

SUBSIDIES AND DIPLOMACY: ROME AND PERSIA IN LATE ANTIQUITY

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DURING LATE ANTIQUITY (4th–6th c. A.D.) it was a common practice of the Romans to pay subsidies to foreign peoples. The purposes of these subsidies and the circumstances under which they were paid varied, but they fell into two broad categories. They were either a genuine subsidy, such as a reward for good behaviour or payment for assistance (usually military), or they were a rental of good behaviour. In the former case the subsidy, which was paid from strength, could be terminated at will and was often an economic alternative to military action. In the latter case the subsidy was paid from weakness (since a credible military alternative did not exist), and so the payments tended to become regular and to increase.¹ These payments, too, might be justified economically,² but the political costs could be very high since the regularised subsidy had, in effect, become a tribute which implied the subordination of the payer to the recipient.³ This danger, in various forms, was recognised and debated during the period. In the fourth century, Ammianus Marcellinus (24.3.4) makes the Emperor Julian, in an address to his troops, say that payments to the barbarians have reduced the Roman Empire to beggary. In the fifth, Priscus (*Fr.* 15.2) makes Attila claim that Theodosius II is his slave bound to the payment of tribute.⁴ But discussion was most intense in the second half of the sixth century over the systematic use of payments by Justinian in the later part of his reign. Although both Agathias (5.24.2–25.6) and Menander the Guardsman (*Fr.* 5.1/4) see a positive side to the use of payments in sowing dissension amongst the barbarians, the position of Procopius (*Anecd.* 11.3–12), that the payments, by confessing Roman

¹This formulation derives from (and expands) E. N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire* (Baltimore and London 1976) 115 f. For an example of the former, which I do not discuss in this paper, see Menander *Fr.* 18.5/42. (The fragments of Menander are cited first by the numeration of my forthcoming edition, *The History of Menander the Guardsman* [Liverpool 1985], and then by the numeration of the older collections.)

²So C. D. Gordon, "Subsidies in Roman Imperial Defence," *Phoenix* 3 (1949) 60–69. The "economical" argument is accepted by O. J. Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns* (Berkeley, etc., 1973) 180–188.

³So, e.g., E. Stein, *Studien zur Geschichte des byzantinischen Reiches vornehmlich unter des Kaisern Justinus II und Tiberius Constantinus* (Stuttgart 1919) 2 f. G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, trans. J. Hussey (rev. ed. New Brunswick, New Jersey 1969) 79, refers baldly to the Persian king's "usual tribute" which Justin II refused to pay.

⁴References to Priscus are to the numeration of my edition in *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire* 2 (Liverpool 1983), which differs substantially from that of the older collections. On Priscus' vehement opposition to the payments to Attila made by Theodosius II see *id.* 1 (Liverpool 1981) 62 f.

weakness, encouraged barbarian attacks and extortion, is more representative.⁵ Some openly called these payments tribute,⁶ while official claims that they were acts of generosity (φιλανθρωπία) were merely disingenuous.⁷

The policy of making payments to foreign peoples (and certainly it was systematic enough under Theodosius II and Justinian to be called a "policy") has been much discussed by scholars, and I do not wish to address the general topic here. In this paper I propose rather to explore one particular issue, the Persian claim to receive money from the Romans, which apparently originated in a Persian proposal that the two sides share the expense of defending the Caucasus, but which developed into an ongoing dispute over payments that both caused and reflected difficulties in the attempts to form a stable relationship between the two states. Enough information survives over time to allow us to trace these attempts and the diplomatic and military manoeuvrings associated with them.

In the opinion of Bury the Roman commitment to "contribute a fixed sum to keep in repair the defences of the Caspian Gates against the barbarians beyond the Caucasus" originated in the treaty of 363, under which Jovian ceded territory and fortresses to the Persians, and was renewed in the treaty of 442 between Theodosius II and Yezdegerd II.⁸ This view is based primarily upon a passage of the Justinianic writer John Lydus (*De Magistratibus* 3.52 and 53) which tells us:⁹

As long as the Romans controlled Artaxata and the regions even beyond, they were able, since they were on the spot, to resist them [i.e. the barbarians penetrating the Caspian Gates]. But when they evacuated these and other regions under Jovian, the Persians were unable to defend both their own and the former Roman territory, and the Armenians subject to both states were gripped by unbearable turmoil. Therefore, after the failure under Julian, talks were held between Sallust, who was then prefect, and the Persian grandees and later with Isdigerd, in order that, sharing the cost, both

⁵Justinian's policy was abandoned by Justin II who substituted for it one based on a more aggressive stance and military preparedness (see Stein [above, n. 3] 4 f.), which opponents of payments, such as Julian (in Ammianus Marcellinus) and Priscus of Panium, always preferred as an alternative. Another element of criticism of payments, that corruption and hardships result from the collection and disbursement of the monies, is voiced by Priscus (*Fr.* 9.3) and Agathias (5.14.1-4).

⁶Procopius *Bell.* 8.15.5 and 16-17, Zonaras 14.10.22-29.

⁷John addressing Khosro I in Menander (*Fr.* 9.1/15) speaks of Justinian's φιλανθρωπίας υπερβολή ("excess of generosity") in sending money to the Lakhmid Saracens; and earlier in the same passage Menander himself had referred to Justinian as μεγαλόφρων ("generous") in the same context. In *Anecd.* 11.5 Procopius speaks of the same Emperor's "extraordinary generosity" (ἄτοπος φιλοτιμία) in a critical tone.

⁸J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire from the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian*, 2 vols. (New York 1953; rpt. of 1923) 2.6; accepted by, e.g., A. E. Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*² (Copenhagen 1944) 238 f.

⁹The translation given in the text is my own, though based upon that by T. F. Carney, *John the Lydian De Magistratibus* (Lawrence, Kansas 1971).

states should build a fortress on the aforementioned pass and bring help to the area in checking the barbarians who were overrunning it. But since the Romans were embroiled in wars in the west and north, the Persians, since they were more exposed to the barbarians' incursions, were compelled to build the fortress against them there, naming it Viraparakh in their own language and establishing a garrison there. And the enemy was unable to effect an entrance.

For this reason the Persians attacked the Romans and spread little by little over Syria and Cappadocia, alleging that they had been wronged and had been deprived of the money for the common project to the amount of the Roman contribution (ὡς δῆθεν ἀδικούμενοι καὶ τὴν ὑπὲρ τῶν κοινῶν γενομένην δαπάνην κατὰ τὸ ἐπίβαλλον Ῥωμαίοις ἀποστερούμενοι). As a result the first Sporacius was sent by Theodosius I to negotiate with the Persians. He, through the power of his money and his ability at speaking, almost persuaded the Persians to leave the Romans in peace and be their friends since the Romans were so generous towards them (ὁ δὲ δυνάμει τε χρημάτων καὶ συνέσει λόγων ἐγγυὺς ἔπειθε Πέρσαις Ῥωμαίων ὥσπερ χαριζομένων αὐτοῖς, ῥυπό Ῥωμαίων† ἡσυχάζειν καὶ φίλους εἶναι).¹⁰ And this affair dragged on until the reign of our Emperor Anastasius, having been talked over, decreed about and, in short, having been prevaricated over.

This passage, which is rather confused, offers five relevant pieces of information: that after the failure of Julian's invasion of Persia in 363 the prefect Sallust (Saturninius Secundus Salutius, praetorian prefect of the East 361–367, though he was replaced briefly in 365 by the Nebridius I of *PLRE I*) discussed with the Persians the sharing of the defence of the Caucasus; that similar discussions were later held with Isdigerd, presumably one of the Persian kings Yezdegerd I (399–421) and II (439–457); that because the Romans made no contribution to the project, which the Persians carried out, the latter launched attacks on the Romans' eastern provinces over a period of time;¹¹ that the first Sporacius was sent as envoy to Persia by Theodosius I and *almost* made peace; that inconclusive talks over the issue of the Romans' contributions towards the defence of the Caucasus continued until the reign of Anastasius (491–518).¹²

Lydus says that the Romans discussed with the Persians the shared defence

¹⁰The Greek is that of the ms, which is clearly corrupt. The first editor omitted the words ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίων, while the Teubner editor, R. Wuensch, wrote ὑπο(φόρων) Ῥωμαίων, which introduces a new element into the text for which there is no authority. Wuensch was followed by Carney in his rendering "they should keep the peace, with Rome subject to tribute." Perhaps ἀπὸ Ῥωμαίων ἡσυχάζειν, "to leave the Romans in peace" should be read (the only parallel for this reading of which I am aware is *Anth. Pal.* 5.133, where ἡσυχάζειν ἀπὸ is used of leaving a lover alone). My English version avoids introducing any element not authorised by the ms.

¹¹I take "spread little by little over Syria and Cappadocia" (κατὰ μικρὸν ἐπὶ τὰς Συρίας καὶ Καππαδοκίας ἐκχεόμενοι) to indicate prolonged hostilities.

¹²The Greek here, καὶ ταῦτα ἕως τοῦ καθ' ἡμᾶς Ἀναστασίου διεσῆρη, which I have translated as, "And this affair dragged on until the reign of our Emperor Anastasius", is vague. Since peace treaties were made between the reigns of Theodosius I and Anastasius, I take the phrase to refer only to the dispute over the defence of the Caucasus.

of the Caucasus. He does *not* say that an agreement to that end was ever made, and he seems to indicate that, at least until the reign of Anastasius, no contributions were made specifically towards that project. Bury's assertion that there were agreements in 363 and 442 appears to be based upon a conflation of Lydus' passage with a statement by Joshua the Stylite (*Chron.* 8) that there was a treaty between the Greeks (Romans) and the Persians to the effect that, if one side asked for help in war, the other would supply three hundred troops or three hundred staters in lieu of troops. This treaty is not dated by Joshua and it could have been made any time up to the reign of Firuz (459–484). It is also a much broader and less specific agreement than those envisaged in Lydus.¹³

Lydus' passage, when looked at closely, does not tell us much, and much of what it does tell us is unclear or suspect. Ammianus Marcellinus (25.7.7) says that Sallust/Salutius was one of those who negotiated the treaty of 363 for Jovian. It is possible that he discussed the defence of the Caucasus on that occasion, but it is highly unlikely. Lydus himself says that it was the Persians' inability to defend the territories which they had acquired under the treaty of 363 that led to the talks (presumably initiated by the Persians) on sharing the defence of the Caucasus. These could hardly have taken place at the same time as the negotiations over the treaty which ceded the territory that the Persians found they could not defend. Lydus himself appears to place the talks over the Caucasus after the treaty of 363, but causes confusion by mentioning Julian (who appointed Sallust/Salutius) after Jovian. Since Sallust/Salutius was prefect until 367 it is possible that talks were held between 363 and that date, in which case the reference to Julian can be dismissed as a clumsy irrelevance. But there is no other evidence of such talks, and it is hard to see why the Persians, one of whose objects in the treaty of 363 was to get the Romans out of Armenia (Ammianus 25.7.12) and who complained strongly when they began to interfere in 369–370 (Ammianus 27.12.10–15), would have been willing to recognise a legitimate Roman interest in the area at such an early date. If Lydus' statement has any basis at all in fact, I suggest that it refers to the period after 370 when the Romans began to interfere in both Armenia and Iberia, perhaps citing "talks" held by Sallust/Salutius in justification. Certainly, in 370 the Romans briefly partitioned Iberia between two kings, one a Roman and one a Persian nominee, an arrangement which the Persians declined to accept (Ammianus 27.12.17–18).

According to Lydus, the Persian response to the Roman failure to contribute towards the defence of the Caucasus was to launch attacks on Syria and Cappadocia, which caused Theodosius I to send "the first" Sporacius as

¹³Joshua orders his material chronologically and links the treaty for mutual assistance with payments made to Firuz to help him in his wars with the Kidarite Huns (*Chron.* 9). The mention of this agreement follows immediately after a reference to the treaty of Jovian, but the two are not linked. (Joshua's *Chronicle* is cited from the translation by W. Wright [London 1882].)

envoy. This Sporacius is otherwise unattested, though *PLRE* 1 ("Sporacius"), conjecturing that he was the ancestor of Fl. Sporacius, consul in 452, confidently identifies this embassy with the one which negotiated the partition of Armenia in 383 (or later—the date is not firm). But Lydus says that Sporacius' mission *almost* succeeded in making peace, whereas the embassy that partitioned Armenia *did* succeed in establishing a peace that endured until 420. More likely, the embassy of Sporacius was an earlier mission, otherwise unattested, that failed in its purpose.

Lydus also says that talks were held with Yezdegerd over the defence of the Caucasus. Bury and others assume that he is referring to an agreement in the treaty of 442 between Theodosius II and Yezdegerd II.¹⁴ But again, this rests upon the failure to note that Lydus speaks of talks that were inconclusive and not an agreement. It is, in fact, quite possible that talks were held with Yezdegerd I, who was generally friendly towards the Romans, so that the latter might have been more willing to help him. But this is mere speculation. All that the passage of Lydus allows us to conclude is that the issue of the defence of the Caucasus might have emerged first during the third quarter of the fourth century; that it was discussed inconclusively until the reign of Anastasius; and that there was no agreement.

The first writer to offer firm and datable evidence that the Persians were seeking Roman help in the defence of the Caucasus is Priscus of Panium, who says (*Fr.* 41.1) that the Persians made certain demands of the Romans including that they show an interest in the fortress of Iouroeipaakh, which guarded the Caspian Gates,¹⁵ by giving money or supplying men towards the garrison. The same embassy also asked for financial help in a war which the Persians were fighting with the Kidarite Huns. These requests were made in 464–465, and the demand for help in the Caucasus was repeated in 467 (*Fr.* 47). The Persians, says Priscus (*ibid.*), made many such requests, using the argument that the Romans benefitted from the defence of the Caspian Gates, but the Romans rejected them.

The passages of Priscus make no reference to a treaty, and, indeed, the form of the Persian argument, that the Romans should help out of self-interest, suggests that they could cite no formal agreement over the Caucasus. Shortly afterwards, however, according to Joshua the Stylite (*Chron.* 9–10), in the first part of the reign of Zeno (474–491) the Persian king Firuz did on a number of occasions receive money from the Romans for his wars with the Kidarite and Ephthalite Huns. In Joshua the Persians present the same

¹⁴Bury (above, n. 8) 2.88 n. 3; E. Stein, *Histoire du bas-Empire*, trans. J.-R. Palanque, 2 vols. (Paris 1949–59) 2.93.

¹⁵Iouroeipaakh is the Viraparakh of Lydus = Armenian Virapahak, "Rampart of Iberia" (E. Drouin, "Memoires sur les Huns Ephthalites," *Museon* 14 [1895] 143). The fortress guarded a pass in the central Caucasus. Another pass, further east, was the Tzur of Procopius (*Bell.* 8.3.4) and the Tzon of Menander (*Fr.* 6.1/11, clause 1 of the treaty of 561).

arguments for assistance as in Priscus, but Joshua, who is careful to emphasise (*Chron.* 8) that the payments were not tribute, links them to the existence of a treaty of mutual assistance between the Greeks (Romans) and the Persians. A letter purportedly from the Persian king Kawad (488–531), which is quoted by John Malalas (*Chron.* 18, pp. 449 f.), gives some support to Joshua's statement. In this letter Kawad says that in the archives (ἐν τοῖς ἡμετέροις ἀρχαίοις) of his kingdom he has found an agreement for mutual assistance, an agreement which, the letter seems to suggest, predated the reign of Anastasius. Bury has plausibly conjectured that this refers to a clause of the treaty of 442.¹⁶ It is also possible that Zeno did make payments, as Joshua claims, especially when he was distracted by problems with the Ostrogoths in the Balkans and opposition at Constantinople. But here again, it is clear that there was no specific commitment to share the defence of the Caucasus; and the passages of Priscus cited above suggest that whatever aid either party sought under the agreement for mutual assistance, he would have to make a case for it.

According to Joshua (*Chron.* 7 and 18), the payments were ended by Zeno after the death of Firuz in 484 on the pretext that the Persians had agreed in the treaty of 363 to return Nisibis to the Romans after 120 years and had failed to do so. That such an agreement was ever made is most unlikely, especially since the treaty of 363 was only of thirty years' duration. Perhaps Joshua's account is a garbled version of a Roman offer of money in return for Nisibis.¹⁷ At any rate, if the Romans did stop payment at this time, they would have been exploiting Persian weakness during the reign of Valash (484–488) and the early years of Kawad's reign.

The balance of evidence so far suggests that the Persians had the right by treaty to approach the Romans for assistance. The insistence of Joshua that the payments made by Zeno were not tribute suggests that some thought they were, perhaps because the Persians had attempted to convert an occasional payment into a regular, and hence (it might be suspected) arguably obligatory, one. Be that as it may, until Kawad had established himself as undisputed monarch of Persia he was in no position to force the matter. Certainly, Joshua (*Chron.* 20) says that near the beginning of Anastasius' reign (ca 491)—which was also close to the beginning of his own—Kawad did ask the Roman Emperor for a payment (which is described as customary), but was refused again on the ground that the Persians had not restored Nisibis. This demand, says Joshua (*Chron.* 23), was repeated later while Anastasius

¹⁶Bury, *op. cit.* (above, n. 8), who thus seems to envisage two separate clauses in the treaty, one on the defence of the Caucasus (which I reject above) and another on mutual assistance. Theophanes, *Chron.* a.m. 5996, speaks of the breaking of the treaty of Theodosius as a result of the refusal of Anastasius to make a payment to the Persians, but the chronicler regards Kawad as the breaker because he opened hostilities.

¹⁷So Stein (above, n. 14) 2.64 n. 4; cf. the case of Daras, below 73. Bury (above, n. 8) 2.10 accepts Joshua's version.

was embroiled in his war with the Isaurians (491–498), and on that occasion Kawad was offered a loan, which he refused.

The Greek sources know nothing of these early demands by Kawad, but they do tell us that after his restoration to the throne by the Ephthalites in 498, when he badly needed funds to pay off his benefactors, he approached Anastasius for a subvention.¹⁸ According to Procopius (*Bell.* 1.7.1–2), Anastasius' advisors opposed the payment pointing out that it would not be sound policy to assist the Persians in maintaining good relations with the Ephthalites. Procopius calls the payment requested τὸ συμβόλαιον, which suggests a loan, while Theophanes (*Chron.* a.m. 5996) says that Kawad asked for money, whereat Anastasius offered a loan in exchange for a note acknowledging the debt. As others have pointed out, Anastasius' offer may have been designed to offend royal honour and prompt a refusal.¹⁹ Another purpose may have been to force the Persians to acknowledge that the Romans had no obligation to pay. But whatever the nature of these negotiations, Lydus (*De Mag.* 3.53) indicates that Kawad had approached the Romans over the defence of the Caucasus, for which some confirmation might be derived from a passage of Procopius (*Bell.* 1.16.4) where Kawad is made to say that Anastasius had been offered the opportunity to buy the fort at the Caspian Gates but refused because of the cost of defending it.²⁰

Kawad's response to this rebuff by the Romans was to make war in 502. After a successful attack on Theodosiopolis/Karin in Roman Armenia, he took Martyropolis and Amida and allowed himself to be bought off from other cities. His main objectives in this fighting appear to have been to extort money from the Romans and to permit his allies (including a force of Ephthalites) to plunder.²¹ After four years of fighting the Persians, having sold Amida back to the Romans for 1000 lbs. of gold, agreed to a seven-year truce for which the Romans paid 500 or 550 lbs. of gold per year.²² Lydus (*De Mag.* 3.53) indicates that Viraparakh figured prominently in the talks and says that Anastasius made some "modest payments" (μετρίων τινῶν . . . χαρισθέντων),²³ being prepared to accept this "loss" (ζημία) as the price of

¹⁸In addition to the sources discussed in the text see Theodore Lector 2.52. Malalas, *Chron.* 18 p. 450, does not specify the period.

¹⁹Bury (above, n. 8) 2.11; Stein (above, n. 14) 2.93.

²⁰The passage of Procopius is not, however, clear confirmation. Although here Kawad is made to say that the Persians offered to sell the fort, at *Bell.* 1.10.9–11, Procopius himself says that it was a Hun who had gained temporary possession and offered to sell it. But in both passages Anastasius is said to have been deterred by the cost of upkeep.

²¹Joshua the Stylite (*Chron.* 24) and Procopius (*Bell.* 1.8.3) both attest the presence of the Ephthalites. For details of the war see Stein (above, n. 14) 2.93–101.

²²On the ransoming of Amida see Procopius *Bell.* 1.9.4, who gives the length of the truce at *id.* 24. In addition to Lydus, Zacharias Rhetor (8.5: 500 lbs. of gold) and Michael Syrus (9.16: 550 lbs.) mention payments.

²³Carney (above, n. 9) translates χαρισθέντων by "concessions," but χαρίζεσθαι is regularly used by late Greek writers of monetary payments and appears to be so used by Lydus himself earlier in the same passage (quoted above, 64).

peace. If Lydus is referring to the truce payments, then Kawad had achieved what his predecessors had failed to do by obtaining regular payments for seven years from the Romans which were earmarked for the upkeep of the Caspian Gates. But again, there is no unequivocal indication, either in Lydus or elsewhere, that the payments and the defence of the Caspian Gates were formally linked in the treaty.

Anastasius was determined not to acquiesce in this situation beyond the seven years of the truce. His measures for the recovery of Mesopotamia and the repair of the fortresses are described by Joshua the Stylite (*Chron.* 83–84, 89–92, 99). Theodosiopolis/Karin was rebuilt and greatly strengthened, and a huge new fortress was built at Daras some four miles from the border and about eleven from Nisibis. This new foundation had two purposes. First, it repaired the weakness of the Roman frontier defences of the area which had existed since the cession of Nisibis, and, second, because, like Theodosiopolis/Karin, it was constructed as an offensive base,²⁴ it put further pressure on the Persians by compelling them to keep a larger force ready at the border. The Romans were aware of the difficulties which the Persians faced in funding a large military establishment, and that Anastasius had decided to apply pressure to this weakness is suggested both by the remark of Procopius (*Bell.* 1.7.1–2) that earlier Anastasius' advisors had opposed the forwarding of money to Kawad since it would aid an enemy, and by the later and very clear statement attributed by Procopius (*Bell.* 1.16.1) to Kawad himself that the building of Daras caused the Persians the difficulties and expense²⁵ of keeping up two armies, one to cover Daras, the other the Caspian Gates. For the meanwhile, however, Kawad, who was occupied by a war with the Ephthalites, could do little more than protest the flagrant breach of the treaty of 442, which had forbidden the erection of new fortresses near to the border.²⁶ According to Procopius, the Romans met Kawad's protests with threats and money,²⁷ and perhaps they also threw in their claim for the return of Nisibis.

When the seven-year truce expired in 513 it was apparently not renewed, and the Romans and Persians returned to a nominal state of war.²⁸ War itself

²⁴On Theodosiopolis/Karin see Procopius *De Aed.* 3.5.3–8; *Bell.* 1.10.18–19. On Daras see Procopius *De Aed.* 2.1.4–10, *Bell.* 1.10.13–17, Joshua the Stylite *Chron.* 90.

²⁵Kawad's statement is very strong: πόνους τε καὶ δαπάνη κεκακῶσθαι τὰ Περσῶν πράγματα ("Persian affairs have been thrown into evil plight by the trouble and the expense"). Persian financial difficulties arising from their military commitments and the connection to their demands for Roman assistance are also recognised by Theophylact (3.15.4–5) and in Malalas (*Chron.* 18 pp. 449–450).

²⁶Procopius *De Aed.* 2.1.5 is quite clear that the building of Daras breached the treaty.

²⁷So Procopius *Bell.* 1.10.17: Ἀναστάσιος τὰ μὲν ἀπειλῶν . . . καὶ χρημάτων οὐ φαίλους δωρούμενος. Could he mean the payments for the truce, which he nowhere mentions?

²⁸This is recognised both by Malalas (*Chron.* 18 p. 478), who says that the peace of 532 ended a war of thirty-one years, and by Procopius (*Bell.* 1.11.20), who has Kawad, before hostilities began in 527, send to the Romans asking for peace negotiations.

did not, however, break out until 527 when hostilities, initiated by Persia, began in Iberia, spread to Persarmenia and, after the accession of Justinian in the same year, to Mesopotamia. The sources give various reasons for the war, including renewed Roman interference in Lazica and Iberia and a serious insult to the Persian monarchy when the Roman authorities rejected Kawad's request that the Emperor Justin I adopt his son Khosro in order to protect him for the succession.²⁹ But, as Kawad makes clear in the speech remarked above (Procopius *Bell.* 1.16.4–8), the question of Roman assistance to Persia was also important. Kawad points out that the Persian expenses had been increased by their need to cover Daras and the Romans had attempted to apply pressure further by building another fort, Mindouros, on the border near to Nisibis.³⁰ The Persian king demanded that the Romans relieve the pressure either by contributing manpower towards the defence of the Caspian Gates or by dismantling Daras (the Persians had already destroyed Mindouros).

This war was terminated in 532, shortly after the accession of Khosro I in the previous year, by the so-called "Endless Peace."³¹ Two of the terms of this peace given by Procopius (*Bell.* 1.22.3–5 and 16–18) are that the Romans pay the Persians 11,000 lbs. of gold for peace and that the commander of the troops in Mesopotamia be withdrawn from Daras to Constantina (Tella de-Mauzelat), about thirty-five miles from the border.³² Thus, the pressure that Kawad had complained about was reduced in two ways, by the reduction of the status of Daras from that of an offensive to a purely defensive base (since one can presume, as is made clear in the treaty of 561, that a large portion of the troops there would be withdrawn with the commander) and by the payment of a large, but non-recurring, sum of gold. Procopius (*id.* 3) says clearly that the gold was the price of peace, which suggests that, as with the peace of 561, the payment was not specified in the treaty itself but in a separate letter (below, 71). But Procopius also says (*id.* 5) that Khosro demanded the gold so that the Romans not be compelled either to tear down Daras or share in the defence of the Caspian Gates. Thus, this agreement was a compromise under which the Romans continued to avoid a commitment to ongoing payments. A passage of Malalas (*Chron.* 18 p. 477), however, adds the

²⁹On the Lazian transfer of allegiance to Rome see Malalas *Chron.* 18 p. 412; *Chron. Pasch.* 613; Stein (above, n. 14) 2.267 f., who, probably correctly, makes this the major cause of the war. On the proposal of adoption and its rejection see Procopius *Bell.* 1.12.

³⁰Kawad again puts it strongly (Procopius *Bell.* 1.16.7): κακῶ δὲ μείζονι κρατύνασθαι τὴν ἐς Πέρσας ἐπιβολὴν ἐγνώτε.

³¹The term "Endless Peace" (ἀπέραντος εἰρήνη, Procopius *Bell.* 1.22.17) indicates not that it was intended to be for perpetuity but that no specific term was set.

³²Procopius (*Bell.* 1.22.3) calls the officer withdrawn from Daras ὁ τῶν Μεσοποταμικῶν στρατιωτῶν ἄρχων, which is naturally taken to be the *dux Mesopotamiae*. If that is correct, then the *magister militum per orientem* was apparently not barred at this stage. The treaty of 561 barred him specifically (below, 72).

interesting information that the monarchs also agreed to aid each other with men or money upon request. If this is correct—and the agreement is strikingly similar to the earlier one mentioned by Joshua the Stylite (above, 65)—then the Persians had the right under the treaty to raise the matter of subventions in the future. The form would not be offensive to the Romans, since, providing the payments did not become regular, the Persians could not represent them as a one-sided commitment.

The “Endless Peace” endured for only eight years. Khosro, fearful of the growing power of the Romans after Justinian’s western conquests, broke it on the pretext that Roman envoys had attempted to draw the Lakhmid Saracens away from their allegiance to the Persians.³³ Nowhere in the hostilities between the Romans and the Persians during the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries is the Persian desire (and need) for Roman gold more in evidence than during this war in the east, especially in 540 when, according to Procopius’ narrative, Khosro conducted a rampage of extortion through Syria, compelling those cities which he did not capture to purchase their safety with large sums of money.³⁴ The war in the east was halted by a five-year truce in 545 for which the Romans paid 2,000 lbs. of gold, and the truce was renewed for another five in late 551 for another 2,600 lbs.³⁵ Fighting continued in Lazica until 557 when a truce (without payments) was agreed upon there also as a preliminary to negotiations for a comprehensive settlement.³⁶

The negotiations, which for reasons unknown were not held until 561, produced a comprehensive agreement which was signed towards the end of the year. The discussions and the clauses of the treaty are set out by Menander the Guardsman in a long fragment (6.1/11). The elements relevant to the present discussion are:

as a preliminary the Romans agreed to a peace of fifty years for which they were to pay 30,000 gold *nomismata* (something over 400 lbs. of gold) per year, and they also agreed to hand over the first ten years’ instalments in two lump sums of seven and then three years’, these payments being guaranteed in a “sacred letter” from Justinian to Khosro, which would be returned upon payment of the second lump sum;

the Persians agreed to guard the passes of the Caucasus and to keep the barbarians from the Roman Empire (clause 1 of the treaty);

³³Procopius *Bell.* 2.1. Procopius also says (*id.* 2–3) that the Ostrogoths, Armenians, and Lazis urged Khosro on to war.

³⁴This is brought out by Bury (above, n. 8) 2.89–113, esp. 93–100. Cf. the passage of Theophylact cited above, n. 25.

³⁵Truce of 545: Procopius *Bell.* 2.28.7–11. Truce of 551: Procopius *Bell.* 8.15.1–7. In the latter passage Procopius says that initially Justinian wished to pay the 2,000 pounds of gold at the rate of 400 per year (the 600 lbs. being for the one-and-a-half years spent in negotiations), but later paid the lump sum in order to avoid the charge that he was paying tribute (*δασμοί*).

³⁶Agathias 4.30.9; Menander *Fr.* 2/3.

the Persians would not in future complain about Daras, but neither side would thereafter fortify any place on the frontier (clause 8);³⁷

only a force adequate to defend the place would be kept at Daras, and the general of the east would not have his headquarters there (clause 10).

As in previous agreements, the Romans recognised the Persian complaints over Daras and their financial difficulties, which they helped address with a cash subvention while still avoiding acknowledging any specific claim upon them. Thus, the yearly payments were not towards the defence of the Caucasus but for peace, on condition that the terms of the treaty were adhered to on both sides (ἀν χιλιάδας ἑτησίας χρυσίου νομισμάτων ἀποφέρεισθαι Πέρσας τῆς ἐιρήνης ἕνεκα ἀπὸ Ῥωμαίων).³⁸ The Persians, who had perhaps at this time completed a programme of military colonisation in the Caucasus,³⁹ agreed to defend the area without designated remuneration; and this issue was never raised again. The advantage of this settlement for the Romans, who had wanted a short-term treaty, was that after the first ten years of payments they could allege or manufacture a breach of the treaty and withhold the money.⁴⁰ The disadvantage was that, should circumstances warrant it, the Persians could allege that the regular payments were tribute and offer this as proof that the Romans were their subjects.

Both, in fact, happened. Justin II, who succeeded Justinian in 565, openly voiced his dissatisfaction with his predecessor's later policy of buying peace, which Theophylact (3.9.10) has him characterise as the payment of tribute (φορολογεῖσθαι).⁴¹ His envoy, John, expressed this dissatisfaction to Khosro, and the Romans began to negotiate with the Turks for an alliance against Persia.⁴² In a confrontation between the Roman and Persian envoys at the court of the Turkish khagan the Persian representative is said to have claimed that the Romans were subjects of Persia because they paid tribute.⁴³ This claim, which appears in a number of places in the oriental sources,⁴⁴ must,

³⁷Menander says that in the preliminary negotiations the Persians promised to hand back the monastery of Sebanos which they had captured from the Romans and fortified, but later failed to do so because it was not mentioned in the treaty.

³⁸Some clearly did link the payments to the defence of the Caspian Gates (e.g., Theophylact 3.9.11, Theophanes *Chron.* a.m. 6064), but Menander's evidence is decisive.

³⁹See J. Kramers, "The Military Colonization of the Caucasus and Armenia under the Sassanians," *BSOS* 8 (1935–37) 613–618.

⁴⁰Grounds for Roman dissatisfaction with the behaviour of the Persians quickly emerged in the dealings over Sebanos (above, n. 37) and their refusal to surrender Suania (Menander *Frs.* 6.1/11, 9.1–2/15–16). In the matter of Suania Menander (*Fr.* 20.2/47) says directly that the Roman envoy was deceived.

⁴¹Cf. Corippus *In Laudem Iustini Augusti Minoris* 2.260–274.

⁴²Dissatisfaction: Menander *Fr.* 9.1/15; negotiations with the Turks: Menander *Fr.* 10/18–22.

⁴³Combining Menander *Fr.* 10.3/20 and John of Ephesus *HE* 6.23.

⁴⁴See K. Güterbock, *Byzanz und Persien in ihren diplomatisch-völkerrechtlichen Beziehungen in Zeitalter Justinians* (Berlin 1906) 34, citing Firdausi and Tabari (to which references add Tabari p. 166, trans. Nöldeke). The only counter claim, that the Romans exacted payments from the

when reported at Constantinople, have caused the Romans to question afresh their commitment to regular payments.

Khosro, fearing that Justin was preparing for war, attempted to negotiate, but his envoy was met with the Emperor's demand that the payments be dropped and that a peace be made which was "equal".⁴⁵ War broke out in 572 with disastrous consequences for the Romans. In the next year Daras fell and Justin lost his mind.

The reigns of Justin's successors, Tiberius II and Maurice, saw both fighting and negotiations between the Romans and the Persians.⁴⁶ At times the Persians received payments for a truce, but the Romans never again consented to commit themselves to regular treaty-payments, repeating the demand for peace "on equal terms."⁴⁷ Even for the return of Daras they would only offer a lump sum (Menander *Fr.* 20.2/47). The war dragged on until Maurice was invited to fight a Persian usurper on behalf of the legitimate heir to the throne, Khosro II, which he did with success in 591. The result was a treaty wholly favourable to the Romans: the return of Daras (as well as the cession of eastern Mesopotamia and Persarmenia) and no payments.⁴⁸

In the longer term this settlement, apparently so advantageous to the Romans, proved a disaster for both sides. Maurice's intervention in the internal affairs of Persia reflected and revived an older confrontationalist attitude, already voiced by Justin II and Hormizd IV (579–590), that one side must win and the other must lose.⁴⁹ This attitude, which in the fourth century had led the Emperor Julian on to disaster, had remained on the whole submerged from the peace of ca 383 to the treaty of 561. During most of this period the efforts on both sides, military and diplomatic, seem to have been aimed towards obtaining a settlement which, though advantageous to one party, recognised the needs of both sides.⁵⁰ As a result, the various agreements

Persians, is in the extremely garbled Ethiopic *Chronicle* of John of Nikiu (trans. Charles [London 1916]) which alleges that the Romans exacted tribute under Constantine (80.2) and Jovian (80.35).

⁴⁵Menander *Fr.* 16.1/36. The formulation is ἡ φιλότης χρήμασι βεβαιουμένη οὐκ ἀγαθὴ . . . φιλίαν δὲ τὴν ἰσόρροπὸν τε καὶ οὐχὶ κερδαλέαν ὀρίζεσθαι.

⁴⁶There is a convenient summary in J. B. Bury, *A History of the Later Roman Empire from Arcadius to Irene*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam 1966; rpt. of 1889) 2.95–113.

⁴⁷Menander *Fr.* 20.2/47, using the word ἰσοτιμία. Theophylact (3.17.2, 5.12.2) has a parallel phrase, ἐν ἰσῆ μοίρῃ.

⁴⁸The terms are set out in Theophylact 4.13.24–25. Cf. the brief account in Bury (above, n. 46) 2.110–113.

⁴⁹See Menander *Fr.* 13.5/32, 16.1/36 on Justin's aspirations to crush the Persians; and *Fr.* 23.9/55 on Hormizd.

⁵⁰What I mean is that, while both sides strove for their own advantage, they set limits to this advantage which fell short of fatal damage to the other side. Thus, in Menander *Fr.* 20.2/47 Tiberius II clearly recognises, and acts upon his recognition of, Persia's legitimate interest in Persarmenia and Iberia.

discussed above (as well as other elements of the treaties of which they were a part) exhibit both a strong continuity and a coherent development. Ultimately, however, this ongoing attempt to preserve an equilibrium between the two states foundered on mutual mistrust and national and individual pride, as the History of Menander shows in detail. Maurice's intervention in the internal affairs of Persia was reciprocated in 602 by Khosro, who, under the pretext of avenging the murder of Maurice by the usurper Phocas, launched an attack that was clearly against the Roman Empire itself (Theophylact 8.15.7). This war resulted in the death of Khosro but also, more importantly, led finally to the weakening of both the Roman and the Persian states that made them easy prey to the Saracens. During the peace negotiations of 561 the Roman envoy, Peter, is said to have declared that if the Romans and the Persians continued to dissipate their resources in war they would fall before those to whom they should not (Menander *Fr.* 6.1/11). Within fifty years of Maurice's death that prophecy had come true. For under the Saracen onslaught the Roman Empire had been stripped of its eastern possessions and the kingdom of Persia had disappeared.

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