those who had rebelled there.⁷⁰⁴ These negotiations continued along these lines, and according to Menander, a deal was basically agreed upon under the following conditions: Tiberius would not be required to make any payments; he would hand over Persarmenia and Iberia to the Persians on the condition that he would not have to surrender anyone who had deserted to the Byzantines; and it would be open for negotiation for Dara to be bought back by Tiberius II.⁷⁰⁵ Unfortunately for Tiberius II, these negotiations all fell apart in late summer / early autumn of 577. Two major victories by Tamkhusro in Persarmenia essentially negated Khusro's willingness to agree to a treaty and thus the entire deal was dismissed.⁷⁰⁶

Tiberius II would make two further attempts at diplomacy during his reign. The first came after several successes the Byzantines had under the new *magister militum per Orientem*, Maurice.⁷⁰⁷ According to John of Ephesus, Maurice acquired troops in Cappadocia, Anzitene, and Syria before he stationed his army at Citharizon.⁷⁰⁸ While Maurice was stationed there, the Persians launched two raids in Mesopotamia. The first, under Mahbodh, attacked the regions around Resaina and Constantia, while at the same time, the second, under Tamkhusro, raided lands around Martyropolis and Amida.⁷⁰⁹ Despite the success of the Persia raids, they did not greatly improve their strategic position. The success of Maurice's counterattack, however, is essentially what forces Persia back to the bargaining table. According to Agathias,

Maurice, the son of Paul, appointed *magister militum per Orientem* by the Roman emperor Tiberius (II) Constantine, suddenly invaded the land of Arzanene, which is adjacent and close to the territory surrounding the village [Thamnon in Corduene], and indeed did not cease ravaging and plundering the whole (country) without mercy. After

⁷⁰⁴ Men. Proc. fr. 20.2.1-15; Joh. Eph. HE. VI.12. A.D. Lee argues that in this case it is likely that John and Menander used a similar source since their accounts are so similar, suggesting one of the ambassadors as the most likely, see Lee 1993b: 38-39.

⁷⁰⁵ Men. Proc. fr. 20.2.15-78.

⁷⁰⁶ Sebeos, 71.1-4/11; Theophylact Simocatta, III.15.8-9.

⁷⁰⁷ According to John of Ephesus, Maurice was elevated to this post in 577/578 in an attempt to improve internal relations in the eastern army after the death of Justinian, see Joh. Eph. HE. VI.27. See also Whitby 1995: 89; Greatrex and Lieu 2002: 160.

⁷⁰⁸ Joh. Eph. HE. VI.14.

⁷⁰⁹ Men. Proc. fr. 23.1.16-43.; Joh. Eph. HE. VI. 14 and 27.

crossing the waters of the river Zirna, he moved up further still, despoiling and burning (whatever) lay close by.⁷¹⁰

Maurice's counterstrike is also recorded in several other sources that provide further details to the extent of his success. John of Ephesus and Menander relate that he captured Aphumon and installed a Byzantine garrison there, and Theophylact states that he destroyed a Persian fort at Singara.⁷¹¹ Following onto the success of Maurice's victories, Tiberius II once again sent Zacharia (along with another Theodore) to negotiate a truce with Khusro.⁷¹² The passage containing the details of the terms offered by Tiberius II is worth noting because it demonstrates the lengths he was willing to go to secure peace. According to Menander, Tiberius II sent the following offer with his ambassadors,

'I too want peace and welcome (it) because it is God-given, just as within me there is a natural friendship with you. Therefore I am prepared to give up all Persarmenia and Iberia, save indeed those of the Persarmenians and Iberians who wish to be subject to us. I both give up the fortress of Aphumon and shall concede Arzanene to you, recovering from you only Dara in exchange for so many things.' These things the Emperor Tiberius indicated to Khusro, and he sent off Zacharia and Theodore with the powers of major envoys to arrange a peace as best they could.⁷¹³

Tiberius II clearly has prioritized peace over a prolonged military conflict. Although he does appear to be attempting to avoid having to pay the yearly tribute payments, he is still willing to sacrifice a large amount of territory to secure a truce. The contrast with Justin II here is quite striking, as he is willing to cede territories to settle the dispute with Persia. It is difficult to evaluate how this strategy would have been received in Constantinople. The loss of Persarmenia

⁷¹⁰ Μαυρίκιος δὲ ὁ Παύλου, ὑπὸ Τιβερίου Κωνσταντίνου τοῦ Ῥωμαίων βασιλέως ἄρχειν τῶν κατὰ τὴν ἕω ταγμάτων προστεταγμένος, ἐσέβαλεν ἀθρόον ἐς τὴν Ἀρξιανηνὴν χώραν, πρόσοικον οὖσαν τῇ τῆς κόμης περιοικίδι καὶ ἀγχιτέρμονα· καὶ δῆτα οὐκ ἀνίει δῆων ἅπασαν ἀφειδῶς καὶ ληϊζόμενος. περαιωθεὶς δὲ τὰ ρεῖθρα τοῦ Ζίρμα ποταμοῦ ἀνὰ τὰ πρόσω ἔτι ἐχώρει καὶ τὰ ἐν ποσὶν ἐλεηλάτει καὶ ἐνεπίμπρα. Agath. *Hist.* 4.8, (161.8); trans. Frendo 1975: 113. For the location of Thamnon, see Karte 1, Talbert 2000: 89 E3.

⁷¹¹ Men. *Proc. fr.* 23.7; Joh. Eph. *HE.* VI.15 and 34; Theophylact Simocatta, III.16.1-2.

⁷¹² Tiberius also released a large number of Persian captives from the war, see Men. *Proc. fr.* 23.8.1-12.

⁷¹³ ἐγὼ καὶ βούλομαι τὴν εἰρήνην καὶ διὰ τὸ θεόσδοτον οὖσαν ἀσπάζομαι, καὶ ὥσπερ φύσει τινὶ προσιζάνει μοι τὰ τῆς φιλίας ὑμῶν. τοιγαροῦν ἐτοίμως ἔχω τῆς Περσαρμενίας τε πάσης ἀφίστασθαι καὶ Ἰβηρίας, οὐ μὴν τῶν βουλομένων ἡμῖν ὑπακούειν Περσῶν Ἀρμενίας τε καὶ Ἰβήρων. ἀναδίδωμι δὲ καὶ τὸ Ἀφουμῶν φρούριον καὶ τῆς Ἀρξιανηνῆς ὑμῖν παραχωρήσω τὸ Δάρας μόνον ἀντὶ τοσούτων ἀνακομιζόμενος πρὸς ὑμῶν. ταῦτα Τιβέριος ὁ αὐτοκράτωρ Χοσρόη σημήνας ἐφῆκε Ζαχαρία τε καὶ Θεοδώρῳ καὶ μεγίστων πρέσβεων ἔχειν ἰσχὺν καὶ τὴν εἰρήνην ὡς ἂν οἴοι τε ἔσονται διατιθέσθαι. Men. *Proc. fr.* 23.8.13-24; trans. Blockley 1985: 205-206.

and Iberia would have come with a substantial loss in revenue as well as the strategic position they held along the frontier. Although Tiberius II would be able to claim to return of Dara and the removal of Persian subsidies, he was clearly losing a significant amount of territory. The failure of this treaty to be ratified is perhaps the reason the sources remain silent on the reception such a move would have made. If we consider, however, Tiberius II's refusal of the same terms with the addition of subsidies (discussed below) offered by Hormizd IV, it does seem plausible that if this treaty was finalized, Tiberius II could have claimed it as a success.

This is the closest Tiberius II came to achieve a substantial truce. According to Menander, Khusro had dispatched his own envoy, Ferogdath, to offer similar terms to Tiberius II.⁷¹⁴ However, Khusro died (Feb/March 579) before the ambassadors reached Persia which required them to negotiate with the new king, Hormizd IV. Hormizd was not willing to make a treaty under these conditions and added that Tiberius would be required to add the yearly tribute payments to the treaty in addition to all the other concessions the Byzantines were making.⁷¹⁵ This effectively ended any chance at a truce being settled. According to Menander, the Byzantine ambassadors were treated poorly and delayed being able to leave Persia. The result of which was that Tiberius II was unable to press the military advantage that he had in Mesopotamia until the following year when Persia had more time to prepare.⁷¹⁶

The final attempt Tiberius II made at a diplomatic solution came following the campaigns of 581.⁷¹⁷ The major campaign of 581 was the joint offensive by al-Mundhir and Maurice against Circesium. The details surrounding the event have been discussed in detail previously in this chapter so will not be reiterated here. Tiberius II's final embassy was led by Zacharia once again. According to Menander, Zacharia met with the Persian representative Andigan on the frontier to discuss terms. However, these negotiations did not get far and the situation quickly dissolved into military conflict. The Persians, led by Tamkhusro and

⁷¹⁴ Men. Proc. fr. 23.8.25-27.

⁷¹⁵ Men. Proc. fr. 23.9.124-125.

⁷¹⁶ Blockley argues that Menander refers to further campaigning in 579, however it has been convincingly argued that the delay of the embassy in Persia sufficiently prevented this from being the case. Menander refers to campaigning in the early summer which would not have been possible given the timeline, see Blockley 1985: 283 n291. For the argument for the campaigns taking place in 580, see Whitby 1988: 271; Turtledove 1977: 288; Stein 1919: 91.

⁷¹⁷ There is little mention in the sources of the campaigns of 580. Theophylact, the only source for the year, reports Byzantine movement in Persia but does not mention any siege activity. The only other battle he mentions is a victory of al-Mundhir over the Nasrids, see Theophylact Simocatta, III.17.3-4.

Adarmahan met Maurice outside Constantia in June of 582 and were defeated (though they remained in the region for another three months).⁷¹⁸ Tiberius died in August of 582 and Maurice would take over as emperor to continue the war.

After an analysis of Tiberius II's foreign policies towards Persia, it is clear that he adopted a middle ground approach to diplomacy with a heavy emphasis to secure peace. Even though at times he made substantial strategic military gains, he still opted to aim for a diplomatic solution. It is difficult to gauge the success or failure of this approach during his reign because of the shifting frontier along the eastern border during this period and the short period of his reign. Overall, however, Tiberius approach cannot be seen to have significantly improved the Byzantines situation with Persia after the reign of Justin II. His focus on a peaceful solution led to several capitulations that were in direct contrast to what Justin II attempted to achieve. His willingness to adopt the tribute system early in his negotiations recreated the political and cultural ideologies that placed the Byzantines, in appearance at least, in subordination to Persia. Furthermore, any chance he had to capitalize on the gains made by Maurice were willing to be sacrificed in the attempt to conclude a treaty. Although this may have avoided the appearance of subordination by elimination of the tribute system, the Byzantines would have sacrificed strategic and economic territories to the Persian empire. Finally, his overall goal of peace was not even secured as the accession of Hormizd IV ended the progress he had made with Khusro and the war with Persia would last almost another ten years under Maurice.

Conclusion

The focus of this chapter has been to evaluate the foreign policies of Justin II and their repercussions. Its goal has been to provide a complete picture on his policies and the wider implications they had to the Byzantine empire. When attempting to evaluate Justin II's foreign policy in the East, it is necessary to encompass the wider picture of what he was attempting to achieve, namely an equalization with Persia and the removal of tributary subsidiaries and the subordinate role that he believed came along with them. When viewed through this lens, it appears that Justin had a coherent foreign strategy that fit within his exclusive model to diplomacy. His strategy was built on several premises. First, to encourage the rebellion in

⁷¹⁸ Men. Proc. *fr.* 26.1; Joh. Eph. *HE.* VI.26; Theophylact Simocatta, III.18.1-2.

Persarmenia (and eventually Iberia) in order to cause disruption in the Persian empire and to secure the strategic locations of Lazica and Suania. Second, to ally with the Turks to pressure the Persians from the northern border. Third, to continue to pressure the southern frontier through his use of the Jafnids. Finally, to put pressure on the eastern frontier with his own troops. The results, however presented a different story and likely are one of the main factors that led the Byzantines into a protracted war with the Persians.

The Arabs can be seen as Justin II's most costly mistake. The failure to support al-Mundhir was detrimental to the security of his southern border. His refusal to continue subsidies to the Naṣrids opened up his southern frontier to their raids. When this is viewed in conjunction with his withdrawal of support for the Jafnids, it is clear that these policies cost the empire troops, resources and territories at a time that was crucial to his overall strategy against the Persians. It not only allowed the Naṣrids more freedom to operate but gave Khusro the ability to move freely through southern Arabia which both provided timely relief for the siege at Nisibis and gave the Persians the opportunity to take Dara.

Conversely, Persarmenia was probably his greatest success from the standpoint of what he wanted to achieve. He was successful in fostering a revolt against the Persians and did so without the use of tribute payments. From a cultural perspective, this was exactly what Justin II hoped to achieve. He received their support through his position as a dominant empire and gained a substantial amount of economic and strategic territories as a result of it. Furthermore, well into Tiberius' reign the Byzantines had firm control over Lazica and Suania and because of this were able to launch raids deep into Azerbaijan, even to the point of being able to safely winter there. Finally, the Turkish alliance falling apart was out of his control because of the death of Ištemi and his son Tandu deciding to end his alliance with Byzantium and re-establish a relationship with Persia. The Turks were clearly a concern of the Persians and if this alliance would have held it would have aided his cause by forcing the Persians to not focus all of their attention on the Byzantine frontier. Furthermore, the combination of a successful strategy with the Turk and success in Persarmenia, would have allowed Justin II to gain prominence in strategic regions that would have given him an advantage in the eventual negotiations with Persia.

Justin II's failure to execute his plan did result in a significant loss of territory but to blame it on incompetence and neglect as has been done would be incorrect. As opportunities presented themselves he capitalized on them in order to pursue his exclusive foreign policy, namely the removal of all Byzantine subsidiaries. He undertook a well thought out plan based on his stance of exclusivist foreign policy which failed more because of a combination a factors, some of which were beyond his control. In this light, a vastly different picture emerges to that which dominates of Justin: as a pale shadow of Justinian, with no acumen for foreign strategy.

CONCLUSION

In this study I have analyzed the changes in foreign policy during the reigns of Justin II and Tiberius II. Objectively, I have sought to fill a neglected gap in the secondary literature on the period. The reign of Justin II provides a pivotal point in the sixth century between the reigns of Justinian and Maurice which is necessary to explore in order to analyze the phenomena that occur in the last two decades of the sixth century. I have taken a wider perspective on this issue, examining the many changes to state and society that were occurring during the transitional period of the late sixth century and looking at the policies of the Byzantine empire from a global perspective. I have set out to achieve several objectives with this survey. First, to bring together archaeological surveys to support the literary evidence whenever possible. Second, to examine how external and internal influences shaped the policies of Justin II and influenced his decision making. Third, to draw together overall conclusions about the state of the empire in the sixth century by looking at regional studies in coordination. Finally, to determine the impact the foreign policies of the Byzantine empire had on the polities that were developing around it in the sixth century.

Chapter one explores two concepts relevant to this study, namely ethnicity and migration. Ethnicity is a particularly important theme to the overall discussion because of the large influx of polities that interact with the Byzantine empire during the sixth century. Furthermore, it is important to have a clear understanding of what is meant when discussing certain 'barbarian' groups with the thesis. To this end, it has answered three specific questions in regards to ethnic groups. First, what are the potential pitfalls when Roman sources discuss certain ethnicities. Second, what actually defines an ethnic group. Third, were these groups a new development within the frontiers of the Byzantine Empire. These questions have been addressed by discussing what the Roman sources indicate when they refer to 'barbarian' groups. It has discussed the issues the sources have when using standard descriptions of these groups and the generalities that may arise because of them. Furthermore, it has discussed the use of similar terms, such as *Sclaveni* and *Antae*, to refer to the same group in one instance but separate groups in another. Finally, it has looked at the pitfall of having little to no written sources from the perspective of the groups in question and the need to construct identities based on the Roman sources who themselves are attempting to come to terms with the different peoples with whom

they interact. It has concluded that the most optimal way to understand these peoples is through the lens of situational ethnicity. It has argued that certain disappearing groups can join larger ethnicities for several reasons, including socio-political, displacement through conflict, or economic prosperity. Furthermore, it has argued that frontier societies were multi-layered and susceptible to change based on the shifting landscape of the sixth century.

Connected to the issue of ethnicity, chapter one also has explored the issue of migration. It examined the issues with generalized maps that show specific groups migrating to specific locations. It argued that although this method can be helpful from a general perspective, it fails to take into consideration the shifting settlement patterns and amalgamations that take place when migration occurs. This section analysed whether or not these migrations actually occurred and attempted to provide a clear understanding on sixth-century ethnic groups. In order answer the questions about migration and if it did take place, how new ethnicities were comprised, it examined several groups that appear in the Balkans during the sixth century and that are discussed in this thesis in regards to foreign policy, namely the Avars, Slavs, Lombards, and Gepids.⁷¹⁹

When viewed through a wider perspective, several conclusions can be made. This wider perspective is also best viewed through the lens of situational ethnicity. The Avars, it argued, were a large amalgamation of peoples who came to recognize an overarching denomination based on economic, political, or geographical circumstances. The Slavs present a similar but slightly varied answer. This chapter has argued that the Slavs came from a series of small-scale migrations where the archaeological trail suggests that groups merged with the peoples who inhabited the region they came to dominate and once again came to recognize an over-arching ethnicity in leadership. Finally, the Lombards and the Gepids also present a similar picture. When comparing the literary sources with the archaeological studies, it is most plausible that portions of these groups moved into the regions such as Pannonia and Dacia, and then merged with the local inhabitants to create the groups that the Byzantines would interact with in the sixth century.

⁷¹⁹ The groups discussed in this thesis from the East, namely the Arabs, Turks, Armenians, and Persians, are analyzed in chapter four as they are longer existing polities, and it is more relevant to discuss how they achieved their current state in the sixth century rather than their earliest origins.

The conclusion of chapter one is an argument for situational ethnicity. This concept most aptly describes the processes that were taking place in the Balkans during this period. Large scale migration of massive ethnic groups is not a valid way to understand the ethnicities in the Balkans. The polities with which the Byzantines interacted were formed through a series of small-scale migrations that merged with the local inhabitants and then came to recognize centralized leadership among specific ethnic groups.

Chapter two has presented the background to the study of foreign policy under Justin II. It examined two main topics, namely the Justinianic reform programs and the accession of Justin II. The first section examines several aspects to Justinian's reform programs. It has demonstrated that through Justinian's desire to fix corruption and fiscal malfeasance at the provincial level he fostered a growing dissent among the aristocracy. He accomplished this in several ways. First, he overhauled certain aspects of the provincial administration by reducing the reliance on local patronage. He prohibited officials from the acquisition of property while in office, he transferred ownership of the *res privitas* and the *sacrum patrimonium* to the crown, and he imposed harsh penalties on the abuses of power within the provinces. Secondly, he introduced reforms to hinder corruption at the civil level. He gave the *defensor civitatis* more power to hold governors more accountable, he gave local bishops a more prominent role in provincial management, and he adopted several policies of land confiscation, such as a policy of confiscation from disloyal families and a prohibition on landholders who attempted to claim ownership over areas that were the property of others.

Although Justinian attempted to appease the local aristocracy by increasing their local stipends, and by instituting a propaganda program focused on putting a positive spin on his reforms, a growing discord was emerging among the elite. The Nika revolt saw many of these dissenters attempt to influence the mob into the removal of primary players in the reform programs. Furthermore, the literary sources that covered Justinian's governance after the 540s demonstrates a clear loss of support among the Byzantine aristocracy. This section concluded that Justinian's reform program ultimately led to a divide between the throne and the aristocracy. The result of which was a desire to establish a pro-aristocratic emperor on the throne and the senatorial backing for the accession of Justin II.

The second section in this chapter analysed the circumstances surrounding the accession of Justin II and the immediate reforms he puts in place to secure senatorial support. It first discussed the unusual circumstances surrounding Justin II's coronation, particularly how reliant it was on the senate. This connection with the senate is important when attempting to understand the framework behind many of Justin's domestic reforms upon becoming emperor. Although in the past, many of these reforms have been viewed as a means to rectify the 'depleted treasury' that Justin II inherited from Justinian, on closer inspection it is argued that the empire was not as economically crippled as the sources suggest.⁷²⁰ It is more prudent to frame these reforms in the context of a pro-aristocratic trend in order to appease the Byzantine elites who just played a major role in Justin's accession. Reforms, such as *Novel 149*,⁷²¹ granted the aristocracy a level of power they had not seen since Anastasius and gave them much more autonomy in local affairs. This chapter concluded that Justin's domestic reforms provide a window into what would become his foreign policy, namely the desire to maintain aristocratic support and a distinct shift away from the approaches of Justinian.

Chapters three and four make up the majority of the thesis. They have explored the foreign policies of Justin II towards a variety of polities with which he interacted during his reign. Furthermore, they have taken a comparative approach and contrasted the foreign policies of Justinian and Tiberius II against those of Justin II. Finally, they examined the degree of influence an empire can have on the development of a polity with which they interact. Chapter three dealt primarily with the peoples of the Balkans, namely the Avars, Slavs, Lombards, and Gepids, while chapter four focused on the Avars, Armenians, Turks, and Persians.

The first polity discussed is the Avars. It has explored the means in which leaders of a nomadic culture achieve their authority, namely through military victories and the display of wealth.⁷²² Understanding of this concept is necessary when analyzing the inclusive approach to foreign policy of Justinian because his policies aided this political development by their support of both these means of authority. First, in regards to the display of wealth, the literary and archaeological records indicated that the Avars received large amount of Byzantine gold from

⁷²⁰ As evidenced by the many building projects, tax rebates, and debt repayments that Justin II undertook in the early years of his reign.

⁷²¹ *Novel 149* decreed that governors would now be elected by landholders and bishops within the provinces as opposed to by the crown.

⁷²² This is supported by the surviving epigraphic and archaeological records.

Constantinople. This aided their political development as it gave Avar elites a symbol of prestige among their populace and a sign of proof that the Byzantines sanctioned their right to rule. Second, in regards to military victories, Justinian's support of their expansionist activities against groups such as the Unigurs, Zali, and Sabirs added to their growth in power and prestige in the region. Thus, when Justin II ascended to the throne, he had a much more centralized and militarily focused polity with which to contend.

Justin II's decision to take an exclusive stance towards the Avars can be seen to have lasting consequences for the Avar polity itself and the empire. The removal of tribute led the Avars to take a more militaristic approach to their neighbors, such as the Franks, Lombards, and Gepids in order for leaders to maintain their status. Furthermore, the success of this approach led to the Avars becoming a more powerful polity in the region. The result of which led to increased military activity against the Byzantines in an attempt to maintain the influx of wealth to which they had become accustomed. Tiberius II, in response to this, attempted to adopt a middle-ground position. He attempted to combat the Avar raids but also utilized the tribute system whenever he was unsuccessful.

The Slavs provided a more difficult polity to examine as they operated under a more decentralized form of government. Although they did have 'warrior leaders' similar to the Avars, there were more sub-sects within their society which made intra-group conflicts more frequent and created difficulties for the Byzantines to create truces that would encompass the entire polity. The evidence for the reign of Justinian is difficult to evaluate as well. It does appear that he adopted an inclusive approach as there is evidence of significant trade (based on the numismatic record) in the early years of his reign. However, the implementation of his fortification program had the, perhaps unintended, consequence of severing economic relations. This did not prove to be an issue for the later years of Justinian because the fortifications were sufficient in discouraging any raids into Byzantine territories, but it did become an issue in the later sixth century. There is little information regarding the contact between Justin II and the Slavs during his reign. There are no embassies recorded and while at times they are seen to be raiding with the Avars, at others they are raiding independently. It does appear however, that they are following the trends of the Avars by becoming more militaristic in order to secure wealth and prestige in their society. Tiberius II had more direct contact with the Slavs. He

contended with multiple wide scale raids from 577-581. Tiberius once again attempted to find a solution in between Justinian and Justin II. He attempted to use a combination of force and diplomacy, wherein he uses tribute to ally himself with the Avars in order to attack the Slavs. While this is initially successful, the Avars turn on him after the expulsion of the Slavs which leads to the loss of Sirmium.

When examining the Byzantines relationship with the Avars and the Slavs as a whole, several conclusions can be made. The traditional approach of explaining the Byzantine's weakened position at the end of the sixth century in the Balkans due to either the lack of resources left by Justinian or the mismanagement by Justin II is overly simplistic. To properly understand the situation a more nuanced approach is required. Justinian's inclusive approach to foreign policy did foster the growth of the reliance of these societies on wealth and war in order to maintain the status quo among elites in their communities. Justin's shift in focus to an exclusive approach thus led to these groups seeking those prestige symbols elsewhere, whether it be against rivals in the Balkans or the Empire itself. Therefore, it is through the combination of these policies that led to a degree of romanization within these polities and created polities that were much more difficult with which to interact.

The interactions between the Byzantines and the Lombards and Gepids are less frequent than the other polities in the Balkans but several conclusions can still be made. Justinian's use of the tribute system did not foster the rise in the polities in the same manner as with the Avars and Slavs. His focus on paying tribute to both polities who were enemies of one another maintained a balance which did not allow either to grow in any substantial way. Justin II's initial alliance with the Gepids fit his model for foreign policy, albeit in a slightly different framework, as he was set to receive territories in exchange for aid against their enemies. This firstly had the affect of sending the Lombards to seek stronger allies and thus influenced the creation of the Lombard-Avar alliance. Although the Byzantine-Gepid alliance had initial success confronting these polities, when the Gepids refused to honor their agreement and relinquish Sirmium to the Byzantines, Justin II's withdrawal of support led to their destruction as a polity in the region. Furthermore, this resulted in a shift in power in the Balkans and created a frontier that the Byzantines would struggle to maintain for the remainder of the sixth century.

In the case of the Gepids, however, we still see the impact that the relationship between an empire and a polity can have on the latter's society. Here we see what the removal of resources could mean for a polity that had become reliant on them could mean. The Gepids found themselves unable to contend with the other players in the region once they lost this support and as a result were essentially wiped out as a political entity in the Balkans.

Overall, this chapter has argued that the interaction between an empire and developing polities can have a significant influence on that development. This interaction encouraged the rise of more centralized leadership and accustomed these leaders to the use of wealth and military success to maintain their prestigious positions within their societies. It thus concludes that the tenuous situation the Byzantines found themselves in the Balkans towards the end of the sixth century was not a result of Justinian leaving the empire financially prostrate but rather a combination of the inclusive foreign policy of Justinian coupled with the exclusive foreign policy of Justin II that led to the rise in power of certain polities who then became much more difficult to control.

Chapter four continued a similar line of argument but focused on the polities in the East, namely the Avars, Armenians, Turks, and Persians. This chapter's main focus was on how it can be argued that Justin II had a coherent plan when applying his exclusive foreign policy which sought above all else to remove the Byzantine Empire from the tributary system to the Persians. Furthermore, it continued the argument that the interaction of an empire could influence the development of neighboring polities through imperial patronage.

The first polity discussed in this chapter was the Arabs. When examining their relationship with the Byzantines, several conclusions are drawn. First, it was argued that the Jafnids and the Naṣrids were significant players in the wider context of Byzantine-Persian relations. Although they only operate in a single region, the Arabian peninsula, they are a factor in the outcome of several major conflicts and thus need to be considered an influential factor in the wider relationship of Byzantine-Persian politics. Second, it argued that Justin II's exclusive foreign policy had a clear affect on the interactions the Byzantines had with those who inhabited the Arabian peninsula. Justin II's removal of tribute to the Naṣrids opened the frontier up to a series of attacks in an attempt to reclaim these subsidies. Furthermore, his refusal to continue to support the Jafnids also had negative consequences for the empire. The departure of al-Mundhir

along the frontier between 572 and 575 allowed Khusro freedom of movement through the peninsula and led to the Persians being able to send a relief force to Nisibis in a more timely fashion. Finally, when evaluating Justin II's foreign policy as a whole, it can only be concluded that his Arab policy was a political miscalculation. Although the loss of the support of the Jafnids did not threaten the empire as a whole, it significantly weakened his strategic position with Persia and contributed to the failure of his foreign strategy.

This section also has discussed the impacts of imperial patronage on Arab society. It makes several arguments for the impact Byzantine culture had on Arab society. It argued that the support of Byzantium contributed to political centralization by supporting a series of dynastic leaders who were then able to exert their influence over tribal Arabic groups. The importance of Byzantine patronage to this fact is evidenced by the fact that the Jafnids were able to rise to a position of prominence while they maintained this support. Furthermore, whenever this support was withdrawn, such as between 572-572 and in the early 580s, the Jafnids influence in the region was significantly weakened. A second aspect that is argued is that the Arabs were appropriating a measure of Byzantine elite culture as their relationship became more interwoven. This is most noticeable through the epigraphic and archaeological records, where the Arab elites can be seen adopting Byzantine inscription practices and constructing similar building projects. Finally, it was argued that although this process of appropriation was taking place, the Arabs were also developing a specific Arab identity. This is evidenced through the development of an Arabic epigraphic tradition that was growing alongside their use of Byzantine Greek. Thus, similar to the polities discussed in the Balkans regions, we see a similar paradigm where a combination of Justinian and Justin II's foreign policies led to the growth of an elite strata in these societies.

The next polity that was discussed is the Armenians. It has argued that the persecution of the Christian Armenians by Khusro led to a situation that Justin II was able to exploit in pursuit of his strategy against the Persian Empire. Justin II's support of Persarmenia fit well within the context of his exclusive foreign policy. He was able to encourage unrest with the Persian controlled territories without having to offer tribute payments to the Armenians. Furthermore, he was able to present the situation in the context of defending fellow Christians and thus was able to propagate the ideology of the superiority of the Byzantine Empire. The

Persarmenian conflict should be viewed as one of Justin II's most successful achievements in his overall foreign strategy. He set the foundation for the military campaigns that were launched by Maurice during the reign of Tiberius II which were able to achieve strategic and economically valuable territories in Armenia.

When evaluating whether or not a process of Romanisation occurred, it is more difficult than the previous polities discussed to provide a definite answer. Justinian attempted this process through a series of reforms which introduced a more Roman form of law and government into the society. However, lack of sources make it difficult to determine how effective this was. The persistence of traditional Armenian culture during the reigns of Heraclius and Constans II indicate that it may not have been as successful as planned. Justin II's reign proves equally difficult to evaluate. Although his strategy in Persarmenia proved largely successful, lack of evidence makes one unable to provide any definitive conclusions in regards to Romanisation. What can be argued is that both Justinian and Justin II attempted to influence the process of Romanisation within this region, Justinian with an inclusive approach of subsidy and reform and Justin II with an exclusive approach that would incorporate Armenia as a subservient ally of Byzantium.

The Turks provided the shortest examination because their connections with the Byzantines in this period are minimal. They do, however, provide further insight into Justin II's exclusive foreign policy. This section has argued that Justin II was not opposed to entering into alliances with foreign powers as long as he was not subjected to tribute payments. As opposed to other polities, the Turkish embassy was well received in Constantinople and this clearly is largely in part to their request for an alliance without the need for tributary payments. The Turkish alliance was one aspect of Justin II's Persian strategy. They planned to utilise a pincer movement wherein the Persians would be pressured along two frontiers and thus be required to split their resources. The failure of this alliance is argued to be largely beyond the control of Justin II. In 576, the change in leadership to Ištemi's son Tandu, led to the Turks returning to their alliance with Persia. The reasoning behind this action is difficult to determine. The sources indicate that it was because of the Byzantines settlement with the Avars but it is equally as likely that this was the reason they gave to justify their realignment with the Persians.

Lack of contact between the Turks and the Byzantines makes the evaluation of Romanisation or the influence of their development a non-factor, however, the available sources about the creation of the Turkish *khaganate* do provide interesting insight into the processes that were taking place several of the other polities discussed, particularly those in the Balkans. The process of a nomadic culture centralising their power base around an elite class that maintains their position through the display of wealth and military success is a common theme among the polities in the Balkans. The creation of the Turkish *khaganate* in the sixth century aided in understanding this process. Finally, the Turkish conquest of Sogdiana provided valuable insight into the process of a foreign polity migrating into a new region and assuming dominance. It has argued that the Turks integrated rather than displaced the local population. A fact which supports the claims made earlier in this thesis, namely that when the power shifted in a region with the arrival of a new polity, there was a process of amalgamation with the local inhabitants who then accepted a new set of elites as leaders.

The final polity discussed in this chapter is the Persian Empire. The Persians are treated slightly differently as they were an empire on par with the Byzantines. The Persians provide a prime example of Byzantine foreign policy as the policies of Justinian, Justin II, and Tiberius II are clearly differentiated. Justinian uses an inclusive approach to foreign policy to secure peace with Persia. This is demonstrated through the treaties he negotiated in 532, 545, 550/551, and 562. In all of these cases, the Byzantines were required to pay annual subsidies to Persia as a condition of the treaties. Justin II, conversely, takes an exclusive approach to foreign policy. It is argued that he employs a coherent strategy in order to free Byzantium from the agreements made under Justinian. This strategy included a multi-pronged assault on the Persian frontiers which had the objective of forcing them into negotiations from a weakened position. This strategy included an alliance with the Turks, fostering an uprising in Persarmenia, pressuring the southern frontier through Arabia, and attacking the Persian frontier with his own forces. Although this strategy proves unsuccessful, it is argued that Justin II was not limited by lack of resources or an ineptitude at foreign relations but rather through a failure to execute a coherent plan. Tiberius II provides evidence of a middle ground to these two approaches. It is argued that he is open to the use of tribute payments but attempts to avoid them whenever possible. Evidence for this argument is presented from the tribute payments he employs to secure treaties

in 574 and 575, and the refrain from the use of them in the series of negotiations that take place in the late 570s.

Since the Persians are a rival empire, the influence the Byzantines had on their culture can not be evaluated in a similar means to the other polities discussed. They clearly had their own culture that had developed over centuries. However, it is argued that the relationship between Byzantium and Persia did influence the development of a diplomatic culture. This is evidenced by the growth of ceremonial around embassies. By the sixth century, the constant diplomatic interactions between the two empires led to the development of art, language, customs, and rituals that all surrounded the sending and receiving of embassies. It is argued that it is through this process that we see an exchange of culture and an influence on each others' society.

Overall, the primary contribution of this thesis has been two-fold. Firstly, it has presented a study of the foreign policies of Justin II and contrasted them against those of Justinian and Tiberius II. It has argued for a clear transition away from the policies of Justinian, primarily motivated by the political ideologies that Justin II viewed of the empire. Furthermore, it has argued against the notions that Justin II operated in this way because of a lack of resources or a lack of knowledge in foreign policy but rather that he had a coherent strategy that he implemented to achieve his political goals. This was presented through a holistic approach by examining each of the polities with which he interacted and concludes that there is a distinct trend away from the tribute system in all of these cases. Secondly, it has examined the impact that an imperial empire had on developing polities. This process is seen in slightly different ways based on the level of interaction and the size of the polity in question. However, it argues that varying levels of influence can be seen across all the polities in which Byzantium interacted, including the influencing the growth of a centralized elite, a process of Romanisation, or the mutual development of a diplomatic culture. The secondary contributions are concerning ethnicity and migration. It is argued that ethnicity is a fluid concept that reacts to different stimuli and that migration, particularly to the Balkans, did not happen *en masse* but rather was a gradual process that involved the amalgamation of migrating and local populations who then came to recognise the authority of a new ruling class.

In conclusion, it is necessary to reflect on the situation of the Byzantine Empire at the accession of Maurice and question the role of the shifting foreign policies that situated it there. Geographically, the rise in the strength of foreign polities led to a vastly different landscape than that which had been inherited by Justinian. The Avar *khaganate*, and to a lesser degree the Slavs, were in control in the Balkans, the Persians were in possession of Dara, Italy was largely lost to the Lombards, and the loss of prominence of the Jafnids restricted Byzantine influence in the Arabian peninsula. The Byzantines did maintain a stronghold in Arzanene but it is clear that the geographical size of the empire was significantly reduced. What then should be viewed as the cause for these developments? The overextension of the Empire by Justinian and the lack of resources left at the end of his reign to maintain the boundaries and the mismanagement of foreign policy by Justin II have been argued as possible causes for this situation, however, in light of the research presented in this thesis, I would argue that a more nuanced approach should be considered.

It is clear that the struggles the empire underwent in the later sixth century were largely due to the presence of stronger foreign polities that threatened its borders, the question that needs to be answered is whether or not the foreign policies of the Byzantines Empire were a factor in this development. I contend that the answer lies in the examination of the policies of Justinian and Justin II. Justinian's inclusive foreign policy, which focused on the inclusion of the tribute system, fostered the growth of the developing polities it was applied to in several ways. It created a process of centralisation as it required a class of elites with which to interact and by extension of imperial backing, contributed these elites to rise to a position of prominence within their societies. As demonstrated in this thesis, this prominence was primarily supported by two means, namely the display of wealth and military achievements. The Byzantine Empire aided this development under Justinian as he contributed to the influx of wealth to these elites and supported them in military endeavours against regional rivals. Thus, Justinian's foreign policy provided the background for the shifting frontiers of the later sixth century but can not be viewed as the sole cause. Justin II's exclusive foreign policy, on the other hand, or the exclusion of the tribute system, also played a role. His policy effectively removed the means these societies employed to maintain their positions of leadership and thus forced them to turn to raids against the empire to continue to achieve their status. However, to place the cause for the situation along the frontiers under Maurice to Justin II's foreign policy would also be overly

simplistic. It is more apt to characterize the causes of the empire's problems under Maurice (and later Phocas and Heraclius) as an amalgamation of the two emperors' policies, combined with the political and economically necessities of the polities along the frontiers of the Byzantine Empire. When viewed from this perspective, the reign of Justin II marks the culmination of a series of processes that had been fostered under Justinian. It is a turning point in the foreign politics of the sixth century and essential to understanding shifting frontiers of the Byzantine Empire.

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