BYZANTIUM AND THE ARABS IN THE SIXTH CENTURY

VOLUME 2 | PART 2

IRFAN SHAHÎD

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A mosaic in the floor of the southern sacristy of the Church of St. George at Mt. Nebo. It is dated 536 and so its Arabic term, *bi-salām*, illustrates the calligraphic expression of the Arabic script in pre-Islamic times, as discussed in the chapter on Calligraphy in this volume.

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IRFAN SHAHÎD

Volume II

Part 2: Economic, Social, and Cultural History

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IN MEMORIAM

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Abbreviations

BAFOC:	Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century*
BAFIC:	Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century*
BALA I–III:	Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs: Late Antiquity,* I–III
BAR:	British Archaeological Reports
BASIC I.1:	Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century: Political and Military History*
BASIC I.2:	Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century: Ecclesiastical History*
BASIC II.1:	Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century: Toponymy, Monuments, Historical Geography, and Frontier Studies*
BASOR:	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* (Jerusalem)
BGA:	*Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*
BSOAS:	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (London)
BZ:	*Byzantinische Zeitschrift*
CSCO:	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
DOP:	*Dumbarton Oaks Papers*
EI^2:	*Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed.
GAS:	Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*
GF:	Nöldeke, *Die Ghassänischen Fürsten*
JAOS:	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JÖB:	*Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*
JRA:	*Journal of Roman Archaeology*
Lib.ann	*Studium biblicum franciscanum: Liber annuus*
LSJ	Liddell, Scott, and Jones, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon*
Martyrs:	Shahîd, trans. and annot., *The Martyrs of Najrân*
OC:	*Oriens Christianus*
OCP:	*Orientalia Christiana Periodica*
ODB:	Kazhdan, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*
PAS:	Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden*
PG:	Migne, ed., Patrologia Graeca
PO:	Patrologia Orientalis

RA:	Shahîd, *Rome and the Arabs*
RE:	*Paulys Realencyclopädie,* new rev. ed.
SubsHag:	Subsidia Hagiographica
ZDPV:	*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*

Preface

This volume, *BASIC* II.2, is the last of six volumes that constitute the middle section of a three-part work, Byzantium and the Arabs. Its first part treated Arab-Roman relations in the centuries that elapsed from the settlement of Pompey in 63 B.C. to the reign of Diocletian (A.D. 284–305)—the centuries of the pagan empire. The third part and the climax of this project, *Byzantium and Islam in the Seventh Century* (*BISC*), will treat in two volumes the rise of Islam and the Arab Conquests. The six volumes of the middle part have their own identity as a contribution to the study of Arab-Byzantine relations in late antiquity, the proto-Byzantine period, but they are also prolegomena to the concluding part. The most relevant as prolegomenon is this volume, since it involves a brief discussion of the economic influences on the prime mover of both Islam and the conquests, the Prophet Muḥammad.

This volume builds on its predecessor, *BASIC* II.1, which is devoted to Ghassānid toponymy, monuments, and historical geography. Elucidation of the Ghassānid *Lebensraum*—the limitrophe and the transverse wedge, with their settlements, villages, and towns—is the *sine qua non* for discussing the three themes of this volume, namely, Ghassānid economic, social, and cultural life and history. The preceding volume revealed a new subdivision of Arab archaeology during the three centuries that preceded the rise of Islam in Oriens that had been *terra incognita;* it was neither pagan Arab, such as that of Petra and Palmyra, nor Muslim Arab, such as that of Damascus and Jerusalem, but Christian Arab. *BASIC* II.1 also revealed another aspect of Arab archaeology in the Oriens of the Muslim Arab period, now Bilād al-Shām: the strong Ghassānid substrate in the structure of many Umayyad structures, the so-called desert castles and palaces.

I

Two of the main strands of continuity between the two volumes may now be pointed out.

1. This volume has unearthed the history of a truly mature and unique Christian Arab culture that arose in the shadow of the Christian Roman Empire. Its birth, growth, and maturation took place in the context of Byzantium's *mission civilisatrice,* not outside the limits of the *imperium* among the "barbarian" peoples that surrounded

it, but *within* Oriens, whither the Ghassānids and other Arab *foederati* had wandered from regions of the Near East that were physically and culturally disadvantaged and less developed. In the Diocese of Oriens, they inevitably were subjected to the gravitational pull of Byzantium in its tripartite structure of "Romanitas," Hellenism, and Christianity, all of which deeply affected their life. The third component was the most powerful and pervasive; it transformed innumerable aspects of their life and history. The result was the rise of a mature Christian culture, which obtained only once in Arab history in Oriens (Bilād al-Shām), then came to an end in the seventh century, when its active and fruitful life ceased to flourish within a Christian political entity. Its flame, independently rekindled some twelve centuries later, has been flickering fitfully and intermittently in present-day Lebanon. In an effort to recover its history from oblivion, traces of this Byzantinized Christian Arab culture in distant proto-Byzantine Oriens have been ferreted out in this volume and retrieved from the debris of extant sources.

2. Just as Ghassānid structures in the Oriens of the sixth century have been revealed in *BASIC* II.1 as substrates in many structures that the Umayyads erected in the later Muslim period, much of the Ghassānid contribution to the economic, social, and cultural life of Oriens persisted in the Umayyad state, especially as the Ghassānids, even after their defeat at the Yarmūk in 636 toppled them from their position as the phylarchs and client-kings of Byzantium in Oriens, succeeded in maintaining a strong presence in Umayyad Bilād al-Shām. Their three fairs, or *aswāq,* survived in the Umayyad period, as did many aspects of their social life, especially those pertaining to wine, song, and tavern life; these were enthusiastically embraced by the more hedonistically inclined of the Umayyad caliphs, such as the two Yazīds and Walīd, the son of the second Yazīd. Especially important was the survival in Umayyad times of the various forms of entertainments in which the Ghassānids had indulged: namely, their sojourns in the country or *tabaddi,* the hunt, and horse races. These took place not in Inner Oriens but in the limitrophe, to which the Ghassānids had been consigned by their overlords, the Umayyads—but which the Umayyads, now themselves the lords of Bilād al-Shām, occupied and made the venue of their entertainments. Thus the Ghassānid substrate is disclosed by a strand of continuity in Umayyad *social* life, just as in the preceding volume it was disclosed by continuities in Umayyad *monumental structures*. These continuities clearly suggest that the better-known and the better-documented Umayyad period can cast light on some aspects of social life among the Ghassānids.

II

The recovery of the life and history of this Christian Ghassānid community prompts the following two observations.

1. Oriens has previously been conceived as bicultural, consisting of the Graeco-Roman and the Syriac/Aramaic. The final part of the present volume, devoted to cultural history, has revealed a third component, the Arab, which flourished not in the old familiar urban venue of the Graeco-Roman establishment in Oriens but in the limitrophe and the transverse wedge; its most important component was poetry. What is more, the Arab culture proved to be the most enduring of the three components, since it survived the Muslim Conquests and enjoyed a *Nachleben* in Umayyad times, during which poetry experienced an efflorescence that was a continuation of the pre-Islamic Ghassānid poetry of Byzantine Oriens.

2. The recovery of the cultural life of this Byzantinized Arab Christian community in Oriens is also a contribution to the history of the more extensive *Oriens Christianus*, which comprised the Armenians, Georgians, Aramaeans, Copts, and Ethiopians. They were all the beneficiaries of the Byzantine *mission civilisatrice,* and they each developed their own version of Christian culture in which their ethos and mores were married to the ideals of the new faith that they had adopted—a fact most patently demonstrated in their art and architecture. In histories of *Oriens Christianus,* the Arab element is either missing or unclear, its outlines vague. The present volume has now made the arc of *Oriens Christianus* a perfect circle, as it has restored the missing segment. This Arab identity contributed to the diversity of early Christian culture in *Oriens Christianus* and to the birth of some new elements, such as Christian chivalry, which developed in this pre-Islamic, proto-Byzantine period. Further archaeological research will undoubtedly shed more light on the Arab sector of *Oriens Christianus.*

Methodology and Terminology

A

BASIC II.2 is also methodologically a continuation of its predecessor, which was written in strict obedience to Nöldeke's Law for reconstructing the history of Arab-Byzantine relations in pre-Islamic times: namely, the employment of Greek and Latin sources and early Arabic poetry rather than the prose sources of later Islamic times.[1]

These sources, like all sources of ancient and medieval history, are mostly concerned with wars and politics and thus are not very informative on economic, social, and cultural life. But the information they supply, though scant and intermittent, remains invaluable and indispensable for elucidating these three aspects of the history of the Arab *foederati* of Byzantium in Oriens in the sixth century. The sources become more revealing when set against the background of Byzantine

[1] See *BASIC* II.1, xxvi–xxvii.

economic, social, and cultural history, as presented in well-known contributions to the field. The social history part of the present volume has profited from the monumental work of Phaidon Koukoules, *Byzantinon bios kai politismos;* Cyril Mango, "Daily Life in Byzantium"; Harry Magoulias, "The Lives of Saints as Sources of Data for Sixth and Seventh Century Byzantine Social and Economic History"; Speros Vryonis, "Aspects of Byzantine Society in Syro-Palestine"; and the most recent articles of Apostolos Karpozilos.[2] Its discussion of economics has benefited from the work of A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire;* a number of articles in *The Economic History of Byzantium,* edited by Angeliki Laiou; and the relevant essays in the first volume of *Le monde byzantin,* edited by Cécile Morrisson, especially Morrisson's own contribution.[3] On culture, especially poetry and rhetoric, the works of Marc Lauxtermann and George Kennedy—*Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres* and *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times,* respectively—have been valuable.[4] With the exception of Speros Vryonis, these scholars focus solely on Byzantium in discussing the three aspects of its history on which the present volume focuses; but because *BASIC* II.2 is a history not of the Arabs as such but of the Arab-Byzantine relationship, the cited works were important for providing historical background.

Just as the Byzantine background of economic, social, and cultural history presented in these works has been helpful in reconstructing the history of the Arab *foederati* in these areas, so has been the Arab background of the Lakhmids of Ḥīra in Lower Mesopotamia—the contemporaries of the Ghassānids, and Arabs similar to them in ethos and mores—especially since there are abundant sources on them. Also useful have been the sources on the Umayyads, who immediately followed the Ghassānids as masters of Oriens, and who willingly assimilated the Byzantine experience of their predecessors.

[2] Ph. Koukoules, *Byzantinon bios kai politismos,* 6 vols. (Athens, 1948–57); C. Mango, "Daily Life in Byzantium," *JÖB* 31 (1981), 337–53; H. Magoulias, "The Lives of Saints as Sources of Data for Sixth and Seventh Century Byzantine Social and Economic History" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1962); S. Vryonis, "Aspects of Byzantine Society in Syro-Palestine," in *Byzantine Studies in Honor of Milton V. Anastos,* ed. S. Vryonis, Byzantina kai metabyzantina 4 (Malibu, Calif., 1985), 43–63; and A. Karpozilos in various entries in *ODB*.

[3] See A. H. M. Jones, *The Late Roman Empire: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey,* 2 vols. (Oxford and Norman, Okla., 1964); A. Laiou et al., eds., *The Economic History of Byzantium from the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century,* 3 vols. (Washington, D.C., 2002), especially I, 115–20, 171–220; and C. Morrisson, "Peuplement, économie et société de l'Orient Byzantin," in *Le monde byzantin,* ed. C. Morrisson, vol. 1, *L'Empire romain d'Orient, 330–641* (Paris, 2004), 193–220.

[4] M. D. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres,* Wiener Byzantinistische Studien 24/1 (Vienna, 2003); G. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times,* 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1999); idem, "Judeo-Christian Rhetoric," in *Rhetoric in Byzantium,* ed. E. Jeffreys (Aldershot, Eng., 2003), 137–82; and see also W. Hörandner, "Court Poetry: Questions of Motifs, Structure and Function," in ibid., 75–85.

B

Because certain terms peculiar to the history of the *foederati* of Byzantium in Oriens are frequently employed, they must be explained at the outset so that this volume can be more easily understood. The need for such clarification was addressed in the preceding volume, where two of these terms, *limitrophe* and *Ghassānland,* were explained. To these were added *urbanization* and *ruralization,* two terms that, though not limited in their application to the Arab *foederati,* were also highly significant.[5]

A term not explicitly discussed in the previous volume, *foederati,* is the one most frequently applied to the Ghassānids in this series of six volumes, especially in this one. The publication, after the completion of *BASIC* II.1, of a monograph specifically devoted to the *foederati* has also made it appropriate to consider this term at some length here.

Foederati

In the course of the three centuries that preceded the rise of Islam and the Arab Conquests in the seventh century, Byzantium availed itself of the services of three Arab groups in succession: the Tanūkhids in the fourth century, the Salīḥids in the fifth, and the Ghassānids in the sixth. And the five volumes devoted to them in this series have correctly described them as *foederati.* Recently, in his monograph *Foederati,* Ralf Scharf has raised questions on the application of the term to groups in the Orient.[6] Hence the following clarifications are called for.

A

I have applied the term *foederati* to these three Arab groups because the Byzantine sources did so, using both the Latin and Greek forms, *foederati* and ὑποσπόνδοι.

1. In the fourth century, the forms of the term in Greek, such as σπονδαί, were used *à propos* of Mavia, the Arab queen, and her group, who fought the emperor Valens.[7] After her victory over Valens and the conclusion of peace, Mavia observed the terms of the σπονδή.[8] Early in the reign of Theodosius, relations soured between the emperor and these Arab *foederati,* which led to their revolt. This entailed the dissolution of the σπονδή, referred to in its Latin form, *foedus,* by Pacatus in his *Panegyricus,* addressed to Theodosius in A.D. 389.[9]

2. In the fifth century the Arab *foederati* of Byzantium are expressly referred

[5] See *BASIC* II.1, xxxiii–xxxv.

[6] R. Scharf, *Foederati,* Tyche, Supplementband No. 4 (Vienna, 2001); see the chapter "Foederati im Osten," 45–48.

[7] See *BAFOC,* 140.

[8] Ibid., 159 note 83.

[9] Ibid., 204.

to as such in the well-known Novella 24 of Theodosius II, where their *annona* or food allotment is also mentioned.[10] The Novella as it related to the Arabs is also discussed by Scharf.[11]

3. The sixth-century Arab allies, the Ghassānids, are referred to as *foederati* by the early ninth-century chronicler Theophanes, who employed the term's Greek form: in A.D. 502, Emperor Anastasius concluded a treaty, σπένδεται, with two groups, the Arabs of Kinda and Ghassān.[12] A quarter of a century later, the Ghassānids are described in a crucial passage in Procopius' *History* as ἔνσπονδοι.[13]

B

In view of such consistent references in the Byzantine sources themselves to the Arab allies as *foederati,* it is clearly correct to apply the term to them. These Arab *foederati* received the *annona* and they were settled *within* the Byzantine Diocese of Oriens, not outside it.

The Arab *foederati* of the Orient, especially the Ghassānids, were well integrated in the Byzantine army of the Orient. Epigraphy reveals that the Ghassānid Nuʿmān, the chief phylarch late in the sixth century, had the title στρατηλάτης,[14] which made him at least the titular counterpart of the *magister militum,* even if his title was mostly honorary. It has also been cogently argued, on the strength of the Greek inscription at Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbī, that before Nuʿmān, the famous Arethas of the reign of Justinian was endowed with the same title.[15] One of the principal duties of the Arab *foederati* was the protection of the Byzantine frontier from the inroads of the nomads, a task that explains their frequent association with the *limitanei,* the frontier troops who watched over the *limes;* another important duty was participation in the wars against Persia, the enemy of Byzantium, to which they contributed an important contingent. The three groups of Arab *foederati,* in three successive centuries, joined the *exercitus comitatensis* in its campaigns far away from their headquarters in the Provincia Arabia. Even Procopius, no friend of the Ghassānids, described the Ghassānid participation at the battle of Callinicum (A.D. 531) as the contribution of an army, στράτευμα (*History,* I.xvii.7).

In the fourth century, the Arab *foederati* took part in Byzantium's Persian and Gothic wars. They fought in the Persian wars with the House of Constantine and even more conspicuously in the Gothic wars of the reign of Valens, when they marched to faraway Thrace. After participating in engagements that culminated

[10] *BAFIC* 49–50, 480–481.
[11] Scharf, *Foederati,* 44–45 and note 115.
[12] Theophanes, *Chronographia,* ed. C. de Boor (Leipzig, 1883–85), I, 144; see *BASIC* I.1, 3–6.
[13] Procopius, *History,* I.xvii.46; see *BASIC* I.1, 95–96.
[14] *BASIC* I.1, 505–6.
[15] See L. MacCoull, "Notes on Arab Allies as *foederati* in Inscriptions," *Tyche* 11 (1996), 157–58.

in the battle of Adrianople in A.D. 378, the *cuneus* or "wedge" of cavalry sent by the federate queen Mavia saved Constantinople itself from the Goths, as Zosimus described in striking detail.[16]

In the fifth century, the Salīḥids took part in the two Persian wars of Theodosius II (A.D. 420–422, 440–442), and one historian commented on their creditable performance in those wars.[17] Even more remarkable was their participation in the Vandal Wars of Emperor Leo I (468 and 470). And as has been argued, their participation in the battle of Cape Bon, in present-day Tunisia, may have contributed to their downfall later in the century, since the battle was a disaster for the imperial army and its Salīḥid contingent.[18]

In the sixth century, the Arab *foederati* performed and even more impressive function, as described in *BASIC* I.1. Indeed, the famous Ghassānid warrior king, Arethas, not only participated with his contingent in all the wars of Byzantium but also on one occasion in the Assyrian campaign of A.D. 541 commanded Byzantine troops, when Belisarius sent twelve hundred troops of his own guards and, in the words of Procopius, directed them "to obey Arethas in everything they did."[19]

Finally, in connection with the *limitanei* and the associations of the Arab *foederati* with them in the latter's garrison duties, it may also be mentioned that the Ghassānid *foederati* were given the duties of the *limitanei* when Justinian disbanded the latter. This shift in responsibility was reflected in the Ghassānid phylarchs' assumption of the title of ὁρικός, Greek for *limitaneus.* [20]

It has always been clear to me that the terms of the *foedus* with the Arabs of the Orient were not identical with those of the *foedus* with the Germans in the Occident. But despite those differences, *foederati* is a term capacious enough to be applied to both sets of allies, those of the Orient as well as those of the Occident.

Irfan Shahîd
Dumbarton Oaks
July 2009

[16] See *BAFOC,* 175–83.
[17] See Sozomen below, p. 211 and n. 26.
[18] See ibid., 25–40; on the Persian and Vandal wars, see 91–96.
[19] Procopius, *History,* II.xix.15; see *BASIC* I.1, 220–25.
[20] *BASIC* II.1, 35–51, especially 45.

Acknowledgments

This volume would not have been ready for publication, had it not been for the contribution of the following institutions and individuals who have given generously of their time and expertise.

Institutionally, all my publications that have the term "Byzantine" in the title must first and foremost be related to the great center of Byzantine studies in the United States, indeed in the world, namely, Dumbarton Oaks. As an associate fellow, it is there that I have researched and written my articles and six volumes, availing myself of its wonderful library with its unrivalled collection of books and journals, and enjoying the support of those who run and administer Dumbarton Oaks. Its director, Professor Jan Ziolkowski, has helped in expediting the publication of this volume. Alice-Mary Talbot, as director of Byzantine studies, has been the one most intimately connected with it. Her accipitral eye has scanned the long manuscript and has contributed much to the elimination of certain repetitious passages and the rearrangement of certain sections and chapters. Joel Kalvesmaki, editor in Byzantine studies, has gone through the manuscript and gathered together all that still needed to be attended to, *inter alia,* precise citations, orthography, and Greek accents. I am grateful to him for all this as I am to Alice Falk, who so very competently copy-edited the manuscript, and also to Kathy Sparkes, our publications manager, who in the final stage supervised and expedited its composition and production.

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* * *

A debt of an entirely different kind is owed to the two dedicatees, the two Franciscan priests, the French P. Francis Demaret and the Italian P. Michele Piccirillo, both closely related to my work on Byzantium and the Arabs.

P. Michele Piccirillo, celebrated Christian archaeologist, was the indefatigable laborer in the vineyard of Christian archaeology who recovered the strong Christian presence in Jordan in Byzantine times. He also gave visibility to the contribution of the Christian Arab community to Byzantine monuments of Jordan, as

he uncovered and collected the recognizably Arab names of donors and mosaicists involved in these monuments, thus complementing archaeologically what my volumes have done through the literary sources. As important was his excavation of the Church at Nitil in the Madaba region, with its Greek inscription saluting the reigning Ghassānid king, Arethas, and a funereal one remembering the Ghassānid officer Thaʿlaba, buried in the hypogeum of the church. He reported on the church in the many pages of *Liber Annuus* as an archaeologist and asked me to contribute the article on the historical Ghassānid dimension of the church. He kindly supplied me with the plates representing various facets of the church at Nitil, which appeared in my volume, *BASIC* II.i (2002) and appear now in the frontispiece of this volume, a mosaic in the church of St. George at Mt. Nebo. His tragic death at the early age of 64 after he lost his battle with pancreatic cancer was a great loss to Christian archaeology, and to me personally, and it has precluded his further excavation of Ghassānid sites, for which *BASIC* II.i has provided a map. Although he passed away at his Italian home in Livorno, he chose to be buried at the scene of his other "home," to which he donated many decades of his short life on earth—Mount Nebo.

P. Francis Demaret, friar of the convent of Clarté Dieu, France, was another indefatigable laborer in the vineyard of Arab Christianity. Completely unknown to me, he approached Dumbarton Oaks in 1991 to translate my volumes on Byzantium and the Arabs into French, which he continued to do for almost two decades until recently, when he was taken seriously ill. But before he was incapacitated, he had translated my six volumes published by Dumbarton Oaks in eleven substantial tomes and also some of my articles, including a long one, "Byzantium in South Arabia," which appeared in *DOP* 1979. P. Demaret's twelve volumes have been truly a labor of love. Not only did he type the translation himself but he also reproduced the volumes and deposited them in various learned and cultural locales in Paris in order to spread knowledge of Arab Christianity, the Cinderella in the circle of Oriens Christianus. In addition to keeping his volumes in my library as a monument to his zeal and industry, I have kept all his letters since 1991, a dossier of single-minded devotion to a theme, the Christian Arab presence in the Byzantine Orient, especially in the Holy Land, which goes back to pre-Islamic times. It is a pity that he could not read what he had looked forward to, namely, *this* volume, which has recovered from oblivion an entire Arab Christian culture that had flourished in the shadow of Byzantium in Oriens, Bilād al-Shām, before the rise of Islam. I had hoped against hope that his health would be restored to normalcy, but my expectations were dashed to the ground when I received from La fraternité d'Orsay, to which he belonged, the sad news, couched in simple but touching terms, that "Le Frère Francis Demaret, Franciscain-Prêtre est entré dans la Paix de Dieu, le mardi 21 juillet 2009, à Athis-Mons dans sa 82e année, après 61 ans de vie religieuse et 53 ans de sacerdoce."

I

Economic History

I

The Role of the Ghassānids

The contribution of the Ghassānids and the other Arab *foederati* of Byzantium to the economic life of the empire and to Oriens in particular is *terra incognita* to Byzantinists, largely because these Arabs are usually referred to as *foederati* and often as *symmachoi,* "fighting allies"; consequently, their *military* role has been emphasized over all others. Procopius' bias, his *ira et studium,* has further obscured their role in the economic history of the region. But as the present volume will clearly demonstrate, their role was considerable, especially during the reign of Justinian. The nature and extent of their contribution will be examined as it relates to Oriens itself and also to international trade, involving the world of the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Peninsula on the one hand and that of Mediterranean Rome on the other. The investigation of their role must rely on sources that, regarding economic and social history, are far from copious. Nevertheless, when set against the background of the better-known economic history of the empire and of Oriens in particular, the sources become more revealing and shed more light on the role of the *foederati,* especially the Ghassānids of the sixth century.

The standard work on the economic history of the empire has recently appeared in three massive volumes, which treat the period from the seventh through the fifteenth century.[1] The editor explains the reason for omitting the previous three centuries;[2] one article, however, gives a general overview of that time, providing good background for a future detailed and concentrated account of the sixth century in Oriens.[3] The seventh century is touched on by other essays.[4]

For the economic history of this proto-Byzantine period, the monumental *Late Roman Empire* by A. H. M. Jones is still the standard work, although the

[1] See *The Economic History of Byzantium: From the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century,* ed. A. Laiou et al., 3 vols. (Washington, D.C., 2002).

[2] Ibid., I, 8.

[3] See C. Morrisson and J.-P. Sodini, "The Sixth Century Economy," in ibid., 171–200.

[4] See, e.g., A. Muthesius, "Essential Processes, Looms, and Technical Aspects of the Silk Textiles," in ibid., 147–68, and K.-P. Matschke, "Mining," in ibid., 115–20.

author practically ignored archaeology in discussing rural life.[5] To this "great synthetic work" may now be added two chapters in the new *Cambridge Ancient History*.[6] Even more recent are two articles in the first volume of a new collection, *Le monde byzantin*.[7]

Against the background of these general works, the economic history of Oriens and the role of the Ghassānids in the sixth century will be set and will become clear. Because the Arabs or the Ghassānids appear in the Byzantine sources as *foederati,* soldiers fighting the wars of Byzantium, the studies cited hardly mention them as a force in the economic history of the region and the century. The Arabic sources, however, have important relevant data on the Ghassānids. A 1971 work in Arabic on the economic history of the Arabs and Arabia before the rise of Islam contains much useful material, although it does not specifically deal with Byzantine involvement in this history.[8] A more recent and more accessible work is Robert G. Hoyland's *Arabia and the Arabs,* which devotes a welcome chapter to the economic history of the Arabs, although again without focusing specifically on the Byzantines or Ghassānids.[9] Until the manuscript of the lost *Akhbār Mulūk Ghassān* is discovered,[10] archaeology will remain the most important source for enhancing knowledge about Ghassānid participation in the economic life of Oriens and Byzantium. The mineral wealth of Arabia has been revealed by Gene W. Heck's publication of *The Precious Metals of West Arabia,*[11] which has shed a very bright light on the keen interest of Byzantium in the Arabian Peninsula. That interest began in the days of Leo I (457–474) and of the adventurous phylarch, Amorkesos, of the fifth century, and reached its climax during the reign of Justinian.[12] More directly and concretely related to the Ghassānids has

[5] See A. H. M. Jones, *The Late Roman Empire: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey,* 2 vols. (Oxford and Norman, Okla., 1964).

[6] See B. Ward-Perkins, "Land, Labour, and Settlement," in *The Cambridge Ancient History,* vol. XIV, *Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors, A.D. 425–600,* ed. A. Cameron, B. Ward-Perkins, and M. Whitby (Cambridge, 2000), 315–45, and idem, "Specialized Production and Exchange," in ibid., 346–91. For the just assessment of Jones by Angeliki Laiou—one who should know—see *The Economic History of Byzantium,* I, 8.

[7] See C. Morrisson, "Peuplement, économie et société de l'Orient byzantin," in *Le monde byzantin,* vol. 1, *L'Empire romain d'Orient, 330–641* (Paris, 2004), 193–220; and G. Tate, "La Syrie-Palestine," in ibid., 374–401. See also A. E. Laiou and C. Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy* (Cambridge, 2007), 23–42.

[8] See Jawād ʿAli, *al-Mufaṣṣal fi Tārīkh al-ʿArab qabl al-Islam* (Beirut, 1971), VII.

[9] See R. G. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs* (London, 2001), 85–112, and his rich bibliography, 286–92.

[10] On *Akhbār Mulūk Ghassān,* see *BASIC* II.1, 364–74.

[11] See G. W. Heck, *The Precious Metals of West Arabia and Their Role in Forging the Economic Dynamic of the Early Islamic State,* King Faiṣal Center for Research and Islamic Studies (Riyadh, 2003).

[12] On Leo I, see *BAFIC,* 61–113, esp. 96–99; on Justinian, see *BALA* III, xi–xvi.

been the discovery of a Ghassānid church at Nitil;[13] its excavation has provided much evidence for Ghassānid involvement in the art and architecture of sixth-century Byzantine Oriens and demonstrates the region's prosperity, to which the Ghassānid protection of trade routes that led to Oriens contributed. Other archaeological excavations—perhaps guided by the preceding volume in this series, which has provided a road map to and onomasticon of Ghassānid sites—may reveal more information.

[13] For the Arab character of this church, excavated by Fr. Michele Piccirillo, see the present writer in "The Sixth-Century Church Complex at Nitl, Jordan: The Ghassānid Dimension," *Lib.ann* 51 (2001), 285–92. On the prosperity of the region in this context, see also M. Sartre, *Bostra, des origines à l'Islam* (Paris, 1985), 132–39.

II

The Ghassānids and the Security of Oriens

The Ghassānids were a group employed by Byzantium as *foederati* in the army of the Orient to defend that diocese and fight the wars of the empire in the east. But they and other Arab *foederati* also performed nonmilitary duties, just as the regular Roman legionaries always did in peacetime. A passage in the *Cambridge Ancient History* details some of the nonmilitary duties of those legionaries:

> Detachments of soldiers were involved in major civilian projects like building the road from Carthage to Theveste, harbour-dredging in Egypt, or supplying stone for the forum at Colonia Ulpia Traiana at Xanten in the Rhineland. One sphere in which the military will have been always involved was administration. The commanders of auxiliary units in Britain or Judaea might find themselves in charge of the census at local level, which centurions on secondment from their legions served as district officers (*centuriones regionarii*).[1]

The Ghassānid *foederati,* it is almost certain, were called upon to perform similar duties in Oriens. Unlike the Ostrogoth troops in Italy or the Franks in Gaul or the Visigoths in Spain, the Ghassānids were not alien to their congeners—Arabs of Nabataea and Palmyrena who had become *Rhomaioi* after their territories were annexed by the Romans. Hence no tension such as that which arose between a Germanic alien army of occupation and the native populations of the Roman Occident was present between the Ghassānids and these Arab *Rhomaioi;* thus, it was easy for them to engage in civilian nonmilitary works and contribute to the economic life of Oriens. Their civilian, nonmilitary duties included building bridges;[2] they also acted as umpires in disputes that erupted among the

[1] On the role of the army in peacetime, see M. Hassall, "The Army," in *The Cambridge Ancient History,* vol. XI, *The High Empire, AD 70–192,* ed. A. K. Bowman, P. Garnsey, and D. Rathbone, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 2000), 341–43; quotation, 342.

[2] On the *qanāṭir,* bridges and aqueducts, constructed by the Ghassānid king Jabala, see *BASIC* II.1, 326–27.

Rhomaioi.[3] Moreover, as enthusiastic Christians they took part in the construction of many monasteries and churches, as when in the fifth century the phylarch of Parembole aided St. Euthymius with the construction of his monastery in the Jordan valley.[4]

The role that the Ghassānids played in the economic history of Byzantium in the sixth century was complex and was related to the significance of the diocese that they protected. In this late antique, proto-Byzantine period, the *Pars Orientalis* became more important than the *Occidentalis*. This shift was reflected in Diocletian's choice of Nicomedia as his capital, and the eastward move culminated in the foundation of Constantinople as the new capital, the new Rome. In this *Pars Orientalis,* the Ghassānids were established in Oriens, a diocese of great importance economically and otherwise. Historians noted its prosperity in the sixth century, before, according to one view, decline set in later in the century.[5] But prosperity requires security. And it is within this framework of security as the key to the prosperity of the diocese that the first contribution of the Ghassānids has to be sought. The diocese was especially exposed and vulnerable, and the Ghassānids, together with the regular *stratiōtai* of the Roman army of the Orient, shouldered the responsibility of shielding it from three major threats.[6]

1. A nomadic threat originated from the Arab Peninsula. The creation of the supreme phylarchate in A.D. 529 extended the power of the Ghassānids from Ayla on the Red Sea to the Euphrates, enabling them to meet the threat along that long frontier in its entirety. Their role was especially significant after they superseded the *limitanei* who had been engaged in performing that function, which more naturally suited the Arab *foederati* than the Roman *stratiōtai* under the direction of the various *duces*.[7]

2. A better organized and more concentrated threat emanated from the Lakhmids of Ḥīra, especially during the long fifty-year reign of their king Mundir (504–554), who terrorized the diocese with his brutality and anti-Christian

[3] For the Ghassānid phylarch Abū Karib as a mediator in a dispute in Ṣadaqa, see P.Petra inv. 83, called the King's Scroll (see Bibliography). See *BASIC* II.1, 46 and n. 55.

[4] On the phylarch Aspebetos and St. Euthymius, see *BAFIC,* 182.

[5] See B. Ward-Perkins, "Specialized Production and Exchange," in *Cambridge Ancient History,* vol. XIV, *Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors, A.D. 425–600,* ed. A. Cameron, B. Ward-Perkins, and M. Whitby (Cambridge, 2000), 352–54.

[6] *BASIC* I.1 provides a detailed account of the Ghassānid contribution to meeting all these threats. On the contribution of the Roman army to security, see B. Isaac, "Trade Routes to Arabia and the Roman Presence in the Desert," in *L'Arabie préislamique et son environnement historique et culturel,* ed. T. Fahd (Leiden, 1989), 241–56. The article deals with the earlier Roman period and the fourth century. The imaginative new system devised by Byzantium, the phylarchate, laid the main burden of security involving the Arab threat upon the shoulders of Arabs in its employ.

[7] See *BASIC* II.1, 35–51.

outbursts. But he met his match in the Ghassānid Arethas, who overpowered him at the decisive battle of Chalcis in 554, when the Lakhmid king was killed.

3. A third threat, the most serious, gave the Ghassānids a special place in the Byzantine defense system. Unlike those allies who were defending the Roman Occident along the Danube and the Rhine, and were facing barbarians such as the Germans, Huns, and Sarmatians, the Ghassānids, as a contingent in the army of the Orient, were facing a world power—Sasanid Persia, which even captured Antioch, the capital of the diocese, in 540. The Ghassānids distinguished themselves in all these military encounters; particularly notable was their performance at the battle of Callinicum in A.D. 531.[8]

Even within Oriens, the Ghassānids helped enforce law and order when they participated and were sometimes the principal agent in pacifying certain areas; for example, they crushed a dangerous revolt around 530 after the Samaritans laid waste parts of Caesarea and Skythopolis.[9]

When, in the fourth century, Christianity became a *religio licita* and later, the official religion of Byzantium, the status of one of its provinces, Palestine, was immediately elevated to being a holy land, whose capital, Jerusalem, became the spiritual capital of the entire Christianized empire and the destination of pilgrims. Thus, Palestine and the Diocese of Oriens, within which Palestine was located, assumed great spiritual importance in the perception of the entire Christian oikoumene. The Ghassānids bore the major brunt of the defense of the Christian Holy Land because they were stationed in the three provinces that surrounded it, the Provincia Arabia, Palaestina Secunda, and Palaestina Tertia, through which ran the two gateways of the nomads from the Arabian peninsula to Oriens: Wādī Sirḥān and the Tabūkiyya in northern Ḥijāz. In addition to protecting the Holy Land against the threat of the nomads, the Ghassānids protected it from the Lakhmid scourge, Mundir, who celebrated his accession to power in Ḥīra by launching a bold campaign that brought him to the borders of the Holy Land around A.D. 503.[10] The Ghassānids effectively protected Palestine from the south and southeast through the efforts of Abū Karib, the energetic phylarch of Palaestina Tertia, and from the east and northeast through those of Arethas, his brother. This led to the prosperity of both provincial Arabia and Palestine, reflected in the efflorescence of Christian art and architecture.[11]

[8] See *BASIC* I.1, 134–42, and *BALA* II, 13–18, especially the testimony of Malalas on the loyalty and courage of Arethas, the Ghassānid commander in chief: ἄλλοι δὲ ἐπέμειναν σὺν Ἀρέθᾳ μαχόμενοι (14).

[9] See *BASIC* I.1, 82–92.

[10] Ibid., 17–19.

[11] See M. Piccirillo, *L'Arabia cristiana: Dalla provincia imperiale al primo periodo islamico* (Milan, 2002), whose title is itself relevatory of the thoroughly Christian character of the *provincia* in this period, reflected in its art and architecture.

Security, provided to a considerable extent by the Ghassānids, was conducive to a prosperity that enabled the *Rhomaioi* in the region to finance and subsidize the erection of many churches and monasteries on both sides of the Jordan. The *foederati,* especially the Ghassānids, took part in this sixth-century explosion of Christian art and architecture, including the recently excavated church of Nitil in the Madaba region of the Provincia Arabia.[12]

[12] In the Provincia Arabia and its environs alone were constructed at least 137 monasteries, some of which were Ghassānid; see *BASIC* I.2, 824–38, and *BASIC* II.1, passim.

III

The Ghassānids and International Trade Routes

Though important, the contribution of the Ghassānids to the security of Oriens was indirect: defending the diocese and enabling its economy to prosper. A more substantial contribution was their protection of important segments of the international trade routes.

The last segment of the Silk Road connecting the Far East and central Asia with the world of the Mediterranean passed through Mesopotamia and the northern part of Oriens. It is often referred to as the Mesopotamian route. According to the *Christian Topography* of Cosmas Indicopleustes, the Silk Road was in fact two routes: one by sea, extending from China to Ceylon to the Red Sea, and the other on land, stretching through central Asia and Persia and finally reaching Mesopotamia.[1]

The West Arabian route connecting the world of the Far East, India, and the Indian Ocean with that of the Mediterranean was a land route that traversed South Arabia and Ḥijāz. Its final segments passed through the Provincia Arabia and Palaestina Tertia. To its west and east were two other routes: a sea route, which passed through the Red Sea to the island of Iotabe (modern Tirān) and finally to the port of Eilat/Ayla in Palaestina Tertia, and a shorter land route through Wādī Sirḥān—at the southern end of which was Dūma, sometimes called Dūmat al-Jandal—which led to the Provincia Arabia.[2]

Oriens was, thus, the confluence of all these major arteries of international trade in the sixth century. Hence the importance of the group of *foederati* in whose provinces of Arabia and Palaestina Tertia were located the termini of the West Arabian routes and through which traveled the caravans that carried this long-distance trade. Because the caravans passed through difficult and dangerous terrain, attractive to raiders, they needed protection, which the Ghassānids provided.

[1] Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Topographie chrétienne,* ed. and trans. W. Wolska-Conus, Sources chrétiennes no. 141 (Paris, 1968), Book II, sections 45–46, pp. 351–55.

[2] See E. H. Warmington, *The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India* (1928; reprint, London, 1974); N. Pigulewskaia, *Byzanz auf den Wegen nach Indien* (Berlin and Amsterdam, 1969).

In this trade were manifest the rivalry and the struggle between Byzantium and Persia; these trade routes hence took on added political and military importance—as did the role of the Ghassānids, who protected the caravans that traveled along them.[3]

* * *

The four sketch maps that accompany this chapter are intended solely to illustrate the role of the Ghassānids in the economic history of Byzantium in the Oriens of the sixth century. By visually presenting the convergence of the trade routes on Oriens, the maps contribute to a clearer and better understanding of how important this diocese was in the economic life of Byzantium and how grave was its loss to Islam after its conquest in the seventh century. An additional map in the following chapter graphically represents the fairs, *aswāq,* frequented by the Arab caravans in Oriens. The maps focus on the *final* stations of the trade routes, especially their termini in Oriens overseen by the Ghassānids, but include some stations on the remoter segments of the long trade routes, which help put the stations involving the Ghassānids in geographical context.

While the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* of the first century cast much light on the Red Sea route, as did the *Mansiones Parthicae* of the same century for the Mesopotamian one, no such guides seem to exist for the sixth.[4] In the world of the Christian Roman Empire of the sixth century, maps and itineraries were available for pilgrims to the Holy Land such as those used by Theodosius.[5] When the "Byzantine" Cosmas ventured into composing something similar to the *Periplus* of the Red Sea,[6] he approached his task with an explicitly Christian agenda (anxious to prove that Ptolemy was wrong, that the earth was not a globe, and that the universe resembled the Tabernacle of Moses). Nevertheless, he preserved valuable information on Axum and Ceylon and made reference to a few ports relevant to seafaring in the Red Sea, such as Adūlis on the African coast and Leuke Kome and Rhaithou on the Asiatic.

[3] See M. Morony, "The Late Sasanian Economic Impact on the Arabian Peninsula," *Nāme-ye Irān-e Bāstān* 1.2 (2002), 25–37.

[4] See *The Periplus Maris Erythraei,* trans. and annot. L. Casson (Princeton, 1989). For Isidore of Charax, and his *Mansiones Parthicae,* see *The Oxford Classical Dictionary,* ed. N. G. L. Hammond and H. H. Scullard, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1992), s.v. Isidorus (1), a more informative entry than is found in the 3rd ed. (1996). The indefatigable modern traveler and explorer Alois Musil traversed the Mesopotamian segment of the route described by Isidore; for his comments and reservations on *Mansiones,* see *The Middle Euphrates: A Topographical Itinerary* (New York, 1927), 227–32. The *Tabula Peutingeriana* is a twelfth- or thirteenth-century copy of a fifth-century tourist map; see A. Kazhdan, "Tabula Peutingeriana," *ODB,* III, 2004–5.

[5] See Y. Tsafrir, "The Maps Used by Theodosius: On the Pilgrim Maps of the Holy Land and Jerusalem in the Sixth Century C.E.," *DOP* 40 (1986), 129–45.

[6] See Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Topographie chrétienne.*

I. The Mesopotamian Route

War with the Persians, which suddenly broke out in A.D. 502 after a long period of peace, reignited in the reign of each emperor of the sixth century; this conflict contributed to the West Arabian route gaining some advantage over the Mesopotamian (for the Mesopotamian route, see Map I). Nevertheless, the latter route retained much of its significance.[7] That two clauses in the peace treaty of 561, the product of complex negotiations between the two powers, involve the Arabs and the Ghassānids reflects their importance in the Byzantine-Persian relationship.[8]

The second clause of the treaty deals with the Ghassānids directly and is military in character. After the decisive Ghassānid victory over the Lakhmids at the battle of Qinnasrīn/Chalcis, in 554, hostilities continued between the two Arab groups independently of their Persian and Byzantine overlords. To address the resultant souring of relations between the two world powers, it was necessary to devote the second clause of the treaty to putting an end to any further strife between the Ghassānids and Lakhmids. The fifth clause is even more relevant to our theme, since it dealt with economic problems. It reads as follows:

> It is agreed that Saracen and all other barbarian merchants of either state shall not travel by strange roads but shall go by Nisibis and Daras, and shall not cross into foreign territory without official permission. But if they dare anything contrary to the agreement (that is to say, if they engage in tax-dodging, so-called), they shall be hunted down by the officers of the frontier and handed over for punishment together with the merchandise which they are carrying, whether Assyrian or Roman.[9]

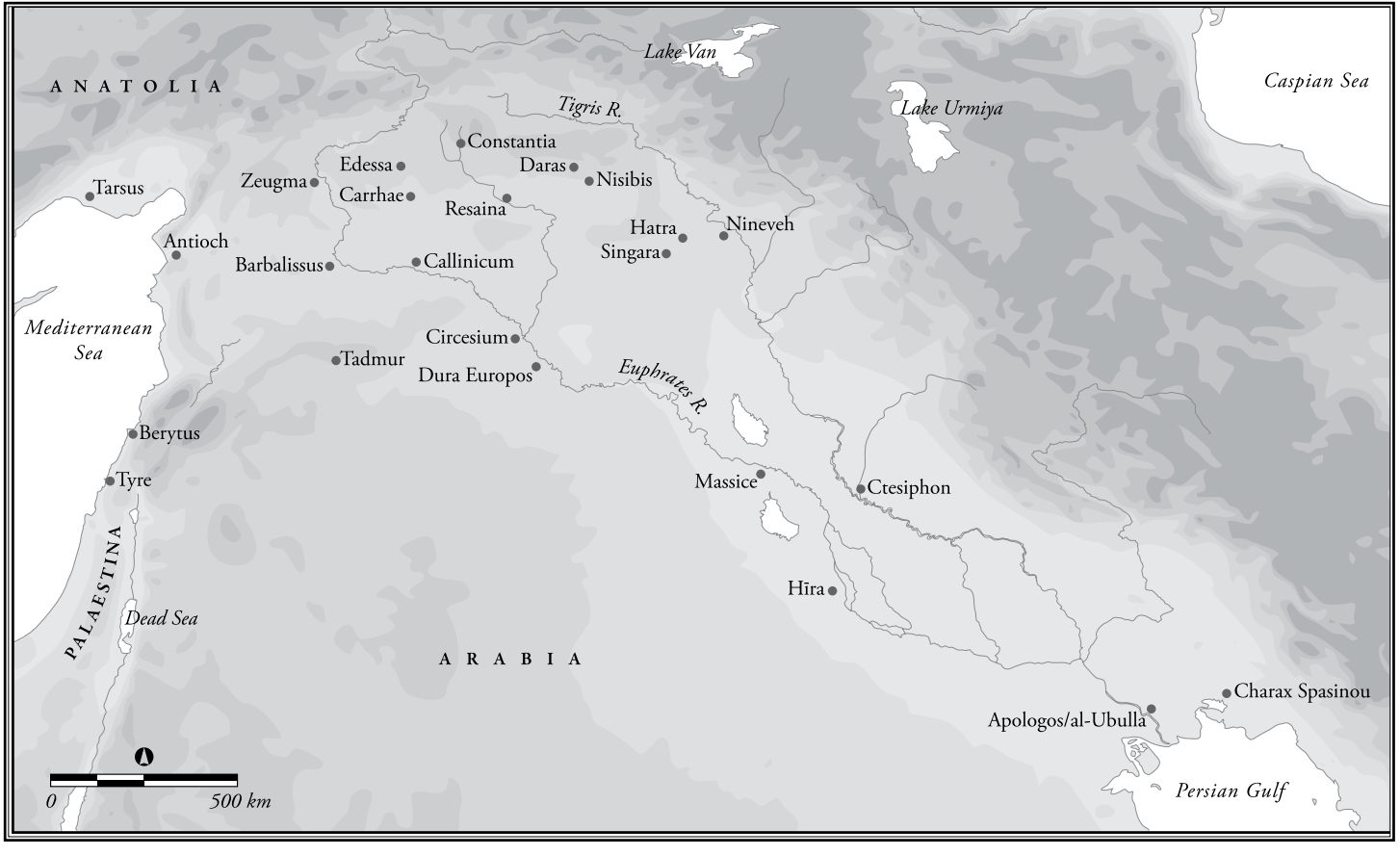
This clause has elsewhere been commented upon copiously by the present writer,[10] and the following point may be added here. Financial considerations were behind the restrictions imposed on Arab traders who engaged in tax dodges. The emperor Justinian was naturally concerned about building up the economy and the treasury, which suffered heavily owing to his wars of reconquest in the West and his expensive building program, and these worries were reflected in his exorbitant duties on merchandise and in the establishment of state monopolies in certain

[7] The importance of silk and the Silk Road was reflected in Julian's embassy of around A.D. 530, which Justinian dispatched to the Ethiopian Negus to invoke his aid—military and other—against the Persians. This embassy is discussed below, in "The West Arabian Route"; see also M. Kordosis, "China and the West: The Silk Route," *Graeco Arabica* 7–8 (2000), 233–41.

[8] For the peace treaty of A.D. 561, see Menander Protector, *The History of Menander the Guardsman*, ed. and trans. R. C. Blockley (Liverpool, 1985), 70–77 (Greek text and English version).

[9] Ibid., 72, 73.

[10] See "The Arabs in the Peace Treaty of A.D. 561," in *BALA* III, 54–59.



Map I. The Mesopotamian Route. All maps by K. Rasmussen (archeographics.com),
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industries such as silk manufacturing. The pursuit and arrest of those merchants who were engaged in illegal trading and thus tax dodging would have fallen to a great extent upon the shoulders of the Ghassānids.[11] The power of these *foederati* had been extended by Justinian in A.D. 529 to the whole of Oriens, including its northern provinces where Daras was located and where tax dodging would have occurred. The Ghassānids had taken part in campaigns involving those northern areas, such as the Assyrian campaign of Belisarius in 540. So they were perfectly familiar with the topography of the region, parts of which were ethnically Arab. The Ghassānids could conduct such operations involving Arab peoples more efficiently than could the regular Roman *stratiōtai*.

* * *

The most important commodity carried over the Mesopotamian route was silk. A luxury article, silk was widely used for vestments by members of the imperial court as well as by clerics, and was also used to decorate both churches and secular buildings. The silk industry in Oriens passed through two stages. In the first stage, private factories in such cities as Berytus and Tyre manufactured goods from raw silk bought from the Persian merchants. When in 542 the manufacturing of silk became a state monopoly, it provided a welcome source of revenue for the state treasury.[12] The second stage began in 552 and witnessed the introduction into Oriens of sericulture, which made Byzantium less dependent on Persian raw silk. Oriens thus became the first region in the empire to pursue silk manufacture, which remained an important part of its economy. But this industry, like others more ordinary, could flourish only when security—a major duty of the Ghassānids—prevailed in the Oriens provinces.

Extant contemporary poetry refers to the clothes of the Ghassānids, including linen and saffron robes.[13] Though silk is not mentioned, it appears in the poetry of the Umayyads,[14] who ruled Oriens immediately after the Ghassānids and who acquired many of their social graces from their predecessors. It is thus logical to conclude that the Ghassānids wore silk garments on festive occasions. Ḥassān, the brother of the Kindite lord of Dūma at the southern end of Wādī Sirḥān in

[11] One of the Arabic words for "thief," *liṣṣ,* is suspected of being a Greek loanword, λῃστής. Its appearance in Arabic may be related to such illegal activities in Byzantium on the part of the Arabs, who tried to evade the customs officials and avoid paying taxes on their merchandise.

[12] The imperial *kommerkiarioi* levied a substantial tax on the traders at emporia. By catching these tax dodgers, the Ghassānids contributed indirectly to the Byzantine economy. For the *kommerkiarioi,* see N. Oikonomides, "Kommerkiarios," *ODB,* II, 1141.

[13] See "Clothes," Chapter 6 in Part II, below, and *BASIC* II.1, 295 note 7.

[14] For instance, it appears as *sarik/q* in the poetry of the Umayyad poet ʿUbayd Allāh al-Ruqayyāt; see *Dīwān ʿUbayd Allāh al-Ruqayyāt,* ed. M. Najm (Beirut, 1986), 159, verse 8, where "silk" appears as *sarak/q. Sarik* is the Arabic version of σηρική, the term used by Procopius for silk in *History,* I.xx.9.

northern Arabia, wore a silk robe woven in gold when Dūma was captured by Khālid ibn al-Walīd around A.D. 630.[15] Ukaydir, the Kindite lord of Dūma, was less affluent than his Ghassānid allies; if his brother wore a silk robe, then *a fortiori* the Ghassānids also wore such robes.

II. The West Arabian Route

Of all the international routes, the overland route of West Arabia, the *via odorifera* (see Map II), was the most important for the economic history of Byzantium in the sixth century and for the Arab-Byzantine relationship involving the Ghassānids. The Roman Empire during the principate of Augustus tried and failed to control it through Aelius Gallus' expedition against South Arabia; and after a checkered history, it languished before it revived in the sixth century at the height of the Ghassānid presence in Oriens. In a previous publication I have suggested five reasons for its sudden revival,[16] of which the most important was the renewal of the Byzantine-Persian war after a fifth-century lull. The conflict, which resumed in A.D. 502 during the reigns of Anastasius and Kawad, broke out anew under every emperor of the sixth century, reaching its climax in the seventh century in the gigantic struggle during the reign of Heraclius. Another reason, of critical importance for the extraordinary events of the seventh century, which witnessed the birth of Islam and the Arab Conquests, was the rise in the sixth century of Mecca to a position of dominance as the main Arab caravan city.[17] This rise contributed to the promotion of the spice route of western Arabia as a major artery of international trade. Of the three western routes, this overland one, which extended from Arabia Felix in the south to Palaestina Tertia in the north, had a decided advantage over the maritime route, which required merchants to navigate the Red Sea with its contrary winds and dangerous shoals.

Even before Mecca reached its position of dominance late in the sixth century, the Byzantine emperor Justinian was promoting the revival of the western route at the expense of the Mesopotamian. Around 530, he sent his ambassador Julian to

[15] See Balāḏuri, *Futūh al-Buldān,* ed. S. Munajjid (Cairo, 1956), I, 73. Wāqidi's account of the capture of Dūma by Khālid is fuller than that of Balāḏuri. According to him, Ukaydir, too, was wearing a silk brocade when he came to Medina after the capture of Dūma. Wāqidi also says that the silk robe of his brother Ḥassān elicited the admiration of the Muslims in Medina when the robe was sent to the Prophet; see al-Wāqidi, *Kitāb al-Maghāzi,* ed. M. Jones (London, 1966), III, 1026–27.

[16] Explored in detail in *BALA* III, 47–54.

[17] See *BALA* III, 52–54. On the lively discussion started by Patricia Crone on this theme, see her *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Princeton, 1987); in response, see R. Sergeant, "Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam: Misconceptions and Flawed Polemics," *JAOS* 111 (1990), 472–86. A comprehensive response to Crone's very stimulating work is a doctoral dissertation in Arabic submitted by Victor Saḥḥāb to the Lebanese University in Beirut, "Ilāf Quraysh" (1992). The precise identity of the goods these caravaneers brought with them to Bostra and Gaza and what they bought there has also been the subject of a lively discussion initiated by Crone's volume.

Map IIa. The West-Arabian Route

Map IIb. The West-Arabian Route

Map IIc. The West-Arabian Route

urge the military and economic mobilization of the Christian world of the Red Sea and the Arabian Peninsula against Sasanid Persia. The key to the success of his plan was the Ethiopian Negus. The economic component of his diplomatic offensive entailed the Ethiopians' purchase of silk in Ceylon or India directly from Indian and Chinese merchants, thereby eliminating the hostile Persian intermediaries who sold silk to the Byzantines at exorbitant prices. In this way, he hoped to divert trade—at least the silk trade—from the Mesopotamian to the western route.[18] Justinian's diplomatic offensive was too complex to succeed, but the western spice route prospered even though the contemplated crusade against Persia on the part of the southern Semites, Ethiopians and Arabs, never materialized. Nevertheless, it was a most enlightened foreign policy, and the words of Procopius are relevant in this context:

> At that time, when Hellestheaeus was reigning over the Aethiopians, and Esimiphaeus 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 the money to their enemy. (This is the silk of which they are accustomed to make the garments which of old the Greeks called Medic, but which at the present time they name "seric").[19]

Before the Ghassānid role with regard to the *via odorifera* is discussed, some facts about this route should be set forth.

1. This long overland route started from South Arabia (Map IIc) and ended in the two Byzantine provinces of Palaestina and Arabia. One of its two termini, after its course ran mostly through Palaestina Tertia, was Gaza in Palaestina Prima (Map IIa). Its other terminus was Bostra (Map IIb), the capital of Provincia Arabia. Before reaching its two termini it passed through Phoinikōn, the "Palm Grove" (probably Tabūk), in Byzantine territory.[20]

2. While still traversing the peninsular segment of the route, caravans passed

[18] For an analysis of the embassy of Julian, see *BALA* III, xii–xvi.

[19] Procopius, *History,* I.xx.9; trans. H. B. Dewing, Loeb Classical Library (1914; reprint London and Cambridge, Mass., 1961), I, 192.

[20] Ibid., I.xx.9–13; for the Ghassānid presence in Phoinikōn, see I.xix.8–13. *Pace* the animadversions of Procopius, Phoinikōn was an important station on the spice route, most probably identifiable with Tabūk. A very detailed and useful account of this route, culled from the Arabic sources, may be found in Jawād ʿAli, *al-Mufaṣṣal fi Tārīkh al-ʿArab qabl al-Islam* (Beirut, 1971), VII, 347–64.

through some of the main cities of western Arabia: Najrān, in the south; Mecca, in the center; and Yathrib/Medina, in the north.

3. The caravans that took this long route traveled through difficult and dangerous terrain and needed protection, guides, and provisions, both while they were still in the Peninsula and after they crossed the Byzantine frontier at the southern portion of Palaestina Tertia.[21]

4. The prosperity of the route depended to a great extent on who controlled South Arabia in this tumultuous century. In the first part of the sixth century, the Ḥimyarites, under a Judaizing king, were unfriendly toward Byzantium. For some fifty years after the Ethiopian occupation, ca. 520, Arabia became a Christian country and was very friendly toward Byzantium. After 570 and until the rise of Islam, it was under Persian domination, but that political shift does not seem to have affected the flow of merchandise from South Arabia to Byzantium.

The Ghassānids contributed substantially to this long-distance trade in western Arabia.

1. The Ghassānids could be most helpful since they originated from the Arabian Peninsula—specifically, from South Arabia, with which they maintained ties—and they belonged to a large, powerful, and influential tribal group, the Azd, which had settled at various strategic sites on this trade route.

2. While the caravans were traveling in Byzantine territory, the Ghassānids exercised more immediate control over them and could provide even more substantial help, both because Justinian extended their power and influence to the whole of the diocese and because he established in the southern portion of Oriens a virtual dyarchy, composed of the famous Arethas in the Provincia Arabia and his brother, the very efficient Abū Karib, as the phylarch of Palaestina Tertia. Even more remarkable, the Byzantines endowed them with unusual responsibilities in handling the taxes imposed on foreign traders.

A

As noted above, the three principal centers through which caravans passed on their way from South Arabia to Oriens were Najrān, Mecca, and Yathrib/Medina. In all of these centers, the Ghassānids had a strong presence and were on good terms with the Arab inhabitants.

Najrān. The Ghassānids most probably had settled in that city during their wanderings from South Arabia to Oriens. The Arabs who ruled the city, the Balḥārith, were Azd, like the Ghassānids, although some genealogists describe them as affiliated with Madhhij. Around A.D. 520 the Najrānites appealed to

[21] See M. Marqaten, "Dangerous Trade Routes: On the Plundering of Caravans in the pre-Islamic Near East," *Aram* 8 (1996), 213–36.

the Ghassānid king, Jabala, at his headquarters in Jābiya to help them against the Ḥimyarite king, Yūsuf; indeed, the Ghassānids may have participated in the expedition that finally toppled Yūsuf. Ever since the Ethiopian victory, the Ghassānids were on the best of terms with Najrān, which they viewed as the Arabian city of martyrs. And when their king Mundir fell out with the emperor Maurice in A.D. 582, the Ghassānid phylarchs for a short time left the service of Byzantium; some of them went all the way to Najrān in South Arabia.[22] Najrān was the most important urban Arab center in the Peninsula. In addition to its being a major caravan hub and a fertile oasis with a flourishing agrarian economy, it was an industrial center noted for its leather work.[23] Its caravan leaders and merchants must have been very welcome in Ghassānland, as its poets were.[24]

Mecca. The Ghassānid presence in Mecca was represented by two groups of allies, or *halīfs*. (1) The Khuzāʿa, who settled in Mecca and belonged to the Azd, had ruled Mecca before Quṣayy transferred its control to the Quraysh. They remained a power even after they had lost the rule. (2) The well-known Quraysh clan of Banū-Asad ibn ʿAbd al-ʿUzzā included Khadīja, the first wife of the Prophet Muḥammad.

The Quraysh had some important relations with Byzantium. Quṣayy was aided by Byzantium when he seized Mecca, evicted the Khuzāʿa, and relieved them of their custodianship of the Kaʿba. In the sixth century ʿUthman ibn al-Ḥuwayrith, a Meccan who belonged to the clan of Banū-Asad, unsuccessfully attempted to become Byzantium's representative in Mecca in what would have marked a turning point in Byzantine-Meccan relations. By the end of the century, Mecca was the main caravan city of western Arabia.[25]

Yathrib/Medina. Even closer to the Ghassānids than the Najrānites and Khuzāʿa were the Arabs of Medina, the Aws and the Khazraj groups, Banū-Qayla. The Ghassānids had tarried with them on the last leg of their wanderings, before they crossed the Roman *limes.* These two Arab groups were so close to the Ghassānids that they always took pride in that affinity, even when they adopted Islam after the Prophet Muḥammad emigrated to Medina. The close relationship

[22] On all this, see the present writer, "Najrān," *EI*², V, 271–72, and "Najrān," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurān,* ed. J. D. McAuliffe (Leiden, 2003), III, 500–501.

[23] See L. Massignon, "Le rôle économique du Najrān," in "La Mubāhala de Medine et l'hyperdule de Fatima," *Opera Minora,* ed. Y. Moubarac (Beirut, 1963), I, 550–72.

[24] On the Najrān poet Yazīd at the Ghassānid court, see "Music and Song in Najrān" below in Part II, Chapter 8. Riding parties are attested in South Arabia, in the verse of Ḥumayd ibn Thawr: he compares the white tops of the mountains of Kullān/Kallān to the white robes worn by the Ghassānid riders or caravaneers—Arabic *arākīb,* plural of *urkūb,* riders of camels or horses. For the verse, see Bakri, *Muʿjam* (Cairo, 1951), IV, 1133–34. On Byzantium and Najrān, see *BAFIC,* 360–76.

[25] On Mecca in the two centuries before the rise of Islam and on its Byzantine connection, see *BAFIC,* 350–60.

between the Arabs of Medina and the Ghassānids may be sketched as follows. (1) The Ghassānids came to the rescue of the city's Arabs when their chief, Mālik ibn al-Ajlān, invoked their aid against the Jews of Medina. (2) One of the Aws—namely, Ibn al-Mughīra—actually became a commander in the Ghassānid army and had the Usays inscription carved to commemorate that service. (3) The Aws also served in A.D. 554 at the famous battle of Chalcis against the Lakhmids, celebrated by ʿAlqama in his panegyric on the Ghassānid Arethas.[26] Medina was an important caravan station and, unlike Mecca, also a fertile oasis in which agriculture flourished. It was made even more important by its Jewish inhabitants, whose skill as ironsmiths and jewelers ensured that it was an industrial center as well.

This strong presence of Ghassānids on the West Arabian route and their influential connections provide useful context for discussing the problems that attended the caravan trade within the Peninsula. The caravans that crossed the long distance from South Arabia to Oriens had to pass through inhospitable and dangerous regions,[27] inhabited by Arab tribes who were indispensable for the smooth running of this international trade. They were paid to perform essential services for these caravans: (1) they acted as escorts, offering protection from the attacks of hostile tribesmen, who would have been attracted by the rich booty they could get from the caravans; (2) they guided the caravans along paths where such clear Roman *strata* as those in Oriens did not exist; and (3) they supplied them with provisions.

The dangers that attended the journeys along these routes can be illustrated by one of the *ayyām,* the battle-days of the Arabs in pre-Islamic times: Ḥarb al-Fijār, the "Sacrilegious War," so called because it broke out in the holy months of pagan times, when war was forbidden.[28] Although this war involved a caravan not of the Ghassānids but of their Lakhmid enemies, it is instructive. The war broke out late in the sixth century, over a caravan that was dispatched by Nuʿmān (d. 602), the Lakhmid ruler of Ḥīra, to the inter-Arab fair of ʿUkāẓ near Mecca. A tribesman from Kināna, a group related to Quraysh, the tribe of the Prophet Muḥammad, murdered the caravan leader and took possession of it. War ensued between the two groups, the Quraysh/Kināna and the Hawāzin, centered between Mecca and Ṭāʾif. According to one account, its many encounters stretched over four years before peace was concluded. A detailed description of one of these encounters, Yawm Nakhla,[29] provides some relevant data on this trans-Arabian trade. (1) The caravan is called *laṭīma,* the technical term for the camels of the caravan

[26] On Medina, see W. M. Watt, *EI*², s.v. "al-Madīna." On the Ghassānid connection, see *BASIC* II.1, 18; *BASIC* I.1, 122–23; for ʿAlqama's ode, see in Part II, Chapter 6, "Clothes."

[27] See Marqaten, "Dangerous Trade Routes."

[28] On this war, see J. W. Fück, "Fidjār," *EI*², II, 883–84.

[29] See M. Jād al-Mawlā et al., *Ayyām al-ʿArab fi al-Jāhiliyya* (Cairo, 1969), 327–30.

that started from Lakhmid Ḥīra.[30] (2) It could not have been sent to its destination in West Arabia before A.D. 570, the year that the Persian overlords of the Lakhmids occupied South Arabia, which under Ethiopian rule had been a Byzantine sphere of influence. (3) The caravan was expected to bring from Mecca back to Ḥīra its celebrated goods—*inter alia,* leather and textiles of all sorts, which had originally come from Najrān. (4) Leading the caravan and its crossing of the tribal territories in Najd and Tihama, the *ijāza,* was the difficult part of the caravan's journey from Ḥīra to ʿUkāẓ; it was in those territories that its leader was murdered, causing the outbreak of the war. (5) Mecca and the future Prophet Muḥammad were involved in this war. J. W. Fück has accurately assessed the significance of the War of Fijār: "The real aim of it was the control of the trade routes in the Nadjd and consequently the benefit of the great gains which this trade offered. In this great context the Kuraysh [Quraysh] were leading."[31]

The extant sources have not preserved memories of Ghassānid caravans traversing the West Arabian route southward to Najrān, but items of merchandise emanating from Ghassānland must have made their way to the south. Their echoes are detectable in a verse of the poet Ḥumayd ibn Thawr, of the tribe of ʿĀmir, which lived not far from South Arabia; a simile refers to Ghassānid *arākīb,* riders or caravans, which he saw there.[32]

B

The Ghassānids became more directly involved in the long-distance trade and its caravans once they crossed the southern boundaries of Palaestina Tertia in northern Ḥijāz. The first significant stopping place was Phoinikōn. Procopius explicitly documents the Ghassānid character of Phoinikōn/Tabūk, a site that belonged to the Ghassānids and was offered to Byzantium by its master, the Ghassānid phylarch Abū Karib. Even after becoming Byzantine territory, it continued to have a strong Ghassānid presence, consonant with the appointment of Abū Karib as its phylarch.[33]

After Phoinikōn/Tabūk, the route ran through Palaestina Tertia to Petra, where it bifurcated:[34] one branch ran through Palaestina Tertia to Gaza, in Palaestina Prima; the other went north to Bostra, the capital of the Provincia

[30] For the explication of this strange term, whose root is related to the word meaning "perfume," see S. Fraenkel, *Die aramäischen Fremdwörter im Arabischen* (1886; reprint, Hildesheim, 1962), 176–77.

[31] See Fück, "Fidjār," 884.

[32] See above, note 24.

[33] Procopius, *History*, I.xix.11.

[34] Some believe that Aḏruḥ/Udhruḥ, not Petra, is the station where the route divided; see Z. T. Fiema, "Late-antique Petra and Its Hinterland: Recent Research and New Interpretations," *Roman and Byzantine Near East* 3 (2002), 191–252.

Arabia.[35] All these routes ran through territories of the ethnically Arab Nabataeans, who had become *Rhomaioi* after the promulgation of the Edict of Caracalla in A.D. 212. And now in the sixth century, these territories formed the provinces of Arabia and Palaestina Tertia, the headquarters of the two Ghassānid phylarchs Arethas and Abū Karib. So the Ghassānids could provide the escorts, guide the caravans, and attend to their needs with perfect ease.

While the branch of the spice route that ran to the north reached its final terminus in Bostra, the branch to Gaza continued on to the eastern part of the Delta in Egypt,[36] also passing through a region that was Arab (and was called Arabia in the *Travels* of Egeria), and indeed used to have an Arabarch as its governor.[37] Gaza itself, the terminus in Palaestina Prima, had had a strong Arab element since the days of Alexander the Great;[38] in the sixth century an Arab caravaneer named Hāshim, the great-grandfather of the Prophet Muḥammad, was buried there. The city is therefore often referred to as "the Gaza of Hāshim," Gazzat Hāshim.[39] Before the caravans reached Gaza, they traversed the Negev, the southern desert of Palestine, passing through what might be called the Heptapolis of Palaestina Tertia—a cluster of seven Arab Nabataean settlements, the main city of which was Elusa.[40] Their prosperity was clearly related to the sixth-century revival of the *via odorifera,* which greatly benefited the Heptapolis. Conversely, the decline of the *via odorifera* after the rise of Islam, and the consequent drastic change in trade routes, explains the decline of urban settlements in this area of Palaestina Tertia.[41]

In Wādī ʿAraba, which extends from the southern tip of the Dead Sea to Ayla/Eilat on the Gulf of Eilat, the last leg of the spice route, from Petra

[35] On routes involving the *via odorifera* in this region of Oriens and northern Ḥijāz, see D. Graf, "Les routes romaines d'Arabie Pétrée," *Le Monde de la Bible* 59 (1989), 54–56; F. Zayadine, "L'espace urbain du grand Petra; les routes et les stations caravanières," *Annual of the Department of Antiquities* 36 (1992), 217–30.

[36] See P. Figueras, "Road Linking Palestine and Egypt along the Sinai Coast," in *Madaba Map Centenary,* ed. M. Piccirillo and E. Alliata, Collectio Maior 40 (Jerusalem, 1999), 211–14; and idem, *From Gaza to Pelusium: Materials for the Historical Geography of North Sinai and Southwestern Palestine (332 BCE–640 CE)* (Beer-Sheva, 2000).

[37] On the Arab character of this region in Egypt, see *Egeria's Travels,* trans. J. Wilkinson (Warminster, Eng., 1999), 115–18; see also *RA,* 5 note 12, with its cross-references to the Arab presence in Egypt. On the Arabarch, see *RA,* 7 note 19.

[38] See Jan Retsö, *The Arabs in Antiquity: Their History from the Assyrians to the Umayyads* (London, 2003), index, s.v. Gaza.

[39] See Ibn Ishāq, *The Life of Muhammad,* trans. A. Guillaume (1955; reprint, Karachi, 1990), 58–59.

[40] On these cities of the Negev, see J. Shereshevski, *Byzantine Urban Settlements in the Negev Desert* (Beer-Sheva, 1991). The seven cities are Kurnub, Eboda, Nessana, Subeita, Elusa, Saadi, and Ruheibeh.

[41] J. Magness has disputed the view that the arrival of Islam in the region caused a decline in these Negev cities; see *The Archaeology of the Early Islamic Settlement in Palestine* (Winona Lake, Ind., 2003).

to Gaza, ran most straight, especially in the central and southern part of the *wādī.*[42] This area was under the phylarchal jurisdiction of the Ghassānid Abū Karib, appointed by Justinian over Palaestina Tertia; protecting the caravans and attending to their needs must have been among his main paramilitary duties, in which he had been involved even when he was the chief of Phoinikōn, an important station of the spice route in northern Ḥijāz. In Roman times, the legionaries of the Third Cyrenaica in this region engaged in work at the copper mines of Wādī ʿAraba and at Timna.[43] The Ghassānid *foederati* might have undertaken similar work.

Such then was the involvement of the Ghassānids in the spice route, which conveyed to the Byzantine world of the Mediterranean the luxury products of the Far East and India. Arabia provided its own unique product: frankincense, which grew only in the southern part of the peninsula and which became indispensable in the fourth century for Christian rites.

III. The Wādī Sirḥān Route

Wādī Sirḥān in North Arabia was another major route to Oriens, running about 360 kilometers from Dūmat al-Jandal in the southeast to al-Azraq in the northwest, where its northern entrance led to the Provincia Arabia, the headquarters of the Ghassānids (see Map III). The term *wādī,* which suggests a narrow passageway, might seem misapplied to this broad lowland.[44] Important personages passed through this *wādī* in ancient and medieval times—most relevant to our theme, the Salīḥids, the federates of Byzantium in the fifth century.[45] In the sixth century, when the defense of Oriens was enhanced by the employment of the Ghassānids, the *wādī* was controlled by a powerful Arab group of the Outer Shield, Kalb;[46] behind them were the Ghassānid *foederati* in the Provincia Arabia, the base from which Arethas protected the diocese from the nomadic threat. In conducting his own campaigns in inner and eastern Arabia, in what might be termed the Unknown War, Arethas marched through this *wādī* when he fought such tribes as the Tamīm. The poet ʿAlqama must have traversed the same *wādī* when he came as a suppliant and pleaded with the Ghassānid king for his brother's release, which

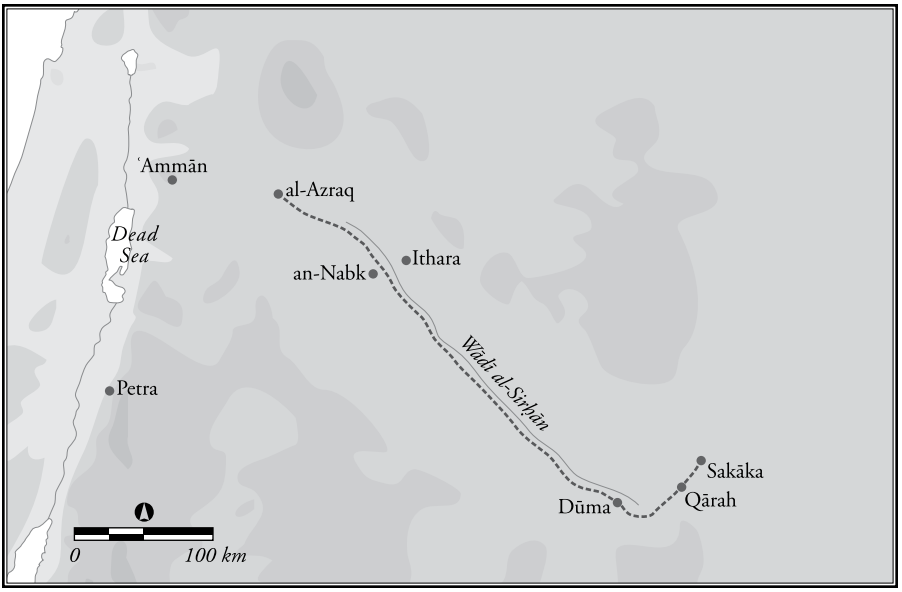
[42] I should like to thank Professor Andrew Smith for informing me of the archaeological field research that has been going on for more than a decade in the Wādī ʿAraba region, about which he read a paper at the Tenth Conference of the History and Archaeology of Jordan, in Washington, D.C., on May 24, 2007. I hope to visit this *wādī* in order to see the extent and degree to which archaeology can help deepen our understanding of this segment of the spice route.

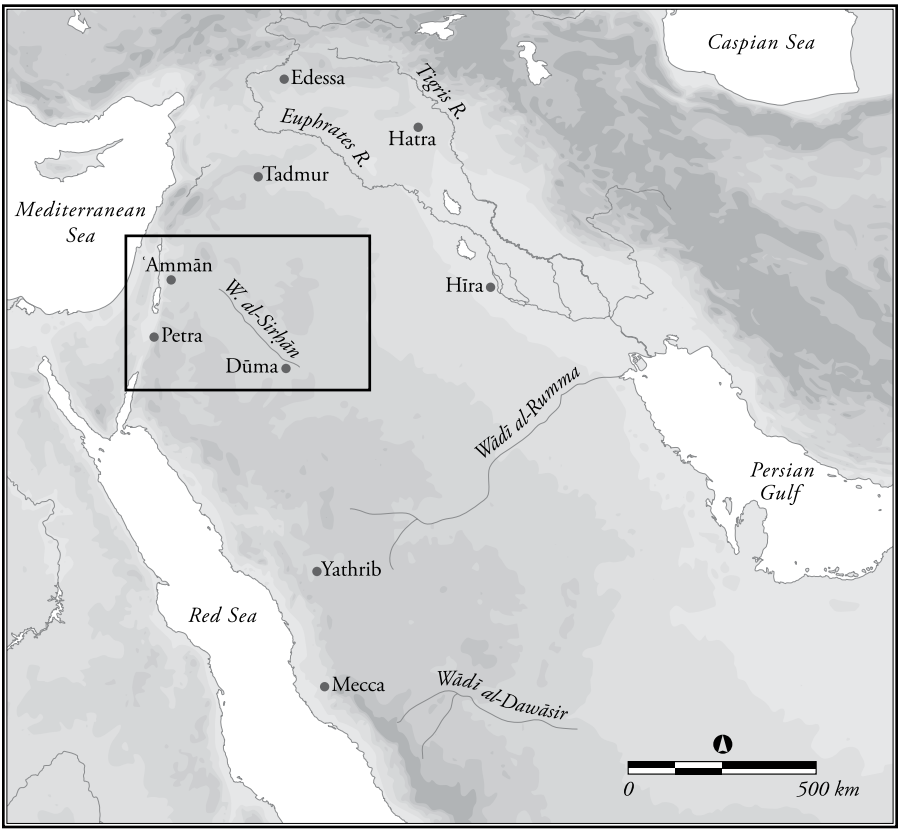
[43] See B. Rothenberg, *Timna: Valley of the Biblical Copper Mines* (London, 1972).

[44] A most valuable work on Wādī Sirḥān is *Fi Shamāl Gharb al-Jazīra* (Riyadh, 1981), by the late Saudi scholar Ḥamad al-Jāsir; see especially his description of the *wādī* (608–9).

[45] On the Salīḥids, see *BAFIC,* especially 346–37.

[46] On the Kalb and the Outer Shield, see ibid., 478–79.





Map III. Wādi al-Sirhān

his splendid panegyric on the king effected.[47] The *wādī* was protected by two fortresses: one at the southern entrance, at Dūma, and the other at the northern entrance, at Azraq. At both, Latin inscriptions commemorate the strong Roman presence there and the movement of Legio III Cyrenaica based in Bostra.[48] When Justinian drastically reorganized Arab federate power in Oriens, around A.D. 530, the watch over Wādī Sirḥān fell not to Abū Karib but to his brother Arethas, as the supreme phylarch and king of all or almost all the Arab federates in Oriens;[49] the responsibility of this watch grew even greater when the *foederati* became in effect the *limitanei* of Oriens.[50] The *wādī* was also protected and guarded by the powerful tribe of Kalb, which participated in the defense of the diocese as part of both the Inner and the Outer Shield.[51] The Kalb's influence reached as far as the southern entrance of the *wādī* at Dūma.

The historical geography of Wādī Sirḥān provides background necessary to understand its role in the economic history of Byzantium. Its soil made it an important source of salt, which apparently was still sold in modern times in ʿAmmān, the capital of the Hashimite kingdom of Jordan.[52] But more significant was the *wādī*'s function as a gateway for caravans and as the site of the great fair that was held at its southern entrance at Dūma, where trans-Arabian trade routes intersected.[53]

IV. The Maritime Route

In addition to the three overland routes overseen in part by the Ghassānids was a maritime route, which is less well known than the other three but also involved the Ghassānids (see Map IV).

Palaestina Tertia—the southernmost province in Oriens, assigned by Justinian to the Ghassānid Abū Karib—had two seaports: Zoghar on the southern

[47] An incident discussed below in "Clothes," Chapter 6 in Part II.

[48] The more remarkable inscriptions, of a Roman centurion, are at Dūma; for facsimiles, see G. W. Bowersock, *Roman Arabia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), plates 14, 15, and see his valuable appendix on the importance of Wādī Sirḥān for the prosperity of the Provincia Arabia, 154–59. See also M. P. Speidel, "The Roman Road to Dumata," in *Roman Army Studies* (Stuttgart, 1992), 213–17, corrected by C. Zuckerman on the extent of the fortified road, which, he observed, ran only from Bostra to Azraq; see his "Aur. Valerianus (291/305) et Fl. Severinus (333), commandants en Arabie, et la forteresse d'Azraq," *Antiquité Tardive* 2 (1994), 83–88.

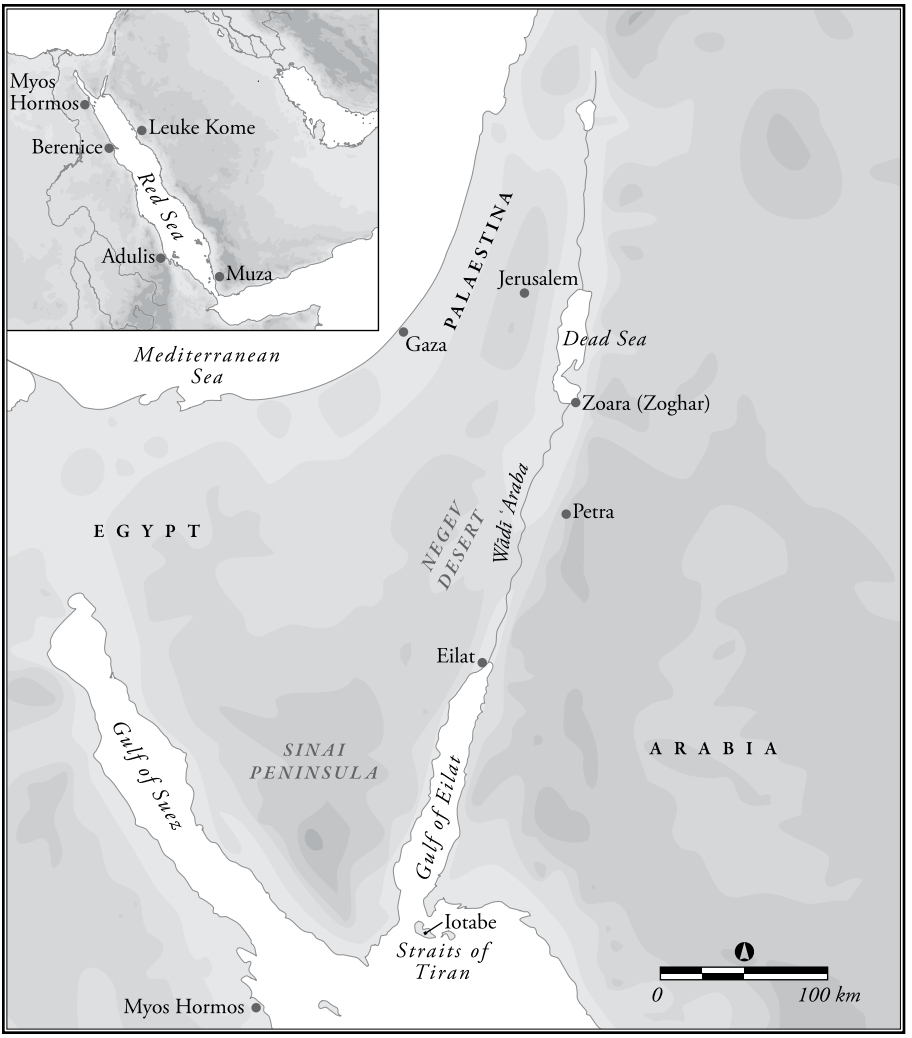
[49] A Ghassānid presence at Dūma may be implied in the verse in Ḥassān that refers to Qaṣr Dūmat; see *BASIC* II.1, 241–42.

[50] See ibid., 21–51.

[51] Kalb acted through its subgroup, Kināna. For Kalb in Wādī Sirḥān, Dūma, and northern Arabia, see L. Veccia Vaglieri, "Dūmat al-Jandal," *EI*², II, 625.

[52] Ḥ. al-Jāsir, *Fi Shamāl Gharb al-Jazīra,* 75.

[53] The most extensive account of Dūma, often called Dūmat al-Jandal in the Arabic sources, may still be found in A. Musil, *Arabia Deserta: A Topographical Itinerary* (New York, 1927), 532–53. The *sūq* of Dūma is discussed at length below in Chapter 4, "The Fairs."



Map IV. The Maritime Route

shore of the Dead Sea and Eilat/Ayla at the head of the Red Sea, with its two gulfs, the Gulf of Clysma and the Gulf of Eilat/Ayla. At the southern mouth of the Gulf of Eilat/Ayla was the island of Iotabe. The two ports and the island all were important in the maritime trade of Byzantium in the sixth century, and the Ghassānids were involved in all three locations.

The Red Sea became a significant maritime route for the Ptolemies after Hippalus discovered the secret of monsoons in the first century B.C., enabling them to be harnessed by mariners; hence the Red Sea became the gateway to commercial relations with the world of the Indian Ocean, as spices, aromatics, precious stones, ivory, Chinese silk, and other products were imported from both its African and Indian shores.[54] The route continued to be traveled in the Roman period, though its importance declined in certain periods (for example, the latter part of the fifth century). But it revived in the sixth, especially in the 520s when, during the long reign of Justinian, South Arabia became Christianized after the Ethiopian military intervention supported by Byzantium. It was within the next five decades, before the Persian occupation of South Arabia in 570, that the Ghassānid involvement in the Red Sea trade may be set. Bringing to light the Arab connection to this maritime trade route, and to the overland trade route, imparts a new paramilitary dimension to Abū Karib's role in the Byzantine economy.

1. The island of Iotabe in the straits of Tirān at the mouth of the Gulf of Eilat was an important station on this Red Sea route. It had taken the place of Leuke Kome as the customs clearinghouse for ships sailing to the port of Eilat at the head of the gulf, and it thus provided the empire with considerable tax revenue.[55] The Ghassānids were involved in Iotabe on various occasions.

a. During the reign of Leo I (457–474), Amorkesos, an adventurous Arab phylarch, took possession of this island and its taxes before Leo officially appointed him the phylarch of Palaestina Tertia. He was, most probably, a Ghassānid.[56]

b. During the reign of Anastasius (491–518), the Ghassānid Jabala controlled the island until Romanus, the *dux* of Palestine, dislodged him from it; but shortly thereafter, he was accepted as the Ghassānid phylarch and king, thus beginning the Ghassānid period in the history of the Arab federates in Oriens.[57] The natural presumption is that he, and his descendants after him,[58] returned to occupy the

[54] Agatharchides of Cnidus, a Peripatetic and guardian of a young Ptolemy in the second century B.C., wrote *On the Erythrean Sea,* ed. and trans. S. M. Burstein (London, 1989); see also *The Periplus Maris Erythraei*.

[55] See F. M. Abel, "L'île de Jotabè," *Revue Biblique* 47 (1939), 510–38.

[56] On Amorkesos, see *BAFIC,* 61–113.

[57] On Jabala and the island of Iotabe, see Theophanes, *Chronographia,* ed. C. de Boor (1883; reprint, Hildesheim, 1963), I, 141. For analysis of the passage in Theophanes, see *BAFIC,* 125–27; Jabala is discussed at greater length in *BASIC* I.1, 3–12, 63–70.

[58] See *BAFIC,* 125–27.

island—but now as phylarch of the central government, collecting the taxes for the empire rather than for himself.

c. During the reign of Justinian, around 535, the *dux* of Palestine, Aratius, took possession of the island from an occupying group whose identity was left anonymous in Choricius' account of the episode. The account does relate that after Aratius' successful campaign to free the island, he turned it over to "trustworthy men," ἀνδράσι πιστοῖς, who were appointed to levy taxes for the Byzantine autokrator.[59] The identity of these "trustworthy men" in the ambitious operation carried out by Aratius is practically certain: they must have been the Ghassānids of Abū Karib, who had been entrusted with the phylarchate of Palaestina Tertia only recently and whom Procopius uncharacteristically praises.[60]

The data cumulatively provided by these sources indicate that the Ghassānids collected the taxes for the empire on the island of Iotabe—just as they collected them in Bostra, the terminus of the overland spice route in the Provincia Arabia, as the sources explicitly state.[61]

2. Eilat/Ayla was the window of Oriens on the world of the Indian Ocean and the Far East. It received merchandise that arrived on ships that had stopped at Iotabe and then sailed on after being taxed; from Eilat/Ayla, the goods were distributed to various parts of Oriens. Some reached Tyre and Sidon in Phoenike Maritima, whence they were conveyed to Constantinople. Because it also received merchandise that was carried over the overland spice route of western Arabia, Eilat/Ayla was an important emporium in this century, particularly during the reign of Justinian.

The involvement of the Ghassānids in Ayla was even deeper than in Iotabe, and it may be presented as follows.

a. The Ghassānids were given extensive military duties in 529 throughout Oriens, especially as they took over the responsibilities of the *limitanei*.[62] At least some of the Roman troops stationed around Eilat/Ayla would have been replaced by the Ghassānids under the energetic phylarch Abū Karib. Consequently, the Ghassānids would have guarded Byzantine interests in the region of Ayla, so close to the pastoralist Arab threat, which they could handle better than the regular Roman *stratiōtai*.

b. This involvement is confirmed by a verse of Ḥassān, the Ghassānid panegyrist, which speaks of their being in charge of the region of Ayla on the two

[59] See *Choricii Gazaei opera,* ed. R. Förster and E. Richsteig (Leipzig, 1929), 67.

[60] Procopius, *History,* I.xix.11. For these operations, see *BASIC* I.1, 129–30, 182–85. Customs were considerable, amounting to one-eighth of the merchandise's value; see P. Meyerson, "The Island of Iotabê in the Byzantine Sources: A Reprise," *BASOR* 287 (1992), 3 note 2.

[61] On Bostra, see M. Lecker, "The Levying of Taxes for the Sassanians in Pre-Islamic Medina (Yathrib)," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 27 (2002), 115–20.

[62] See *BASIC* II.1, 35–51.

sides of the Gulf of Eilat.[63] The Ghassānids thus had an extensive presence in and around Ayla. One of the poets speaks of the "glittering *danānīr* (dinars) of Ayla," which he presumably observed or received while transacting some business with the Ghassānids there.[64]

c. The importance of Ayla is reflected in Koranic and Muhammadan sources in the last days of Byzantium in Oriens. It was almost certainly referred to in the Koran as Ḥādirat al-Baḥr.[65] Moreover, the covenant that the Prophet Muḥammad struck with Yūḥanna ibn Ruʾba, the master of Ayla, refers to the security given by the Prophet to the caravans reaching it by land and the ships arriving by sea.[66] In the later Islamic sources, which are more explicit and informative on Ayla, the city is described as very prosperous, and the presumption is that it had been so in the sixth century.[67]

Ayla was for centuries an Arab Nabataean city, whose inhabitants became Arab *Rhomaioi* when Caracalla issued his edict in A.D. 212. They continued in that status, speaking Arabic as their native language, in the sixth and seventh century, as is clear from the Prophet Muḥammad's covenant with them. The Ghassānids, who levied the tax on the caravaneers of the spice route at Bostra, may also have been responsible for levying it on those who sailed the Red Sea on their way to Iotabe and thence to Ayla, especially if they were Arab merchants. The Ghassānids thus had a presence in the Gulf of Eilat in both Iotabe and Ayla—an outgrowth of the strong Byzantine presence in the Red Sea in this period.[68] One demonstration of that presence is the number of ships that sailed from the Red Sea's northern Byzantine ports to support the Negus of Ethiopia in his South Arabian campaign. The survivors

[63] See *Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit,* ed. W. ʿArafāt, Gibb Memorial New Series 25 (London, 1971), I, 308, verse 9.

[64] For this verse, see Uḥayḥa ibn al-Julāḥ in Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-Buldān* (Beirut, 1955), I, 292, Column B, verse 2.

[65] Koran, 7:163.

[66] See M. Hamidullah, *Majmūʿat al-Wathāʾiq al-Siyāsiyya, li al-ʿAhd al-Nabawi* (Beirut, 1987), 16–118. The covenant clearly implies that the inhabitants of Ayla with whom the Prophet dealt were Arabs, and it reflects the new world order—the Prophet is now himself taxing the *Rhomaioi* Arabs who earlier had taxed him when he arrived at the frontier as a caravan leader.

Nöldeke thought that Yūḥanna ibn Ruʾba was a descendant of Abū Karib, whom he believed was a Kindite; see *GF,* 17 note 1. But he came to that conclusion before the discovery of the Sabaic Dam inscription of Abraha, which proved that Abū Karib was the brother of Arethas, a Ghassānid. Nöldeke recognized his mistake in his *Nachlass*.

[67] Ayla was especially prosperous in the Mamlūk period. These Islamic sources have important data on Ayla, now al-ʿAqaba; one of them, *Khitat al-Maqrīzi,* refers to the existence of a *bāb maʿqūd,* possibly a vaulted porch, that contained a military station for the Romans (referred to as *Qaysar,* Caesar), where taxes (*miks*) were levied; see the index of Y. Ghawanmeh, *al-Tārikh al-Siyāsi li Sharq al-Urdunn fi ʿAsr Dawlat al-Mamālīk al-Ūlā* (Amman, 1982), s.v. al-ʿAqaba.

[68] In effect, the Red Sea became a Byzantine lake, especially in the reigns of Justin I and Justinian; see J. Ruska, "Milāḥa," *EI*², VII, 41–42.

from the martyrdoms of Najrān around 520 had come to Jābiya in the Golan to ask their relative, the Ghassānid king Jabala, for military help; though Jabala could not at that time aid them, the emperor Justin, according to the *Martyrium Arethae,* soon thereafter sent fifteen ships from Ayla, twenty from Clysma, seven from Iotabe, and two from Berenice.[69] Surely these ships, especially those that sailed from Ayla and Iotabe, also carried Ghassānid troops, eager to exact vengeance for the martyrs, which they had been unable to do without Byzantine support.

3. Although seafaring and water-borne traffic in the Dead Sea is not explicitly mentioned in the contemporary sources, the Madaba Mosaic map does include a scene depicting ships. That evidence from the mosaic—together with references in the Islamic sources of later times, when the two shores of the sea were similarly united under one power—suggests that some vessels traversed the Dead Sea. Dubbed Mare Mortuum, it did not support fishing, but there must have been some traffic in such products as bitumen and salt; the Islamic sources specifically name indigo, *nīla,* and boats built at Zoghar that reached the Dead Sea shore near Jericho.[70]

[69] See *BALA* III, 39 and note 53.

[70] See Gawanmeh, *al-Tārikh al-Siyāsi li Sharq al-Urdunn fi ʿAsr Dawlat al-Mamālīk al-Ūlā*.

IV

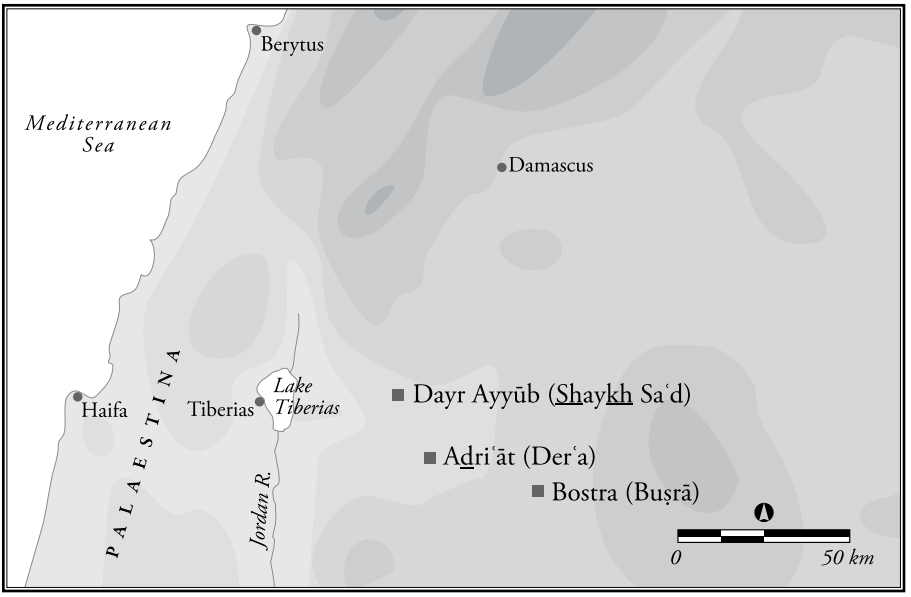
The Fairs

The *aswāq* (plural of *sūq*), the markets or fairs, were a key feature of the economic and social life of the pre-Islamic Arabs in the Arabian Peninsula as they were in the Byzantine Empire. They were the centers at which the urban and the pastoral sectors of Arab society met and connected within an inter-Arab and intra-Arabian framework.[1] The *aswāq* became more important when, after monsoons were harnessed, the Red Sea began offering an alternative route for international trade between the two worlds of the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean; the Ptolemies, Romans, Byzantines, and Ethiopians subsequently began participating in this maritime commerce, sometimes as competitors with one another and with the Ḥimyarites of South Arabia. The importance of these intra-Arabian markets reached its peak when hostilities between Byzantium and Persia resumed in the sixth century and war broke out in the reign of every emperor and shah of that century. Because of these conflicts, traffic shifted from the Mesopotamian route to the overland Arabian route, the famous *via odorifera,* which extended from South Arabia to the southern part of Oriens, comprising Palaestina Tertia and the Provincia Arabia. The same century also witnessed the rise of Mecca to the position of the dominant Arab caravan city, as nearby ʿUkāẓ became the primary market of the Arabs in pre-Islamic times—a development of great importance to the rise of Islam and the Arab Muslim Conquests of the seventh century.

Nothing better illustrates the surge in the economic life of Arabia and the Arabs than the rise of about ten of these fairs, which sprang up throughout the Peninsula.[2] This feverish intra-Arabian economic expansion in sixth-century Arabia

[1] For the *aswāq,* see T. Bianquis and P. Guichard, "Sūḳ," *EI*², IX, especially 786–87 (on the pre-Islamic period); see also I. M. Ḥammūr, *Aswāq al-ʿArab* (Beirut, 1979); S. al-Afghānī, *Aswāq al-ʿArab fi al-Jāhiliyya wa al-Islam* (Cairo, 1993). For the fair, πανήγυρις, in Byzantine life, see Ph. Koukoules, *Byzantinon bios kai politismos* (Athens, 1949), III, 270–83, S. Vryonis, "The *Panegyris* of the Byzantine Saint," in *The Byzantine Saint: University of Birmingham Fourteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies,* ed. S. Hackel (London, 1981), 196–227; L. de Ligt, *Fairs and Markets in the Roman Empire: Economic and Social Aspects of Periodic Trade in a Pre-industrial Society* (Amsterdam, 1993).

[2] A highly intelligent account of this surge and the importance of the *aswāq* as local trade within the Peninsula may be found in M. B. Piotrovski, "L'économie de l'Arabie préislamique," in *L'Arabie avant*



Map V. The Three Arab Fairs, *Aswāq*, in Oriens

benefited the Ghassānids, both as protectors of the caravans and as conveners and tax collectors at these fairs.

I

The Ghassānids were involved in these markets in two different areas, one outside Oriens in the Arabian Peninsula and the other within Oriens.

Arabia

The sources are clear on the Ghassānid ties to one important market in Arabia, that of Dūma. Dūma was an important strategic site for Byzantium, both because

l'Islam, ed. S. Noja (Aix-en-Provence, 1994), 211–39 (reviewed by the present writer in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 32 [2000], 538–41). For the medieval Arabic sources on the *aswāq,* see al-Yaʿqūbi, *Tārīkh* (Beirut, n.d.), I, 313–14; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Muḥabbar,* ed. I. Lichtenstädter (1942; reprint, Beirut, n.d.), 263–68; Abū-ʿAli al-Marzūqi, *Kitāb al-Azmina wa al-Amkina* (Hyderabad, 1914), II, 169–70.

Yaʿqūbi lists ten fairs (for the English version, see R. G. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs* [London, 2001], 109–10); though Ḥammūr's work (*Aswāq al-ʿArab*) makes clear that the actual number was higher, these ten were the most important.

it was located at the southern entrance of an important gateway to Oriens from the Arabian Peninsula, namely Wādī Sirḥān (Map III), and because it was the location of a fair that had international as well as Arabian significance.[3] The Byzantine presence there was simultaneously direct, through its Ghassānid *foederati,* and indirect, through allied groups such as Kinda and Kalb. The sources speak of the involvement of the Ghassānids in this *sūq,* noting that they used to run it alternately with Kalb or a Kalb subdivision, the Kināna.[4] The merchants who used to frequent the *sūq* were tithed by the Ghassānids when they were in charge of it. One of the sources uses the verb *ghalaba,*[5] "gain the upper hand," to characterize the alternating control of the *sūq* between Ghassān and Kalb—a curious term to use of allies. Another source, however, relates the term to a contest of wits between the two groups that involved solving an enigma, *uḥjiya;*it explicitly states that taxes, *ʿushūr,* were levied.[6]

Of all the fairs in Arabia, the one in Dūma had the most international importance—an importance derived from the strategic position of Dūma itself at the intersection of several routes, halfway between Ḥīra and Persia on the one hand and Mecca and Medina on the other: it was a central point on an international trade route running from east to west. One of the two main sources on *aswāq* gives it more space than all the other fairs of Arabia. Apparently, the *sūq* was a site of Byzantine-Persian rivalry,[7] which further endowed it with international importance and naturally involved the Ghassānids, as *foederati*.[8]

[3] On the *sūq* of Dūma, see Afghānī, *Aswāq al-ʿArab,* 232–39, and Ḥammūr, *Aswāq al-ʿArab,* 166–69.

[4] For the medieval Arabic sources on the *sūq* of Dūma, see Yaʿqūbi, *Tārīkh,* I, 270–71, and the expansive account in Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Muḥabbar,* 263–64. Ibn Habīb provides a detailed description of how business in the *sūq* was conducted and what role the Ghassānids played; M. Lecker has clarified some of its confusing elements in "Were Customs Dues Levied at the Time of the Prophet Muhammad?" *Al-Qantara* 22 (2001), 19–43 (on Dūma, see 27–28).

[5] Yaʿqūbi, *Tārīkh,* 270.

[6] Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Muḥabbar,* 264.

[7] The rivalry is perceptively noted by Lecker in "Were Customs Dues Levied?" For the Sasanid presence in the Arabian Peninsula and its economic implications, see M. Morony, "The Late Sasanian Economic Impact on the Arabian Peninsula," *Nāme-ye Irān-e Bāstān* 1.2 (2002), 26–37.

[8] The work of the most recent traveler to Dūma, the scholar Ḥamad al-Jāsir, should be noted; see *Fi Shamāl Gharb al-Jazīra* (Riyadh, 1981), 528–33. *Inter alia* he refers to a church that used to be in the vicinity of the fortress, the *qalʿa* (530), perhaps recalling the phrase *qaṣr Dūma* in Ḥassān's verse; see *Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit,* ed. W. ʿArafāt, Gibb Memorial New Series 25 (London, 1971), I, 75, verse 20.

A verse in an ode by the Umayyad poet Kuthayyir ʿAzza (d. 723) refers to a monk, to merchants, and to pilgrims in Dūma, suggesting that much of Dūma's pre-Islamic Christianity persisted at least until the middle of the Islamic Umayyad period. Reference to pilgrims might also imply that Dūma was a pilgrimage center, perhaps featuring a *martyrion* in which the relics of some martyrs (those of Najrān?) were deposited. Dūma thus emerges as a *sūq* that, like Dayr Ayyūb in Oriens, may have had some religious significance. For the verse, see Abdulla al-Majdhūb, *al-Murshid il-a Fahm Ashʿār al-ʿArab* (Cairo, 1995), I, 436.

Oriens

Three important markets were located in Oriens,[9] and they all involved the Ghassānids (see Map V).

1. The *sūq* of Dayr Ayyūb. Nowadays an insignificant village called Shaykh Saʿd,[10] in ancient and Byzantine times Dayr Ayyūb was much more important. It lay 10 kilometers to the south of Jābiya in the Golan. As its name indicates, it was related in the popular mind to Ayyūb, the biblical Job, a connection that has survived in the form of a *maqām,* a religious site associated with him in Ḥawrān, in Ghassānland proper. This biblical figure was of importance to the Ghassānids as warriors, since in war they invoked not just St. Sergius but also Ayyūb, Job,[11] celebrated in the Bible for his endurance and fortitude in the face of adversity—qualities that the Ghassānids saw in themselves. They identified so strongly with the virtue of *ṣabr* (endurance) that a clan or a subdivision within the Ghassānids was called the *ṣubr:* that is, those who were known for their endurance.[12]

The sources state that Dayr Ayyūb was the first stop for the Arabs of the Peninsula after they completed their transactions at the three *aswāq* of Ḥijāz—ʿUkāẓ, Majanna, and Dhu al-Majāz. Their caravans would then proceed to the three markets of Oriens, beginning with Dayr Ayyūb.[13] And because this *sūq* was also one of the *loca sancta* of Oriens, it brings to mind ʿUkāẓ, the pan-Arab *sūq* near the sites of the pre-Islamic Arab pilgrimage to ʿArafāt; for the Byzantine world, it recalls the fair at Thessalonike, so closely associated with the feast day of St. Demetrios.

2. Bostra. The second *sūq* visited by the caravans from Arabia was Bostra, the most important of the three markets in Oriens. The town had been founded by Nabataean Arabs and had become the capital of the Provincia Arabia. The rise to prominence of the West Arabian spice route enhanced its importance, since Bostra was one of the route's two termini (the other being Gaza). It therefore developed into a great emporium frequented by the Arab caravans carrying international goods that hailed ultimately from Abyssinia, South Arabia, and India.[14]

[9] All unknown to the medieval sources Ibn Ḥabīb and Jaʿqūbi, but known to Marzūqi; see *al-Azmina wa al-Amkina,* II, 169–70.

[10] See R. Dussaud, *Topographie historique de la Syrie antique et médiévale* (Paris, 1927), 244.

[11] See Al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* ed. S. Fayṣal (Beirut, 1968), 53, verse 16. The biblical figure appears in the Koran (38:41–44). See also the appendix to Chapter 11 in Part II.

[12] The association of *ṣabr* with Ghassān, and the unit called *al-ṣubr* or *al-ṣubur*, survived well into the Umayyad period, since it appears in the verse of al-Akhṭal, the poet laureate of the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Malik; see his *Dīwān,* ed. A. Ṣālḥāni (Beirut, 1969), 106, verse 4 (with the footnote making clear that Ḥassān in the text should read Ghassān).

[13] See Ḥammūr, *Aswāq al-ʿArab,* 195–96, and Afghānī, *Aswāq al-ʿArab,* 362–63.

[14] On Bostra, the standard work is M. Sartre, *Bostra, des origines à l'Islam* (Paris, 1985) (see G. W. Bowersock's review in *American Journal of Philology* 106 [1985], 139–42); see also A. Abel, "Bosrā," *EI*[2] I, 1275–77.

The Arabic sources single out for special mention two items for which Bostra was known among the Arabs: the wines sold there, whether locally pressed or brought thither from other parts of Oriens, and its swords with broad blades, *safā'iḥ,* mentioned in Arabic pre-Islamic poetry.[15] The swords' prominence at this fair suggests that there may have been a *fabrica* in Bostra in addition to the better-known *fabricae* in Oriens.

One sign of Bostra's importance is the length of its *sūq,* which was held for twenty-five days, a fact that no doubt derives from its being the terminus of the spice route. The *sūq* clearly kept its importance in Islamic Umayyad times, as its duration increased to thirty or forty days.[16]

With the rise of Mecca to a dominant position as the main caravan city of Arabia, Bostra became a final destination of the Meccans and their caravans.[17] One of the caravaneers, according to the sources, was none other than the future Prophet of Islam, who is supposed to have visited Bostra on two occasions—once as a child in the caravan of his uncle Abū Ṭālib and again when he himself led the caravans of his wife Khadīja. It was during one of these visits that he is said to have met the monk Baḥīra in a monastery, the famous Dayr Bostra.[18]

As the capital of Provincia Arabia, the main Ghassānid province under the celebrated Arethas, the supreme phylarch, and until the end of the dynasty, Bostra was a key city for the Ghassānids. There were kept the regalia of the Ghassānid kings.[19] So, as the guardians of Bostra's *sūq* full of peninsular Arabs, the Ghassānids acted for Byzantium as they tithed Arabia's caravaneers, who brought their merchandise thither.

It was only natural that the Ghassānids should have been responsible for levying the tax in Bostra. The sources attest to their delegation of that charge to the tribe of Juḏām at the point where the merchants first crossed the Byzantine frontier in Palaestina Tertia, when the merchandise was still in transit.[20] In Bostra, selling and buying were taxed, again by Arabic-speaking Ghassānids dealing with Arabic-speaking peninsulars.[21]

3. Aḏriʿāt. After Bostra, the Arabs and Arabian caravans visited the third *sūq,* at

[15] See Afghānī, *Aswāq al-ʿArab,* 370–71.

[16] See Marzūqi, *al-Azmina wa al-Amkina,* 167.

[17] On Bostra's relations with Mecca and Ḥijāz, see Sartre, *Bostra,* 129–32.

[18] See S. Gero, "The Legend of the Monk Baḥīra: The Cult of the Cross and Iconoclasm," in *La Syrie de Byzance à Islam,* ed. P. Canivet and J.-P. Rey-Coquais (Damascus, 1992), 47–57.

[19] See *BASIC* I.1, 469.

[20] See Chapter 5, below.

[21] See M. Lecker's ingenious argument and the sources he cites for the phrase "taxes of Bostra," *kharāj Busrā,* in "The Levying of Taxes for the Sassanians in Pre-Islamic Medina (Yathrib)," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 27 (2002), 109–26; on the taxes of Bostra, 115–20.

Aḏriʿāt. It lay to the northwest of Bostra in the Bathaniyya region (biblical Bāshān), and it survives nowadays in Syria as the chief town of Ḥawrān, called Derʿa.[22]

The sources that mention it make clear that the *sūq* of Aḏriʿāt lasted a long time, apparently longer than the other two *aswāq*. Al-Marzūqi, a writer of the fifth century of the *hijra,* says that it was still functioning in his day, some five centuries after the fall of the Ghassānids.[23] Aḏriʿāt, like Dayr Ayyūb, was under Ghassānid phylarchal control in the Provincia Arabia. The few sources extant do not expressly state that the Ghassānids levied the taxes on its caravaneers—a responsibility (according to these sources) they had for Bostra's, as Arabs dealing with Arab traders—but it seems very likely. One sign of the Ghassānid association with Aḏriʿāt is provided by the Kindite poet Imruʾ al-Qays, a relative of the Ghassānids, who visited it, as a verse of his reveals.[24] The association is confirmed by the famous battle of Aḏriʿāt in A.D. 614. The Ghassānids were employed to defend Oriens against the Persians during the Persian war of Heraclius' reign, and they participated in the battle fought at Aḏriʿāt.[25] Such links strongly suggest Ghassānid involvement in the town and in the *sūq* associated with it.[26]

It is not clear whether Aḏriʿat had any religious significance (such as Dayr Ayyūb had), which would have made its *sūq* more attractive. When members of the Jewish community of Banū al-Naḍīr were expelled from Yathrib/Medina in A.D. 626, they chose to settle in Aḏriʿāt; perhaps that was their place of origin,[27] or perhaps the place held some religious association for them. [28] Such an association would also have

[22] On Aḏriʿāt, see Dussaud, *Topographie historique de la Syrie,* 325ff.

[23] Marzūqi, *al-Azmina wa al-Amkina,* 170.

[24] See Imruʾ al-Qays, *Dīwān,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1958), 31, verse 2. The poet, known as the "vagabond king" and a confirmed hedonist, no doubt found appealing the entertainments that such *aswāq* provided to draw in more purchasers. Aḏriʿāt was noted for its wine, an added attraction to Imru' al-Qays; on its wine, see the verse of the Hudhali poet cited by P. Crone in *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Princeton, 1987), 105 note 92.

[25] On the battle of Aḏriʿāt, see W. E. Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Arab Conquests* (Cambridge, 1992), 114–17. The battle and the subsequent fall of Jerusalem to the Persians are alluded to in *sūrat al-Rūm* in the Koran (30:1–3).

[26] That Muʿāwiya II, the son of the caliph Yazid ibn-Muʿāwiya, was born in Aḏriʿāt might provide further support to its association with the Ghassānids. Yazid used to frequent Ghassānid Ḥuwwārin and Jalliq, where he could drink and hunt, and perhaps Aḏriʿāt was another Ghassānid resort where he spent some time.

[27] So thought the late Shlomo Goitein; Aḏriʿāt had an important Jewish community in pre-Islamic times. A connection with the Jews of Medina is indicated by the arrival for the Jews of seven caravans in one day from Aḏriʿāt and Bostra (see Crone, *Meccan Trade,* 102, 140 note 36).

[28] Both the community of Banū al-Naḍīr and the other Jewish tribe in Medina, the Qurayza, called themselves *al-Kāhinān,* a reference to their priestly descent; they therefore might have sought out a dwelling place with some religious associations. However, none can be predicated for Aḏriʿāt, biblical Edrei, other than its falling within the portion allotted to the half-tribe of Manassah; see M. Avi-Yonah,

been accepted by the Christians of the empire, as Job/Ayyūb was.[29] But in any case, Aḏriʿāt was a nodal point that "dominated north-south communications east of the Jordan";[30] as such, its *sūq* enjoyed great drawing power, to which its Jewish community could have contributed.[31] The Jews in this period were active as craftsmen and agriculturalists—as demonstrated by the prosperity of Yathrib/Medina, which had three Jewish tribal groups, celebrated for their craftsmanship and agriculture.[32]

Whether there were *aswāq* in Oriens other than these three remains an open question. One tantalizing verse in the *Dīwān* of the Ghassānid panegyrist al-Nābigha explicitly refers to a *sūq* that was held, *muqām,* either at a place called Luqmān or by a wine merchant called Luqmān.[33] Regardless of its other uncertainties, the verse is clear on the existence of a *sūq* to which, according to the poet, the wine vats came from Capitolias—one of the cities of the Decapolis and within the Provincia Arabia. Hence a Ghassānid association with this *sūq* can probably be predicated, since the poem was in praise of a Ghassānid king: the poet was describing the transfer of wine from one place in the Provincia Arabia (the headquarters of the Ghassānids) to another, and the subject was wine, so dear to the Ghassānids and the poet, who may have tasted it at that *sūq*.

Needless to say, these *aswāq* were good publicity for the Ghassānids and Byzantium, since the Arab merchants would return home bearing tales of a powerful and well-ordered Ghassānid phylarchate. In addition to exchanging material goods and commodities, merchants and customers naturally also exchanged ideas and other intangibles, as suggested by the account of the encounter of the monk Baḥīra and Muḥammad.[34]

"Edrei," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica,* VI, 381. On the Jews of Aḏriʿat during the Persian invasion, see Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Arab Conquests,* 116–17.

[29] Dayr Ayyūb remained in Islamic times a *locus sanctus* for Muslims as well, becoming a place of pilgrimage; the biblical figure appears in the Koran (38:41–44). See ʿAli al-Harawi, *Kitāb al-Ishārāt ilā Maʿrifat al-Ziyārāt,* ed. J. Sourdel-Thomine (Damascus, 1953), 16, and her translation of the work into French, *Guide des lieux de pèlerinage* (Damascus, 1957); see also the more recent edition and translation by J. M. Meri, *A Lonely Wayfarer's Guide to Pilgrimage,* Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 19 (Princeton, 2004), 35.

[30] Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Arab Conquests,* 115, based on J. B. Glubb, *The Great Arab Conquests* (London, 1963), 136, 140–43.

[31] For a recent notice of the three *aswāq* in Oriens—Bostra, Dayr Ayyūb, and Aḏriʿāt—in the Islamic context, see A. Binggeli, "Foires et pèlerinages sur la route du Hajj," *Aram* 18–19 (2006–07), 571–76.

[32] See W. M. Watt, "al-Madina," *EI*^{2}, V, especially 994–95.

[33] For the verse, see al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 160, verse 10. The editor, citing Ibn al-Kalbī, prefers to understand Luqmān as the name of the wine merchant rather than of the *sūq*. See also below, Part II, Chapter 5, note 59.

[34] The many fairs *within* the Arabian Peninsula functioned in the life of the pre-Islamic Arabs as a great force unifying them in language, ethos, and mores. For more on this, see the present writer in "The Arabs in Late Antiquity" (Beirut, 2008), 7–9.

II

So much for the regional fairs, involving international trade and traders. Local *aswāq* must surely also have existed within Ghassānid towns; Jābiya or Jalliq is inconceivable without its local *sūq*. Nevertheless, for an accurate account, the urban topographer of the Ghassānid landscape must await the excavations of the field archaeologist of Jābiya or of some other Ghassānid town.

Although the exiguous extant sources make no reference to local *aswāq,*[35] the contemporary scene in Ḥijāz (in Medina and Mecca) offers an informative analogy. A *sūq* in Medina was run by the Jewish tribe of Qaynuqāʿ, and possibly another was run by the Nabataeans.[36] In Mecca, however, the great caravan city, fairs certainly existed, as attested in Islam's holy book, addressed to Muḥammad, who had led the caravans before his prophetic call. In one of the verses of the Koran he is referred to by the unbelieving Meccans as one who walked in the *aswāq* of Mecca.[37] The Prophet is also associated with *aswāq* in Medina, whither he emigrated in 622.

The *sūq* in a Ghassānid town such as Jābiya must have also been a center of social life, much as the *agora* and the *forum* were for the Greeks and the Romans. Whether the Ghassānid *sūq* had the *agoranomos* of the Graeco-Roman world or the *muḥtasib* of later Islamic times is not clear, but it must have had some kind of a market supervisor or inspector. The *sūq* became one of the main distinguishing elements in the tripartite structure of the Islamic city, the other two being the mosque and the governor's mansion, *Dār al-imāra*.[38] If in the Ghassānid cityscape such a tripartite urban structure obtained, the cathedral/monastery would have taken on those functions carried out by the mosque in the later Islamic period.

[35] It is possible that the *sūq* referred to in al-Nābigha's verse (see note 33) was local.

[36] For the *aswāq* of Medina, see Watt, "al-Madina," 995; Bianquis and Guichard, "Sūḳ," 787; and S. al-ʿĀni, *Kaʿb Ibn-Mālik al-Anṣāri* (Baghdad, 1966), 66.

[37] Koran, 25:7.

[38] See G. E. von Grünebaum, "The Structure of the Muslim Town," in *Islam: Essays in the Nature and the Growth of a Cultural Tradition,* 2nd ed. (London, 1961), 141–58.

V

The Ghassānids as Tax Collectors

In addition to protecting caravans and ships until their merchandise reached the termini of Gaza and Bostra, the Ghassānids also engaged in another activity that brought substantial financial benefit to the Empire—namely, taxing that merchandise. The tax was said by the fifth-century historian Malchus to have amounted to one-tenth of the value of the goods and was probably even more, one-eighth.[1] A recently rediscovered Arabic source, *al-Manāqib al-Mazyadiyya,* explicitly documents this function of the Arab *foederati*.[2]

This work states that a certain Zinbāʿ, a member of the tribe of Judām, used to tax the Meccan merchants in gold for the Ghassānids.[3] Judām was a tribe of the Inner Shield,[4] an ally of Byzantium; after the extension of Ghassānid power around A.D. 530 over the whole of Oriens, the tribe was subordinated to the Ghassānid phylarch. Arethas, as commander in chief of the entire federate force in Oriens, could distribute federate responsibility, as when he dispatched one of his generals to be in charge of a fortress in the region of Usays. Similarly, he or his brother, Abū Karib, would have empowered Zinbāʿ to impose the tax on the merchandise that passed through the designated stations at the frontier where foreign merchants crossed into Palaestina Tertia, Byzantine territory. Another source associates the Ghassānids directly with taxes, which they collected from foreign

[1] See P. Meyerson, "The Island of Iotabê in the Byzantine Sources: A Reprise," *BASOR* 287 (1992), 3 note 2.

[2] Advertised to the scholarly world by M. J. Kister and published in 1984; see Abū al-Baqāʾ Hibat Allah, *al-Manāqib al-Mazyadiyya,* ed. S. Daradka and M. Khuraysāt, 2 vols. (Amman, 1984).

That the Arab *foederati* in Oriens used to collect the taxes levied on other Arabs who crossed the frontier from Arabia is clearly stated in the sources on the Salīḥids, the fifth-century predecessors of the Ghassānids. See M. ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Muḥabbar,* ed. I. Lichtenstädter (1942; reprint, Beirut, n.d.), 370–71; he notes that the Ghassānids, before becoming the *foederati* of Byzantium in the sixth century, were themselves taxed.

[3] See Abū al-Baqāʾ Hibat Allah, *al-Manāqib al-Mazyadiyya,* I, 67 (*wa kana Zinbāʿ . . . āshiran li Ibn-Jafna bi al-Shām*). The details and specificity of what follows (68, 70) speak to the authenticity of the statement on the tax levied by Zinbāʿ on Quraysh for the Ghassānids. Zinbāʿ's son, Rawḥ, is a better-known figure of early Islamic times.

[4] On the Inner Shield of Byzantium, see *BAFIC,* 477–78.

traders belonging to various Arabian tribes not on the frontier but within Oriens, at the famous Arab *sūq* of Bostra.[5] The two sources reveal the paramilitary duties of the Arab *foederati* of Byzantium in the economic sector; some of the *foederati* were Ghassānid, and some belonged to other tribes of the Inner Shield, such as the Judām.

Byzantium had an official called κομμερκιάριος, *commerciarius,* who controlled trade on the frontier and collected the taxes.[6] Because the Ghassānids and other Arab federates in Oriens performed that function at the Byzantine frontier where the various trade routes crossed it, they were *commerciarii* if not *de jure* then at least *de facto*. They thereby contributed much to the Byzantine economy, since the value of the merchandise that was carried along the four international routes—and thus the tax imposed on it—was considerable.

[5] See *BASIC* I.1, 122–23. The Ghassānid involvement in taxes at Buṣra (Bostra) and its fair is indicated in various sources, which have been carefully examined by M. Lecker; see his "The Levying of Taxes for the Sassanians in Pre-Islamic Medina (Yathrib)," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 27 (2002), 116–17 and notes 35–38; 118–19 and notes 43–37; 120.

The Ghassānids had a strong presence in Bostra, as most recent research on the Ghassānids has shown (*BASIC* I.1 and I.2; see also Lecker, "The Levying of Taxes," 119 note 48). The *sūq* at which taxes were levied was most probably near but outside Bostra. There were two Sadīrs in the Fertile Crescent, the better-known one in Ḥīra (mentioned in Lecker, 120), and another in southern Jordan, Sadīr ʿAfra; hence its association with Ghassān is correct.

[6] See N. Oikonomides, "Silk Trade and Production in Byzantium from the Sixth to the Ninth Century: The Seals of Kommerkiarioi," *DOP* 40 (1986), 33–53.

VI

A Ghassānid Dyarchy in Oriens

The foregoing pages have revealed the role of the Ghassānids in the economic history of Byzantium in the sixth century. This leads us back to Justinian's Arab and Arabian policy and its economic dimension.[1]

Around A.D. 530 Justinian created the new Arab phylarchate in Oriens under the famous Arethas, whose brother Abū Karib was given an autonomous or possibly an independent command over Palaestina Tertia. These actions reflected Justinian's understanding of the military and economic situation in Oriens. Arethas was pitted against the Persians and the Lakhmids in the north of Oriens, while Abū Karib in the south had to deal with the pastoralist threat from Arabia. But it was also through his province that the two most important of the four international routes passed, and these were his responsibility. Hence the importance of his assignment as phylarch of Palaestina Tertia. The following observations on his assignment are relevant to assessing the soundness of Justinian's Arab policy.[2]

1. The rising importance of the spice and the maritime routes in the sixth century, both of which passed through Palaestina Tertia, justified the imperial decision to assign a special phylarch to look after them, since the chief phylarch, Arethas, was busy in the north fighting Persia and the Lakhmids.

In Justinian's drastic reorganization of federate Ghassānid power in Oriens in 529, Arethas received the lion's share as the archphylarch and king. As a result, commentators have tended to overlook Abū Karib, who was endowed with the phylarchate of Palaestina Tertia. The present elucidation of his role in the economic history of Oriens and Byzantium in the sixth century restores his image in relation to his more famous brother and presents federate Oriens as a virtual dyarchy, in which phylarchal responsibility was divided more or less equally between the two brothers, each performing a function peculiar to his assignment in Oriens.

[1] For the most recent description of Justinian's Arab and Arabian policy, see *BALA* III, xi–xvi.

[2] These remarks may be added to what I have said elsewhere on his Arab and Arabian policy; see ibid. and *BASIC* II.1, 28–32.

The one complemented the other as they discharged their duties in the service of the military and economic interests of the empire.

Nothing illustrates better the important status of Abū Karib as co-equal or almost co-equal with Arethas than the Sabaic Dam inscription of Abraha, the Ethiopian ruler of South Arabia. In that monumental epigraphical document, Abraha recalled the visit (around A.D. 540) to him in Maʾrib of the ambassadors of the rulers of the Near East; in that embassy, Byzantium was represented both by its own ambassador and by the ambassadors of the two brothers, Arethas and Abū Karib.[3]

2. The Diocletianic enlargement of Palaestina Tertia entailed the addition of the Negev and the part of the Provincia Arabia south of the Arnon river, including Petra. The enlargement thus made the phylarch of Palaestina Tertia, Abū Karib, responsible for more of the spice route.

3. Abū Karib had been involved in the spice route even before his appointment as phylarch of Tertia, since he was already in control of Phoinikōn (Tabūk), a station on the spice route, before it became part of Byzantine territory with his enlistment as phylarch.[4]

4. The trade that moved along the most important of the four routes, the spice route, was conducted not by the Ḥimyarites but by the Arabs after Ḥimyar fell to the Ethiopians around 525. Mecca emerged as the principal caravan city of western Arabia. Hence the decision to appoint Arabs, such as Abū Karib, to deal with the Arab caravans of the spice route and with their taxation was sound.

5. Of all the exports of Arabia, the item most significant to the Christian Roman Empire was frankincense. After first disdaining it as a symbol of pagan worship, the church finally accepted frankincense in the late fourth century.[5] Produced only in Ḥaḍramawt in South Arabia, it was brought to Byzantium by Arab merchants and taxed at the frontier by such Arab officials as Abū Karib.

[3] See *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum,* Part IV, Book 2 (Paris, 1911), 280–81, lines 87–92. J. M. Solà Solé has made the celebrated inscriptions numbers 541 and 540 the subject of a monograph; see *Los dos grandes inscripciones sudarábigas del dique de Mârib* (Barcelona, 1960). For the reference to Arethas and Abū Karib, see lines 90–92.

[4] According to Procopius, Abū Karib presented it to the emperor as a gift; *History,* I.xix.8–13.

[5] See R. Taft and A. Kazhdan, "Incense," *ODB,* II, 991.

VII

Other Contributions

In what other ways did the Ghassānids contribute to the economy of Oriens within the diocese, in addition to protecting Oriens from nomads, protecting the caravans of the international routes, and controlling the fairs held in the diocese?

1. One verse of Ḥassān, the Ghassānid poet laureate, speaks of the meadows of the Ghassānids where cattle and goats grazed.[1] If this verse accurately captures a Ghassānid bucolic scene, it indicates that they raised livestock. That the area the poet describes is Ghassānid is clear from the verse *diyārun min Banī al-Ḥasḥās* ("homesteads of Banū al-Ḥasḥās").[2]

2. In another poem, Ḥassān speaks of visiting the Ghassānids in a region that lay between Kurūm and Jizʿ al-Qastal.[3] If *kurūm* is not a proper noun but the plural of *karm,* meaning "vineyard," then it is possible that the Ghassānids planted vines and other crops. So apparently the Ghassānids engaged in some agriculture, including animal management, though the extant sources have little detail on this aspect of Ghassānid economic life.

3. Wādī ʿAraba, the depression that separated Sinai from Arabia, was known since ancient Pharaonic times for its wealth in copper. Its mines were worked by the Egyptians and later by the Arab Midianites and Kenites, the clan of Jethro (known from the Bible as Moses' father-in-law). Even in Roman times the copper mines were still active. Of most relevance for the Ghassānids and their involvement in the economic life of Oriens is the evidence of a Latin inscription set up

[1] See *Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit,* ed. W. ʿArafāt, Gibb Memorial New Series 25 (London, 1971), I, 17, verse 3.

[2] Ibid., verse 2. Banū al-Ḥasḥās belonged to the clan of al-Najjār of Medina, to which Ḥassān also belonged. Some of the Medinan Arabs, relatives of the Ghassānids, apparently lived in Ghassānland—for example, Ibn al-Mughīra (who belonged to the Aws of Medina), the commander of the Usays military station. On Banū al-Ḥasḥās, see Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamharat Ansāb al-ʿArab,* ed. A. Hārūn (Cairo, 1962), 350. On Ibn al-Mughīra, see *BASIC* I.1, 122–23.

[3] See Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 75, verse 17.

as an epitaph, which suggests that when Legio III Cyrenaica was transferred from Libya to Provincia Arabia, some of its members worked in the copper mines.[4] The ʿAraba depression was within the phylarchal jurisdiction of the Ghassānid Abū Karib, and it is possible that the *foederati* were asked to do some work related to these mines during his phylarchate.

[4] See the work of B. Rothenberg, both his *The Egyptian Mining Temple at Timna* (London, 1988) and *Timna: Valley of the Biblical Copper Mines* (London, 1972). On the biblical association of the copper mines with the Kenite Jethro and with Moses, see *Timna,* 182–83; on the Roman copper industry, the references to the Third Cyrenaica legion, and the epitaph, see 222–23.

VIII

The Wealth of Arabia

Strabo's tripartite division of the Arabian Peninsula into *Petraea, Deserta,* and *Felix* suggests that the greater part of Arabia, Inner Arabia, was desert. The preceding pages, with their emphasis on trade routes, might also have given the impression that the Arabian Peninsula was merely a transit area through which long-distance trade and traffic passed. The reality is quite different. The better-informed classical writers perceived Arabia as the land of wonders and of precious metals. This was the view presented by such authors as Diodorus Siculus, who wrote of the gold of western Arabia, as well as medieval Arab writers such as al-Hamdānī, who described its gold and silver.[1] Centuries earlier, the Bible had referred to the "four hundred and twenty talents" brought to King Solomon from Ophir, associated with a distant part of Arabia, and also to the gold brought by the Queen of Sheba from South Arabia and given to Solomon.[2] All these sporadic references to the wealth of Arabia have been confirmed in the most scientific and detailed manner in a volume by Gene Heck that has appeared recently.[3] But first let us discuss Byzantine interest in Arabian gold during late antiquity.

[1] Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica,* Book III, section 45, ed. and trans. C. H. Oldfather et al., Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass., 1935), II, 220–24; al-Hamdānī, *Kitāb al-Jawharatayn, Das Buch von den beiden Edelmetallen: Gold und Silber,* ed. and trans. C. Toll (Uppsala, 1968), 145–57 (on gold and Ḥijāz, 137, 141). See also D. M. Dunlop, "Sources of Gold and Silver in Islam according to Hamdānī," *Studia Islamica* 8 (1957), 29–49; R. G. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs* (London, 2001), 110–12. On Byzantine gold mines, see S. Vryonis, "The Question of Byzantine Mines," *Speculum* 37 (1962), 1–17, and A. Savvides, "Observations on Mines and Quarries in the Byzantine Empire," *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 82, no. 2 (2000), 130–55. For further bibliography, see M. M. Mango, "Gold," *ODB,* II, 858, which does not discuss Arabian gold mines, since no research on their role in the pre-Islamic period had been done.

[2] I Kings 9:28 and 10:2, 10. Eusebius' *Onomasticon* on the toponyms of the Holy Land and Bibleland includes Ophir; see *Eusebius, Onomasticon: The Place Names of Divine Scripture,* ed. and trans. R. S. Notley and Z. Safrai (Leiden, 2005), 165. On Ophir in Arabia, see Agatharchides, quoted by Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs,* 112.

[3] See G. W. Heck, *The Precious Metals of Western Arabia and Their Role in Forging the Economic Dynamic of the Early Islamic State,* King Faiṣal Center for Research and Islamic Studies (Riyadh, 2003).

I

1. Constantine I. The first volume of this series has discussed Constantine's interest in the Arabs and in Arabia. The establishment of Imruʾ al-Qays as king of the Arab federates and above all Constantine's assumption of the title *Arabicus,* which suggested a Byzantine connection to the famous Namara inscription of Imruʾ al-Qays, a long epitaph, were relevant data.[4] Imruʾ al-Qays' campaign against Najrān in South Arabia sometime before A.D. 328 may have been motivated in part by the gold for which Arabia was well known. Gold was also dear to Constantine, who had confiscated the pagan temples' treasures and used their gold for minting his new gold *solidus*.

2. Leo I. The second volume in this series has discussed at great length the emperor Leo's courting of another Arab personage, Amorkesos, whom he invited to Constantinople in A.D. 473 and appointed phylarch of Palaestina Tertia.[5] The Arab chief gave Leo a portrait of himself in gold set in precious stones;[6] he had come from Ḥijāz, an area in western Arabia rich in gold. Behind the emperor's warm welcome may have been the thought that the chief would be a valuable ally in a region rich in that precious metal, which Leo very much needed after the disastrous Vandal War, on which, according to Procopius, he had spent 130,000 pounds of gold.[7]

3. Justinian I. It was in Justinian's reign that an Arab and Arabian policy is clearest.[8] Especially relevant and important is the explicit reference of Choricius of Gaza, unique in the Byzantine sources, to a Byzantine encounter with Arabian gold. In his encomium on Aratius, the *dux* of Palestine in the 530s, Choricius mentions an operation that the *dux* conducted against the Saracens of northern Ḥijāz and his capture of their fortress, which the rhetorician describes as φρούριον ἦν χρυσοῦ μέταλλα πρόσοδον φέρον. Although the sentence presents a slight difficulty in interpretation, there is no doubt that gold is involved.[9]

The existence of gold in western Arabia, a Byzantine sphere of influence during the reign of Justinian—especially gold in Ḥijāz, so close to the Byzantine frontier in Palaestina Tertia—makes it practically certain that in an operation

[4] See *BAFOC,* 31–72, especially 56–59, 62–72.

[5] *BAFIC,* 61–106.

[6] Ibid., 79–81.

[7] See C. Courtois, *Les Vandales et l'Afrique* (Paris, 1955), 201 and notes.

[8] See *BASIC* I.1, 144–66; *BALA* III, xi–xvi.

[9] *Choricii Gazaei opera,* ed. R. Förster and E. Richsteig (Leipzig, 1929), 54, lines 6–7; see *BASIC* I.1, 183 note 21, which suggests "There was a fortress guarding the approach to the gold mines" as an alternative translation to F. K. Litsas' "There was a fortress the main income of which was gold" ("Choricius of Gaza: An Approach to His Work" [Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1980], 160).

such as the one undertaken by the *dux* of Palestine, Aratius,[10] the Arab federates were involved, led in this case by the Ghassānid Abū Karib, phylarch of Palaestina Tertia.[11] The Ghassānids must also have been interested in areas where the sources explicitly state that gold was to be found. Such was ʿAynūna, which had a mine, a *maʿdin,* located near the coast below Tabūk.[12] Its proximity to Tabūk, of which Abū Karib was the master, put it nearly in his territory. The most celebrated gold mine in pre-Islamic times was in the area settled by the tribal group of Banū Sulaym, not far from Medina; it was called *Maʿdin Banī-Sulaym*.[13] The Ghassānids had a strong presence in Medina, through the two Azd Arab tribes there, and thus they must have been involved in the gold mines of Banī-Sulaym. The Banū Sulaym used to carry the merchandise of the Lakhmids, sell it in the fair of ʿUkāẓ, and share in the profits;[14] and because the Ghassānids were closer to the Banū Sulaym than the Lakhmids and were more influential in this area, these gold mines could not have escaped their notice and attention. It was well known that Mecca itself suffered from no lack of gold, and when the Meccans were in Byzantine territory, they were taxed in gold by the Ghassānid *foederati* through the federate tribe of Judām.[15]

II

The subterranean wealth of Arabia in mineral substances such as gold and silver, which sporadically attracted the attention of classical authors, received a specialized monographic treatment by the distinguished Arab medieval scholar al-Hamdānī (d. 945),[16] who devoted an entire work to the two precious metals in the Arabian Peninsula. However, his text was not published until 1968, when it appeared with a translation and a commentary.[17] More recently, gold and silver received more scientific treatment, made possible by the technological revolution, in Gene Heck's

[10] The *dux* hailed from Persarmenia, where the gold mine of Pharangium had been acquired by Byzantium before the conclusion of the Eternal Peace; see Procopius, *History,* I.xv.18.

[11] See *BASIC* I.1, 184–85.

[12] See Heck, *Precious Metals of West Arabia,* 329–30.

[13] On *Maʿdin/Maʿādin* (in the plural) *Banī Sulaym,* see ibid., 253–72. It was not one mine but seven (see 53), the most important of which was called *Mahd al-Dhahab,* "The Cradle of Gold." For attempts to pinpoint its location, see A. al-Wūhaibi, *The Northern Hijāz in the Writings of Arab Geographers, 800–1150* (Beirut, 1973), 132–39 (in Arabic).

[14] See Abū al-Baqāʾ Hibat Allah, *al-Manāqib al-Mazyadiyya,* ed. S. Daradka and M. Khuraysāt (Amman, 1984), II, 375.

[15] Ibid., I, 67.

[16] For al-Hamdānī, see O. Löfgren, "Hamdani," *EI*², III, 124–25.

[17] See Toll, *Die beiden Edelmetalle Gold und Silber.* The work of al-Hamadānī was also edited and annotated by Ḥ. al-Jāsir, *Kitāb al-Jawharatayn* (Riyadh, 1987).

The Precious Metals of West Arabia. This important work deserves special notice for the light it sheds on the mineral wealth of Arabia.

Preceding the book were two articles: the first, based on firsthand observation, dealt mainly with gold mining in the Peninsula, and the second targeted the major problem of Meccan trade and the rise of Islam.[18] In *Precious Metals,* a substantial volume of some 500 pages, Heck unites and amplifies the themes of his articles. The book deals mostly with gold and silver,[19] the location of the mines, their wide diffusion, and their active use in present-day Arabia. Though the number of mines proposed is truly astronomical, the analysis is grounded in direct observation and the scientific application of the techniques of archaeology and metallurgy. Because Heck focuses mainly on western Arabia, the sphere of Byzantine and Ghassānid influence in the sixth century,[20] his work is relevant to the concerns of this volume. *Precious Metals* also contains maps of Arabia and its trade routes, and an appendix on the fairs of western Arabia.[21] Heck has confirmed the reliability of the Arabic sources on the mineral wealth of Arabia and has also provided a clear and persuasive background for understanding the interest in the Arabs and Arabia of three Byzantine emperors, Constantine, Leo, and Justinian, in the three centuries before the rise of Islam. The emergence of Arabia as a major source of gold provides, to a great extent, the key to this imperial interest in the Arabian Peninsula.

III

Just as the subterranean wealth of Arabia in gold and silver has been disclosed by recent research based on modern technology, so Heck has revealed its wealth "on the ground" by taking a closer look at Inner Arabia,[22] labeled *Arabia Deserta* by Strabo. Although the region, generally speaking, was arid and infertile, Ḥijāz did have a number of oases, including Khaybar, Fadak, Yathrib, Wādī al-Qurā, and Ṭāʾif.[23] To the south of Ḥijāz, ʿAsīr, where Najrān was located, is now considered the Switzerland of the Peninsula. So, Inner Arabia can no longer be considered an empty and barren region.

[18] G. Heck, "Gold Mining in Arabia and the Rise of the Islamic State," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 42 (1999), 364–95, and "'Arabia without Spices': An Alternate Hypothesis," *JAOS* 123 (2003), 547–76.

[19] Chapters 5 and 6 of Heck's *Precious Metals* (91–138) are devoted to the theme raised by P. Crone in *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Princeton, 1987).

[20] Heck's main interest is the first century of the Islamic Hijri calendar, but the truth of his conclusions on the seventh century A.D. are valid for the pre-Islamic period, as he expressly states (xxvii).

[21] See Heck, *Precious Metals,* 411–17.

[22] See idem, "Arabia without Spices," 564–71. Heck's conclusions are fully supported by the most primary of all sources for this period, the Koran itself, which he cites in various footnotes.

[23] Because of its climate, Ṭāʾif nowadays is the summer capital of the Saudi state. The medieval author al-Qalqashandi called it "a little bit of Heaven transported by God from Syria to Ḥijāz" (quoted in ibid., 564).

In the oases and fertile valleys in western Arabia where irrigation canals and dams existed in pre-Islamic times,[24] agriculture developed and herds and flocks roamed; the products of this agropastoralism were carried by Arab traders to Oriens, where they were taxed by Arab customs officers—the Ghassānids and the federates subordinated to them, such as the Judām.[25] The fruits produced by these oases and fertile valleys were varied and diversified,[26] but the most important were the fruits of the date palms and the vines that abounded in the oases. Dates rather than grapes were carried by the Arab traders into Oriens, which had its own vines but few date palms.[27]

In addition to supporting crops, these oases—together with the *aḥmāʾ*, "the pastoral reserves"[28]—were the breeding grounds of Arabia's livestock: camels, horses, cows, and sheep. Although camels were the *sine qua non* of the transit trade,[29] the herds of cows and flocks of sheep were much more important in the Arab trade with Oriens and Byzantium. The cows provided vast quantities of hide, which tanners processed into leather (*dibāgha*), perhaps the most important native export item of Arabia to Oriens. Because the Peninsula had the *qaraẓ,* the tree that produced a substance used in tanning, leather making flourished in Arabia.[30] Equally abundant was Arabia's supply of wool. Out of its spun yarns were woven textiles, and those of Najrān were the most famous. And just as *qaraẓ* was essential for tanning, so *wars,* another plant native to Arabia, was essential for dyeing.[31]

[24] Ibid., 566.

[25] Ghassānid involvement in taxation was noted by E. Simon in "Ḥums et īlāf, ou commerce sans guerre," *Acta Orientalia* (Budapest) 23.2 (1970), 226, although for the wrong context, as noted by Crone, *Meccan Trade,* 138. But Crone's volume was published in 1987, long before the history of the Ghassānids—including their involvement in the levying of taxes—had been researched in detail.

[26] A long inventory of farm products and other items of Arabian merchandise in Oriens is provided in V. Saḥḥāb, "Ilāf Quraysh" (Ph.D. diss., Lebanese University, 1992), 232–33; see also Crone, *Meccan Trade,* 87–108.

[27] Although the oases of western Arabia had date palms, these grew mostly in eastern Arabia; Hajar was so famous for its dates that the Arabic equivalent of "carrying coal to Newcastle" is "carrying dates to Hajar." On the dates of Yamāma in eastern Arabia as trade items, see Crone, *Meccan Trade,* 140.

[28] On the *aḥmāʾ*, see *BASIC* II.1, 57–60, 66–67.

[29] The number of camels in caravans on the spice route was truly impressive, even after allowing for some inaccuracy or exaggeration in the sources. See Heck, "Arabia without Spices," 568–69.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid., 569–71 (where *qarẓ* should be transliterated *qaraẓ*). On *wars,* a product of South Arabia, see Saḥḥāb, "Ilāf Quraysh," 233. On *qaraẓ,* see *An Arabic-English Lexicon,* ed. E. W. Lane (London, 1863–93), Book I, part 7, 2518, middle column.

IX

Economic Rivalry in Arabia: Byzantium and Persia

In addition to the frontier wars of the two superpowers along the Euphrates and in Mesopotamia, there was strife in the Arabian Peninsula caused by economic competition. Just as Byzantium in the sixth century dominated the western half of Arabia, which it made into a sphere of influence, relying on its proximity and its Arab federates, the Ghassānids, so Persia dominated the eastern half and the Gulf, relying on its proximity and its clients, the Lakhmids of Ḥīra.[1] The Byzantines and Persians thus clashed in large part vicariously, through their respective clients, the Ghassānids and the Lakhmids. This dynamic is the key to understanding the course of the economic struggle in Arabia between the two world powers.

The Ghassānids had a strong presence in western Arabia through their affiliation with the large Azd group spread across this region. With the Ethiopian conquest of South Arabia in A.D. 520, the whole of western Arabia became Christian, while the Red Sea became a Christian lake; for a half century thereafter, and mostly through the Ghassānids, the region became a Byzantine sphere of influence. The Lakhmids, and through them Persia, were all-powerful in eastern Arabia and the Gulf, including Oman at the southern tip of the Peninsula. Besides, Persia had friends in western Arabia—notably the many Jewish communities in the oases of Ḥijāz, especially those of Yathrib/Medina. Their sympathies were naturally with Persia, the enemy of Byzantium, which possessed as its Christian Holy Land the territory that the Jews of the Diaspora wanted back. And so they may have hoped that the Sasanid kings would return them to the Promised Land as the Achaemenid Cyrus had done when he returned the Jews from their Babylonian captivity.

[1] See C. E. Bosworth, "Iran and the Arabs before Islam," in *The Cambridge History of Iran,* vol. 3, *The Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian Periods,* ed. E. Yarshater (Cambridge, 1983), part 1, 593–612, especially 597–612; M. G. Morony, "The Late Sasanian Economic Impact on the Arabian Peninsula," *Nāme-ye Irān-e Bāstān* 1.2 (2002), 25–37.

The reign of Justinian, which coincided roughly with that of the Ghassānid king Arethas, was the period that witnessed Byzantine/Ghassānid control of the western routes of world trade, especially the overland spice route. Yet Persia did not hesitate in attempting to win over an important station on the spice route, namely Yathrib/Medina. The sources state that around 530, Chosroes Anūshravān extended the power of the Lakhmid Mundir in Arabia to include sites in Ḥijāz such as Ṭā'if and Yathrib. The sources also note that a Persian *Marzubān al-Bādiya,* "satrap of the Arabian steppe," or *Marzubān al-Zāra,* "satrap of al-Zāra" in eastern Arabia, had an official in Yathrib who collected taxes for Persia.[2] Yet Byzantium's grip over the western routes and arteries of trade, especially the spice route, was not seriously affected, and the Ghassānids remained in control of the flow of merchandise from the Indian Ocean to the two termini of the spice route, Bostra and Gaza.

The tide began to turn against Byzantium with the Persian conquest and occupation of South Arabia in 570.[3] This development coincided with the souring of Ghassānid-Byzantine relations during the reign of Mundir (569–582), which reached their nadir during the reign of Maurice, when the Ghassānid king was exiled to Sicily.[4]

During their sixty years of occupation the Persians were very active in the economic life of South Arabia.[5]

1. As they used silver rather than gold for their coinage, they naturally were engaged in mining that metal in a region noted for its silver mines. All the silver miners were Persians, and according to the historian of South Arabia, al-Hamdānī, the most famous mine was Raḍrāḍ.[6]

2. The Persians also controlled the fairs of South Arabia, such as Aden and San'ā'. At the former, a seaport, the products of India came and the Persians taxed

[2] M. J. Kister and his student, M. Lecker, have elucidated and discussed in detail this Persian penetration of western Arabia. On the *Marzubān al-Bādiya,* see Kister's "al-Ḥīra: Some Notes on Its Relations with Arabia," *Arabica* 15 (1968), 145–47, which cites Ibn Khurdadbeh's *Kitāb al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik,* and Lecker's "The Levying of Taxes for the Sassanians in Pre-Islamic Medina (Yathrib)," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 27 (2002), 109–26, especially 120–24 on al-Zāra and its marzubans (satraps).

[3] See *BASIC* I.1, 364–72, which attempts to pinpoint the date and the circumstances of the conquest through the Greek source John of Epiphania; see also Bosworth, "Iran and the Arabs before Islam," 606–7, for details of the conquest based on Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh.*

[4] See *BASIC* I.1, 439–78, 529–49.

[5] The intra-Arabian route that directly connected Ḥīra (and southern Mesopotamia) with Najrān (and northeastern Yaman, or Yemen)—running diagonally from Najrān through Wādī al-Dawāsir to central Arabia, where it linked up with another route that extended through Wādī al-Rummah and led to Ḥīra—must have been active as well.

[6] See M. Morony, "Late Sasanian Economic Impact," 35. On Raḍrāḍ, he refers to al-Hamdānī's *Kitāb al-Jawharatayn, Das Buch von den beiden Edelmetallen: Gold und Silber,* ed. and trans. C. Toll (Uppsala, 1968), 142–43.

the merchants who brought them;[7] these products would travel thence to San'ā' (since Ethiopian days, the capital), where another *sūq* was held.

3. The Persians also gave an impetus to the leather and cloth industry that had already developed in South Arabia.[8]

During the forty years that extended from 570 to the beginning of the reign of Heraclius in 610, two events may be singled out. Both were related to the economic interests of the two world powers, and both illustrate their rivalry in the wake of the Persian occupation of South Arabia.

1. The *Ḥarb al-Fijār,* the "Sacrilegious War," was related to the *laṭīma,* the caravan, that the Lakhmids and the Persians started to send to western Arabia along the direct overland route connecting Ḥīra with Mecca and 'Ukāẓ, the most important inter-Arab fair. This war was an aggressive initiative by the Persians to break into the Byzantine sphere of influence, in western Arabia.[9]

2. Working to expand Byzantine influence was 'Uthmān ibn al-Ḥuwayrith, a Meccan of the clan of Banū-Asad, with whom the Ghassānids were allies; he had the ambition to become the Byzantine phylarch/king over Mecca. In his address to the Byzantine authorities, 'Uthmān had argued that with their support, his phylarchate over Mecca would countervail the Persian occupation of South Arabia; and in his address to the Meccans seeking their acceptance of him as Byzantium's representative, he argued that such a connection would facilitate the passage of Meccan merchants into Byzantine Oriens. After some initial success, his plan fell through.[10]

In the last quarter of the sixth century, Byzantine-Persian rivalry persisted in two of the stations of the spice route, Medina and Mecca. In Medina the Persians—through the intervention of the last Lakhmid king, Nu'mān—succeeded in persuading an Arab who belonged to the Khazraj tribe, 'Amr ibn al-Iṭnāba, to be their representative.[11] As he became the lord of Medina, he represented a Persian/Lakhmid influence in that important station on the spice route, but he does not seem to have seriously affected Ghassānid and Byzantine influence on that route. Indeed, it was at just this time that Mecca reached its position of dominance as the principal caravan city of the spice route. The Persian occupation of South

[7] Morony, "Late Sasanian Economic Impact," 35–36, quoting Abū-'Ali al-Marzūqi, *Kitāb al-Azmina wa al-Amkina* (Hyderabad, 1914), II, 164. To San'ā', the merchants brought cotton, saffron, and dyes, and at San'ā' they bought cloth and iron.

[8] Morony, "Late Sasanian Economic Impact," 36.

[9] This war is discussed in "The West Arabian Route" in Chapter 3, above.

[10] The most reliable account of this episode is found in al-Zubayr ibn Bakkār, *Jamharat Nasab Quraysh wa Akhbārihā,* ed. M. M. Shākir (Cairo, [1961]), 425–38, especially 425–26, see also Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq,* ed. Kh. Fāriq (Hyderabad, 1964), 178–85.

[11] On 'Amr ibn al-Iṭnāba, see Kister, "al-Ḥīra," 147–49.

Arabia brought new masters to that region, after fifty years of occupation by the Ethiopians. This change was not conducive to stability in South Arabia, and so control of the spice route, which historically was mainly in the hands of its own peoples—Sabaeans, Minaeans, and Ḥimyarites—slipped into other hands. This was Mecca's opportunity to move into a dominant role.[12] Ghassānid-Meccan relations during this period were good. The clan of Banū-Asad counted the Ghassānids as their allies,[13] a relationship that neutralized whatever advantage the Lakhmids had gained in Medina through ʿAmr ibn al-Iṭnāba. Ghassānid relations with Najrān also remained positive, reflected *inter alia* by the visits of its chief, Yazīd, to the Ghassānid court.[14]

* * *

Before the storm that wrecked Persian-Byzantine relations in the seventh century broke out, the Ghassānids had served the economic interests of Byzantium in the sixth century; in so doing, they deserved well of the empire. Although during the reign of Maurice friction obtained, the Ghassānids' good relations with Byzantium were restored not long after, in the late 580s,[15] and so they continued to function as wardens of the three western trade routes: the maritime route over the Red Sea, the overland spice route in western Arabia, and the Wādī Sirḥān route. In addition to protecting the caravans, they also participated in holding one important fair outside Oriens, at Dūma, and they held three fairs within it. The economic life of Oriens was much stimulated by these three *aswāq*—Dayr Ayyūb, Bostra, and Aḏriʿāt—where the Ghassānids also levied taxes for the empire. These important functions, involving the three trade routes, were performed mostly by the Ghassānid phylarch of Palaestina Tertia, who had an autonomous status and whose function was mainly to look after the economic interests of the empire. In contrast, the principal phylarch/king to the north had primarily a military function, keeping Oriens secure from the Persians, the Lakhmids, and the Arabian pastoralists; at the same time, he contributed indirectly to the economic welfare of Oriens by ensuring its safety. The fifty years between 520 and 570, mostly during the reign of Justinian, were the halcyon days of Ghassānid-Byzantine relations: Justinian's Arab and Arabian policy functioned smoothly and fruitfully in the economic sphere, as implemented by the archphylarch and king, Arethas, and his brother, Abū Karib, the phylarch of Palaestina Tertia.

[12] See *BALA* III, 52.

[13] One of its members, Khadīja, was the wife of the future Prophet of Islam. She was a wealthy woman who ran caravans, which Muḥammad conducted to Oriens.

[14] See Abū al-Faraj Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (Beirut, 1958), XII, 11–12.

[15] See *BASIC* I.1, 562–68.

Epilogue

The balance of power in the Peninsula was shaken in A.D. 570 by the Persian occupation of South Arabia. This signaled a major turn in the Persian-Byzantine struggle, as Persia gained the advantage; the struggle reached its climax in the reigns of Heraclius and Parvīz, when the final Byzantine-Persian conflict broke out.[16] The Persians occupied the whole of Oriens and Egypt; as a result, they took possession not only of the Silk Road, both by land through Asia and Mesopotamia and by sea through the Persian Gulf, but also of the western routes formerly controlled by Byzantium and the Ghassānids: the maritime Red Sea route and the overland spice route, together with the two termini in Gaza and Bostra. The Ghassānids and the imperial Byzantine army were overwhelmed by the Persians and withdrew to Anatolia, not to return to Oriens to resume their control of the spice route until around 630.

The forty years or so that followed the Persian occupation of South Arabia witnessed the rise to prominence of Mecca as the principal caravan city of the spice route; the following twenty years or so of the Persian occupation of Oriens and the whole of the Fertile Crescent witnessed the birth and rise of Islam in Mecca, and its subsequent development in Medina as a state, when "Muhammad acted as his own Constantine."[17] During the five-year period after the Ghassānids and Byzantium returned to Oriens around A.D. 630, most of Arabia was united by Islam, and the Arab armies were readied to be the instruments of the future conquests. Within two years, 636–638, the two world powers were reeling from two historic defeats: the first gave the Arabs Oriens, and the second almost destroyed Persia itself. As a result, the Arabs found themselves in control of both the silk and the spice routes, as the Persians had been while they occupied Oriens. But whereas Persian control was relatively brief, the Arab/Muslim occupation of the two principal arteries of international trade lasted for centuries. Hence the economic revolution that the Arab Conquests brought about in the struggle for the control of the arteries of world trade, whose masters the Arabs became.[18] The economic life of the empire, now an Anatolian-Balkan state, entered an entirely new and different phase.

These conquests had a prime mover. They were initially inspired by a truly extraordinary personage, Muḥammad, who before his prophetic call in A.D. 610

[16] See the present writer in "The Last Sasanid-Byzantine Conflict in the Seventh Century: The Causes of Its Outbreak," in *Convegno internazionale La Persia e Bisanzio* (Rome, 2004), 222–43.

[17] B. Lewis, "Politics and War," in *The Legacy of Islam,* 2nd ed., ed. J. Schacht and C. E. Bosworth (Oxford, 1974), 156.

[18] A leading historian of the Arabs and Islam aptly observed of the pre-Islamic period that "The successive displacements of these routes determined the changes and revolutions in Arabian history"; see B. Lewis, *The Arabs in History* (1957; reprint, New York, 1966), 33.

had spent a good fifteen years as a caravan leader on the spice route. He then began the religio-political movement, Islam, that in the seventh century brought an end to the three centuries of late antiquity. The relevance of the spice route in this context is its formative influence on the political, diplomatic, and administrative genius of the Prophet, who created the Arab-Muslim state of Medina in a mere ten years, between 622 and 632. From Medina he sent the first military expeditions against Oriens, initiating the future celebrated conquests. During the years that Muḥammad had led substantial caravans of the spice route, he had to deal with the Byzantine authorities and their federates, the Ghassānids, in Oriens, a complex operation involving negotiations at the frontier, at the termini (Bostra and Gaza), and between termini and frontier. In addition to honing his secular skills, the spice route enabled him to have an intimate knowledge of the geography of the southern part of Oriens, the Provincia Arabia and Palaestina Tertia.[19] It was against these regions that he directed the first military expeditions of the conquests, and it was again in this sector in Oriens, shortly after his death in 632, that his successors won the first victories of Islam, especially the decisive battle of Yarmūk in 636. These two provinces of Oriens, so well-known to the Prophet, were the first target of conquests that soon would encompass a wide belt of the globe extending from India to Spain.

Of all the parts of the present volume, it is this economic section that is the most relevant and crucial as prolegomenon to the final volume of this series, namely, *Byzantium and Islam in the Seventh Century,* since it elucidates the relevance of the spice route to the formation of Muḥammad, the prime mover of Islam and of the conquests that changed the course not just of Arab, Byzantine, and Persian history but also of the Mediterranean world.

Appendix

Al-Nuʿmān ibn al-Mundir: Ghassānid or Lakhmid?

In his work *Ṣifat Jazīrat al-ʿArab* (*The Description of Arabia*), the Arab medieval author al-Hamdānī states that a member of the tribal group Bāhila, namely, Ibn ʿIsām, was the *ṣāḥib,* or friend, of al-Nuʿmān ibn al-Mundir, and later refers to him as the *khādim,* servant, of the same al-Nuʿmān ibn al-Mundir.[1] In his article on the

[19] In the fifth century, Malchus of Philadelphia criticized the emperor Leo I for inviting the phylarch Amorkesos to Constantinople, a journey that, he thought, acquainted the Arab phylarch with what he should not know about Byzantium. In view of the events of the seventh century, his words sound prophetic. On Malchus and his animadversions against Leo, see *BAFIC,* 100–106, especially 100 note 5; on the surviving fragment of his *History,* see 112–13. For a more detailed account see "The Arabs in Late Antiquity" (Beirut, 2008), 22–30 by the present writer.

[1] al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifat Jazīrat al-ʿArab,* ed. M. al-Akwaʿ (Riyadh, 1974), 293, 310.

gold and silver mines in Arabia, D. M. Dunlop concluded that al-Nuʿmān was the Ghassānid king.[2] If his conclusion had been correct, this would have been a remarkable penetration of the Ghassānids into a Lakhmid and Sasanid sphere of influence.[3] The Bāhila, however, was a tribal group that lived in Yamāma in eastern Arabia, where it is unlikely that the Lakhmids would have tolerated a Ghassānid presence.

Namesakes were common among the Lakhmids and the Ghassānids; both had Nuʿmāns and Mundirs. The individual mentioned by Hamdānī must have been a Lakhmid, the famous last king of the dynasty in the fourth quarter of the sixth century, who was killed in A.D. 602. His identity is confirmed by the verse that Hamdānī quotes: it is by al-Nābigha and addressed to ʿIsām, the well-known *ḥājib,* chamberlain, of the Lakhmid al-Nuʿmān.[4]

[2] See D. M. Dunlop, "The Sources of Gold and Silver in Islam according to al-Hamdani," *Studia Islamica* 8 (1957), 39 note 1.

[3] As a matter of course, the Ghassānids would have been interested in the silver mine in the *thaniyya,* defile, of Bāhila; on the silver mines of Bāhila, see G. W. Heck, *The Precious Metals of West Arabia and Their Role in Forging the Economic Dynamic of the Early Islamic State,* King Faiṣal Center for Research and Islamic Studies (Riyadh, 2003), 344–46.

[4] al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifat,* 310, lines 10–11, quoting *Dīwān al-Nābigha al-Dubyānī,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1977), 105, verses 1–2; see also M. al-ʿAshmāwi, *al-Nābigha al-Dhubyāni* (Cairo, 1960), 111.

II

Social History

A. BACKGROUND

I

Ghassānid Federate Society

I. The Arab Background

Of the *foederati* of Byzantium during the three centuries of the proto-Byzantine period, the Ghassānids endured longest in its service, 150 years, forming the last layer of a long, strong Arab presence in Oriens in late antiquity. Hence their social history is complex. They were settled in the Byzantine limitrophe, the home in Hellenistic and Roman times of the Nabataean and Palmyrene Arabs—Arabs who became *Rhomaioi* through the Edict of Caracalla in A.D. 212, which made them citizens of the pagan Roman Empire.[1] The Ghassānids' predecessors during this proto-Byzantine period were the Tanūkhids of the fourth century and the Salīḥids of the fifth, Arabs much more like themselves than were the Nabataean and Palmyrene *Rhomaioi*. They were settled in roughly the same area as those predecessors, the easternmost portion of Oriens, where the Rhomaic Arabs of Petra and Palmyra had also lived.

As Byzantinized *foederati* and as Christianized Arabs, the Ghassānids were well integrated into Byzantine society in Oriens. Unlike the Germanic peoples of the Roman Occident, who derived from an entirely different stock, the Ghassānids were Arabs like these *Rhomaioi* and were accepted by them as such. This acceptance is well illustrated in the Petra Papyrus, Roll 83, which records a request to the Arab Ghassānid phylarch Abū Karib that he arbitrate a dispute between two Arab families.[2] The relations with the Salīḥids and the Tanūkhids were equally close. Together

[1] For the strong Arab presence in Oriens in the Roman period, see *RA,* 1–16.

[2] For this papyrus (P.Petra inv. 83), see L. Koenen, "The Carbonized Archive from Petra," *JRA* 9 (1996), 177–88; M. Kaimio, "P.Petra inv. 83: A Settlement of Dispute," in *Atti del XXII Congresso Internazionale di Papirologia*, ed. I. Andorlini et al. (Florence, 2001), 2:719–24, and eadem, ed. "P.Petra inv. 83," in *The Petra Papyri*, ed. J. Frösén et al. (Amman, forthcoming), vol. 4; see also *BASIC* II.1, 46 note 55. Somewhat similarly, the Ghassānid phylarch was invited to take part in the consecration of a church in Ḥuwwārin; see *BASIC* I.1, 455–61.

these groups helped give the Arab phylarchate a new look, after Justinian in 529 put under the command of the Ghassānid Arethas almost all the other *foederati* of Byzantium. And so the Ghassānids inherited much of what the other *foederati* had assimilated from Byzantium in the two centuries prior to their own advent in Oriens.

The social life of the Ghassānids was thus exposed to many influences, Arab and non-Arab, emanating from the Graeco-Roman establishment. In writing the history of their social life, ideally one would identify those many influences and their provenance; but as usually happens, the sources deal mainly with the rulers and with their political and military history. *Akhbār Mulūk Ghassān,* despite its title (*Accounts of the Kings of Ghassān*), must have contained much social history, but the manuscript is lost. However, the surviving sources contain enough data to paint a fairly clear picture of Ghassānid social life, especially when set against the background of what is known of the social history of Oriens in this period from the Greek sources and from some Arabic sources. The more plentiful material on the Ghassānids' rivals, the Lakhmids of Ḥīra,[3] serves to illuminate Ghassānid social history, since the Lakhmids, like the Ghassānids, had come from South Arabia and lived in the shadow of a world power—in their case, Sasanid Persia. The same applies to the Umayyads and the sources about them. Living in the same area in Oriens as the Ghassānids before them, they were the first Muslim dynasty; they came to power shortly after the end of Byzantine rule in Oriens and the fall of the Ghassānids, whose presence in the Umayyad state remained very strong.[4]

The difficulties presented by the paucity of the sources can be negotiated by remembering the tripartite character of the Ghassānids; as Arabs who had hailed from the Peninsula, as *foederati* of Byzantium in Oriens, and as pagans who were converted to Christianity. This realization can shed much light on their social life, secular and religious, deriving from what is known about the social aspects of Byzantine culture, and of Christianity in Oriens in late antiquity.

II. The Byzantine Influence

The social life of the Ghassānids reflected the Arab heritage of both their peninsular congeners and the urban communities of *Rhomaioi* in Oriens. It is well to begin with the Byzantine influence. Once they crossed the Roman frontier, the Ghassānids as *foederati* became exposed to two major influences: one from Byzantium, the other from Christianity.

Byzantium was the lesser of the two influences, and the Ghassānids are known

[3] Because Islamic historians such as Ṭabarī and Balāḏurī were Persians, they were naturally more interested in the Lakhmids, who were clients of the Persian Sasanids, than they were in the Ghassānids. As Muslims, they also naturally were more interested in the Umayyads of Oriens, the first Muslim Arab dynasty in Bilād al-Shām, than in the Ghassānids, Christians who had moved in the orbit of Byzantium.

[4] See *BASIC* II.1, 375–91, 403–4.

to have rejected two important aspects of Byzantine social life. (1) Although they were avid horsemen, they did not enjoy chariot races, a sport very popular in Byzantium and pursued in hippodromes in Oriens, including Bostra. (2) They were not partial to theatrical performances, whether serious or light. Hence in the townscapes of the Ghassānids, such as Jābiya and Jalliq, the hippodrome, the amphitheater, and the theater—mainstays of the early Byzantine cityscape—did not appear.[5]

On the other hand, the tavern was an important center of social life, providing wine, women, song, and dance.[6] For the Ghassānids, the baths or *thermae* were not the social centers that they had been in Roman times; though Byzantine baths were sexually segregated, the Ghassānids' Arab ethos and mores must have found nudity repugnant. The nymphaeum probably appealed to them functionally: water was the *sine qua non* of Ghassānid existence in the Peninsula and in the limitrophe.

III. Christianity

More important than the Byzantine influence in their social life was Christianity, which was required of them once they became Byzantium's *foederati*. This factor revolutionized their social life.[7]

The feasts of the Christian calendar and the liturgical year had distinct social aspects.[8] As devoted Christians, the Ghassānids scrupulously observed these feasts, which at the same time became social events; thus these celebrations became part of their cultural life. Indeed, the Ghassānids were truly a unique Christian community, not only in Oriens but also within the entire Christian oikoumene in late antiquity, for the following reasons.

1. As *foederati* encamped in the Provincia Arabia, Palaestina Secunda, and Palaestina Tertia, they were physically very close to the Holy Land, some of whose *loca sancta* they could even see from their military stations.[9]

[5] In their rejection of many Byzantine pastimes, the Ghassānids must also have accepted both ecclesiastical animadversions on such diversions as gladiatorial games and chariot races and imperial legislation, which did not spare the old forms of entertainment.

[6] The tavern is treated in detail below in Chapter 5, "Drink."

[7] Some villages in the limitrophe provide insight into Christian concepts of social life; see E. A. Knauf, "Umm al-Jimāl: An Arab Town in Late Antiquity," *Revue Biblique* 91 (1984), 578–86, and D. Whitcomb, "Urbanism in Arabia," *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 7 (1996), 38–51.

[8] Banquets accompanied religious festivities, and the distinction between the religious and the social was often blurred. The term ἀγάπη ("love feast") speaks for itself.

[9] Such places were especially visible from Palaestina Secunda, where Christ performed one of his miracles on the woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5:25–34). From Jābiya and elsewhere the Ghassānids could see the Sea of Galilee, sites of the lakeside ministry of Christ, and Mount Tabor, the scene of the Transfiguration, as well as the Jordan, the river of baptism. A verse in one of the poems of their panegyrist al-Nābigha may suggest that they even had a presence in northern Galilee (see *BASIC* II.1, 221); if so, they could see the place from which the Sermon on the Mount was delivered.

2. In addition, they, together with the Byzantine regular troops, were the protectors of the Holy Land and its holy sites from the raids and incursions of the Lakhmids and the nomads of Arabia Pastoralis. This role gave their Christianity a military tone—they were literally *milites Christi*.

3. They were the relatives of the martyrs of Najrān, some three hundred men and women who chose martyrdom over apostasy around A.D. 520 in South Arabia. It is not difficult to visualize how vibrant their Christianity must have become in response to these martyrdoms, especially as their survivors appealed for help to their Ghassānid relative, Jabala, in Jābiya of the Golan. These martyrdoms, occurring long after the Peace of the Church in A.D. 313, gave the Christian Arab community in the Near East a special position. The martyrs were sanctified by the church, which set 24 October as their feast day.[10]

4. Just as they were the military protectors of the Holy Land, so too they were the ecclesiastical protectors of the Monophysite church in Oriens, which they had resuscitated around 540 and continued to defend and protect until their own existence as a Byzantine phylarchate ended in 636, after the battle of Yarmūk.[11]

Such then was the Christianity of those *foederati* of Byzantium in sixth-century Oriens. The literary and epigraphic evidence for the Ghassānid celebration of the feasts of the liturgical year will be examined in the following section.[12] The discussion will be set against the background of the larger community of Christians in Oriens, with whom, as fellow Christians, the Ghassānids shared these feasts and celebrations of the liturgical year, emphasizing a certain number of them both as Arabs and as Monophysites.

Feast Days

The Ghassānids no doubt celebrated the dominical, Marian, and sanctoral feasts of the Christian calendar. Most important were the dominical: Christmas, Epiphany,[13] Transfiguration, Palm Sunday, Easter, and Ascension. Two or perhaps more are documented in the surviving poetic fragments, which attest as well to the *social* aspects of these feasts.

[10] Their feast on 24 October is usually celebrated in the names of the chief male and female martyrs, Arethas and Ruhm. For these martyrdoms, see *Martyrs*. For the names of some 300 martyrs in Najrān, see my "The Martyrdom of Early Arab Christians: Sixth Century Najrān," in *The First One Hundred Years: A Centennial Anthology Celebrating Antiochian Orthodoxy in North America,* ed. G. S. Corey et al. (Englewood, N.J., 1995), 169–88, especially 178–80.

[11] The Ghassānid contribution to the welfare of the church was so substantial that a volume of some 350 pages could be exclusively devoted to this theme; see *BASIC* I.2.

[12] Arabic contemporary poetry is the main authentic extant source.

[13] In the Eastern Church, Epiphany marks not the Adoration of the Magi but the baptism of Christ in the Jordan.

Dominical Feasts

Palm Sunday. Palm Sunday is most frequently mentioned in the few verses that have survived. In the Orient, Easter was the great feast day of Christianity, but Palm Sunday was a joyous occasion, less somber than Easter and Holy Week. Palms were available in the region for the Ghassānids, and the day was widely celebrated in late antiquity among the Christians of the entire Arab area, even by those of Ḥijāz in pre-Islamic times.[14]

Significantly, the Ghassānid celebration of Palm Sunday was noticed by two of their panegyrists, Ḥassān and al-Nābigha, who complement each other in their eyewitness descriptions of the scene on Palm Sunday in the mansions of the Ghassānids. While al-Nābigha describes the young princesses of the royal house presenting their bouquets of flowers to the Ghassānid rulers,[15] Ḥassān describes them busily weaving wreaths of coral for the occasion.[16] Out of the practice of the presentation of flowers on Palm Sunday, the term *taḥāyā* (plural of *taḥiyya*), "salutations," was applied to the flowers presented during the salutation, and became the name by which the present itself was known—a term that apparently survived in this signification into Islamic times.[17]

Easter. The climax of all the feasts of the Christian calendar was referred to by its non-Arabic name, *f-i-ṣ-ḥ, pascha* in the *dīwān*s of pre-Islamic poets.[18] Ḥassān mentions it once in an attractive verse of his ode, the rhyme in *N,*[19] in which he says that Easter has drawn near and the young maidens are weaving the wreaths of coral quickly, that is, before it arrives. Though a *hapax legomenon,* the reference is significant; the Ghassānids must have celebrated Easter with great solemnity as the principal Christian dominical day, as *Oriens Christianus* still does (much more ceremonially than Christmas).

Ascension. This day, one of the chief feasts of the liturgical year, falls on the fortieth day after Easter. It is not mentioned in the extant sources, but the Ghassānids had a special reason for celebrating it: on Ascension Day in May of

[14] Palm Sunday is referred to by the Prophet Muḥammad in a hadith asking his followers to stop celebrating it in favor of an Islamic feast; see Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Murtaḍa al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿArūs Min Jawāhir al-Qāmūs* (Kuwait, 1967), III, 41.

[15] *Dīwān al-Nābigha al-Ḏubyānī,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1977), 47, verses 25–26. That *walāʾid* in verse 26 refers to the princesses is made clear in Ḥassān, who refers to the daughters of the Ghassānids as royals not engaged in degrading and servile chores; *Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit,* ed. W. ʿArafāt, Gibb Memorial New Series 25 (London, 1971), I, 174, verse 14.

[16] Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 255, verses 6–8; for "wreaths of coral," *akillat al-marjān,* see verse 6.

[17] On *taḥiyya* and *taḥāyā,* see Abū al-Faraj Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (Beirut, 1957), II, 304 and note 5; see also Ḥ. al-Zayyāt, "al-Diyārāt al-Naṣrāniyya fī al-Islām," *al-Machriq* 36 (1938), 332–37.

[18] As also Aʿshā in his ode, eulogizing the Christian ruler in eastern Arabia; see *Dīwān,* ed. M. Ḥusayn (Cairo, n.d.), 111, verse 69. For the term as a loan from the Aramaic/Hebrew *Pesah,* see S. Fraenkel, *Die aramäischen Fremdwörter im Arabischen* (1886; reprint, Hildesheim, 1962), 276–77.

[19] Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 255, verse 6.

570 their distinguished general, Mundir, scored a famous victory against the Lakhmids.[20] No doubt the very devout Ghassānids would have noticed the coincidence, as did the Syriac chronicler who remembered the victory of the protector of the Monophysite church by saying that "The Lord helped Mundir and the Cross triumphed."[21] What word was used for Ascension in Ghassānland is not clear. Even some Arabic-speaking areas often used the Syriac term, Arabicized as Sullāq.[22] Nowadays it is Ṣuʿūd, from the Arabic root *ṣ-ʿ-d*, "to ascend."

Epiphany. Unlike Ascension Day, Epiphany is not mentioned in any extant texts. But the Ghassānids, who lived close to the river of baptism, surely celebrated the baptism of Jesus, which may well have taken place in Trans-Jordan (not in Cis-Jordan)—that is, in the Provincia Arabia, the headquarters of the Ghassānid phylarchs.[23] Of all the dominical feast days, this one would have been celebrated in the context of the events of Ghassānid family life, which included the baptism of the newly born. Such baptism was dignified as a sacrament and became a distinguishing attribute of Christians, who were often called "the Children of Baptism."[24] Up to the present day, Epiphany has been celebrated by the Christian Arabs of the Orient as a major social event.

It is not clear whether the Ghassānids followed the recommendation of St. Paul and gave up circumcision in favor of baptism.[25] If they did, they would have been following the lead of Abgar the Great, the Arab king of Edessa; after he converted to Christianity, around A.D. 200, he ordered the discontinuation of circumcision (perhaps inspired by the Roman rejection of the practice).[26]

Transfiguration. The sources are likewise silent about the Ghassānids' celebration of the Feast of Transfiguration, but their proximity to the Holy Land again argues that it did happen. According to tradition, Christ's Transfiguration took place on Mount Tabor or on Mount Hermon, both of which were visible from the Ghassānids' centers in Palaestina Secunda. Mount Hermon was referred to twice by their panegyrist Ḥassān (though not in a religious context) as Jabal al-Thalj, "the Mountain of Snow."[27]

[20] See *BASIC* I.1, 343–46.

[21] See *Chronicon Maroniticum,* trans. J. B. Chabot, *Chronica Minora,* pars secunda, CSCO, Scriptores Syri, 3rd ser., vol. 4 (Paris, 1904), 111, lines 14–15, discussed in BASIC I.1, 345 note 138.

[22] For Sullāq as an Aramaic term, see Fraenkel, *Die aramäischen Fremdwörter,* 277; Jawād ʿAli, *al-Mufaṣṣal fi Tārīkh al-ʿArab qabl al-Islam* (Beirut, 1971), V, 104.

[23] A view popularized nowadays by the Ministry of Tourism in Jordan, and supported by John 1:28 (πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου).

[24] Nowadays called *ghiṭās,* the ceremony involves the newborn's total immersion in the waters of the baptismal font.

[25] On circumcision, see the final section of this chapter.

[26] On Abgar, see *RA,* 109–12.

[27] Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 270, verse 4; 308, verse 9.

Marian Feasts

In the sanctoral cycle of feast days, no doubt those of the Theotokos, the Mother of God, were celebrated with considerable social activity. The Theotokos was especially revered among the Monophysites, who emphasized the divinity of Christ, as does the term Theotokos.[28] Although no reference to her feast days have survived, the name Mary, Arabicized from the Greek version of the name as Māriya, appeared in the matronymic of their most famous king, Arethas.[29] Both her virginity and her role as mother of Jesus were remembered in Ghassānid toponymy and epistolography.[30]

Sanctoral Feasts

All the saints to whose shrines the Ghassānids made pilgrimage—namely, Julian, Sergius, Thomas, Cosmas and Damian, and the two Symeon Stylites—must have been honored by the celebration of their feast days in Ghassānid churches. Such celebrations must have received an impetus from the martyrdoms (ca. 520) in Najrān of their relatives, who were venerated as saints and whose feast day was undoubtedly celebrated with great solemnity. The martyrs of Najrān, usually identified by the names of the chief man and woman among them, Arethas and Ruhm, formed a special group of saints with whom the Ghassānids surely felt a certain affinity, since they were their congeners as Arabs. Such also were Cosmas and Damian, the Arab patron saints of medicine, whom the outbreak of plague during the reign of Justinian brought to even more prominence in the sixth century. To these may be added another Arab saint whose shrine or place of burial remains unknown, but who attained celebrity in the fourth century: Moses, the Chalcedonian bishop of Mavia, the federate queen of Byzantium, who raised the standard of revolt against the Arian emperor Valens and emerged from the struggle victorious. Moses was sainted and his feast day set for 7 February. Surely he was remembered by

[28] Luckily for the Monophysites, the term was coined after the Council of Ephesus in A.D. 431; after Chalcedon (451), when Christ was declared by Pope Leo the perfect man and perfect God, the epithet instead would have been Theandrotokos and thus doctrinally unacceptable to them.

[29] On Māriya, the mother of Arethas, see *BASIC* I.1, 69. L. Cheikho listed eight instances of the name Māriya assumed by Christian Arab women; see *al-Naṣrāniyya wa Ādābuhā bayna ʿArab al-Jāhiliyya* (Beirut, 1912), I, 244. For the name Fartanā among Christian Arab women as an Arabicized form of Greek *parthenos,* "virgin," see *BASIC* II.1, 196; alternatively, Lecher suggested *fortuna*.

[30] The Arabic for virgin, *ʿadhrāʾ*, appears in Ḥassān's poetry as the name of a Ghassānid town, which still exists in Syria, northeast of Damascus; see *Dīwān,* I, 17, verse 1. *Wālidat al-Ilāh* appears in the letter of the Ghassānid king and phylarch Arethas, which he dispatched from Constantinople. For the town, see *BASIC* II.1, 238, and Map XI, p. 441; for the letter, see *BASIC* I.2, 784. Toponymically, Maria, Maryam, has survived in the names of many monasteries in the region. Some of them may have been erected by Ghassānid queens, one of whom is explicitly credited with building a monastery, Dayr Hind (see *BASIC* II.1, 200).

the Ghassānids, who as Monophysites also rebelled against orthodoxy. The odes celebrating the victory of Queen Mavia and her bishop were noted in the fifth century by an outsider—the ecclesiastical historian Sozomen[31]—but they would have carried special meaning to the Ghassānid Arabs, as *foederati* of Byzantium.

Not Christian but possibly Arab was a figure of the Old Testament, Ayyūb, Job, for whom the Ghassānids had considerable veneration, reflected by the invocation of his name during military encounters and by the giving of his name to a village in which a famous fair was held, Dayr Ayyūb.[32] The Ghassānids, who apparently looked to him as their role model for endurance, celebrated his feast day in March or May. The fact that in Islamic times his village, now called Shaykh Saʿd, was considered one of the sites to be visited by pious Muslims[33] suggests a pre-Islamic Ghassānid custom: visits to such shrines often were continuations of older traditions. But the figure closest to them as *foederati* was St. Sergius, their patron saint and that of the Byzantine army of Oriens. And it is not difficult to visualize the enthusiasm evinced by the Ghassānids when they celebrated the feast day of the saint whose name and banner they carried in their military engagements.

Pilgrimage

Although pilgrimage was not a Christian religious duty and had no scriptural authority, as it has in Judaism and more clearly in Islam,[34] it was popularized by the visit of Constantine's mother, Helen, to Jerusalem in 326. Pilgrims from all over the Christian oikoumene flocked to visit the *loca sancta,* consecrated by the ministry of Christ. The four visits of Barsauma from Mesopotamia in the fifth century, and even more strikingly Egeria's travels in the fourth century from faraway western Europe to almost all the biblical sites from Edessa to Egypt, reflect this popularity.[35]

Both as Arabs and as *foederati,* the Ghassānids must have made pilgrimages.[36] For Arabs, pilgrimage was an important religious institution (entailing *ṭawāf,*

[31] For Moses and Queen Mavia, see *BAFOC,* 138–202, and the *ODB,* s.vv. Moses, Mavia.

[32] Many biblical scholars believe that Job was an Edomite, and the Edomites were an Arab people; see *BAFIC,* 540–43, and below, p. 347; see also M. Avi-Yonah, *The Holy Land* (New York, 1972), 25–26, 61–62. For more on Ayyūb, Job, and the Ghassānids, see the appendix to Chapter 11, below.

[33] See al-Harawi, *Kitāb al-Ishārāt ilā Maʿrifat al-Ziyārāt,* ed. J. Sourdel-Thomine (Damascus, 1953), translated by J. Sourdel-Thomine as *Guide de lieux de pèlerinage* (Damascus, 1957).

[34] The *aliyyah* (going up to Jerusalem for the festival) in Judaism, and the hajj, one of the five pillars of the Islamic faith.

[35] For Barsauma, who performed the pilgrimage on foot, see A. Palmer, "The History of the Syrian Orthodox in Jerusalem," *OC* 75 (1991), 18–20; for Egeria, see *Egeria's Travels,* trans. J. Wilkinson (Warminster, Eng., 1999).

[36] For the pilgrimage sites of the Arab Christians in Oriens generally, see the present writer in "Arab Christian Pilgrimages in the Proto-Byzantine Period (V–VII Centuries)," in *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt,* ed. D. Frankfurter (Leiden, 1998), 373–89.

circumambulation around a shrine), and indeed Arabic contains an unusually large number of words related to pilgrimage.[37] As *foederati,* the Ghassānids were in a special position vis-à-vis the Holy Land, since they lived so close to it and were its protectors as well as protectors of Oriens, a diocese that also had a multitude of *loca sancta* that were centers of pilgrimage.[38]

The Holy Land

The Holy Land in its widest acceptation comprised the Three Palestines. The evidence in the sources that points or may point to visits by the Ghassānids may be summarized as follows.

1. Although the reference to the famous Arethas in Sinai is shrouded in obscurity,[39] the presence of the king in Sinai, the province of his brother, Abū Karib, may be related to a pilgrimage he had undertaken to Mount Sinai, the site of the Decalogue, a popular destination in this period.

2. The presence of one of the Ghassānid princesses, Layla, in Jerusalem, which is analyzed in the following chapter, may have been related to a pilgrimage. The Ghassānids, though Monophysites, had some presence in Orthodox Chalcedonian Palestine, as demonstrated by Dayr Ghassānī, the Monastery of Ghassān, near Jerusalem.[40]

3. The pre-Islamic poet al-Aʿshā, who hailed from eastern Arabia and eulogized the Ghassānids, mentions Jerusalem as a place he visited.[41] Perhaps the Ghassānids whom he eulogized happened to be pilgrims in Jerusalem then.

4. Circumstantial evidence from later Umayyad times also suggests that the Ghassānid royal house made pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Yazīd, the crown prince and successor of the first Umayyad caliph, Muʿāwiya, is known to have visited Jerusalem with the Christian poet laureate al-Akhṭal.[42] Jerusalem was not a tourist attraction for the two hedonists Yazīd and Akhṭal, who usually found diversions in Jalliq. But Jerusalem was important for the Umayyads, who were anxious to legitimize their usurpation of the caliphate from the ʿAlids and so associated themselves with

[37] See ibid., 373–74; to the words listed there may be added *muʿtamir,* the one who performs the pilgrimage not in the canonical month, and *hujayja,* the diminutive form of *hājja,* "female pilgrim" (see Masʿūdi, *Murūj al-Dahab wa-maʿādin al-jawhar,* ed. C. Pellat [Beirut, 1966], I, 281).

[38] See I. Peña, *Lieux de pèlerinage en Syrie,* Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Collectio Minor 38 (Milan, 2000).

[39] The reference is to a monk from Sinai who was a prisoner in the camp of Arethas. Doctrinal differences in this period could result in violence—Arethas's own son, the Monophysite Mundir, was captured by the Chalcedonian central government—and perhaps the monk was captured while Arethas was performing the pilgrimage. On the monk of Sinai, see *BASIC* I.2, 769.

[40] See *BASIC* II.1, 190–91.

[41] See ibid., 273–74.

[42] See J. Naṣrallah, *Saint Jean de Damas: Son époque, sa vie, son oeuvre* (Harissa, Lebanon, 1950), 67.

the Holy City to which the Prophet Muḥammad made his nocturnal journey; a desire for such legitimation may explain Yazīd's journey. Similarly, both Muʿāwiya and ʿAbd al-Malik announced their accession to the caliphate in Jerusalem. The Umayyads imitated and followed in the steps of the Ghassānids in many respects, perhaps including pilgrimage to the Holy City. Moreover, Yazīd was the son of a Christian mother, Maysūn, and the husband of another Christian woman, the Ghassānid Umm Ramla.[43]

Ghassānid pilgrimages to the Holy Land probably included visits not only to Jerusalem but also to the other two holy cities associated with Jesus, Nazareth and Bethlehem.

Oriens

Oriens had other pilgrimage sites in addition to the three provinces that constituted the Holy Land. Some of them were associated with figures of Arab Christianity; others were not but were nevertheless visited by the Ghassānids.

1. Julian of Antioch was a saint especially revered by the Monophysites and thus no doubt by the Ghassānids. Epigraphic evidence of their veneration is found in the inscription at al-Burj, near Damascus, in which he is thanked by their king, Mundir.[44]

2. More important was St. Sergius, the patron saint of the Byzantine army of Oriens and of the Ghassānids, whose name was invoked during military encounters.[45] The church of Mundir in the capital, Jābiya, was dedicated to him, and his city, Sergiopolis, was protected by the Ghassānids.[46] After Jerusalem, Sergiopolis was the most important pilgrimage center, and it also had a *mawsim,* a πανήγυρις. Ghassānids undoubtedly performed the pilgrimage to his shrine in Sergiopolis/Ruṣāfa.

Syriac hagiography provides evidence for such activity. In the *Life* of Aḥūdemmeh, the Arabs of Persian Mesopotamia are described as so dedicated

[43] On Ghassānid-Umayyad relations, see *BASIC* II.1, 375–91.

[44] For this inscription, see *BASIC* I.1, 495–501, and I.2, 965–66. On Julian, see H. Kaufhold, "Notizen über das Moseskloster bei Nabk und das *Juliankloster* bei Qaryatain in Syrien," *OC* 79 (1995), 48–119.

[45] In addition to the well-known invocation in the poetry of al-Akhṭal (see *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Akhṭal,* ed. I. Ḥāwī [Beirut, n.d.], 533, verse 3), there may be another one in the ode of al-Nābigha on the Ghassānid al-Nuʿmān (*Dīwān,* 53, verse 16). Its final verse invokes Jesus and Job; though the intervening name is Duʿmiyy—explained in the commentary as a personage related to the Iyad group—it likely originally was Sarjis, the Arabic for Sergius, whom the Ghassānids invoked in war. Such substitutions in pre-Islamic verses sometimes occurred in later Islamic times.

[46] On the Ghassānids and Sergius, see *BASIC* I.2, 949–62. On Sergiopolis, see E. K. Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius between Rome and Iran* (Berkeley, 1999).

to St. Sergius that they undertook the long journey from Persian territory to Sergiopolis in order to visit his shrine. Consequently, to spare them the hardship of traveling to Euphratensis, Aḥūdemmeh built them a shrine for Sergius in Persian Mesopotamia.[47] If Sergiopolis was a goal of Arab pilgrims from Sasanid territory, surely it also drew Arab *foederati* living in Roman territory such as the Ghassānids, who furthermore looked at Sergius as their patron saint and defended his shrine.[48]

Other pilgrimage centers in Oriens were associated with Arab figures.

1. Edessa, which contained the remains of the Apostle Thomas, was the city that its Arab dynasty, the Abgarids, made the principal center of the Christian Semitic Orient when Abgar the Great adopted Christianity.[49] Abgar's correspondence with Jesus and his receipt of the Holy Mandylion (a miraculous image of Jesus), though legendary, enhanced the sanctity of Edessa in the eyes of the Arabs. Abgar lived long in the memory of the Christians in Oriens and elsewhere.[50]

2. Cyrrhos, in the province of Euphratensis, contained the graves of two important Christian saints, Cosmas and Damian the Anargyroi (the Silverless), the patron saints of medicine. Whether the Ghassānids were aware of the physicians' Arab origin is not clear, but they most probably made the pilgrimage to their shrine—especially in a century that witnessed outbreaks of plagues and the dedication of many churches to them.[51]

3. Qalʿat Simʿān/Telanissos was also a great pilgrimage center whose saint, Symeon Stylites the Elder (d. 459), was associated with the Arabs of the fifth century. Indeed, they would have immediately carried off the body of the deceased saint to their settlements, had it not been for the arrival of the *magister militum,* Ardabūr.[52] Although the extant sources do not retain a reference to a pilgrimage by the Ghassānids, they must have visited the shrine, since they also became attached to Symeon the Younger of the sixth century, buried at the Wondrous Mountain, near Antioch.[53]

[47] For the *Life* of Aḥūdemmeh, the metropolitan of the East in Persian Mesopotamia, see PO 3 (Paris, 1909, 15–51); see also *BASIC* II.1, 177–82.

[48] For more on Sergius and the Arabs, see *BASIC* I.2, 949–62.

[49] For the Arab dynasty of the Abgarids in Edessa, see *RA,* Appendix, s.v. Abgarids (especially 109–12).

[50] His fame and Edessa's reached distant Ethiopia. A ceremonial center consisting of a group of churches was created during the period of the Zagwē dynasty (A.D. 1137–1270) and was called Roha (present-day Lālibālā), the Semitic form of the Greek Edessa. On Abgar, see G. Haile, "The Legacy of Abgar in Ethiopic Tradition," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 55.3 (1989), 375–410. Abgar has survived in the Near Eastern onomasticon, especially among the Armenians, as Apgar, and also among the Arabs, as Abjar; see I. ʿAbbās, *Shiʿr al-Khawārij* (Beirut, 1923), 61.

[51] See *BASIC* I.2, 963–65.

[52] See *BAFIC,* 160 note 7.

[53] See *BASIC* I.1, 244–48.

4. Especially important and meaningful to them must have been the pilgrimages associated with Najrān and its martyrs, their relatives. Najrān itself in South Arabia became the great pilgrimage center of the pre-Islamic Arabs and must have been visited by the Ghassānids.[54] In addition, the strong Najrāni presence in Oriens was concentrated in two towns.

a. Najrān in the Trachonitis was the namesake of Najrān, the martyropolis in South Arabia. According to the most reliable source, Yāqūt, it had a magnificent church, where vows and votive offerings were made.[55] This description suggests that it was also a local pilgrimage center.

b. The Ghassānids most probably had another local pilgrimage site related to their martyred relatives: Maḥajja, not far from Damascus, whose very name ("Pilgrimage Center") reveals its function. It is the only such toponym in Oriens. Presumably the Ghassānids asked for some of the relics of the martyrs of Najrān, which were transported to Oriens from South Arabia and went through a *depositio* at the site, which they then named Maḥajja.[56] A recent work on Syrian toponymy has revealed that the town still contains ancient oratories, churches, palaces, cemeteries, wells, canals, pools, and wine presses. Two miles to the north of it is Tall Qaswa, which also has remains from the Byzantine period.[57]

IV. Private and Family Life

The religion that revolutionized the public social life of the Ghassānids similarly affected their private family life. Indeed, it was only natural that their Christian faith should have been reflected in the everyday life of such a religious community. Its traces are clearly visible in the scant surviving sources.

1. In one verse of al-Nābigha, the panegyrist uses the phrase *ṭayyibun hujuzātuhum,* "zoned in chastity," to describe the sexual purity of the Ghassānid kings.[58] In another he alludes to their Christian faith by implication, marking their calm reaction to the vicissitudes of life.[59] In a third, he employs the phrase *fama yarjūna ghayra al-ʿawāqibi:*[60] they look forward not to this world and its blandishments but to the other world, to life after death and to the Resurrection. In a fourth verse, they are saluted as a unique people, whom God favored with a virtue

[54] See the present writer in "Byzantium in South Arabia," *DOP* 33 (1979), 69–76.

[55] Ibid., 78–79; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-Buldān* (Beirut, 1950), II, 539.

[56] For Maḥajja and its *dayr* in the list of the subscriptions of the 137 archimandrites in their letter addressed to the Ghassānid Arethas, see *BASIC* I.2, 828; see also Map V in *BASIC* II.1, 429.

[57] See *al-Muʿjam al Juġhrāfi li al-Quṭr al-ʿArabi al-Sūri,* ed. M. Ṭlas (Damascus, 1992), IV, 438.

[58] al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 47, verse 25.

[59] Ibid., 48, verse 28.

[60] Ibid., 47, verse 24. See ʿAbd al-Baghdādī, *Khizānat al-Adab,* ed. ʿA. Hārūn (Beirut, 1981), III, 331, for al-Aṣmaʿī's perceptive scholium.

granted to no other group, *lahum shīmatun lam yuʿṭihā Allāhu ghayrahum*.[61] Their Christianity was so clearly manifest that the Arabian poet noticed it; and in saluting their virtues he was not simply parroting clichés, since these terms had never been used in pre-Islamic panegyrics.[62]

The lives of ordinary families were also touched, even suffused, by Christianity, which gave certain events new significance. The newborn child was now baptized sacramentally, rather than circumcised;[63] marriage ceased to be simply a contract and became a sacrament; and death itself could be viewed as a journey to the other world, which for good Christians meant Resurrection. These changes are reflected clearly in a verse of an elegy on one of their kings, al-Nuʿmān, composed by al-Nābigha.[64] Thus, when a member of the royal family, the crown prince Jabala, died in battle, he died as *miles Christi* and was buried as a martyr in a martyrion in Chalcis.[65] Comparisons and contrasts with the pagan Arabs, their congeners in the Arabian Peninsula, and with their predecessors in Oriens, the Nabataeans and Palmyrenes, are instructive in illustrating the long social distance traversed by the Ghassānids in their spiritual journey from paganism to Christianity.[66]

Because Christianity affected every aspect of Ghassānid social life, it also influenced their urban landscape, especially since the kings of the dynasty were lovers of building, *philoktistai*. In Ghassānid towns, the important architectural landmarks were not those of pagan Rome—the circus (hippodrome), the theater, the amphitheater, the nymphaia—but the church, the monastery, and possibly the baptistery (in this early period a detached structure, separate from the church). These were significant venues for various social functions in addition to the religious ones for which they were primarily designed.[67]

[61] al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 46, verse 23. Al-Baghdādī's *Khizānat al-Adab,* III, 330, has the better reading, *mina al-nāsi* (instead of the *Dīwān*'s *mina al-jūdi*).

[62] The Christian sentiments expressed by al-Nābigha in this sextet of verses in his famous ode on the Ghassānids are noteworthy. Rather than responding to specific events, they reflect general conclusions that the poet drew on the life of Christians and their expectations—conclusions perhaps arrived at after he had read the New Testament, or at least one of the Gospels. He does refer to Majalla (*Dīwān,* 47, verse 24), accepted by all commentators as the Gospel; see al-Baghdādī, *Khizānat al-Adab,* III, 331.

[63] Circumcision was abandoned generally by the church, following the views of St. Paul; after the Council in Jerusalem, ca. A.D. 50, circumcision was no longer obligatory on gentiles. For circumcision among the Ismailites, see Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities,* books I–III, trans. H. St. J. Thackeray, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass., 1930), book I, 193; among the Arabs in general, 214.

[64] See the attractive epicedium on the Ghassānid king al-Nuʿmān, in al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 122, verse 30; also G. T. Dennis, "Death in Byzantium," *DOP* 55 (2001), 1–7.

[65] See *BASIC* I.1, 243–49.

[66] For such aspects of social life as marriage, communal meals, and banquets among the South Arabians, whence the Ghassānids had hailed; in Arabia Pastoralis, where they had stopped on their way to the north; and among the Rhomaic Nabataeans and Palmyrenes of Oriens, see R. G. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs* (London, 2001), 128–38.

[67] See "The Ghassānid Sedentary Presence," Chapter 2 in Part III, below.

Childhood and Children in Federate Oriens

The interest of Byzantinists in children as a serious branch of historical research has grown in the second half of the twentieth century.[68] The latest reflection of this interest was the Dumbarton Oaks Spring Symposium of 2006, at which the many dimensions of childhood in Byzantium were explored.

As has been the case with other aspects of Ghassānid social life, the contemporary poets are the best sources of evidence; and the two most prominent Ghassānid panegyrists, al-Nābigha and Ḥassān, are also the two main sources on this theme.

1. al-Nābigha. In an attractive quatrain,[69] the poet meets a Ghassānid prince, still a young boy, a *ghulām,* and provides a detailed description of him. The first verse is remarkable for its inclusive, comprehensive quality. The poet notes the handsome face of the boy, who is on his way to distinguishing himself morally, and he is physically strong enough to reach his majority or youth quickly.[70] These are the physical and moral qualities that the poet praised in the Ghassānid kings and phylarchs, whom he eulogized more expansively in his long odes.

Also noteworthy in the quatrain is its inclusion of the female as well as male progenitors of the Ghassānid boy. As discussed in the following chapter in this volume, Ghassānid queens were prominent and influential, and one or two of the Hinds mentioned in the quatrain may have come from the celebrated group *Kindat al-Mulūk,* Royal Kinda.[71] Hence the moral and physical qualities of their offspring were outstanding, and the child would be called *muʿimm,* "one with distinguished paternal uncles," and *mukhwil,* "one with distinguished maternal uncles."[72]

The quatrain is thus remarkable as a poetic expression of the image of the Ghassānids as perceived by their contemporaries: a family and clan, distinguished

[68] Groundbreaking work was first done by Ph. Koukoules; see his *Byzantinon bios kai politismos* (Athens, 1948), I.1, 1–184. He was followed by such scholars as E. Patlagean, *Structure sociale, famille, chrétienté à Byzance, IVe–XIe siècle* (London, 1981), 85–93; A. Moffatt, "The Byzantine Child," *Social Research* 53 (1986), 705–23; and now C. Hennessy, *Images of Children in Byzantium* (Aldershot, Eng., 2008) and A.-M. Talbot and A. Papaconstantinou, eds., *Becoming Byzantine: Children and Childhood in Byzantium* (Washington, D.C., 2009).

[69] See al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 166. The quatrain attracted the attention of Nöldeke, who discussed it in *GF,* 33–35.

[70] The Arabic phrase *mustaqbil al-khayr* may be translated in various ways. One possibility is "prosperity and good things lie close to him"; Nöldeke rendered it *dem das Gute bevorsteht* (*GF,* 33). *Al-khayr* is made plural in the fourth verse of the quatrain; though the context suggests a moral connotation, its meaning is still not entirely clear.

[71] The mother of Arethas was Māriya, a Kindite princess; relations between the two royal houses were always good, unlike Ghassānid-Lakhmid relations.

[72] These epithets were used in a verse of ʿAntara, one of the poets of the Suspended Odes. See *Sharḥ Dīwān ʿAntara,* ed. K. al-Bustani (Beirut, 1958), 57, verse 8.

morally and physically, who kept the purity of their Ghassānid blood unadulterated.[73] This image is inspired by the impression made by the Ghassānid prince, who thus elicits from the poet the description and eulogy of the royal house as his pedigree is recounted. It is a reflection of the premium that the Arab Ghassānids placed on childhood and on their children, made so clear in the background of the quatrain, which, according to the scholiast, was an invitation extended to the poet to see the child in whom the Ghassānid king took such fatherly pride.[74] That such parental care elicited filial care is demonstrated by the heroic efforts of Nuʿmān to win the release of his father, Mundir, the Ghassānid king, after he was captured and exiled during the reign of Tiberius II.[75]

2. Ḥassān. While al-Nābigha's attention was drawn by the handsomeness of the young Ghassānid prince, Ḥassān was attracted by Ghassānid children of a riper age: the maidens who on Palm Sunday were fashioning the coral wreaths in preparation for the celebration of Easter.[76] It was these very maidens who, in the famous ode of al-Nābigha, appear presenting their parents and other members of the Ghassānid royal house with these wreaths and other appropriate gifts, the *taḥāyā,* described above.[77]

Baptism, Nomenclature, Nursing

The sacrament of baptism was especially important in late antiquity, when infant baptism superseded the adult catechumenate. The Ghassānids lived so close to the Jordan, the river of baptism, that the baptism ceremony of their children must have represented a major celebratory occasion.

Baptism also raises the question of Arab identity, which was strong among the Ghassānids. Even after living for a century and a half in the orbit of a Christian Roman Empire and helping to refound the Monophysite church after its suppression

[73] See al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 42, verse 8; Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 205, verse 7. The Ghassānids win in battle when they fight alongside those whose blood is purely Ghassānid. In both verses this belief is subtly expressed by the use of derivatives from the root *a-sh-b,* "mixed."

[74] The scholium and the quatrain recreate a domestic scene still common in the Arab Near East: parents proudly show their young children to their guests. On the Arab affection for their children, see the section "On the Love of Children" in Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *al-ʿIqd al-Farīd,* ed. A. Amīn, I. Abyārī, and A. Hārūn (Beirut, 1982), II, 437–41.

[75] See *BASIC* I.1, 341, 378, 468, 474, 531.

[76] See Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 255, verse 6, and the discussion in *BASIC* II.1, 295 note 6.

[77] For Ḥassān's and al-Nābigha's verses on the *walāʾid,* the maidens, see the discussion in *BASIC* II.1, 295. *Al-walāʾid* in al-Nābigha can only be the plural of *walīda,* "daughter," and not a reference to the slaves or servants, as suggested by the scholiast, who explains the word as *imāʾ* (plural of *ama,* "servant, slave"); see *Dīwān,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1977), 47 note 25, and ed. S. Fayṣal (Beirut, 1968), 63 note 25. The context surely suggests the meaning "daughters," a reading clinched by a verse of Ḥassān that explicitly uses the same term, *walāʾid,* of the daughters of the Ghassānids, whom he describes as royals and not nomads indulging in occupations appropriate only to the pastoralists; see *Dīwān,* I, 255, verses 6, 7, 8.

by Justin I and his successors, they refused to assume non-Arab names.[78] This resistance is especially noteworthy in the context of the sacrament of baptism. Already in the fourth century, John Chrysostom had chided Christian parents for calling their children after their forebears, urging them instead to use the names of the apostles, martyrs, and saints.[79] The Ghassānids never responded to this call.[80] All their names for their sons and daughters were strictly Arab, including Ḥalīma and (their queens) Hind or Umāma or Salma, as well as Ḥārith, Jabala, and Nuʿmān. The one exception occurred not among the Ghassānids but within another phylarchal royal house, that of Kinda, where the name Māriya (Mary) appeared; thus Arethas, whose father Jabala had married the Kindite princess Māriya, was called Ibn Māriya, "the son of Māriya."[81]

The conversion of Arabs to Christianity before the rise of Islam brought about a change more generally in Arab attitudes toward the birth of female children. Theirs was a society of warriors, most notably in the Peninsula but also when they became federates of the two empires, Persia and Byzantium. Hence their partiality to sons rather than daughters—well-illustrated in the Koran's description of the suppressed anger of a father told that his wife had given birth to a daughter.[82] The Koran and Islam ameliorated the earlier attitudes of Arabs toward women, but Christianity did more, since it was a woman, the Virgin Mary, through whom the mystery of the Incarnation and the miraculous birth of Christ took place.[83] Women continued to play an important role in the life of Jesus and subsequently as saints and martyrs; hence women among the Arabs such as the Kinda and also Muslims often assumed the name of the Virgin, as Māriya or Maryam. The Ghassānids apparently resisted that impulse, however, as the extant sources record no Māriya or Maryam in their onomasticon.

Ghassānid parents demonstrated their pride in their children by including the names of their sons and daughters as part of their own names. Patronymics ("son of") are widely used across peoples and societies, but the Arabs went further

[78] On "Flavius" and "Philochristos" as honorific titles bestowed on them, see "The Ghassānid Identity," below (Part III, Chapter 10).

[79] See John Chrysostom, *Sur la vaine gloire et l'éducation des enfants,* ed. and trans. A.-M. Malingrey, Sources Chrétiennes 188 (Paris, 1972), 146–47.

[80] Many of their kings and phylarchs were called by the name of al-Ḥārith, the Arethas of the Greek sources. Ḥārith, a very Arab name, was also the name of the chief martyr of Najrān, al-Ḥārith ibn-Kaʿb of the *Martyrium Arethae* and the Syriac *Book of the Ḥimyarites;* see the index to *Martyrs*, s.v. Arethas.

[81] This matronymic of the famous Arethas was remembered as late as the days of the poet laureate Ḥassān, ca. A.D. 600; see his *Dīwān,* I, 74, verse 11.

[82] Koran, Sūrat al-Naḥl, 16:58–59; Sūrat al-Zukhruf, 43:17. These verses rejected and inveighed against the pre-Islamic ethos of partiality to male issue.

[83] The veneration for Mary was also shared by the Koran; Maryam, 19:16–26; Āl-ʿImrān, 3:35–37.

by also adding tecnonymics ("father of") to their proper names. Most of the Arab tecnonymics involve sons rather than daughters.[84]

The importance of children among the Arabs is reflected in some of the customs and terms associated with them, including the Ghassānids.

1. In aristocratic circles, infants were not suckled by their own mother but were given to another woman called the *murdiʿ* or *murdiʿa*. The end of suckling represented the end of a phase of infancy, and the weaning was performed by a woman called a *fātima*—a word that became a proper name assumed by many Arab women, including the Prophet Muḥammad's daughter.

2. The teething of infants was also considered a significant stage of development. The Arabic word for tooth, *sinn,* came to mean the age of an individual, and it also gave rise to *musinn,* the term for an elderly man.[85]

3. One of the occasions on which Arabs gave a banquet, *al-khurs,* was childbirth.[86] It is practically certain that the Ghassānids observed this celebration.

Education

The education of Ghassānid boys is shrouded in obscurity, for the scanty extant sources say nothing about it. But it surely must have included a preparation for their future duties as federates, such as training in weapons, the sword and the spear, and in the equestrianism for which the Ghassānids were celebrated.[87] Religious instruction must also have been part of their education, since their royal house was the protector of the Monophysite church. Arabic poetry undoubtedly played a role; the art was closely associated with the court at which poets eulogized the Ghassānid kings, and some poetry was composed by the Ghassānids themselves. It is worth exploring the extent to which these children were likely also exposed to non-Arab and non-Arabic education, particularly knowledge of Latin and Greek, the two languages important for the Ghassānids as *foederati* in the service of Byzantium.[88] The higher echelons of the Ghassānid hierarchy probably knew both, enabling the famous Arethas to confer directly with Justinian and Theodora, without an interpreter, when he visited the capital. Similarly, his son, Mundir, almost certainly

[84] The Ghassānid onomasticon presents a unique case when al-Ḥārith, one of the many Ḥāriths, is called Ibn Abī-Shamir, which thus simultaneously combined both the tecnonymic and the patronymic; for the occurrence of this in the Arabic poetry of the period, see Nöldeke, *GF,* 21.

[85] See Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab* (Beirut, 1997), III, 351.

[86] For the term, see ibid., II, 239.

[87] Analogies can be drawn from the education of Lakhmid children, about which more is known. Like the Ghassānids, the Lakhmids originally hailed from South Arabia, and the two groups shared ideas and ideals common to Arabs; see Y. R. Ghunayma, *al-Ḥīra* (Baghdad, 1936), 109–11.

[88] On Byzantine education, see "School," *ODB,* III, 1853.

addressed the Monophysite conference in Constantinople in A.D. 580 using Greek, the language common to all the participants, who came from different parts of the empire or at least the Pars Orientalis, including Coptic Egypt.[89]

A passage in Choricius of Gaza, from the 530s, has some relevant material. In section 25 of his *Laudatio Summi,* the rhetor speaks of one of his students, who was sent to him by Summus, the *dux* of Palestine, and whose father was a very well known figure in the Provincia Arabia: γνώρισμα μέγιστον ὁ πατήρ.[90] No one after the *dux* was more famous in the *provincia* than the phylarch, Arethas, and it is tempting to think that it was he who sent his son—possibly Mundir, who would become equally celebrated—to study with Choricius in Gaza.[91]

In this context, Choricius is also helpful when he speaks of an Arab orator who functioned as the *symboulos* of the *dux* Summus in either assessing the taxes of Palestine or reconciling two Arab phylarchs.[92] Here the Roman officer, who belonged to the Graeco-Roman establishment, had to depend on an interpreter who could communicate with the Arabs of the *provincia*. Surely he must also have known the languages that Summus spoke or knew, Latin and Greek. The Arab phylarchs and their children, who were trained as future phylarchs, thus not only spoke Arabic but also may have been taught one or both of the official languages of the empire.

Also instructive is the case of a young Arab prince who belonged to the other phylarchal family, Kinda, in central Arabia. To negotiate a settlement, Justinian sent Kinda his veteran diplomat, Abraham, who succeeded in 528 in striking a *foedus* with the Kindite phylarch, Qays; as part of the agreement, Qays sent his son, Muʿāwiya, to the capital as a hostage, a ὅμηρος.[93] Surely a young Arab prince residing in Constantinople received some Byzantine education at the court or some schooling at home, learning Greek, the language of the capital where he was living, and possibly some Latin, which was still the language of the army and thus especially important to the son of an Arab military ally. Some Ghassānid princes may also have been sent to Constantinople, since Ghassānid-Byzantine relations during

[89] For the Monophysite conference in Constantinople, see *BASIC* I.2, 900–908.

[90] *Laudatio Summi,* section 25, in *Choricii Gazaei opera,* ed. R. Förster and E. Richsteig (Leipzig, 1929), 76, lines 17–18; see *BASIC* I.1, 189.

[91] When I wrote *BASIC* I.1 in the 1990s, I doubted that Arethas was involved (189 note 47). But my subsequent lectures on and research into other aspects of Ghassānid life have led me to conclude that the leader left unnamed by Choricius was almost certainly Arethas; especially persuasive are Arethas' non-military attainments, which recent research has revealed. Such an accomplished king might well have sent his sons to Gaza to be trained for their future careers in the service of Byzantium in the style of the "barbarian" chiefs of the Roman Occident, who cared for the education of their children.

[92] Ibid., 189–90.

[93] See "Byzantium and Kinda," in *BALA* III, 86–90.

the reign of Justinian were very good; but the young Ghassānids did not have to make the journey to the distant capital to learn the two languages, since instruction was available in the many schools of Oriens.

Marriage

The marriage of Ghassānid children was noticed in the prose account of the wedding of the princess al-Dhalfāʾ to her cousin, which pointed out that the marriage was endogamous.[94] Both these accounts derive from later prose works. Contemporary poetry on the Ghassānids, or what has survived of it, is silent on marriages. But in federate, non-Ghassānid history—such as that reported by the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Socrates—there is reference to the fourth-century marriage of the daughter of Queen Mavia to the *magister equitum,* Victor, a remarkable marriage between a *Rhomaios,* Sarmatian though he was, and a "barbarian" princess. It was a significant political marriage, unique in the social history of Arab-Byzantine relations.[95] Its varied dimensions involved the Christian faith, which united Victor and the princess, and the imperial interests, political and military, of Byzantium in the second half of the fourth century.

The statement of the ecclesiastical historian on this marriage was very laconic, even leaving the princess anonymous. There is no doubt, however, that the wedding was royally celebrated and involved a nuptial banquet, which the Arabs always gave on such occasions and which they called the *ʿurs* or *ʿurus*.[96] To the reign of Mavia also belongs the earliest solid reference to the composition of Arabic poetry (celebrating victories over the imperial armies of Valens), and it is very likely that epithalamia were composed on this unusual marriage. According to Sozomen, the epinician odes of Mavia were still remembered and sung in the fifth century, but they—together with the epithalamia, if any were composed—have unfortunately disappeared.[97]

Circumcision

The Arabs in pre-Islamic times did circumcise their children, a practice attested by Josephus.[98] They also celebrated childbirth with a meal called *ʿidhār/iʿdhār/ ʿadhīra*.[99] But the Ghassānids, after converting to Christianity, became devoted to their new faith. As is well known, St. Paul rejected circumcision in favor of

[94] For a description of the wedding, see the Cambridge Manuscript, No. 1201, 115v.
[95] See *BAFOC*, 158–69.
[96] On this term, see Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab,* IV, 298.
[97] See *BAFOC,* 151–52 and note 54.
[98] Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities,* book I, 193, 214.
[99] See Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab,* IV, 286.

baptism,[100] and following his recommendation, circumcision was abandoned by the Christian Church, although it has survived among some of the Christian communities in the Orient such as the Ethiopians.

Extant texts do not definitively settle the question of whether the Ghassānids had their children circumcised. However, baptism was close to their hearts, living as they did near the Jordan, the river of baptism. And the Ghassānids, like other Christians, sought to distinguish themselves from the Jews—whom St. Paul referred to as ἡ περιτομή, "circumcision"[101]—in an age that viewed the Jews as *Theoktonoi*, deicides. Like other Monophysites, the Ghassānids were probably hostile toward the Jews and Judaism.[102] It is thus almost certain that the Ghassānids did not circumcise their children. But soon after the fall of the Ghassānids, Islam prevailed in Oriens and the practice of circumcision returned, but not as a religious ritual.

[100] Galatians 5:6, 6:15.

[101] Romans 3:30; Ephesians 2:11.

[102] When Michael the Syrian, the Monophysite historian and patriarch, expressed his antipathy to the Chalcedonian patriarch of Antioch during the latter's encounter with the Ghassānid king, Arethas, he pejoratively referred to him as Ephraim the Jew: see *BASIC* I.2, 748.

II

The Women of Ghassān

Gender studies across the humanities have been considerably stimulated by Joan Scott's pathbreaking article "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," which appeared in 1986.[1] The field of Byzantine studies has witnessed the publication of many important works that have built on older well-known ones as they have taken up the theme of women in Byzantium.[2] These provide a valuable background for considering the Arab women of Ghassān, since the Ghassānids lived in the shadow of Byzantium for a century and a half and were its *foederati*. Studies on Arab women have focused mostly on the modern period, as societies today grapple with the problem of the veil and its return as a headdress, promoted by Muslim fundamentalists to reassert Muslim identity.[3] None has appeared on Arab women in late antiquity, let alone on the more specialized subject of Ghassānid women. Among scholars, only the late Nabia Abbott touched briefly on the Arab women in late antiquity in an article that treated the theme of Arab queens from the Assyrian period of the eighth century B.C. to the Byzantine period of the seventh century A.D.[4] More recently and more relevantly, Sebastian Brock and Susan Harvey have dealt with the Syriac Orient in

[1] J. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91 (1986), 1053–75.

[2] See D. M. Nicol, *The Byzantine Lady: Ten Portraits, 1250–1500* (Cambridge, 1994); L. Garland, *Byzantine Empresses: Women and Power in Byzantium, AD 527–1204* (London, 1999); A.-M. Talbot, *Women and Religious Life in Byzantium* (Aldershot, Eng., 2001); I. Kalavrezou, *Byzantine Women and Their World* (New Haven, 2003); and C. L. Connor, *Women of Byzantium* (New Haven, 2004). See also A. Laiou, "The Role of Women in Byzantine Society," *JÖB* 31 (1981), 233–60, with a useful bibliography (233 notes 1–2) of some important works on Byzantine women that preceded Scott's article. On the most famous of all Byzantine women, Theodora, the most recent study is C. Foss, "The Empress Theodora," *Byzantion* 72 (2002), 141–76, which contains a select bibliography on Theodora (141 note 1). To these works on Byzantine women may be added K. G. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses: Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1982).

[3] On the veil, see "Veiling in the Islamic Vestimentary System," in the standard work on Arab dress, Y. K. Stillman, *Arab Dress: A Short History; From the Dawn of Islam to Modern Times,* ed. N. A. Stillman (Leiden, 2003), 138–45.

[4] N. Abbott, "Pre-Islamic Arab Queens," *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 58 (1941), 1–23.

late antiquity in a volume that appeared in 1987, but they did not concentrate on Arab women.[5]

The present writer broached the topic in 1999 in an article on the Christian Arab women of late antiquity from the third to the seventh century; a more specialized article on the martyresses of Najrān followed in 2004.[6] Hence this chapter is the first detailed and comprehensive account of the women of federate Ghassān. While the Greek sources have yielded data on only two Arab federate women in the fourth century—namely, Queen Mavia and her daughter[7]—and on a single anonymous woman in the fifth century—namely, the poet daughter of the Salīḥid federate king, Dāwūd[8]—more information is available on Ghassānid women in the sixth and seventh centuries.

I. Overview

On Ghassānid women, as on all aspects of Ghassānid social history, the sources have their limitations. They deal with the aristocracy and with members of the royal house, rarely or almost never with ordinary Ghassānids. But they are reliable, since they are mostly contemporary poetry. Only a few sources are prose accounts written later, but even these are borne out by contemporary poetry. The first reference to the women of Ghassān appropriately begins in the reign of Justinian with a matronymic: Arethas ibn Māriya.

The examination of the sources on the women of Ghassān has revealed the names of no fewer than thirteen queens and princesses: Māriya, Ḥalīma, two Hinds, Umāma, Salma, Maysūn, Fākhita, al-Raʿlāʾ, al-Naḍīra, Layla, Dhalfāʾ, and Ramla, each discussed below. Despite their importance, revealed so clearly in the matronymics of the Ghassānid kings, little data on them have survived, but those data are sufficient to enable a picture of their functions in Ghassānid life to emerge. Moreover, the limitations of the extant sources can be partially counteracted when those sources are set against the background of what is known about the social role of Arab women in this period,[9] as well the rise of the status of women through Christianity in the history of the Christian Roman Empire.[10]

[5] S. P. Brock and S. A. Harvey, *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient* (Berkeley, 1987).

[6] See I. Shahîd, "The Women of *Oriens Christianus Arabicus* in Pre-Islamic Times," *Parole de l'Orient* 24 (1999), 61–77; idem, "The Martyresses of Najrān," in *Aegyptus Christiana: Mélanges d'hagiographie égyptienne et orientale dédiés à la mémoire du P. Paul Devos, Bollandiste,* ed. U. Zanetti and E. Lucchesi, Cahiers d'Orientalisme 25 (Geneva, 2004), 123–33.

[7] See *BAFOC,* 138–201.

[8] See ibid., 426, 434, 436–38.

[9] See Abbott, "Pre-Islamic Arab Queens"; Jawād ʿAli, *al-Mufaṣṣal fi Tārīkh al-ʿArab qabl al-Islam* (Beirut, 1970), IV, 616–54.

[10] For a succinct description of the status of women in Byzantium, see J. Herrin, A. Kazhdan, and

Despite the number of queens and princesses whose names are known, their story is a practically unknown chapter in Ghassānid history. Source survival is part of the problem. An entire long ode has survived on an Arab queen of this period, but unfortunately she was Lakhmid, not Ghassānid, and the subject was primarily her beauty.[11] However, from the debris of references in the extant sources on Ghassānid women, some significant data are retrievable on the royal house. They make it possible to arrive at conclusions about the importance of women in the history of the Ghassānids.

Women always played a significant role in Arab history, which even had a matriarchal period.[12] After the demise of the Arab matriarchies the privileged position of Arab women persisted, as reflected in matrilineality—genealogical filiation through the mother rather than the father, a distinctive feature of Arab society. Matronymics such as Ibn Māriya, Ibn Hind, and Ibn Salma have survived in the Ghassānid onomasticon.[13] That they appear as appellations of Ghassānid kings, sometimes even without the personal name of the king, clearly implies that these queen mothers were strong and influential personalities in the history of the dynasty.

The first question that needs to be asked is, How can the importance and influence of queens in Ghassānid history be explained? The history of Arab-Roman-Byzantine relations, especially in the sixth century, together with that of related Arab groups in the Peninsula and Mesopotamia, provides fruitful clues and a framework for understanding their prominence. This history presents role models who stimulated and inspired the Ghassānid queens.

1. The influence of Ghassānid queens and princesses in Oriens was a continuation of that of their predecessors in the previous three centuries. The third century witnessed the climax of that influence, represented by Arab empresses of the Severan dynasty; by the wife of Philip the Arab, Marcia Otacilia Severa; and by the federate Zenobia of Palmyra.[14] Closer still to the Ghassānids was the federate queen Mavia, who in the fourth century successfully challenged the military might of the empire under Valens. Memories of Mavia were certainly alive in the sixth century. As noted in the previous chapter, the epinician odes of her victories were

A. Cutler, "Women," *ODB,* III, 2201–4, and its very useful bibliography, especially the first article listed: A. Laiou, "The Role of Women in Byzantine Society."

[11] See al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1977), 89–97; the poem is discussed below in Part III, Chapter 7.

[12] Eight Arab queens who ruled as well as reigned are known by name in the Assyrian period, the first being Zabibi and the last Adia; see Abbott, "Pre-Islamic Arab Queens," 4–5.

[13] Even the Ghassānids' relatives in Medina, the Aws and the Khazraj, were called matronymically Banū-Qayla, "the Sons of Qayla."

[14] All are discussed in *RA.*

still recited in the fifth, when the ecclesiastical historian Sozomen heard them.[15] In addition, Mavia was the model of the Christian warrior queen, and her name continued to be found among Christian Arabs in the sixth century.[16]

2. The Ghassānids were zealous in their Christianity, a religion that elevated the status of women. The figure of the Theotokos was dominant, and women played an important part in the ministry of Jesus and of St. Paul. Like all Ghassānids, their queens and princesses were physically the closest of all the Christians of the world to the scene of Christ's birth and to his "homeland," where he performed his ministry and where he died. The ideals presented by the women of the New Testament were alive in the consciousness of Ghassānid queens, the most famous of whom—the mother of Arethas, a Kindite married to the Ghassānid Jabala—carried the name of the Theotokos, Māriya.

3. Closer to the Christian Ghassānids in time and affiliation were the martyresses of Najrān, about a hundred of whom died around the year A.D. 520.[17] Unlike the women of the New Testament, these were their contemporaries and their relatives, women who laid down their lives rather than renounce their faith. The chief martyress, Ruhm, and her speech before she died must have remained vivid in their minds. It was to the Ghassānid king and phylarch, Jabala, that the refugees from Najrān came seeking aid against their persecutor, and Ghassānid-Najrāni relations remained very close throughout the sixth century. They became even closer after the martyrs' relics were carried to Oriens and a new Najrān, with a great votive church, rose in the Trachonitis.[18] Memories of the martyresses would have been especially vivid on 24 October, the date of the Feast of the Martyrs of Najrān. Just as the example of the chief martyr, Arethas, became a model for the kings and phylarch (who coincidentally were often his namesake), so Ruhm, the chief martyress, became a model for the queens, who must have been inspired by her example.[19]

4. Even closer in time was the influence from Ḥīra, the capital of the Lakhmids in Mesopotamia. In the second half of the sixth century, the Lakhmid queen Hind was active in building monasteries and spreading the Christian faith. Whereas the poet al-Nābigha wrote a not very informative but beautiful, long ode on one Lakhmid queen, another Lakhmid queen, Hind, left a most informative, long, and resoundingly Christian inscription that clearly revealed what

[15] For Mavia and the epinician odes, see *BAFOC,* 138–202, 276.

[16] For the name's appearance among the martyresses of Najrān, the relatives of the Ghassānids, see *The Book of the Himyarites,* ed. A. Moberg (Lund, 1924), cxxi.

[17] See Shahîd, "The Women of *Oriens Christianus Arabicus* in Pre-Islamic Times," 61.

[18] On this church, see the present writer in "Byzantium in South Arabia," *DOP* 33 (1979), 79.

[19] For Ruhm/Ruhayma, see *Martyrs,* 57–59.

Christian queens could do for their faith,[20] and thus what Ghassānid queens could similarly do. Although Lakhmids and Ghassānids were not on friendly terms, owing to the paganism of the Lakhmid kings (especially Mundir and his father, al-Nuʿmān), relations between Kinda and Ghassān were very cordial. Because she was both Kindite and Christian, Hind had a natural affinity with the Ghassānid queens, her counterparts in Oriens, who must have looked upon her as a model. Two of them assumed her name, Hind, which therefore was incorporated into the matronymics of their sons, the two kings of Ghassān in the late sixth century. Her influence is clear in the actions of the Ghassānid queen Hind: namely, building one or more monasteries. The Ghassānid queens may also have been inspired by a descendant of Hind of Ḥīra, who became a nun toward the end of her life; another inspiration may have been the martyrdom of the Daughters of the Covenant in Najrān.[21]

5. Finally, Constantinople exerted a strong influence on Ghassānid queens. The sixth century was the Age of Justinian and his wife, the Monophysite Theodora, whose influence and power during that famous reign are well known and may be briefly described as follows.

a. The Ghassānid kings were also *patricii,* and the wife of the promoted *patricius* took part in the ceremony that raised him to that status.[22] It was on such an occasion that the Ghassānid queen would have met the imperial consort, who was usually active in the work of Christian charity and *philanthropia*. The patriciate of the queen (she was also *patricia*) cemented her loyalty to the Christian empire; the ceremony of promotion to the patriciate had religious overtones and would have induced in the Arab queen willingness and readiness to engage in Christian services in Ghassānland.

b. Theodora was the great friend of the Ghassānid Arethas, who obliged her by resuscitating the Monophysite church around A.D. 540. So she was naturally also the friend of his wife, the Ghassānid queen; from her, as from her husband, much was expected in the service of the revived Monophysite church. Although the loss of the sources detailing their activities, such as the *Akhbār Mulūk Ghasān,* has left little evidence for their Christian activities, one piece of information has survived: the building of the monastery Dayr Hind/Hunād (discussed below). The empress Theodora built homes and related facilities for fallen women,[23] and

[20] On this Arabic inscription, see the present writer in "The Authenticity of Pre-Islamic Poetry: The Linguistic Dimension," *al-Abḥāth* 44 (1996), 3–29, especially 11.

[21] On the Daughters of the Covenant, see *Martyrs,* 46.

[22] See Constantine VII, *Le livre des cérémonies,* ed. and trans. A. Vogt (Paris, 1939), II, chap. 56, p. 48.

[23] Procopius, *Secret History,* xvii.3.

the patronage of the Ghassānid queen must have been at least partly inspired by Theodora's actions.

c. It has been noted that the daughter of Justinian's nephew, Justin II, was called Arabia,[24] possibly marking appreciation for the Arab king's contribution to the resuscitation of the Monophysite church, to which the empress belonged and for which she was a zealous crusader. Perhaps it was Theodora who gave Justin II's daughter her name—Arabia.

Barbarian rulers and *magistri militum* sometimes sent their daughters to the capital for education, and it is possible that Theodora may have arranged for some Ghassānid princesses to be in Constantinople.

II. Women in Wartime

Although the Ghassānids contributed considerably to the arts of peace in Oriens and were well integrated as a sedentary community close to the Arab *Rhomaioi* in the region, they owed their presence in Oriens primarily to their employment as *foederati,* soldiers in the service of Byzantium. Military life was the basis of their existence, and their women played an important part in it.

Ghassānid women accompanied their men during military operations, according to the sources (discussed in detail later in this chapter). Their presence on the battlefield imparted a moral force to the warriors: they encouraged the men and recited some verses in the *rajaz* meter. This role is exemplified by the famous Ḥalīma and by Hind. In taking these actions, these Ghassānid princesses were inspired by ancestresses such as the heroic Arab queen Mavia, who in the fourth century personally led her own troops victoriously against those of the emperor Valens.

Ghassānid women cared for the troops in other respects. They provided food, as did Hind, and looked after the wounded. They also perfumed the warriors in their *qubba*s, pavilions where they stayed, as Maysūn did while the battle raged. The memory of Ghassānid women has survived among Arabs through the battle to which one of them, Ḥalīma, gave her name: the battle of Chalcis, Yawm Ḥalīma. Their presence also imbued these military encounters with a romantic complexion, one of the elements that make up the concept of chivalry (discussed in Part III).

III. Women in Peacetime

In peacetime Ghassānid women played an even more important role, which was considerably enhanced by Christianity, to which they were devoted. It influenced practically all aspects of their life, and was consonant with some aspects of their Arab ethos and mores.

[24] See *BASIC* I.1, 318–22. For more on Theodora and Arabia, see below, pp. 347–48.

As noted in the previous chapter, family and family life, already important among the pre-Islamic Arabs, was further enhanced by Christianity. The Ghassānids celebrated the birth of children with a feast, undoubtedly rejoiced in their baptism, and observed marriage as a Christian sacrament, now celebrated with the feast known in Arabic as *al-milāk*. The rites associated with death, too, changed, as Christianity emphasized hope in the Resurrection.

Of all these occasions on which women would have figured prominently, only death is mentioned in contemporary poetry, as when Ghassānid women mourned the death of a Ghassānid king, al-Nuʿmān.[25] And as will be explained in the chapter "Music and Song," below, mourning became institutionalized in memory of the martyrs of Najrān. The Resurrection is also mentioned in al-Nābigha's ode on the death of al-Nuʿmān, in which the Ghassānids, both men and women, share that hope for the deceased king, no doubt voiced in the funeral rite during burial.[26] The relevant prayers are possibly referred to in one of al-Nābigha's verses on al-Nuʿmān, if the reading *muṣallūhu* and not *muḍillūhu* is accepted, as some scholiasts recommend.[27]

The sources refer to the death of two members of the Ghassānid royal house, both sons of the famous Arethas: one, left anonymous by Procopius, died after being captured by their inveterate enemy, the Lakhmid Mundir of Ḥīra, in one of the encounters of the Ghassānid-Lakhmid war (A.D. 545–550) and sacrificed to Venus;[28] the other, Jabala, died at the battle of Chalcis in 554,[29] which also witnessed the death of the Lakhmid king Mundir. Jabala was buried in the martyrion of Chalcis/Qinnasrīn. Both would have been considered martyrs dying for the faith, since they fought against the pagan and rabid anti-Christian Mundir, and both would have been remembered in special services and mourned by Ghassānid women, especially by the bereaved mother.

The contributions of Ghassānid women could not have been limited to family and family life but must have extended to the social life in Ghassānland in general. In this area, the old Arab ethos and mores found their perfect complement in the ideals preached by Christianity. Half of the Arab ideal of *murūʾa* was *karam,* hospitality, a capacious concept that included many minor virtues. Likewise φιλανθρωπία, the Christian ideal of social welfare, was broadly manifested: it was

[25] See al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 107–8, verses 4–5.

[26] Al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 122, verse 30; see E. Velkovska, "Funeral Rites according to the Byzantine Liturgical Sources," *DOP* 55 (2001), 44.

[27] For *muṣallūhu,* see al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 121, verse 25; for *muḍillūhu,* see *Dīwān,* ed. S. Fayṣal (Beirut, 1968), 199, verse 27.

[28] Procopius, *History,* II.xxvii.12–13; see *BASIC* I.1, 237.

[29] As recorded by Michael the Syrian, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche jacobite d'Antioche (1166–1199),* ed. and trans. J. B. Chabot (Paris, 1899), II, 269; see *BASIC* I.1, 241.

institutionalized in the hospices (*xenodocheia*), the orphanages (*orphanotropheia*), and the hospitals (*xenones*).[30]

Ghassānid men were occupied in fighting continually on three fronts: against the Lakhmids, against the Persians, and against the pastoralists of the Arabian Peninsula. It was therefore a natural division of labor that left Ghassānid women to undertake the work of social welfare. A model for the case of the Ghassānid kings and queens was provided by the Abbasid caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd and his wife, Zubayda bint-Jaʿfar. While he was engaged in war and politics, she concentrated on welfare and public works, such as building an aqueduct to supply water to the Holy City, Mecca.[31] The scope and nature of such work is hard to ascertain in the documents that have survived on Ghassānid social life,[32] but one piece of evidence does reveal what they might have done in this respect. The historian Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī (d. 961) writes of Dayr Hind, the monastery of Hind, which, as discussed below, may well have been built by one of the two Hinds who appear as queens in the Ghassānid genealogical tree.

Of all the institutional manifestations of *philanthropia,* Ghassānid women must have been most involved in the *xenodocheia* attached to some monasteries. *Philoxenia* was the perfect counterpart to that part of Arab *murūʾa* related to peace—namely, *karam* in all its forms, such as offering food and lodging to strangers and travelers. And life and conditions in Ghassānland and Oriens called for the rise—even the proliferation—of such hospices. They could accommodate general travelers to the court of the Ghassānid kings and even the caravaneers of western Arabia, on their way to the Ghassānids' markets, *aswāq,* discussed in Part I of this volume. In particular, they welcomed pilgrims from faraway countries journeying to the Holy Land and to other *loca sancta* in Oriens. This was the century in which pilgrimage attained a wide vogue.

Though the evidence in contemporary poetry of Ghassānid involvement in these *xenodocheia* is indirect and circumstantial, it is pervasive and persuasive. Their panegyrists go out of their way to say that the Ghassānids were the foremost among all the Arab groups noted for hospitality.[33] And hospitality is natu-

[30] For instances of Ghassānid *philanthropia* at its best, see *Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit,* ed. W. ʿArafāt, Gibb Memorial New Series 25 (London, 1971), I, 74, verse 10.

[31] On the social work of this Abbasid woman, see R. Jacobi, "Zubayda," *EI*², XI, 547–48.

[32] The Ghassānid kings were highly engaged in the urbanization of Oriens, as the list of kings in Ḥamza, analyzed in *BASIC* II.1, makes clear; their activities included the building or repair of aqueducts (see *BASIC* II.1, 326–27). Ghassānid queens may also have been involved in this, just as Zubayda was in Mecca.

[33] So al-Nābigha sings in his famous ode: "God has gifted them with a quality which he did not favor any other group with"—namely, their generosity and hospitality; *Dīwān,* ed. Ibrāhīm, 46, line 23. In a similar vein, Ḥassān describes their visitors as so many and frequent that their dogs, accustomed to the sight of guests, do not bark or howl to protect their masters; see *Dīwān,* I, 74, verse 12.

rally displayed in such venues as *xenodocheia*. The prose sources offer one explicit piece of evidence for women's patronage of such social activities. This is again the construction of Dayr Hind in the Damascus region. It is unlikely to have been the only monastery built by a Ghassānid queen; some of the 137 monasteries enumerated by Syriac writers must have been Ghassānid, and some of those such as Dayr al-Labwa may have been built by women.[34]

The Ghassānid monastery was not, however, primarily a foundation for social welfare, manifested in a *xenodocheion*. It was an institution for "imitators of Christ," men and women who chose monasticism as a way of life. Some of the Ghassānid warriors made that choice after participating in the battle of Chalcis in A.D. 554; they decided to stay with St. Symeon the Younger, who, they believed, had aided them in their victory.[35] Although there is no direct evidence of Ghassānid nuns, Ghassānid women must have been inspired by their relatives in Najrān, the Arab martyropolis, who numbered nuns and daughters of the Covenant among their dead.[36] The Arabic term for nuns is found in the pre-Islamic period in the poetry of Imruʾ al-Qays, whose maternal uncles were the Ghassānids.[37] More to the point, it appears in the poetry of Ḥassān, their panegyrist. In an elegy on the Prophet Muḥammad, he uses the term *rawāhib* (plural of *rāhiba,* "nun") in describing the widow of the Prophet.[38] The most likely presumption is that he saw nuns in Ghassānid Oriens. Further evidence is provided by the Arabic term *hayjumāna,* which probably derives from the Greek ἡγουμένη, the "mother superior" in charge of a nunnery.[39] The Arabic terms *hayjumāna,* for the head of the convent, and *rawāhib,* for its members, strongly argues for the existence of the institution among the Arabs. A study of monasteries in later times has revealed about seventeen of them in the region.[40] These could not have been built in the Islamic period, when restrictions were placed on the construction of Christian places of worship; thus

[34] See "The Monastery as a Cultural Center," Chapter 4 in Part III; on the Syriac document, see *BASIC* I.2, 824–38. On Dayr al-Labwa, see *BASIC* II.1, 200, 333: in Arabic, Labwa means "Lioness," a complimentary term indicative of strength.

It is worth noting that the empress Theodora made grants in support of charity in various parts of the empire, as far distant as Italy. It is therefore quite likely that she extended grants to the diocese dearest to her heart, that of the Monophysite Ghassānids, who had revived the church of her confession. The remarkable number of monasteries built within a thirty-year period may thus be owed in part to the grants extended by the empress to federate Oriens, to the queens and kings of the Ghassānid royal house.

[35] See *BASIC* I.1, 247.

[36] See *Martyrs,* 54.

[37] Imruʾ al-Qays, *Dīwān,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1958), 386, verse 36.

[38] See Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 272, line 8.

[39] *Hayjumāna* appears in the *Dīwān* of Salāma ibn Jandal, ed. F. Qabāwa (Aleppo, 1968), 190, verse 1.

[40] See H. al-Zayyāt, "al-Diyārāt al-Naṣrāniyya fi al-Islam," *al-Machriq* 36 (1938), 291–417; on the nunneries, see 312–15.

they must go back to pre-Islamic times. The chances then are that Ghassānid queens, perhaps inspired in part by the imperial example of Theodora, did establish some nunneries in Oriens.[41]

It is also possible that one or more were founded for fallen women who repented—as had been done by the empress Theodora in Constantinople.[42] Again, some strong circumstantial evidence points in this direction. Despite imperial and ecclesiastical disfavor, sensual festivities such as the Maiumas had not disappeared in this period in Oriens,[43] and some Arabs, federate and Rhomaic, must have wandered into venues that featured them. These could be the breeding ground for prostitution, as evidenced in the poetry of Ḥassān, who refers to the *mūmis,* the prostitute, more than once.[44] Even the region whence the Ghassānids had hailed before they became *foederati* of Byzantium was no stranger to prostitution. The Laws of St. Gregentius, given to the Ḥimyarites of South Arabia, legislated against prostitution and sexual misbehavior; and in Najrān itself, a prostitute, Māḥiya, was among the women who had repented and around A.D. 520 chose to be martyred as a Christian.[45]

IV. Women and Religious Feasts

The Ghassānids were devout Christians, and Christianity was in effect their state religion. It followed that all the feasts of the Christian calendar were observed by the Ghassānids, including all members of their families. Indeed, in the scant sources on this aspect of Ghassānid social life, contemporary poetry mentions Ghassānid women rather than men.[46]

Ghassānid women naturally would have had a special interest in the Marian feasts; their most famous queen carried the name Māriya. Also close to their hearts would have been the Feast of the Martyrs of Najrān, their relatives, whose numbers included about 100 women.[47] And while these feast days were celebrated

[41] For a general account of Arab and Ghassānid nunneries in Oriens in the pre-Islamic period, see *BASIC* II.1, 195–200.

[42] See Procopius, *Anecdota,* XVII.5–6.

[43] See A. Segal, *Theatres in Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia* (Leiden, 1995), 11 note 33.

[44] For references in Ḥassān to *mūmis,* see the appendix to Chapter 8.

[45] On the legislation against prostitution, see a summary of various laws in *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Bishop of Taphar,* ed. and trans. A. Berger (Berlin, 2006), 82. On Māḥiya of Najrān, see *Martyrs,* 55–57.

[46] See, e.g., the verse in which Ḥassān describes the Ghassānid maidens weaving wreaths of coral for the fast-approaching Easter Sunday; *Dīwān,* I, 123, verse 6.

[47] For the list of martyresses and the speech of Ruhm before her death, see "The Martyrdom of Early Arab Christians: Sixth Century Najran," in *BALA* II, 165–67, 170. For a study of the female onomasticon of the martyresses, see Shahîd, "The Martyresses of Najrān." For Ghassānid celebration of feast days generally, see the previous chapter.

by both Ghassānid men and women, the women would have been more intimately involved in such matters as preparing the love-feast, the ἀγάπη, provided on such occasions.

V. Women and Pilgrimages

The Ghassānids, men and women, also participated in the all-important institution of the early Christian Church that required travel, the pilgrimage.[48] As noted in the previous chapter, the Ghassānids would have undertaken such journeys with particular enthusiasm because of their proximity to the Holy Land and because of their role in defending it.

Just as women may have been more involved than men in the social aspects of celebrating the feast days, so perhaps they may have been more active in traveling to various pilgrimage centers. Ghassānid women must have been aware that the institution of pilgrimage was established largely by a woman—Helen, the mother of Constantine—whose feast they celebrated. They would also have known of the female pilgrim Egeria, who came from the far west of Europe and traveled all over the biblical lands in the fourth century,[49] and of the empress Eudocia, who in the fifth century stayed long in the Holy Land.

The only extant explicit reference to Ghassānid involvement in pilgrimage refers to Ghassānid women rather than men. The source is Iṣfahānī's *al-Aghānī,* which mentions Layla, a Ghassānid princess. Particularly noteworthy in this context is that the princess apparently undertook the pilgrimage to Jerusalem in a style worthy of her station in life, surrounded by a group of devoted female attendants.[50] Here, as in other aspects of Ghassānid social life, it is likely that the uniqueness of the reference reflects the scantiness of the sources, not the rarity of the event: other Ghassānid visits to the Holy Land were no doubt mentioned in accounts that have not survived.

The sources have also revealed the Arabic term for a female pilgrim, *ḥājja,* which has survived in the form of a diminutive, *al-ḥujayja.* The term is attested in an account of Ṣafiyya bint Thaʿlaba, who gave refuge and the right of *jiwār,* "protection of a neighbor," to Hind, the daughter of the last Lakhmid king of Ḥīra, al-Nuʿmān; both were Christian women.

Ṣafiyya is described as a courageous woman and a poet who harangued her own people to fight against the Persians and their Arab allies. They did so around

[48] For the destinations of the Ghassānid pilgrims in the Holy Land and in Oriens in general, see the previous chapter and "Arab Christian Pilgrimages in the Proto-Byzantine Period," in *BALA* III, 125–41.

[49] See *Egeria's Travels,* trans. J. Wilkinson (Warminster, Eng., 1999).

[50] See Abū al-Faraj Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (Beirut, 1959), XVII, 273–75. The passage is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

A.D. 604, at the famous battle known as Yawm Dhī Qār, in which the Arabs were victorious.

In her own verses Ṣafiyya five times refers to herself as *al-ḥujayja*. Traces of her religious belief are clear in references in her verse to God, Allah, whom she describes as al-Muhaymin (Preserver) and al-Mannān (Gracious Giver). Apparently, she used to wear a veil, the custom of aristocratic women in pre-Islamic Arabia.[51] She belonged to the tribe of Bakr in northeastern Arabia and to the subdivision of Shaybān. So she must have traveled far to reach Jerusalem in performing the pilgrimage, as did Bar Sauma, the Metropolitan of Nisibis (d. A.D. 496), who came from distant Mesopotamia.

The implication for pilgrimages by Ghassānid women to the Holy Land is clear. If a Christian woman from northeastern Arabia could make such a long journey, braving the harsh climate and difficult terrain, then women living close to the Holy Land undoubtedly made pilgrimages often.[52]

Already in the sixth century maps to the Holy Land were being provided for pilgrims,[53] especially those who came from distant lands, who also needed *xenodocheia* and *xenones.* Possibly Ghassānid queens and princesses took part in one of these important activities related to pilgrimage, the construction of the hospices and hostels. Such involvement is attested in later Islamic times for the wives of Muslim rulers. Zubayda, the wife of Hārūn al-Rashīd (A.D. 786–809), constructed Darb Zubayda, "the Route of Zubayda," the long pilgrim route that extended from Iraq to Mecca in Ḥijāz, and she provided it with stations for accommodating the pilgrims.[54]

VI. Queens and Princesses

Māriya

The first Ghassānid queen known to the sources is Māriya, who appears in the matronymic of her son, the Ghassānid king al-Ḥārith ibn Māriya—al-Ḥārith/Arethas, son of Māriya (A.D. 529–569). That he was referred to more often by his

[51] See B. Yamut, *Shāʿirāt al-Arab fi al-Jāhiliyya wa al-Islam* (Beirut, 1934). He does not specifically identify the source from which he derived the poems of Ṣafiyya, leaving it among a long list of sources given at the end of the work. For references to *al-ḥujayja* in her own poems, see 11, verse 11; 12, verse 8; 14, verse 11; 15, verse 9; 16, verse 2. For her veil, see 24, verse 6, written by Hind, the Lakhmid princess who took refuge with her.

[52] For other Arab Christians who came from Arabia as pilgrims to Palestine, see "Arab Christian Pilgrimages in the Proto-Byzantine Period," in *BALA* III, 128.

[53] See Y. Tsafrir, "The Maps Used by Theodosius: On the Pilgrim Maps of the Holy Land and Jerusalem in the Sixth Century C.E.," *DOP* 40 (1986), 126–46. On the Madaba Mosaic map, see the present writer's "The Madaba Mosaic Map Revisited: Its Meaning and Purpose," in *Madaba Map Centenary,* ed. M. Piccirillo and E. Alliata, Collectio Maior 40 (Jerusalem, 1999), 147–54.

[54] On Darb Zubayda and the facilities constructed along it, see Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Jubayr, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr,* ed. W. Wright (Leiden, 1907), 208; S. al-Rāshid, *Darb Zubayda: The Pilgrim Road from Kufa to Mecca* (Riyadh, 1980).

matronymic than by his patronymic, as was usual in the Arabic onomasticon, signifies the importance of Māriya, his mother. But the name of this first Ghassānid queen known to the sources is attended by some problems, and it raises the following questions.

The first problem is correctly establishing Māriya within Ghassānid genealogy. Was she the mother of the Arethas who was the most famous of all the Ghassānid kings (and so the wife of Jabala, his father), or was she the mother of a later Ghassānid king of the sixth century who was called al-Ḥārith? As a further complication, at least two more famous Ḥāriths flourished at the end of the sixth century and the beginning of the seventh.

Nöldeke was in favor of identifying Māriya as the mother of the later Ghassānid king/phylarch,[55] but the case for her being the mother of the earlier, more famous, Arethas remains equally strong. That Arethas was also called "son of Jabala" does not invalidate this identification, since a patronymic is not inconsistent with a matronymic; Arab rulers were sometimes referred to by both.[56] According to the sources she was a princess from the tribe of Kinda, and this description could support her being the mother of Arethas, the earlier Ḥārith, and the wife of Jabala, who had attacked the Roman frontier around A.D. 500 together with the two Kindites Ḥujr and Maʿdī Karib; this unified action suggests that the two groups, Kinda and Ghassān, were on friendly terms.[57] The marriage of Jabala to the sister of the two Kindite phylarchs thus becomes credible. Also pointing to the earlier Arethas is the matronymic "son of Māriya" in Ḥassān's famous ode.[58] He is the only Ghassānid king mentioned in that ode, written long after the demise of the dynasty, and reference is made to a mausoleum around which his descendants gather. This can belong only to the famous early Arethas whose death was noted by the poet Labīd.[59] The same matronymic appears in a verse referring to a Ghassānid king who established the peace, *Pax Ghassānica,* among the various clans of Ṭayyiʾ, and that king was the early Arethas.[60] So it is highly probable that Māriya was the mother of the early Arethas and wife of his father, Jabala.

[55] See Nöldeke, *GF,* 22–23.

[56] Arethas' contemporary, the famous Mundir of the reign of Justinian, was called the son of al-Nuʿmān (his father) and the son of al-Shaqīqa (his mother).

[57] See "Ghassan and Byzantium: A New *Terminus a quo,*" in *BALA* I, 77–100, and *BASIC* I.1, 3–12.

[58] Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 74, verse 11.

[59] Labīd, *Dīwān,* ed. I. ʿAbbās (Kuwait, 1962), 266, verses 49–52; see *BASIC* II.1, 278–80.

[60] On the peace, see *BASIC* II.2, 258. The phrase *sulh Ibn Māriya,* "the peace of Ibn Māriya," appears in a verse by al-Ḥārith ibn Ḥilliza, wrongly attributed to Qays ibn Sharāhil in Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī,* XI, 39. The matronymic Ibn Māriya appears again in another of Ḥārith's verses; see al-Khatīb al-Tībrizi, *Sharh Ikhtiyārāt al-Mufaḍḍal,* ed. F. Qabāwa (Damascus, 1971), 24, line 9. Ibn Māriya is referred to in the previous verse as *malik,* "king," a label that fits Arethas, who lived until A.D. 569—long enough to have been remembered in his poetry; see also note 6 to the verse.

The princess who married a Ghassānid kept her Kindite affiliation, since around A.D. 500 her group was more powerful and famous than the Ghassān, although it began to decline upon the death in 527 of its famous king, also called Ḥārith/Arethas.[61] The retention by Māriya of her Kindite affiliation reflects the Kinda's high status.

Another problem surrounds the meaning of Māriya. Was it the Arabic version of the name of the Virgin Mary, or was it, as has been suggested by Nöldeke, a Syriac term meaning "the lady"? The case for the name being Mary in its Greek form, Maria, was made by the present writer some years ago,[62] and may be supported by another observation. The Kindite princess had come from the heart of the Arabian Peninsula, where, unlike Oriens, Syriac was not known. Kinda was a Christian group, and the inscription of one of its princesses, Hind, vouched for the Christianity of the entire royal house: herself, her father, and her son.[63] It was only natural that the women of Kinda should assume the name of the Virgin Mary, especially as the latter figured so prominently in the theological controversies of the period, which ended with her being called the Theotokos.

Māriya thus emerges from the preceding arguments as a Kindite princess; the wife of Jabala, the Ghassānid (ca. 500–528); mother of Arethas (529–569); and a Christian woman, whose name was that of the Virgin Mary, a reflection of the strong attachment of her house to Christianity. That attachment is demonstrated in the inscription at Ḥīra of Hind, who may have been Māriya's sister.

The sources are almost silent on Māriya, and she would have remained a mere name in the Ghassānid onomasticon had it not been for a tantalizing reference to some of her jewelry. The Arabic sources associate her with two earrings—*qurṭā Māriya,* "the two earrings of Māriya"—that are discussed below in the chapter "Votive and Victory Offerings."

Ḥalīma

Whereas Māriya was the most celebrated of the queens of Ghassān, Ḥalīma was the most celebrated of its princesses. She appears in the sources in a military context—in the army of her father, the Ghassānid king—in the course of a battle fought with his inveterate adversary, the Lakhmid king of Ḥīra. Ḥalīma's role was to perfume the Ghassānid warriors and clothe them in their coats of mail, acts that promoted the Ghassānid victory. Some uncertainty attends the identity of the Ghassānid king and the battle involved, but it is highly probable that the king

[61] See *BASIC* I.1, 148–60.

[62] See "The Women of *Oriens Christianus Arabicus* in Pre-Islamic Times," *Parole de l'Orient* 24 (1999), 66 note 18.

[63] For the inscription, see ibid., 68.

was the famous Arethas, of the reign of Justinian, and the battle was the decisive battle of A.D. 554, a smashing victory in which the equally famous Lakhmid king Mundir was not only defeated but killed.[64]

This rare glimpse of a Ghassānid princess on the battlefield makes possible several observations.

1. Ḥalīma's identity. She was the daughter of Arethas, son of Māriya. The identity of her mother is not clear, but at least through her father she was the granddaughter of Māriya and so had some Kindite blood. Arethas had many sons, at least two of whom are known by their names: Mundir, his successor in 569, and Jabala. Whether Ḥalīma had sisters is not known.[65]

2. Ḥalīma's name. Like all other Ghassānid names of the royal house, Ḥalīma was a purely Arab name. It has survived in two toponyms: a wadi, *Wādī Ḥalīma,* and a meadow, *Marj Ḥalīma.*[66] Above all, it is attached to the most famous of Arab pre-Islamic battle-days (*ayyām*), Yawm Ḥalīma, the battle of Chalcis, which gave rise to the proverbial saying "The day of Ḥalīma is no secret," applied even in Islamic times to a celebrated event.[67]

3. Ḥalīma's participation in the famous battle. Her contribution is striking in many ways, one of which pertains to the Ghassānid style in waging wars: the king, who is the commander in chief, fights together with his family—normally his sons, who are either current or prospective phylarchs. At this battle of Chalcis/Qinnasrīn, the king's son Jabala died;[68] another son—his successor, Mundir—may also have fought there. The involvement of his daughter means that possibly three of Arethas' children participated in the battle.

More generally, the episode underscores the importance of women's participation in Arab warfare in pre-Islamic times. They had duties to perform, such as looking after the wounded. But their more important function was

[64] The battle is described in many sources, including Ibn Qutayba; for his description of the role of Ḥalīma in the battle, see R. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (1907; reprint, London, 1969), 50. For the battle of Chalcis, see *BASIC* I.1, 240–51. On which Lakhmid was killed in this battle, the judicious Ibn al-Athīr is positive, and rightly so, that it was the famous Mundir; see *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh* (Beirut, 1965), I, 547.

[65] For the family of her grandfather Jabala, see *BASIC* I.1, 69–70.

[66] See the poem on the battle by Ibn al-Athīr, in *al-Kāmil,* 544, verses 1, 4. Nöldeke doubted (*GF,* 19) that the name Ḥalīma belonged to a woman who accompanied the Ghassānid army, suggesting instead that it referred to a place, the Valley of Ḥalīma (*Wādī Ḥalīma*). It is difficult to accept this view, which Yāqūt rejected; see *Muʿjam al-Buldān* (Beirut, 1955–57), II, 292. Ḥalīma is clearly a woman's personal name, though perhaps the valley was given the name Ḥalīma after the Ghassānid princess. See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil,* I, 543.

[67] Even some fifty years after the engagement, al-Nābigha invokes the Day of Ḥalīma to praise the swords of the Ghassānids, handed down as heirlooms from that day and distinguished by having been unsheathed during that heroic encounter; see *Dīwān,* ed. Ibrāhīm, 45, verse 20. In another poem, he speaks of the Two Days of Ḥalīma, indicating that the battle lasted long (206, verse 4).

[68] On the son Jabala, see *BASIC* I.1, 243.

moral—imparting spirit to the warriors to do their best. Sometimes, it was a woman who recited the *rajaz* verses to hearten the warriors.[69] Apparently the Ghassānids followed this Arab custom when fighting other Arabs, as in this battle with the Lakhmids, but not when they fought as part of the army of the Orient against the Persians.

The participation of women in military campaigns in pre-Islamic Arabia received its classical statement in the Suspended Ode of ʿAmr ibn Kulthūm (ca. A.D. 570), which included an octave of verses that explained the reason for their participation. Although the lilt of the Arabic meter and the sting of its rhyme are lost in the following English version, the substance of what the poet says is preserved:

> Upon our tracks follow fair, noble ladies
> that we take care shall not leave us, nor be insulted,
> litter-borne ladies of Banu Jusham bin Bakr
> who mingle, with good looks, high birth and obedience.
> They have taken a covenant with their husbands
> that, when they should meet with signal horsemen,
> they will plunder mail-coats and shining sabers
> and captives fettered together in irons.
> When they fare forth, they walk sedately
> swinging their gait like swaying tipplers.
> They provender our horses, saying, "You are not
> our husbands, if you do not protect us."
> If we defend them not, may we survive not
> nor live on for any thing after them!
> Nothing protects women like a smiting
> that sends the forearms flying like play-chucks.[70]

Female participation in campaigns is not unknown in Byzantine military history—for example, the empress Irene Doukaina, the wife of Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118), occasionally accompanied her husband on his military campaigns[71]—but this was the exception rather than the rule. Closer to Ḥalīma

[69] For example, on the battle-day of al-Sharʿabiyya a woman named Layla was *al-ḥāḍḍa*—the one who urges the warriors or stirs them up; see *Shiʿr al-Akhṭal,* ed. F. Qabāwa (Beirut, n.d.), 129. The battle was fought by the Christian tribe of the Taghlib.

[70] Translated in A. J. Arberry, *The Seven Odes: The First Chapter in Arabic Literature* (London and New York, 1957), 208–9.

[71] The campaigns of Alexios Komnenos were remembered by his daughter Anna in the *Alexiad,*

and the Ghassānids was the figure of Mavia, the Christian federate queen of the fourth century; as already noted, she personally led military campaigns against the emperor Valens. Her memory was certainly still green in the Ghassānid consciousness.[72]

Women continued to participate in the wars of Islamic times, taking part in the battle of Uḥud, which Islamic forces lost to the pagan Meccans, and at the Yarmūk in A.D. 636, which Islamic forces won against those of Byzantium.[73]

4. The *qubba,* the canopy. A typically Arab structure, the *qubba* was usually put up for the commander in chief and also for those women of the group who participated in the battle. This was the setting in which Ḥalīma is said to have perfumed the warriors and clad them in white sheets and coats of mail, preparing them for the charge. Women in *qibāb* (plural of *qubba*) during the battle are attested elsewhere as well in Arabic poetry and prose accounts.[74]

5. The romantic element. The participation of Ḥalīma at the battle of Chalcis endows the engagement with a romantic element, unrelated to the purely military facets of the battle. Though the account was much embroidered in later times, its core remains sound. These embroideries include reference to a warrior by the name of Labīd (not the famous poet of the Suspended Ode) who was smitten by Ḥalīma's charms and was able to win her hand only after acquitting himself remarkably well in the battle,[75] illustrating the principle of "none but the brave deserves the fair." Indeed, the concept of chivalry may be rooted in this famous encounter at Chalcis, which involved key chivalrous elements: the lady (the dame of medieval European literature) and the knight in shining armor, riding his mare, who performs his duty in the service of the lady. ʿAntara, the black poet who is associated with the idea of chivalry in pre-Islamic Arabia,[76] was the younger contemporary of those involved in the battle of Chalcis, but his lady, ʿAbla, never participated in battle; Ḥalīma

which contains data on her mother relevant to Ḥalīma and to female Arab participation in war. In particular, (1) during the campaign, an imperial canopy covered her, not unlike the *qubba* which covered Ghassānid women such as Maysūn, who took part in Ghassānid military expeditions; and (2) her dress was modest and decorous, protecting her from the public eye. See Anna Comnena, *Alexiade,* ed. and trans. B. Leib (Paris, 1945), III, 60, lines 22–24; 62, lines 8–11. See also the comments of Laiou in "The Role of Women in Byzantine Society," especially section 3, "Society and Politics," 249–60.

[72] On Mavia and her exploits, see *BAFOC,* 138–201.

[73] On Hind, the mother of the future caliph Muʿāwiya, at the battle of Uḥud, see Ibn Isḥāq, *The Life of Muhammad,* trans. A. Guillaume (1955; reprint, Karachi, 1990), 374; on Arab women at the Yarmūk, see Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1962), III, 401.

[74] The *qubba* of Maysūn, another Ghassānid princess, and of the daughter of Jabala, the last Ghassānid king, are discussed below.

[75] See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil,* I, 543, 546–47.

[76] On ʿAntara and the romance, and on chivalry in his *Sīra*, see E. Heller, "Sīrat ʿAntara," *EI*², I, 520–21.

did. And so she provides an important element in what may be assembled as an Arab pre-Islamic concept—which perhaps was a gift from pre-Islamic Arabia to European medieval literature.[77]

Ḥalīma died some fifteen centuries ago, but as noted above, she lives in the literary consciousness of the Arabs through the proverbial saying "The day of Ḥalīma is no secret" and through two toponyms, Wādī Ḥalīma and Marj Ḥalīma. She also is memorialized in the second verse of a celebrated couplet extolling the swords of the Ghassānids that performed well at the battle of Chalcis—namely, Mikhdam and Rasūb; this couplet was recited in Islamic times as late as the tenth century, when the epic Arab-Byzantine conflict involved the Ḥamdānid Sayf al-Dawla and the Byzantine Nicephorus Phocas.[78]

Al-Raʿlāʾ

Just as Yawm Ḥalīma, "the Battle-Day of Ḥalīma" (A.D. 554), was remembered in a poem by a Ghassānid, so was ʿAyn Ubāgh (A.D. 570) in another Ghassānid poem. Whereas the author of the former poem was anonymous, the poet of the second is known through his matronymic, Ibn al-Raʿlāʾ, the son of al-Raʿlāʾ.[79] That the poet did not use his patronymic suggests that the mother was an important personage. Nothing else is known about her, and the meaning of her name is also obscure.

Ibn al-Athīr attributed the poem to a poet with almost the same matronymic, although he calls him not a Ghassānid but a Dubyāni.[80] But as a historian, Ibn al-Athīr's attribution is less reliable than that of Marzubāni, who made the poets and their names his specialty. Furthermore, the poem is redolent of *Ghassānica:* it connects the Ghassānid broadsword, the *ṣafīḥa* or *spathe,* with Bostra, where evidently there was a factory for making swords, and mentions a Ghassānid *rāya,* "standard," called al-ʿUqāb, "the Falcon," a favorite name for battle standards.[81]

[77] On this controversial subject, see H. A. R. Gibb, "Literature," in *The Legacy of Islam,* ed. T. Arnold and A. Guillaume (London, 1931), 180–209, especially 184–86; F. Rosenthal, "Literature," in *The Legacy of Islam,* 2nd ed., ed. E. Bosworth and J. Schacht (Oxford, 1974), 321–49, especially 340; but particularly F. Gabrieli, "Islam in the Mediterranean World," in ibid., 81, 89, 95–96.

[78] For the two verses, see al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* ed. Ibrāhīm, 44–45, verses 19–20. On their recitation by Sayf al-Dawla in the tenth century, see *Dīwān al-Mutanabbi,* ed. ʿA. al-Barqūqī (Cairo, 1930), II, 286 note 2. The swords are discussed in detail below, in Chapter 11, "Votive and Victory Offerings."

[79] For the poem and its poet, see Muḥammad al-Marzubāni, *Muʿjam al-Shuʿarāʾ,* ed. ʿA. al-Sattar Farrāj (Cairo, 1960), 86.

[80] See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil,* I, 542.

[81] For all the Ghassānid elements, see the poem on ʿAyn Ubāgh in Marzubāni, *Muʿjam al-Shuʿarāʾ,* 86, verses 2, 6, 9. It provides important historical data on the Ghassānids, such as the name of their standard in battle, al-ʿUqāb, "the Falcon" (a favorite name for battle standards; it was also the name of Khalid's standard during the Muslim conquest of Bilād al-Shām).

Hind, a Princess

A quatrain of verses on Yawm Ḥalīma, attributed to an anonymous Ghassānid poet,[82] refers to a certain Hind, who had with her the *khalūq* (perfume composed of saffron) with which she scented the warriors, as Ḥalīma was said to have done. The poem thus both documents the participation of women in Ghassānid military operations and alludes to their perfuming the warriors, supporting the evidence of prose accounts (considered less reliable). This Hind apparently was a Ghassānid princess of around A.D. 554, not one of the Hinds who belonged to the later period. Those mentioned in al-Nābigha's fragment were two important queens of the later period (see below),[83] and so they may be ruled out. Whoever she was, her name is a welcome addition to the Hind class of names, which apparently was popular in the female Ghassānid onomasticon.

This quatrain both contains the two toponyms mentioned above—Wādī Ḥalīma and Marj Ḥalīma, the valley and meadow near which the battle took place—and suggests that Ghassānid women fed as well as perfumed the warriors.[84] The verse that describes platters of food being laid out does not make clear who did the feeding, a function that naturally fell to women. Moreover, the verse as it stands does not scan correctly; a logical emendation both corrects the scansion and definitely allocates this function to women.[85]

Two Hinds, Two Queens

One of the extant fragments of pre-Islamic poetry ascribed to al-Nābigha, panegyrist of the Ghassānids, is almost a genealogical list of the Ghassānid dynasts of the second half of the sixth century.[86] Two of the generations of Ghassānid rulers enumerated are related not to the kings but to two queens, each called Hind.[87] This attestation of the queens is confirmed by the reference to the Ghassānid kings in encomia by their matronymic "son of Hind," Ibn Hind,[88] which also clearly indicates the significance of these Ghassānid queen mothers.

[82] See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil,* I, 544, verses 1–4.

[83] For this quatrain, see al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* ed. Ibrāhīm, 166, discussed above in Chapter 1, in the section "Childhood and Children in Federate Oriens," and by Nöldeke, *GF,* 33–35.

[84] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil,* I, 544, verse 4.

[85] As written, the verb *naṣabnā* ("we set up") ends in a long final *a* and thus has an epicene referent; if emended to *naṣabna,* with a short final *a* ("and they set up"), "they" must be women, since the verb is a third-person feminine plural.

[86] The fragment and the list have been analyzed most competently by Nöldeke, in *GF,* 33–36.

[87] At least one of these two Hinds has to be distinguished from the Hind who was the princess of the previous discussion. For the Arabic version of the fragment, see al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* ed. Ibrāhīm, 166, verses 1–4.

[88] For instances of this matronymic, see, *inter alia,* ibid., 196, verse 1; 206, verses 5, 6. The last of these is erroneously thought by the editor to be that of the Lakhmid.

In his important list of structures built by the Ghassānid rulers, the historian Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī mentions a monastery by the name of Dayr Hunād.[89] It has been argued that Hunād is either a plural of Hind or a corrupt reading of the name Hind, and that the monastery was built by the Ghassānid queen of that name, mentioned in al-Nābigha's fragment. Moreover, it has been argued that the *dayr* (monastery, plural *adyār*) built by the Ghassānid queen is likely to have been a nunnery.[90] Her patronage may have been inspired by the Byzantine empress, Theodora, who had built homes for fallen women and a monastery in Constantinople. But closer to Oriens was the Lakhmid queen Hind of Ḥīra, who commissioned the celebrated inscription engraved at the door of the chapel in her famous *dayr* in Ḥīra. She was a model for those Ghassānid queens, her namesakes and possibly her blood relations, since the Ghassānid Māriya was a Kindite princess before she became a Ghassānid queen, and other Ghassānid kings may have married Kindite princesses. Just as the Ghassānids had two Hinds so too did the Lakhmids, Hind al-Kubrā and Hind al-Sughrā, the Elder and the Younger, and to each of the two a *dayr,* well described in the sources, has been attributed.[91] The Ghassānid queens may well have built more than one *dayr:* Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī was a selective author, giving only specimens to illustrate what each Ghassānid ruler had done.[92] Another inspiration for the Ghassānids to build *adyār,* possibly nunneries, must have come from Najrān, where Sons and Daughters of the Covenant were martyred by their South Arabian persecutor, Yūsuf.[93]

The location of the Ghassānid Dayr Hind has long been placed in the region of Damascus called Bayt al-Ābār by Yāqūt; more recently it has been pinpointed to the south of Damascus, a *tall* (hillock) east of Germana.[94]

Salmā

The name of this queen appears in the matronymic of a Ghassānid king in Ḥassān's poem on the Day of Uḥud, in A.D. 625.[95] The Jewish mother of the Lakhmid Mundir IV was also called Salmā, but Ḥassān's Ibn Salmā was surely Ghassānid,

[89] This monastery and its name are discussed in *BASIC* II.1, 324–25.

[90] On Ghassānid nunneries, see ibid., 198–200.

[91] On the two Lakhmid Hinds and their two monasteries, see Yāqūt, *Muʿjam,* II, 541–43.

[92] On Ḥamza, see *BASIC* II.1, 306–41.

[93] For these Sons and Daughters of the Covenant in Najrān, see *Martyrs,* 250–55, 63, 49.

[94] See M. Kurd ʿAli, *Ghūṭat Dimashq* (Damascus, 1984), on Bayt al-Ābār (197) and Germana (164). For further discussion of the monasteries of the Ghassānids, see the appendix to Chapter 3 in Part III titled "The Monasteries of the Ghassānids."

[95] The battle lost by the Prophet Muḥammad to the pagan Meccans; for the poem, see Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 40, verse 10. Note the use of *bāb* (door) for the Royal Court, used again in the plural, *abwāb* (75, verse 30). The term acquired its royal acceptation in Ottoman times, when the Sultan's palace/court was called *al-Bāb al-ʿĀli,* "The Sublime Porte."

since verse 7 of the same poem refers to Jābiya, the Ghassānid capital in the Golan, where his maternal uncle was an orator. In the verse in which the matronymic appears, Ḥassān prides himself on his own intercession on behalf of two individuals, who consequently were liberated. Because Ḥassān was influential at the court of the Ghassānids, his relatives, but not at that of the Lakhmids, Salmā and her son must be Ghassānid. Her name appears again in the matronymic Ibn Salmā, "the son of Salmā," in another poem similarly composed in the context of liberating captives through his intercession.[96]

This son must be one of the later Ghassānid kings whom Ḥassān eulogized;[97] nothing else is known about his mother, the Ghassānid queen.[98] She does appear in Ḥassān's nostalgic ode on the Ghassānids, in the conventional opening lament over the deserted abodes and mansions of the Ghassānids.[99] There, she is remembered in her own right as Salmā, and not as the mother of a king.

A late Islamic source refers to a Salmā the Ghassānid, to whom is attributed a triplet of verses and a hemistich in which she laments the death of her father after the loss of her brother.[100] If authentic, and if this Salmā is the Ghassānid queen mentioned above, then the triplet suggests that she was also a poetess. The possibility brings to mind the daughter of the fifth-century federate Salīḥid king, Dāwūd; she, too, lamented the death of her father (at the battle of al-Qurnatayn).[101]

Maysūn

Maysūn appears in one of the verses of the *Muʿallaqa,* the so-called Suspended Ode of the poet al-Ḥārith (fl. A.D. 556–569).[102] The verse, according to the medieval commentator Bakri, involved a campaign by a Lakhmid who succeeded in capturing the Ghassānid Maysūn. She had been installed in a royal canopy, a *qubba,* which the Lakhmid also captured and fixed in a place called al ʿAlāt.[103]

[96] The *dāliyya,* or rhyme in *D;* Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 49, verse 9.

[97] Two of them are mentioned by name posthumously, ʿAmr and Ḥujr; see ibid., 308, verse 8.

[98] Unless ʿAyn Salma, "the Spring of Salma," in Ḥawrān was also named after her; the possibility is overlooked by R. Dussaud, *Topographie historique de la Syrie antique et médiévale* (Paris, 1927).

[99] See Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 74, verse 2.

[100] See Abū al-Baqāʾ Hibat Allah, *al-Manāqib al-Mazyadiyya,* ed. S. Darādka and M. Khuraysāt (Amman, 1984), I, 351.

[101] See the manuscript *Kitāb al-Nasab al-Kabīr,* British Library Add. 22376, fol. 91^{v}, discussed in *BAFIC,* 308 and note 369, 434.

[102] For the verse, see A. Tibrīzī, *Sharh al-Qaṣāʾid al-Ashr,* ed. C. J. Lyall (1894; reprint, Ridgewood, N.J., 1965), 137, verse 60. For a translation of the *Muʿallaqa* into English, see Arberry, *The Seven Odes,* 222–27; for the relevant verse on Maysūn, see 225.

[103] On this *Muʿallaqa,* see T. Nöldeke's brilliant analysis in *Fünf Moʿallaqat* (Vienna, 1899–1901), 52–84. He translates the relevant verse "Als er die Zelte der Maisūn auf Alāh aufschlagen liess; da war die nächste Stelle ihres Gebiets ʿAuṣā" (63, verse 42; see also his comments, 77 note 42). The identification

This episode is noteworthy for various reasons. That Maysūn was captured in a *qubba* suggests that she was a woman of distinction, probably a Ghassānid princess. Her presence in the Ghassānid army during the encounter confirms that Ghassānid women accompanied the Ghassānid troops to provide moral support in war.

The name Maysūn is attractive semantically and by association. It may be related to *māsa, yamīsu,* "to move gracefully," and so her name would evoke a woman who walks gracefully. It also brings to mind the name of one of the women of the Severan dynasty, the Arab Julia Maesa—sister of Julia Domna, wife of Septimius Severus, and grandmother of the emperor Elagabalus (A.D. 218–222); Maesa is derived from the same verb, *māsa.*[104] More closely related to this Maysūn in the federate context was another Maysūn, from the tribe of federate Kalb, who was married to Muʿāwiya, the founder of the Umayyad dynasty, and became the mother of his son and successor, Yazīd. She, too, composed poetry; in well-known verses, she jilted the caliph and returned to her people, Kalb, in the vicinity of Palmyra, rejecting the stifling air of Damascus to live closer to nature.[105]

Fākhita

A Ghassānid princess named Fākhita was the daughter of the Ghassānid ʿAdī, whose maternal uncle was the famous Arethas (ibn Abī-Shamir).[106] Her name means "the dove whose color is that of the moonlight." To her is attributed a couplet of verses on her father's death in an encounter with the Asad tribe, two of whom killed him: "I have not feared for ʿAdī the spears of the one who ties a donkey; / Rather, I feared for him the spears of the Jinn and you! O Ḥārith!"[107] In light of the anxiety and concern expressed by the first-person verbs in the couplet, the speaker must have been someone emotionally close to ʿAdī, such as his daughter, Fākhita. The encounter took place near the Euphrates; hence its name, Yawm al-Furāt, "the Battle-day of the Euphrates."[108]

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of Maysūn as Ghassānid by Bakri must now be accepted: Nöldeke's uncertainty about her identity has been dispelled by new research on the women of Ghassān. Nöldeke mistranslated *qubba* as *Zelte,* which is an appropriate rendering of the Arabic *khayma,* "tent," but not of *qubba,* a royal canopy. For Bakri see A. Bakri, *Muʿjam ma Istaʿjam,* ed. M. Saqqā (Cairo, 1949), III, 908.

[104] On Julia Maesa, see *RA,* 33–36.

[105] On Maysūn, wife of Muʿāwiya, see Nicholson, *Literary History of the Arabs,* 195; for her verses, see Chapter 15, below.

[106] Her mother's name remains unknown, but the account of her relationship to the famous Arethas implies that the latter had a sister, married endogamously to another Ghassānid. This confirms the poet's references to the pure blood of the Ghassānids, *ghayr ashāʾib,* of which they apparently were proud. For the phrase, see al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* ed. Ibrāhīm, 42, verse 8.

[107] al-Jāḥiz, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān,* ed. ʿA. Hārūn (Cairo, 1943), VI, 219.

[108] For an account of this encounter, see ibid., 218–19; 218 note 6; and 219 notes 1–3, with reference to the account in Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī,* X, 61. See also the appendix "Yawm al-Furāt, 'the Battle-day of the Euphrates,'" below.

"The one who ties a donkey" refers to Tumāḍir, the mother of the two murderers of Fakhita's father, ʿAdī, while Ḥārith is the famous Arethas. The couplet is remarkable for the contempt it displays toward those who killed her father. They were the sons of one who ties beasts of burden, not horses that charge in war; hence, they did not deserve to kill her father, whom only the redoubtable Arethas or the plague (thought to be the work of the Jinn) was worthy of overcoming.

The couplet reflects the emotions of a Ghassānid woman involved in war at a distance, who does not express grief, which she proudly keeps to herself, but who endures the vicissitudes of time.[109] She also takes advantage of the opportunity to sing the praises of the Ghassānid king Arethas (invoked in the apocopated form Ḥāri, not as Ḥārith).

According to the extant sources, Fākhita is the only female member of the royal house who composed poetry. The couplet recalls the single verse of federate poetry in the fifth century that has survived—that of the daughter of Dāwūd, the king of the federated Salīḥids, who expressed her contempt for the men who murdered her father at the battle of al-Qurnatayn: "Two of the lowest of the low have hit you, the reprobate (*khalīʿ*) Ibn ʿAmir and one of the riffraff, Mashjaʿa."[110]

It can be assumed that Fākhita, like the daughter of the Salīḥid king Dāwūd, must have written other poetry as well, but none has survived. The lost *Akhbār Mulūk Ghassān* must have contained many specimens of such poetry, composed by members of the Ghassānid royal house.

A Ghassānid Queen and a Ghassānid Princess Exiled in Sicily (a.d. 582–602)

The preceding discussion of the fortunes of Ghassānid queens and princesses has presented a succession of episodes that reflected the sunny side of their life in Oriens and illustrated reverence shown to them through the use of matronymics by their royal sons; chivalry, sometimes even romance, involving war; and their engagement in *philanthropia* both Arab and Christian. But they were not strangers to adversity. When relations soured between the central Byzantine Chalcedonian government in Constantinople and the strongly Monophysite federate phylarchate in Oriens during the reign of Maurice, late in the sixth century, the Ghassānid king Mundir and his family were carried away from Oriens to Constantinople. After staying in the capital for some time they were transferred to Sicily, where they spent twenty years in exile before they were returned home in 602 at the intercession of Pope

[109] The Ghassānids were praised for their readiness and ability to deal with the vicissitudes of time and their fortitude in the face of adversity. This is expressed by their panegyrist al-Nābigha in his most famous epinician ode on them, the Bāʾiyya; see *Dīwān,* ed. Ibrāhīm, 48, verse 28.

[110] See note 101, above; see also *BAFIC,* 259–60, 434.

Gregory the Great.[111] It was a sad episode in the life of the Ghassānid royal house, because of both the duration of their exile and its distance from their home.

The primary source for this episode, the Syriac John of Ephesus, states that the family consisted of Mun̲dir, his queen, a princess, and two princes.[112] A Syriac chronicle documents their return in 602 but refers only to the king.[113] The surviving Byzantine sources are silent on Mun̲dir and the Ghassānid family in Sicily.

Al-Naḍīra and Layla

Ghassānid women are usually associated with war and with *philanthropia,* not with romance. Yet two of them may be discussed in the latter new context: one in the pre-Islamic period, named al-Naḍīra, and another, Layla, who appears in the early Islamic period.

Al-Naḍīra

In his longest poem, Ḥassān addresses a woman by the name of al-Naḍīra, whose phantom visited him while he was traveling in the desert.[114] The poem attracted the attention of students of Ḥassān's poetry, and it even puzzled them.[115] The mystery that surrounds the woman's identity may be dispelled if we posit that she was a Ghassānid princess; hence the peculiarities of this love poem. The following points support this view.

1. Unlike his verses on other women,[116] those on al-Naḍīra are chaste, with no sensual undertones; his need for care in expressing his sentiments suggests that the woman in question was a royal personage.

2. Some terms and phrases in the poem—including references to "the palace courtyard," to kings, and to the noble lineage[117]—imply royalty.

3. In the verse that suggests most strongly the royal connection of al-Naḍīra, Ḥassān says to her, "When you hove in sight in the court of the palace, on the Day of the Exodus."[118] The Arabic *Yawm al-Khurūj,* "the Day of Going Out," sounds like a technical term or phrase used for a celebration—possibly a religious

[111] See *BASIC* I.1, 618–22.

[112] *Ioannis Ephesini Historiae Ecclesiasticae Pars Tertia,* Latin trans. E. W. Brooks, CSCO, Scriptores Syri, ser. 3, vol. 106 (Louvain, 1936), versio, p. 131.

[113] See *Chronicon Anonymum ad Annum Christi 1234 pertinens,* ed. and trans. J. B. Chabot, CSCO, Scriptores Syri, ser. 3, vol. 14 (Louvain, 1937), versio, p. 172.

[114] See Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 52–54. Though Ḥassān's poems tend to be short, this one consists of 44 verses.

[115] For example M. T. Darwīsh, in his excellent volume on Ḥassān, devotes three pages to discussing this poem and finally asks, Who was al-Naḍīra? See his *Ḥassān ibn Thābit,* Maktabat al-Dirāsāt al-Adabiyya 43 (Cairo, n.d.), 270–73.

[116] There were eight of them: Shaʿthā', Layla, Um ʿAmr, ʿAmra, Suʿda, Lamīs, Zaynab, and al-Naḍīra.

[117] For these references to royal associations, see Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 53, verses 28, 29, and 35.

[118] Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 53, line 28.

feast, such as Easter—during which the congregation goes out of a church and circumambulates it, a custom observed until the present day in the Arab Christian Orient.[119] The occasion alluded to in the phrase *Yawm al-Khurūj* may have been either secular or religious. If secular, it may have been the celebration of a victory, such as the Ghassānids achieved against the Lakhmids;[120] more probably, the poet refers to a religious occasion.[121] The term is so used in the Koran, though in an entirely different context.[122]

4. Ḥassān refers to their difference in social status: she is a woman of glorious lineage,[123] but he hastens to say that although he is not on the same rung of the social ladder, he too comes from a noble family.[124] Ḥassān was always proud of his descent from the clan of Banū al-Najjār in Medina; so his suggestion that al-Naḍīra was perched on a higher level of social eminence strengthens the hypothesis that she was a princess.

Relationships between Arab pre-Islamic poets and royalty are known to have existed, such as that of al-Munakhkhal with one of the daughters of the Lakhmid king al-Nuʿmān. Al-Nābigha also described the wife of the Lakhmid al-Nuʿmān, and as a result almost fell from grace with him. The best-known and most celebrated of these romantic relations was that between the Ḥīran Christian poet ʿAdī ibn Zayd and Hind, the daughter of the Lakhmid king al-Nuʿmān. In Islamic times the love of the foremost medieval Arab poet, Mutanabbi, for Khawla, the sister of his patron, Sayf al-Dawla, the Ḥamdānid prince of Aleppo, was rightly suspected.[125]

If al-Naḍīra was indeed a Ghassānid princess with whom Ḥassān fell in love, she would be the only Ghassānid princess for whom we have a description, brief as it is, of her complexion and graceful figure.[126] Also, an attractive new name is added to the female Ghassānid onomasticon.[127]

[119] It was on such religious occasions—a celebration of the liturgy in one of the churches of Ḥīra—that another poet, ʿAdī ibn Zayd, the foremost Christian poet of Ḥīra, met Hind, the daughter of the Lakhmid king al-Nuʿmān. For ʿAdī ibn Zayd and Hind, see Nicholson, *Literary History of the Arabs,* 46–47.

[120] For the Ghassānid celebration of the victory at the battle of Chalcis, see *BASIC* I.1, 248–51.

[121] See the appendix "Yawm al-Khurūj" for a detailed discussion of this procession.

[122] Koran, 50:42.

[123] In verse 35, he speaks of the glory, *majd,* of her lineage.

[124] Verses 42–44. The classical statement of this sentiment appeared later in Islamic poetry, when Mihyār expressed himself similarly in an identical amatory context. See *Dīwān Mihyār* (Cairo, 1925), I, 64.

[125] On al-Munakhkhal, see Sezgin, *GAS,* II, 183; on al-Nābigha and al-Nuʿmān's wife al-Mutajarrida, see Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shiʿir wa al-Shuʿarāʾ,* ed. A. M. Shākir (Cairo, 1966), I, 166, and Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī,* II, 107–9. On Mutanabbi, see M. M. Shākir, *al-Mutanabbi* (Cairo, 1978), I, 225–50.

[126] Verses 30, 34.

[127] Naḍīra evokes *naḍāra,* a term applied to flowers and fruits meaning "new, fresh and attractive," and is also related to *nuḍār,* "gold, pure gold."

Layla

Much more is known about Layla than al-Naḍīra. She is identified as the daughter of al-Jūdī ibn Rabīʿa, who commanded forces at Dūmat al-Jandal together with the Kindite Ukaydir ibn ʿAbd al-Malik against the Muslim assault led by Khālid ibn al-Walīd in A.D. 633. Ṭabarī does not explicitly say that Layla or her father was a Ghassānid, but he notes that one of the contingents dispatched by Byzantium for the defense of Dūma was Ghassānid.[128] The detailed account of Iṣfahānī in *al-Aghānī* lays any doubt to rest: he clearly refers to al-Jūdī's father as ʿAdī (a good Ghassānid name, unlike Ṭabarī's Rabīʿa), and calls him a royal personage and a Ghassānid, thereby clinching the conclusion that Layla was indeed a Ghassānid and princess.[129]

Iṣfahānī's account of the Conquest of Dūma is confirmed by Balāḏurī, who also explicitly refers to al-Jūdī as a Ghassānid.[130] Furthermore, he states that Layla was captured in a *ḥāḍir* of Ghassān. This technical federate military term was used, *inter alia,* of military stations such as those manned by the Ghassānids on the frontier facing the Arabian Peninsula, where a Ghassānid lady could also have been stationed to give moral support to the warriors.

Most important in Iṣfahānī's account is the reference to Layla's presence in Jerusalem.[131] Unlike Jalliq,[132] the Holy City was not a place of pleasure and entertainment; it was a pilgrimage destination. References to her in *al-Aghānī* confirm that she came to the Holy City as a pilgrim. Her future husband, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, had seen her in what he called *Bayt al-Maqdis,*[133] Jerusalem, and was smitten by her beauty. He composed a triplet of verses in which he expressed his longing for her and expressed a hope that fate would unite him with her during the next pilgrimage.[134]

This is a precious datum on the Ghassānids and their religiosity. It seems highly unlikely that a Ghassānid princess belonging to the royal house would have failed to make pilgrimage to the Holy City during Lent or Holy Week. Such can be inferred from the royal house's devout Christianity and the Ghassānids' proximity to and role in defending the Holy Land. Yet *al-Aghānī*'s account about Layla is the only *explicit* reference in the exiguous surviving sources to a Ghassānid presence in Jerusalem for the performance of the pilgrimage.

In addition to documenting the Ghassānid pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Iṣfahānī

[128] Ṭabarī, *Tārikh,* III, 378–79.
[129] Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī,* XVII, 273–74.
[130] Balāḏuri, *Futūḥ al-Buldān,* ed. S. al-Munajjid (Cairo, 1956), I, 74.
[131] See Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī,* XVII, 274.
[132] For Jalliq, see *BASIC* II.1, 105–15.
[133] Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī,* XVII, 274.
[134] Ibid., 273. For the triplet, see ibid. In this sentiment and its expression he anticipated the famous Umayyad poet ʿUmar ibn Abi Rabīʿa, who would see Muslim women during the Muslim pilgrimage and then compose love poetry about them.

notes the style in which Ghassānid royalty traveled, even when performing their religious duty. He refers to the esteem in which Layla was held by a band of female attendants who waited on her. Whenever one of them would stumble or swear, she would invoke Layla's name through her patronymic, saying "O Daughter of al-Jūdī."[135]

The rise of Islam and the Arab conquest of Oriens, Bilād al-Shām, ended the Byzantine presence in that diocese and brought about the fall of the Ghassānid dynasty. The fortunes of Layla were naturally affected by this upheaval. During the last days of the Ghassānid dynasty, Layla became involved with two prominent Muslims: Khālid ibn al-Walīd, the famous general, and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, the son of the first Orthodox caliph, Abū Bakr. Her beauty attracted both, and they appear in the sources as her husbands: the first after his conquest of Dūma (633), and the second after the Muslim conquest of Oriens (636).[136] The two accounts can be easily reconciled: Khālid may have divorced her or left her,[137] enabling the Ghassānid princess to join her people in Oriens, where she again fell captive.[138]

It was the caliph Omar who asked one of his commanders to deliver Layla to ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, since he knew of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's emotional involvement with her.[139] She became his wife, so favored that his uxoriousness elicited the jealousy of his other wives.[140] But the two became estranged—most likely, as Iṣfahānī suggests, because of her depression caused by what had befallen her royal family[141]—and after the intercession of his sister ʿĀ'isha, the widow of the Prophet Muḥammad, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān sent her back to those of her own people, the Ghassān, who remained in Bilād al-Shām. The name of Layla was destined, through her namesake, to be celebrated in later Umayyad times. Layla and Qays became the most famous romantic couple in Arabic literature, and consequently in Persian and Turkish literature—the medieval Islamic equivalent of Romeo and Juliet.

[135] Ibid., 274. Iṣfahānī states that at home in Ghassānland, she used to receive the red carpet treatment: two golden pomegranates were thrown before her when she would go out (275).

[136] See Ṭabarī, *Tārikh,* III, 379; Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī,* XVII, 374; Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-Ghāba* (Tehran, 1958), III, 305; and al-ʿAsqalānī, *al-Iṣāba fi Tamyīz al Ṣaḥāba* (Cairo, n.d.), II, 407–8.

[137] That the victor of Yarmūk had a weakness for women has been noted in the sources; witness his marriage to the wife of Mālik ibn Nuwayra after the latter was killed in the Ridda War. His death elicited from his brother, Mutammim, one of the best elegies in Arabic poetry; on Khālid, Mālik, and Mutammim, see M. ibn Sallām, *Ṭabaqāt Fuḥūl al-Shuʿarā',* ed. M. M. Shākir (Cairo, 1974), I, 203–9.

[138] This capture of Layla for the second time at Dūma, *near* Damascus, was described by M. J. de Goeje: see his *Mémoire sur la conquête de la Syrie,* vol. 2 of *Mémoires d'histoire et de géographie orientales,* 2nd ed. (Leiden, 1900), 16–17. However, de Goeje incorrectly states that ʿAbd al-Raḥmān saw Layla in Damascus ("Damas," 17); Ibn al-Athīr, in *Usd al-Ghāba,* identifies the location as *al-Shām* (III, 305), which in formal Arabic is always Oriens.

[139] See Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī,* XVII, 274.

[140] For their complaints, see Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-Ghāba,* III, 275.

[141] Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī,* XVII, 275. Exactly why and how the relationship ended is not clear. Perhaps the domestic situation became intolerable for her, either because the other wives were so jealous or because as a Christian, accustomed to monogamy, the very idea of other wives made her uncomfortable.

Umāma

The last Ghassānid queen known to the sources was Umāma, mentioned by Ḥātim, the chief of the group Ṭayyiʾ; the poet traveled nine days to reach the Ghassānid king in southern Oriens in order to plead for the liberation of members of his tribe whom the Ghassānid had captured.[142] In the course of his panegyric on the king, he refers to his distinguished ancestry, going back to the two Ḥāriths and Umāma.[143] It is noteworthy that he gives precedence to Umāma in the genealogical list and in such a way as to suggest that she was a well-known figure not only among the Ghassānids but also among the Arabs of the Peninsula, of whom Ḥātim, the poet, was one. Nothing else is known about her, but the reference to her is a welcome addition to the Ghassānid onomasticon.

Two Ghassānid Princesses post Ghassān

Although the Ghassānids ceased to be *foederati* of Byzantium in Oriens after the Byzantine defeat at the battle of Yarmūk in A.D. 636, many of them remained in Oriens and maintained a strong presence in the new Islamic world of Bilād al-Shām, the metropolitan province of the Arab Muslim Umayyad dynasty. Its founder, Muʿāwiya, was especially enlightened and open-minded in his assimilation of Byzantine institutions in Oriens, and was especially well-disposed toward the Christian Arabs, such as Ghassān and Kalb. From the latter group, he married his Christian wife, Maysūn, the mother of his son and successor, Yazīd. This Yazīd was involved with two Ghassānid princesses. He was known to have been a refined hedonist—a fact documented in his own poetry, still recited and admired today.

First, he took as one of his wives the Ghassānid princess Umm Ramla.[144] She was not a queen, however, since Islam rejected the concept of kingship, which it replaced with the caliphate. So Yazīd had both a Christian mother and wife. Nothing else is known of Umm Ramla, but her daughter Ramla was remembered by her father, Yazīd, in one of his verses.[145]

[142] For Ḥātim, the famous pre-Islamic poet and chief of the Ṭayyiʾ, see *BASIC* II.1, 246–59.

[143] *Dīwān Shiʿr Ḥātim,* ed. ʿĀ. Sulaymān (Cairo, 1990), 197, verse 4. It is not clear whether Umāma was his mother or a more distant ancestress; in a fragment of al-Nābigha mentioned earlier, the poet's reference to a Hind is to an ancestress of the Ghassānid young man whose genealogy was being presented; see *Dīwān,* ed. Ibrāhīm, 166, verse 3.

[144] Knowledge of Umm Ramla is owed to Balāḏuri in his *Ansāb al-Ashrāf,* ed. I. ʿAbbās (Beirut, 1979), IV, part I, 290. Balāḏuri gives only the name of her daughter Ramla, but she almost certainly was royalty: Yazīd would have sought the legitimation provided by marrying a woman from a royal house (as his father had done). He also married a woman from another royal house, that of Kinda: the daughter of Ḥuwayrith, the brother of Ukaydir, the Kindite lord of Dūma (see Balāḏuri, *Futūḥ al-Buldān,* I, 74).

[145] Yazīd was away from Damascus when his father, Muʿāwiya, died. On his return, he heard Ramla

A little more is known about his involvement with another Ghassānid princess: the daughter of Jabala, the last Ghassānid king. Yazīd was trained as a crown prince by his father, and one of his duties as a prospective successor and caliph was to lead expeditions against the Byzantines in Anatolia. One of them culminated in the famous siege of Constantinople in the spring of 669. It was on this occasion that he became involved with the daughter of the Ghassānid Jabala. What happened is best related in the words of the late Philip K. Hitti: "In legend Yazīd distinguished himself for bravery and fortitude below the walls of Constantinople and earned the title *Fata al-ʿArab* (the young champion or hero of the Arabs). The *Aghānī* relates that alternate shouts of jubilation were heard from two separate tents as the Arabs or Byzantines made headway in the battle. On learning that one tent was occupied by the daughter of the king of the Rūm and the other by the daughter of Jabalah ibn-al-Ayham, Yazīd was spurred to extraordinary activity in order to seize the Ghassānid king's daughter."[146]

Hitti makes clear the legendary element in the account.[147] But there might be a modicum of truth in it as well: the historicity of the siege conducted by the Arab crown prince is beyond doubt, while descendants of Jabala were in evidence in Anatolia and in Constantinople after the battle of the Yarmūk. It is not altogether impossible that those Ghassānids who were still smarting after the debacle at the Yarmūk did take part in the defense of the capital,[148] especially as it was besieged by congeners who had defeated them in 636. Nor is the reference to the tent occupied by the princess alien to Arab practice on such occasions, as has been shown above in the case of Maysūn. The Byzantine tent of "the king of the Rūm" may have been a later embroidery, but the participation of Byzantine women in military expeditions is not unknown, as mentioned above in the case of the empress Irene Doukaina, who likewise was canopied.

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mourning the death of his father, and he remembered her in the final verse of a five-line poem he composed on the occasion; see Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī,* XVII, 143.

[146] See P. Hitti, *History of the Arabs,* 10th ed. (New York, 1981), 201.

[147] The truly legendary element in the account, not quoted here, ascribes to Yazīd some exploits against the gates of Constantinople and a plaque that was nailed there to commemorate them. These details (clearly a later embroidery) rather than the presence of Jabala's daughter inclined not only Hitti but also Marius Canard to reject this account. Much more is now known about the Ghassānids than when these distinguished scholars wrote; as this chapter has shown, the women of Ghassān did take part in warfare, as sometimes did their Byzantine counterparts as well. The later accretions that have grown over the original kernel of truth in some of the Islamic sources on the pre-Islamic period have long created a prejudice against using those sources, but the task of *Quellenkritik* is to get hold of that kernel of truth. For Canard's views on this episode, see "Les expéditions des Arabes contre Constantinople dans l'histoire et dans la légende," *Journal Asiatique* 208 (1926), 69–70.

[148] As Constantinople had been defended successfully in A.D. 378 by the troops of the federate Arab queen Mavia against the Goths after another debacle, the battle of Adrianople; see *BAFOC,* 175–83.

Appendix I
Elizabeth of Najrān

Elizabeth was not a Ghassānid; but as a martyress of Najrān, she was very intimately related to the women of Ghassān, her relatives, who looked at the martyrs of Najrān ca. 520 as their role models. Elizabeth is significant as well to understanding the problem of the female diaconate in the early church, for she represents its Arab profile in late antiquity.

The *Book of the Ḥimyarites* is the most detailed account of the martyrdoms at Najrān, but only the rubric of the chapter on Elizabeth has survived.[1] *The Second Letter* of Simeon of Bēth-Arshām, however, gives an account of her martyrdom, which was a most grievous one.[2] The *Letter* has also preserved important data on her as a deaconess of the church of Najrān and the sister of Paul II, the bishop of Najrān who was also martyred. Elizabeth became venerated as a saint together with the rest of the martyrs of Najrān, and their feast is celebrated on 24 October.

1. The martyress. One of the remarkable features of the martyrdoms of Najrān was the number of women who died for their faith, together with the range of social classes to which they belonged;[3] the most famous of them was the "First Lady" of Najrān, Ruhm. Elizabeth had the ecclesiastical rank of deaconess and so belonged to the hierarchy of the church of Najrān, which was also unique, as the only pre-Islamic Arab Christian Church for which the hierarchy, together with the names of the various clerics, is precisely known.[4] Elizabeth was the only female among them.

As has been repeatedly noted in this volume, the martyrdoms of Najrān had enormous spiritual resonance for the pre-Islamic Christian Arabs, especially those related to them—the Ghassānids. Those martyrs, male and female, became role models for the Ghassānids. Elizabeth was distinguished by being the only Arab woman of the pre-Islamic period who held an ecclesiastical rank and whose name has survived. The queens and princesses of the royal house were, like their husbands and fathers, interested in institutionalizing Arab Christianity through the endowment and foundation of churches and monasteries, and the church of Najrān—specifically, the concrete example of Elizabeth—must have been a model.

2. The deaconess. In the latter part of the twentieth century, questions of women's roles in the church became pressing. Relevant here is the problem of the diaconate.[5] In one work on the subject, Phyllis Zagamo has contended that

[1] See *The Book of the Himyarites,* ed. A. Moberg (Lund, 1924), cii, no. XVII.
[2] See *Martyrs,* 47–48.
[3] See *The Book of the Himyarites,* cxxi.
[4] See *Martyrs,* 64.
[5] See R. Gryson, *The Ministry of Women in the Early Church* (Collegeville, Minn., 1976); P. Zagano,

nothing in scripture, ecclesiastical history, or Christian theology argues against the female diaconate, and therefore has concluded that the ordination of women for the ministry of the diaconate is desirable, defensible, and necessary. The example of Elizabeth of Najrān supports her case in two ways.

First, Elizabeth concretely illustrates the employment of women in the church in late antiquity. Najrān was an Arab city, and Arab society was conservative in its view of women and of relations between the sexes. Ruhm of Najrān prided herself on wearing a veil to cover her face and prevent unwelcome attention and gazes.[6] Church services and ceremonies involved activities, such as baptism by immersion, that for women could not be performed by male clerics with propriety. On such occasions a female deaconess could officiate more appropriately.

In addition, Elizabeth was likely ordained. According to the *Second Letter* of Simeon of Bēth-Arshām, Elizabeth's brother Paul was consecrated bishop of Najrān by Philoxenos of Mabboug (Hierapolis).[7] If Philoxenos consecrated her brother for the church of Najrān, the chances are that he also ordained Elizabeth as deaconess of Najrān. Both that ordination and the consecration of Paul would have had particular significance, for the first bishop of Najrān (also consecrated by Philoxenos) had been martyred in a persecution that preceded that of 520; it thus was important to emphasize the legitimacy of the church of Najrān and reestablish it on a firm basis.

Appendix II

Yawm al-Khurūj: The Day of the Exodus

The striking phrase "Yawm al-Khurūj," "The Day of the Exodus," in Hassān's love poem on al-Naḍīra repays careful analysis. As has already been noted above, it was probably used in celebration of a religious occasion.

The Islamic Arabic sources speak of the procession that al-Nuʿmān, the Lakhmid king of Ḥīra, used to organize together with his household. They would go out on Sundays and feast days, dressed in festive clothes and carrying the cross, to the monastery of Dayr al-Lujj, where they would celebrate the feast. They would then go to a beauty spot in the vicinity of Ḥīra, where they would relax for the rest of the day.[1]

Holy Saturday: An Argument for the Restoration of the Female Diaconate in the Catholic Church (New York, 2000); and V. Karras, "Female Deacons in the Byzantine Church," *Church History* 73 (2004), 272–316.

[6] See *Martyrs,* 57.

[7] Ibid., 46.

[1] See Abu al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Diyārāt,* ed. J. al-ʿAtiyya (London, 1991), 139–40; on the Ghassānids, the Lakhmids, and the Ḥārithids of Najrān, and their building of monasteries in beautiful spots, see 163. As a member of the Ghassānid royal house, whose Christianity was of longer standing and more deeply rooted than that of the Lakhmids, al-Naḍīra would surely have participated in similar proceedings on religious occasions.

In one of the accounts that describes such a "going out" on a religious occasion—singling out Palm Sunday—the word used for the procession is *kharaja,* the very same verb from which *khurūj* is derived.[2] The phrase Yawm al-Khurūj thus could easily have been technical, used by the Christian Arabs of pre-Islamic times for such occasions.[3] If so, this poem of Hassān, composed before he became the poet of Islam, will have preserved a welcome addition to the Christian Arab vocabulary of those times.

A sort of Yawm al-Khurūj was still observed until recently in the Holy Land by Christian Arabs. Such a "going out" had as its destination Mount Tabor and Mount Carmel for the Feast of Transfiguration and of Mar Elias (Elijah), respectively. On both occasions the Christians of Nazareth and Haifa would go out to these two mountains in Galilee to celebrate the feasts and afterward to relax and picnic.[4]

Appendix III
Palm Sunday

Arabic has two terms for Palm Sunday, *Yawm al-Shaʿānīn* and *Yawm al-Sabāsib.* The first, the common term for the feast day, is still used in the Arab Christian Orient for Palm Sunday. It is an Arabicization of the Hebrew/Aramaic term *Hoshaʿna,* "Save us,"[1] the phrase—rendered in English as "Hosanna"—that the crowd shouted during the procession from Bethany to Jerusalem on the Sunday before the Crucifixion. The Hebrew/Aramaic verb became a noun, transferred first to the branches carried by the crowd in the procession and then to the feast day itself. It appears as a plural, the singular of which is *shaʿnūn* or *saʿnūn* in the Arabic lexica, which recognize it as a loanword.[2]

The second term, *Yawm al-Sabāsib,* was used earlier than the first, in pre-Islamic times. It is the one used by al-Nābigha, the panegyrist of the Ghassānids, in

[2] See al-ʿUmari, *Masālik al-Abṣār fi Mamalik al-Amṣār,* ed. A. Zaki Pasha (Cairo, 1924), I, 312.

[3] It is especially appropriate for Palm Sunday, because that is the one dominical feast associated in the Gospels with a procession (the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem from Bethany, followed by a crowd crying "Hosanna" and carrying branches; see Mark 11:8–11). Ismāʿīl ibn ʿAmmār, an eighth-century poet, uses the term *Yawm al-Shāʿānīn,* Palm Sunday; see Abū al-Faraj Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (Beirut, 1959), XI, 346, verse 7.

[4] Celebration of the Feast of Mar Elias by making *al-Khurūj* from Nazareth to Elijah's shrine is little practiced nowadays, but it has been recorded by Dr. Elias Srouji, a physician whose Christian Arab family used to observe the feast annually. For his detailed account of how it was celebrated during the British Mandate of Palestine, see E. S. Srouji, *Cyclamens from Galilee: Memoir of a Physician from Nazareth* (Lincoln, Neb., 2003), 12–14.

[1] See S. Fraenkel, *Die aramäischen Fremdwörter im Arabischen* (1886; reprint, Hildesheim, 1962), 277.

[2] See Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab* (Beirut, 1979), III, 291.

his most famous ode on them,[3] and is the indigenous native Arabic term for Palm Sunday. It derives from the plural of *sabsab,* an Arabian tree from whose branches arrows used to be made.[4] Apparently this was considered an appropriate name for the branches carried on Palm Sunday, and so the feast day came to be called Yawm al-Sabāsib, the Day of Sabāsib. Al-Nābigha's use of the phrase in connection with the Ghassānids suggests that this was the term in Ghassānland for the feast day. The term seems to have been known and used in Ḥijāz, in Mecca or Medina, since the Prophet Muḥammad is said to have asked his community to give up celebrating Palm Sunday in favor of a Muslim feast.[5]

Apparently, after the rise of Islam the first term gained currency, as it is attested in the verse of a Muslim poet who lived in the eighth century.[6]

Appendix IV

The Education of a Ghassānid Princess

The federate Germanic kings and *magistri militum* of the Roman Occident did not neglect the education of their daughters. Maria, who was the daughter of the Vandal *magister militum* Stilicho and wife of the emperor Honorius, was well versed in Greek and Latin literature. Pulcheria, the sister of Theodosius II and granddaughter of the Frankish *magister militum* Bauto, was admired for her knowledge of Greek and Latin. The daughter of the Ostrogoth Theodoric the Great, Amalaswintha, was trilingual, fluent in Greek, Latin, and Gothic.[1] Their example raises the question of whether the counterparts of these Germanic federates in the Orient, such as the Ghassānids, similarly nurtured the education of their daughters, who perhaps were sent elsewhere in Oriens or to Constantinople to be educated.

The question is particularly pertinent in the sixth century, a time when literary art among the Arabs and at the court of the Ghassānids was at its climax; this was the period of Imruʾ al-Qays, the foremost pre-Islamic poet in Arabic,[2] and the Ghassānids were well integrated into Byzantine society, both as *foederati* and as Christians. To serve Byzantium, their phylarchs must have been bilingual or perhaps trilingual. The federates of the previous century counted among their rank a notable woman poet, the daughter of the Salīḥid king Dāwūd, who may have been influenced by Eudocia, the ex-empress who herself wrote poetry.[3] It is thus possible

[3] See *Dīwān al-Nābigha al-Ḏubyānī,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1977), 47, verse 24.

[4] See Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab,* III, 235.

[5] See Murtaḍa al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿArūs,* ed. ʿA. Hārūn (Kuwait, 1970), III, 41.

[6] For the attestation of Yawm al-Shaʿānīn in the verse of Ismāʿīl ibn ʿAmmār, see Abū al-Faraj Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (Beirut, 1957), XI, 346, verse 7.

[1] See A. Goltz, "Gelehrte Barbaren?" in *Gelehrte in der Antike: Alexander Demandt zum 65. Geburtstag,* ed. A. Goltz, A. Luther, and H. Schlange-Schöningen (Köln, 2002), 297–316.

[2] On Imruʾ al-Qays and the Ghassānids, see *BASIC* II.1, 259–65.

[3] See *BAFIC*, xxvii, 436–38, 518.

that the Ghassānids, like their German counterparts, devoted considerable attention to the education of their daughters.

The sources confirm the presence of only one young federate Arab in Constantinople: Muʿāwiya (a son of the Kindite phylarch Qays, not a Ghassānid), who presumably received some "Byzantine" education while spending time in the capital.[4] Nothing can be inferred from their silence about federate daughters; but they make clear the female influence at play in the Byzantine state through the most famous of all Byzantine empresses, Theodora, who was a friend of the Ghassānid phylarch Arethas and was even in his debt because he helped to revive Monophysitism, her confession. Her well-known activities provide a relevant background for speculating on whether young Ghassānid princesses ever visited Constantinople and were familiar with the Roman Byzantine educational tradition.

The following data may be recovered from the surviving sources.

1. It seems plausible that the wife of the Ghassānid king Arethas accompanied her husband to Constantinople for the ceremony promoting him to the patriciate. As noted in Chapter 2, she had a role to play in that ceremony. Perhaps, after seeing the splendors of the capital, the Ghassānid queen desired her daughter to benefit from its cultural opportunities and from acquaintance with an empress determined to help women promote Monophysite Christianity.

2. Even more relevant and more certain is the name *Arabia,* which was given to the daughter of Justin II, the nephew of Justinian. Nomenclature is significant and can reflect attitudes and relationships; I have argued elsewhere that this strikingly un-Byzantine, un-Greek, and un-Christian name was given her as a result of the warm relations that obtained between the Arab phylarchate-kingship of the Ghassānids and the central government during the reign of Justinian.[5] Though corroborating texts or inscriptions have yet to be discovered, it is possible that the female members of the family of the federate *patricius* Arethas were well-known to the imperial family, and that a personal relationship arose based on their shared Monophysitism. The name Arabia, given to the daughter of the heir to the throne, may reflect the warmth of the friendship between the female members of the two families, consequent on a female Ghassānid presence in the capital.

3. A clearer indication of some social contact between the Byzantine imperial family and the royal Ghassānids during Arethas' visit to Constantinople in the 540s derives from a statement by John of Ephesus: after Justin II became insane in the 570s, his guardians would quiet him by saying, "Arethas is coming for you."[6]

[4] See *BASIC* I.1, 155, and above, Chapter 1, note 93.

[5] See *BASIC* I.1, 318–22 (note that her birth, not her marriage, must have occurred in the mid-540s; see 319).

[6] See *BASIC* I.1, 287–88.

Justin II must have met and been impressed by Arethas under happier circumstances; it was possibly then that his daughter was born or was young enough to take on a new name, Arabia.

It would be pleasant to think that Ḥalīma, the most celebrated of all Ghassānid princesses, or one of the two Hinds of the late sixth century did visit Constantinople, but no evidence of such a visit survives. The only princess whose visit was recorded by the extant sources is the daughter of the last Ghassānid king, Jabala, who with many of his followers followed Heraclius to Anatolia. Though the story cannot be firmly confirmed or rejected, it is said that during the Arab siege of Constantinople in A.D. 669, which was conducted by Yazīd, who would succeed Muʿāwiya, the crown prince strove hard to capture the tent that housed this princess.[7]

Appendix V

Al-Jūdī, Layla's Father at Dūma

In his account of the conquest of Dūma, Ṭabarī in his *Tārīkh* refers to al-Jūdī ibn Rabīʿa as one of the two commanders of the federates of Byzantium who were defending this fortress against Khālid ibn al-Wālid; the other commander was a Kindite, Ukaydir ibn ʿAbd al-Malik. Khālid had an encounter with al-Jūdī and captured him. After Dūma fell to Muslim arms, Khālid had al-Jūdī executed. The women of Dūma were taken captive and were offered for sale as prisoners of war. Khālid bought the daughter of al-Jūdi, who was apparently known for her beauty.[1]

The account in Ṭabarī presents some problems, one of which is the identity of Dūma itself.[2] Three locations of that name are known: one at the southern end of Wādī Sirḥān in northern Arabia, one in Lower Mesopotamia near Ḥīra (suggested by references to Ḥīra and al-Anbār in the rest of the account after the fall of Dūma), and a third near Damascus. A more important question concerns the identity of al-Jūdī. Was he the same Ghassānid whose daughter Layla became the wife of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, son of the caliph, Abū-Bakr, after Oriens was conquered by the Muslims, as discussed in the section in Chapter 2 on Layla?

It is practically certain that Dūma was the famous Dūmat al-Jandal, which lay at the southern tip of Wādī Sirḥān, and that the al-Jūdī involved in this episode was Layla's father. Two strong pieces of evidence argue for these identifications.

[7] P. Hitti, *History of Syria, Including Lebanon and Palestine* (London, 1951), 444.

[1] Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1962), III, 378–79. Note that he erroneously gives al-Jūdī the patronymic Ibn Rabīʿa; he is given the good Ghassānid name ʿAdī in Abū al-Faraj Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (Beirut, 1959), III, 273.

[2] Another problem is the number of expeditions launched in different years to capture Dūma; see L. Veccia Vaglieri, "Dūmat al-Jandal," *EI*², II, 624–26.

First, that Dūma was Dūmat al-Jandal is supported by the sharing of the command by al-Jūdī, the Ghassānid commander, and the Kindite Ukaydir. The Ghassān and Kinda were allies; and as *foederati* of Byzantium, they would not have been fighting in the Dūma of Iraq. Furthermore, Ṭabarī states that a number of other Arab *foederati* of Byzantium in this pre-Islamic period took part in the defense of Dūma, including the Kalb, Tanūkhids, and Zokomids (Salīḥids). They likewise would not have been fighting in Iraq; conversely, they naturally would have been defending Dūma, an important fortress in Byzantium's Outer Shield, against the nomads of the Arabian Peninsula.[3]

Second, that two men with the same uncommon name would both have beautiful daughters who became the wives of prominent Muslims seems highly unlikely.[4] As explained in Chapter 2, Layla could easily have been the wife first of Khālid ibn al-Walīd and later of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, son of Abū Bakir.

Appendix VI

Yawm al-Furāt, "the Battle-day of the Euphrates"

There is some confusion in the sources concerning this encounter, Yawm al-Furāt, in which the Ghassānid princess Fākhita was involved. The best account is the one in *al-Aghānī,* which has Fākhita compose the couplet of verses, as recognized by the able editor of Jāḥiẓ's *al-Ḥayawān*.[1] But according to Ibn al-Athīr, Yawm al-Furāt was an encounter between Shaybān and Taghlib, and a Shaybāni recited a triplet of verses.[2] The confusion may be resolved by Ibn Habīb, who says in *al-Muḥabbar* that Rabīʿa ibn Hidhar of the Asad tribe led his group for the Ghassānid ʿAdī,[3] presumably as ʿAdī's allies. This action is confirmed by the triplet cited by Ibn al-Athīr. Though he attributed the lines to a Shaybāni, they are more likely to have been said by someone else (perhaps Rabīʿa, leader of the Asad). The third verse in the triplet probably refers to the death of ʿAdī, lamented by his daughter Fākhita: there the phrase *Gharīb al-Shām,* "the Stranger from al-Shām," could describe ʿAdī; moreover,

[3] The Dūma near Damascus is out of the question, since its region (Oriens, Bilād al-Shām) came under attack by Muslims later, when this impressive number of federate contingents could not have been assembled for its defense. For the Outer Shield, see *BAFOC,* 478–79; *BAFIC,* 478–79.

[4] The only other person known to me who had this name is the Arab Spanish grammarian of Granada, Jūdī al-Mawrūri, on whom see Ḥ. Monés, "Jūdī al-Mawrūri," *EI*², II, 574–75. Judi is also the Koranic name of the mountain on which Noah's ark rested; see M. Streck, "Djūdi," *EI*², II, 573–74. Since *jūd* means generosity, a virtue for which the Ghassānids were celebrated, it could have been a nickname he had earned, just as another Ghassānid was called Qātil al-Jūʿ, "the Killer of Famine" (see below Chapter 4, with notes 5–6).

[1] Namely, ʿAbd al-Salām Hārūn; see his edition of al-Jāḥiz, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān* (Cairo, 1963), VI, 218 note 6.

[2] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh* (Beirut, 1965), I, 647–48. A variant of al-Furāt is al-Qurāt.

[3] Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitab al-Muḥabbar,* ed. I. Lichtenstädter (1942; reprint, Beirut, n.d.), 247.

the second hemistich, which emphasizes that his relatives lived far away, *tanāʾā aqāribuh,* could easily be referring to Bilād al-Shām, whence ʿAdī came. The third verse also mentions the dead man's liberation of prisoners of war, implying that he was a man of influence, as the Ghassānid prince ʿAdī would have been.

Difficulties remain in reconciling the various traditions of the prose accounts. But in obedience to Nöldeke's Law, the definitive evidence is provided by contemporary Arabic poetry, represented in the triplet just analyzed, which surely refers to a Ghassānid, ʿAdī. The triplet must have been composed by someone in a group who fought for the Ghassānids under ʿĀdī. And, as explained in Chapter 2, the author must have been someone with a strong emotional bond to the dead man, such as his daughter, Fākhita.

III

Prose Accounts on the Ghassānids

Ḥassān

In the reconstruction of the social history of Oriens during the Ghassānid phylarchy undertaken in this volume, contemporary Arabic poetry has been the principal source;[1] among the poets, Ḥassān—specifically, his *Dīwān*—has proved to be the most helpful. The Arabic sources of later times, however, include a number of prose accounts that treat Ghassānid social life.[2] These later sources have to be used with great care, since in the process of transmission they have suffered interpolations, exaggerations, and embroideries. The goal is to reach the kernel of truth that they undoubtedly contain, after they are stripped of their later accretions.

The authorship of these prose accounts is ascribed to Ḥassān himself, or involves him, as is natural, since he frequented the Ghassānid court every year and was intimately familiar with their life and history. This is true of none of the other poets who visited the Ghassānids and eulogized them, with the exception of al-Nābigha al-Ḏubyānī, who is also a major source for their social life though less important than Ḥassān.

Ḥassān was the poet laureate not only of the Ghassānids but also of the Prophet Muḥammad during the last ten years of his life. Ḥassān survived the death of the Prophet, in A.D. 632, living for another thirty years or so, until the beginning of the caliphate of Muʿāwiya. The death of the Prophet was a disaster for the fortunes of Ḥassān, not recognized by those who have written on the poet.[3] This fact is relevant to the authenticity of these prose accounts attributed to him for the following reasons.

1. Ḥassān ceased to be the only poet of Islam after the conquest of Mecca in 630

[1] In compliance with what I have elsewhere called Nöldeke's Law for writing the history of the Arabs and of Arab-Byzantine relations before the rise of Islam; see *BASIC* II.1, xxvi.

[2] The two principal sources are Abu al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī's *al-Aghānī* and Ibn ʿAsākir's *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*. Both belonged to Bilād al-Shām, and naturally paid particular attention to the region and to the Ghassānids, who lived there for so long as *foederati* of Byzantium.

[3] With the exception of M. T. Darwīsh in *Ḥassān ibn Thābit,* Maktabat al-Dirāsāt al-Adabiyya 43 (Cairo, n.d.), 205–8.

and the eventual conversion to Islam of all the Meccan poets who had been his rivals, at the head of whom was his archenemy and competitor ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Zibaʿrā.[4] Thus Ḥassān lost his paramountcy as defender of Islam and poet laureate.

2. Ḥassān's position would not have been so serious if the Prophet had not died just two years after the conquest of Mecca. Muḥammad's death deprived Ḥassān of his patron and protector, leaving him isolated and marginalized.

3. After the decisive battle of the Yarmūk in 636, the Oriens of the Ghassānids and Byzantium became Arab Muslim territory. With the establishment of the first Arab Muslim dynasty in Oriens (now Bilād al-Shām) in Damascus in 661, the region and Ghassānland were open to Ḥassān; he visited the founder of the Umayyad state, Muʿāwiya, who had made the Ghassānid capital, Jābiya, his own capital for twenty years,[5] and whose son and crown prince, Yazīd, had married a Ghassānid princess, Umm Ramla. So when Ḥassān visited Muʿāwiya, he surely must have felt he was visiting the familiar Ghassānland of his previous patrons, especially now that he was patronless.

4. Although Ḥassān converted to Islam and became its eloquent spokesman, he never forgot his affiliation with his Ghassānid relatives. He often remembered them in the most laudatory terms and took pride in his consanguinity with them. In fact, in one verse he combined secular pride in the Ghassānids with religious pride in Islam.[6]

The preceding four points have made clear how and why Ḥassān poured forth his sentiments on the Ghassānids, providing examples of "emotion recollected in tranquility" and acting as a *laudator temporis acti*. And most of his surviving poetry on the Ghassānids was written during this period, not before their fall. These are the odes that elicited the admiration of the classical critics, who thought them better than his Islamic odes. They were set to music in later Islamic times and some of them are still judged to be in the front rank of Arabic classical poetry. Perhaps the rhyme in *N,* the *nūniyya,* is the best of his poems that illustrates this poetry of reminiscence. It is the only poem in which he mentioned the Yarmūk, the river by the fateful battle. After the prelude, he depicts the attractive scene at the Ghassānid court, where the young Ghassānid maidens were weaving coral wreaths in preparation for Palm Sunday.[7]

Most of his extant poems on the Ghassānids were written intermittently in

[4] For Ḥassān's nine rivals, see Ibn Sallām, *Tabaqāt al-Shuʿarāʾ,* ed. M. M. Shākir (Cairo, 1974), I, 233–35.

[5] When Muʿāwiya became caliph in 661, he moved the capital to Damascus. Ḥassān had been pro-Umayyad since the days of the Umayyad caliphate of ʿUthmān (646–656), whom he elegized; see *Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit,* ed. W. ʿArafāt, Gibb Memorial New Series 25 (London, 1971), I, 96.

[6] See Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 109, verse 8.

[7] See ibid., 255, verse 6.

the course of the thirty years or so after the death of the Prophet, when Ḥassān was getting old and was possibly neglected. Then he was afflicted with blindness, which made him reluctant to socialize. It was during this time that his own son, also a poet, looked after him. As a poet looking after a father who was a poet, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān understood that the best therapy for his father's many ailments, physical and psychological, was to create situations that encouraged the old man to remember his good old Ghassānid days. The most effective were occasions that involved the recitation of his Ghassānid odes, set to music and sung by women. It was then that Ḥassān described his life at the Ghassānid court in prose pieces, such as the one involving Jabala.

No one has ever cast doubt on these Ghassānid *poems,* and the same stamp of authenticity could easily attach to the *prose* compositions attributed to Ḥassān, but only after later accretions added to them by storytellers (*quṣṣās*) and other literary embroiderers have been eliminated. Just as there is no doubt about the authorship or authenticity of the poem about the Yarmūk, so must the prose piece involving Jabala be treated as genuine. Indeed, the prose pieces are background for some of the verses of Ḥassān that describe the *dolce vita* he had experienced at the Ghassānid court.

In addition to these prose compositions from the Islamic period, and others attributed to him about the Ghassānid court before the fall of the dynasty, some artistic prose compositions of Ḥassān on the Ghassānids before their fall also need to be seriously entertained as genuine.[8] That a poet of Ḥassān's caliber should have left behind some prose composition of an artistic nature should not be surprising. Literary history provides examples of poets who were also distinguished prose writers; in Arabic letters the figures of Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarri in the Orient and Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khatīb in Andalusia are splendid examples. This is a kind of Arabic *Kunstprosa,* which is of special importance as a rare example of pre-Islamic and early Islamic prose, of which only a few fragments have survived. It is noteworthy that these prose pieces addressed to the Ghassānid kings are rhymed, a distinctive feature of Arabic verse. Rhymed prose was one of the transitional stages between prose and metered verse.[9]

Ḥassān's status as the poet laureate of the Prophet Muḥammad and the

[8] One example is the attractive long piece of rhyming prose, addressed to Jabala, in which Ḥassān expresses why the Ghassānids were superior to their enemies, the Lakhmids; see Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (Beirut, 1958), XV, 124–25, where the piece is popularly attributed to al-Nābigha but the author of *al-Aghānī* favors its attribution to Ḥassān. The question of attribution is not as important as authenticity or genuineness, which may be predicated of this composition. On sources that attribute prose compositions to Ḥassān, see Darwīsh, *Ḥassān ibn Thābit,* 194 note 3.

[9] The rhyming prose of the soothsayers, *kuhhān,* is considered such a stage by historians of pre-Islamic poetry. The foremost neoclassical poet of modern Arabic poetry, Ahmad Shawqi, wrote in praise of rhyme and commended its use in prose by poets, and he followed his own advice.

defender of Islam in his post-Ghassānid poetry must be remembered when one employs his prose as a source for Ghassānid social history. Sometimes this Islamic ambience provides the framework within which his prose pieces are presented by later Islamic authors. Hence the writings are given a certain twist, even as they convey a kernel of the truth provided by Ḥassān. In one of the best-constructed of these accounts, Jabala, his Ghassānid patron, is presented as one who had adopted Islam but renounced it because he would not consent to being treated as the equal of the simple Arab pastoralist who had trodden on his robe. Such twists in the accounts are the product of later Islamic piety, and they cannot be taken seriously. Even more important is the statement of a Muslim in Medina who heard Ḥassān praising the Ghassānids and their hospitality; surprised at Ḥassān's loyalty and admiration for the Ghassānids, he exclaims: "Why do you praise kings who were infidels, and whom God has caused to perish?"[10] As has been noted in the preceding volume, only a small amount of Ḥassān's poetry on the Ghassānids in the pre-Islamic period has survived.[11] This outraged exclamation on the part of the pious Muslim indicates how perceptions of Ḥassān, as the poet laureate of the Prophet of Islam, were distorted in later times, when relations with Christians soured. The bad feeling aroused by the Muslim-Byzantine conflict lasting so many centuries disinclined later anthologists and collectors of his poetry to preserve his compositions on the "infidels," and so they ignored most of them. However, the poems were still extant when authors such as al-Jāḥiẓ and al-Hamaḏānī expressed their admiration for Ḥassān's poetry on the Ghassānids.[12] They could have made that judgment only on the basis of an *extensive* corpus of poems still available to them, not on the basis of the few poems that have survived in Ḥassān's *Dīwān*. Such must have been the situation when the well-known critic Aṣmaʿī (d. 828) said that Ḥassān's pre-Islamic poetry on the Ghassānids was much better than that written in the Islamic period.[13]

Nihāyat al-Arab

Of an entirely different nature is a work on the history of the Arabs and the Persians before the rise of Islam that also involved an attempt at a synchronization of the history of the two peoples: hence its title, *Nihāyat al-Arab fi Akhbār al-Furs wa al-ʿArab*.

The work is said to have been compiled by the famous philologist al-Aṣmaʿī

[10] The account is preserved by Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih in *al-ʿIqd al-Farid,* ed. A. Amīn, I. Abyārī, and A. Hārūn (Beirut, 1982), II, 62, verse 4.

[11] See *BASIC* II.1, 287.

[12] Ibid., 287–91.

[13] On Aṣmaʿī and his remark, see Darwīsh, *Ḥassān ibn-Thābit,* 503, and Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shiʿr wa al-Shuʿarāʾ*, ed. A. M. Shākir (Cairo, 1966), I, 305.

for the Abbasid caliph Harūn al-Rashīd.[14] In 1879, Theodor Nöldeke, working on a manuscript of it in Gotha, dismissed it as *schwindelhafte* (bogus).[15] In 1900, Edward G. Browne declared that the Sasanid part in this work "appears to merit more attention than is implied in the disparaging remarks of Professor Nöldeke."[16] The work was later noticed by Mario Grignaschi and was consulted more frequently by M. J. Kister in 1980.[17]

There are four manuscripts of this work: one in Gotha, two in London, and one in Cambridge.[18] *Nihāyat al-Arab* has been published in Iran;[19] there is apparently only one copy of the text in the United States, at Harvard University's Widener Library. Its account of a Ghassānid wedding[20] contains information not to be found anywhere else in the sources, and may be briefly summarized as follows.

Al-Nuʿmān ibn Bashīr al-Ansāri[21] relates that the caliph Abū Bakr (632–634) sent him to Heraclius to convert the emperor to Islam. Al-Nuʿmān traveled to Antioch, where Heraclius was staying. Before he and his party met the emperor, they lodged in a palace on the roof of which beautiful maidens were dancing; in their midst was a beautiful woman with a *duff,* a tambourine, in her hand, who sang and recited a couplet of verses. Al-Nuʿmān and his party declined a young man's offer to join the wedding celebration and proceeded on their unsuccessful mission.

[14] Its authorship is attributed to al-Aṣmaʿī the philologist (d. 828), on whom see B. Lewin, "al-Aṣmaʿī," *EI*², I, 717–19.

[15] Nöldeke, *PAS,* 475.

[16] See E. G. Browne, *Hand-list of the Muhammadan Manuscripts, Including All Those Written in the Arabic Character, Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1900), 241. I share Browne's view. He discussed this work further in "Some Account of the Arabic Work Entitled *Nihāyatu l-irab . . .,*" *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1899), 51–53; (1900), 195–209.

[17] See M. Grignaschi, "La Nihāyatu-l-Arab fi Ahbāri-l-Furs wa-lʿArab," *Bulletin des études orientales* 22 (1969), 17–67, and "La Nihāyatu-l-ʿArab fi Ahbāri-l-Furs wa-lʿArab et les Siyaru Mulūki-l-ʿAgam du Ps. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ," *Bulletin des études orientaľes* 26 (1973), 83–184; for M. J. Kister's notice of the London Manuscript at the British Museum, see "Some Reports Concerning Mecca from Jāhiliyya to Islam," in *Studies in Jāhiliyya and Islam,* Variorum Reprints (London, 1980), 61–93.

[18] Nöldeke refers to the Gotha manuscript as Goth.A 1741 (*PAS,* 475). The two manuscripts in London are British Library, Add. 18,505 and 23,298 (while reading the second, I noted that the leaf in which the description of the wedding occurs is missing). The Cambridge manuscript number in Browne's *Hand-list* is No. 1201. Nöldeke (*PAS*) and Browne (*Hand-list*) read one word in the title as *Irab;* Gringaschi ("La Nihāyatu-l-Arab fi Ahbāri-l-Furs wa-lʿArab") reads it *Arab,* which rhymes better (and is indeed almost a homophone) with the second word, ʿArab. Each provided a reading of the word, which was unvocalized, without discussion.

[19] Edited by Muḥammad Taqī Dāneshpazhuh, who used only the two MSS in the British Library (Tehran, A.H. 1375 [1955–56]). In his introduction, he discusses the work's authorship and refers to its Persian translation, *Tajārub al-Umam fi Akhbār Mulūk al-ʿArab wa al-ʿAjam,* ed. R. Anzabinijād and Y. Kalantari (Tehran, n.d.).

[20] On weddings in Byzantium, see W. Treadgold, "The Bride-shows of the Byzantine Emperors," *Byzantion* 49 (1979), 395–413; see also L. Rydén, "The Bride-shows at the Byzantine Court—History or Fiction?" *Eranos* 83 (1985), 175–91.

[21] See K. V. Zettersteen, "al-Nuʿmān Ibn Bashīr," *EI*², VIII, 118–19.

Some thirty years later, Muʿāwiya, now the ruler of the region, sent al-Nuʿmān on a mission to Antioch. He found the spot where he had met Heraclius desolate and the palace in ruins. He met then a blind old woman whom he asked to identify herself, which she did in a couplet of verses in which she said she was al-Dalfāʾ, the daughter of Jarwal, who was a lord among the Ghassānids. Al-Nuʿmān reminisced on his earlier visit, and the woman told him that the wedding he had witnessed then was that of her sister, who was being married to her cousin, a Ghassānid, and that the young man who had offered him hospitality was her own brother.[22] If authentic, this account provides valuable information on Ghassānid social life.

The maiden's name is significant. Its consonantal skeleton, *d-l-f,* can support one of three roots—*d-l-f, z-l-f,* or *dh-l-f;* the third reading is probably the correct one.[23] Dhalfā, applied to a woman, refers to one who has a beautiful nose, small and straight.[24] Dhalfāʾ is also attested as a female proper name belonging to some of the medieval *qiyān* (songstresses). It is a welcome addition to the onomasticon of Ghassānid women, just as her father's name, Jarwal,[25] is to the onomasticon of its men.

The description of the wedding party, however, is the most important part of the account.

1. The bride and the bridegroom are cousins. Clearly the Ghassānids engaged in endogamous marriages, since they were proud of the purity of their pedigree, mentioned in the odes that eulogized them: the phrase *ghayr ashāʾib,* "not sullied or adulterated by admixture with other blood," appears in their panegyrics.[26] The principle of *kafāʾa,* "equality" in pedigree for contracting a marriage, was apparently observed by the Ghassānids.[27]

2. Dancing was a feature of the celebrations that attended their wedding; this is the only reference to dance in Ghassānid life.

3. The sister of the bride was leading the group; she appears both as an instrumentalist and vocalist. The entertainment was thus provided not by a professional artist, a *qayna,* but by a family member, a sister singing at her sibling's wedding.

4. Al-Dhalfāʾ uses a *duff,* an instrument well-known and popular in this period and on such occasions.

5. Finally, al-Dhalfāʾ sang a couplet of *verses*. The impetus that the Ghassānids imparted to Arabic poetry by their patronage has been explained in this volume.

[22] Cambridge Manuscript, No. 1201, 115v; *Nihāyat al-Arab,* ed. Dāneshpazhuh, 233–35.

[23] But for the roots *d-l-f* and *z-l-f,* see Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab* (Beirut, 1979), III, 405, 194–95.

[24] Ibid., II, 467.

[25] For Jarwal, meaning the rocky part of a mountain, see ibid., I, 411.

[26] The phrase appears in the famous panegyric on the Ghassānids by al-Nābigha; see his *Dīwān al-Nābigha al-Ḏubyānī,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1977), 42, verse 8.

[27] On *kafāʾa,* see J. Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (Oxford, 1964), 160 note 85.

But the verses sung by al-Dhalfāʾ were not formal, solemn eulogies on their kings such as al-Nābigha or ʿAlqama composed; rather, they were light verses, related to entertainment and the social life of the Ghassānids. The author of the couplet is unknown, but it may have been composed by al-Dhalfāʾ herself, or by one of her relatives. The federates had women poets among them.[28]

The verses were apotropaic, as the princess wishes death upon those who envy her house and do not wish them well. Such sentiments are not implausible. The luxury and the splendor of the Ghassānid court must have elicited jealousy from other Arabs, such as the Lakhmids and even the Meccans.[29] So, the content of her song corresponds with what is known about how the Ghassānids were perceived by some contemporaries.

That this account is set in the region of Antioch should cause no surprise; although Ghassānid power was centered in the south of Oriens, in the Provincia Arabia and in Palaestina Secunda and Tertia, their influence extended to the north and affected the whole of the region up to at least the Euphrates, after Justinian created the *archiphylarchia* around A.D. 529. Furthermore, after the start of the Muslim offensive against Oriens during the caliphate of Abū Bakr and the initial Muslim successes, there was a major redeployment of Byzantine troops in Oriens; it is quite possible that some of the Ghassānids who were fighting with Heraclius were moved to the north—the region of Antioch.[30]

A final aspect that deserves comment is the Islamic framework within which the account is set: namely, the dispatch of al-Nuʿmān to convert Heraclius to Islam. This is surely a later Islamic pious embroidery. Indeed, the attribution of the account to al-Nuʿmān ibn Bashīr may be cited as one of these later pieties; he was too young to be sent by Abū Bakr to convert Heraclius, but the account is ascribed to him in order to enhance its credibility, since he was one of the Companions of the Prophet.

Such then is the account on the Ghassānids in *Nihāyat al-Arab*. Notably, it is free of fantastic or miraculous elements, which would have made it completely unreliable, although it contains inaccuracies such as its attribution to al-Nuʿmān ibn Bashīr. Even the dramatic manner of the maiden's death at the end of the account is not implausible. The reader has the choice of accepting Nöldeke's judgment on *Nihāyat al-Arab* or the more sympathetic assessment of Edward G. Browne.

[28] For the poet daughter of Dāwūd, the fifth-century Arab federate king, see *BAFIC,* 434; see also above, Chapter 2, note 101.

[29] Even the Prophet Muḥammad, who was aware of the power of the Ghassānids, is said to have exclaimed, "O God, do away with the Ghassānid kingship." See Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUyūn al-Akhbār* (Cairo, 1963), IV, 71.

[30] The move followed the incipient and unfinished thematization of Oriens after the Byzantine victory at the battle of Nineveh and the evacuation of Oriens by the Persians (see the five articles by the present writer in *BALA* I, 119–280).

Appendix

Reynold Nicholson on the Ghassānid Royal Court

In the context of Chapter 3's *Quellenkritik* involving prose literature on the Ghassānids, the views of a distinguished scholar of Arabic literature, Reynold Nicholson, deserve to be noted. From the compositions attributed to Ḥassān, he singled out the one in which the poet refers to a banquet given by the Ghassānid king Jabala, when the *qiyān* (songstresses) from Ḥīra and Mecca sang for him.[1] In Chapter 8, arguments have been advanced supporting the authenticity of the account on the dispatch of *qiyān* to Jabala from Ḥīra and Mecca; two other points may be added here.

First, the statement on the king's behavior, shunning all vulgarity or obscenity in the course of that banquet,[2] accords well with other poets' allusions to the Ghassānids' chastity and decency,[3] reflections of their Christian faith. And second, the reference to snow/ice in the piece is not surprising, since the Ghassānids lived so close to Mount Hermon, called in Arabic Jabal al-Thalj, "the Mountain of Snow." It was seen by Ḥassān and remembered by him in two of his poems.[4]

Applying his critical acumen, Nicholson accepted the historicity of the various elements of the account, but doubted that it could have come from Ḥassān. The distinguished scholar, however, wrote at the beginning of the twentieth century, before the development of Byzantine studies and, more importantly, of research on Arab-Byzantine relations, and so he was not clear about some aspects of that relationship.

1. His main difficulty in accepting the attribution of the piece to Ḥassān derived from his erroneous belief that Jabala's rule began in A.D. 635[5]—that is, one year before the battle of the Yarmūk. He therefore concluded that Ḥassān could not have met Jabala, since Ḥassān had accepted Islam long before Jabala acceded to the kingship of Ghassān. Yet despite his reservations about the chronology and the ascription of the passage in its present form to Ḥassān, Nicholson concluded that "this does not seriously affect its value as evidence."[6]

2. The last days of the Ghassānids and the reign of Jabala are now much better understood than they were when Nicholson wrote. Ḥassān's last visit to the Ghassānids must be related to the *terminus* 614, when the Persians occupied

[1] See R. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (1907; reprint, London, 1969), 53 and note 4.

[2] The Arabic text uses the strong words *khanā* and *ʿarbada,* which Nicholson discreetly translates, "I never knew him offend in speech or act."

[3] For example, see *Dīwān al-Nābigha al-Ḏubyānī,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1977), 47, verses 24, 27; 101, verse 4.

[4] See *Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit,* ed. W. ʿArafāt, Gibb Memorial New Series 25 (London, 1971), I, 137, verse 4; 308, verse 9.

[5] Nicholson, *Literary History of the Arabs,* 52.

[6] Ibid., 53 note 4.

Jerusalem and Oriens. Some Ghassānid kings are known to have had extended reigns—Arethas reigned for forty years, 529–569—so Jabala could easily have ruled long enough that Ḥassān might have visited him before 614.[7]

3. Although Jabala quite possibly could have been the Ghassānid king involved in this prose piece ascribed to Ḥassān, it also could have been some other Ghassānid king who reigned before A.D. 614. The names of the Ghassānid king and his phylarchs between 600 and 614 are known from contemporary Arabic panegyrics on them: al-Ḥārith, al-Nuʿmān, ʿAmr, and Ḥujr. In the transmission of a prose account such as this one, the name of one Ghassānid king may have been substituted for that of a phylarch, but such an error would not affect the substance of the account.

4. It might be added in this connection that female singers are attested at the Ghassānid court as early as the first half of the sixth century, during the reign of Arethas, who presented a poet, Ḥarmala, with two songstresses to convey his gratitude.[8]

[7] Ibn Khaldūn gives the year of Jabala's death as that of Heraclius—i.e., A.D. 640/641; see *Tārīkh* (Beirut, 1956), II, 587.

[8] See Abū al-Qāsim al-Āmidi, *al-Muʾtalif wa al-Mukhtalif,* ed. ʿA. al-Sattār Farrāj (Cairo, 1961), 235.

B. DAILY LIFE

IV

Food

Food played an important role in the social life of the Ghassānids, who had belonged to a people whose ideal of *murūʾa* comprised the twin virtues of hospitality in peace and courage in war.[1] The former was made real in food, especially food offered to a stranger or guest. One of the fires that the Arabs lit was intended to guide the wayfarer at night to where he could find food to satisfy his hunger; it was called *Nār al-Qirā,* "the Fire of Hospitality."[2]

Their attachment to this virtue is clearly signaled even in their onomasticon. Their eponymous ancestor was called Jafna, which means "a large platter"; and they were often referred to as "the Sons of Jafna" (the Jafnids), *Awlād Jafna,* or "the House of Jafna," *Āl-Jafna*. Thus, their very name reminded the Arabs of their hospitality, which became proverbial both in poetry and in prose. It was immortalized by their poet laureate Ḥassān. In a verse that became celebrated in the annals of Arabic poetry, he says that their splendid hospitality even silenced their dogs: their supposed guardians against suspicious strangers, the dogs became so accustomed to the frequent visits of guests that they ceased to howl![3] In prose, too, the saying *Awqar li-al-Ḍayf min Banī-Ghassān,* "More hospitable to the guest than

[1] The pre-Islamic concept of *murūʾa* included as many as seven elements, but the two main ones were bravery in war and hospitality in peace, reflecting the division of the life of the pre-Islamic pastoralists between war and peace. Islam enlisted *murūʾa* in its service; according to a famous hadith, *lā dīna bilā murūʾa,* "religion cannot subsist without *murūʾa*." On *dīn* and *murūʾa,* see I. Goldziher, "Muruwwa and Din," in *Muslim Studies,* ed. S. M. Stern, trans. C. R. Barber and S. M. Stern (London, 1967), I, 1–44 (especially 23 note 4, for the hadith); see also B. Farès, "Murūʾa," *EI*², VII, 636–38, especially 637.

[2] The pre-Islamic Arabs also applied the term *jawād* (plural *ajwād*) to individuals known for their outstanding hospitality. For an enumeration of these *ajwād* in pre-Islamic time and on hospitality in general, see Jawād ʿAli, *al-Mufaṣṣal fi Tārīkh al-ʿArab qabl al-Islam* (Beirut, 1970), IV, 575–84; for the fire of hospitality, see 582.

[3] *Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit,* ed. W. ʿArafāt, Gibb Memorial New Series 25 (London, 1971), I, 74, verse 12.

Banū-Ghassān," expressed their hospitality. Even as late as the tenth century, the famous belle-lettrist Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamaḏānī echoed it; in a memorable passage in one of his *Epistles,* he puns on the name "Jafna."[4]

One of their phylarchs, Imruʾ al-Qays, was nicknamed Qātil al-Jūʿ, "the Killer of Hunger or Famine,"[5] a sobriquet he acquired during a famine in which he attended to the needs of his people. The epithet was preserved even in Greek inscriptions that called him καθελόγος, as well as in an Arabic verse that the phylarch himself composed.[6]

I. Haute Cuisine

Food was important to all Arabs,[7] and "the Sons of the Large Platter," the Ghassānids, must have enjoyed at their tables a high level of cuisine. This is attested by the Arab authors who actually singled them out from all the Arabs for the high standard that their culinary art had reached. Speaking of one succulent Ghassānid dish, the *tharīda* (discussed below), Thaʿālibi (961–1038) wrote: "This group (the Ghassānids) distinguished themselves among the Arabs for their specialization in *al-ṭayyibāt,* the delicious foods, and to them belonged the *tharīda,* which is proverbial. And about this dish the Arabs were united, declaring that there was no *tharīda* more delicious than theirs, neither in the food of the common people nor of the elite, and so it served as a proverb for the most delicious of foods."[8]

Ghassānid cuisine may have been influenced by their origins in the Arabian Peninsula, where they associated with the Ḥimyarites,[9] and by later contacts with the Palmyrene and the Nabataean Arabs, who accorded great importance to banquets and feasts. Such expressions as "Children of the Banquet," "Companions of the Banquet," and "Chief of the Banquet" speak for themselves.[10] It is also

[4] Hamaḏānī, *Rasāʾil Abī al-Fadl Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamaḏānī* (Cairo, 1898), 300–301; see *BASIC* II.1, 289–91.

[5] See Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamharat Ansāb al-ʿArab,* ed. A. Hārūn (Cairo, 1962), 372.

[6] See Hishām al-Kalbī, *Jamharat al-Nasab,* ed. N. Ḥasan (Beirut, 1986), 618–19; for the Greek inscription, published by Maurice Sartre, see *BASIC* I.1, 509–12; *BASIC* II.1, 44–46.

[7] The importance of food in the life of the Arabs is reflected in the large number of dishes (twelve), each of which had a name; see Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *al-ʿIqd al-Farīd,* ed. A. Amīn, I. Abyārī, and A. Hārūn (Beirut, 1982), VI, 290–92. And likewise, banquets were given on twelve named occasions (292). For the list in English of these dishes and banquets, see G. J. H. van Gelder, *God's Banquet: Food in Classical Arabic Literature* (New York, 2000), 16, 21. This is now the standard work on Arab food.

[8] See ʿAbd al-Malik al-Thaʿālibi, *Thimār al-Qulūb fi al-Muḍāf wa al-Mansūb,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1965), 122–23.

[9] For food in Ḥimyarite South Arabia, see "Ghidhāʾ," *EI,* II, 1060–61; for the food of the Arabs of the Peninsula in pre-Islamic times, see 1057–60. The entries "Ṭabkh" ("Cooking") and "Matbakh" ("Kitchen," "Cookhouse") by D. Waines may also be consulted, in *EI*², X, 30–32, and VI, 807–9, respectively.

[10] For these expressions in Nabataean and Palmyrene inscriptions, see R. G. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs* (London, 2001), 136.

possible that Arethas introduced to the Ghassānid court foods that he had tasted at imperial banquets in Constantinople.[11] Such banquets in later times attracted the attention of a Muslim observer, who left a vivid and detailed description of one of them.[12]

The fourth-century historian Ammianus Marcellinus, who judged a particular people or society by what they ate and what they drank, dismissed the Arab pastoralists of the fourth century as a people "wholly unacquainted with grain and wine."[13] But the Ghassānids displayed a high level of cultural development in their food and drink, recognized both by the poets who visited them and by the authors of later Islamic times such as Thaʿālibi. In particular, Ḥassān distinguished the Ghassānid princesses from the Arab women of the Peninsula by noting that they did *not* consume pastoralist food.[14]

II. Bread

Information on the Ghassānid diet is extremely limited. As bread was the staple food of Byzantium, so it was for the Ghassānids. At the court, a major component of the diet would have been *ḥuwwārā,* bread made of the finest white flour, quite distinct from the bread made of coarse flour called *khushkār.*[15] The Syriac term *ḥuwwārā,*[16] related to the root that means "white," is attested in a piece of rhyming prose addressed to one of the Ghassānid kings—a panegyric on him in which the superiority of the food he eats is considered evidence for his superiority over his rival, the Lakhmid king of Ḥīra.[17] Coarser bread, *paximadion,* was distributed to the Ghassānid troops when they were on duty.[18] Ḥawrān/Auranitis and Bathaniyya/Bāshān, where the Ghassānids were partly settled, were known as cereal-growing regions in Oriens.

[11] On Arethas in Constantinople, see *BASIC* I.1, 282–88.

[12] For Hārūn ibn Yaḥyā's description of the imperial Christmas banquet in Constantinople, see the English version of the Arabic text in A. Dalby, *Flavours of Byzantium* (Trowbridge, Eng., 2003), 118–19.

[13] Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae,* XIV.vi.6. On Ammianus' value system, see P. Tuffin and M. McEvoy, "Steak à la Hun: Food and Drink, and Dietary Habits in Ammianus Marcellinus," in *Feast, Fast or Famine: Food and Drink in Byzantium,* ed. W. Mayer and S. Trzcionka, Byzantina Australiensia 15 (Brisbane, 2005), 69–84, especially 79–80.

[14] See Ḥassān, *Dīwan,* I, 255, verse 8, translated in *BASIC* II.1, 295.

[15] On *khushkār,* see van Gelder, *God's Banquet,* 99, 120; it was probably baked in an oven called a *tannūr.* On bread among the Arabs generally, see C. Pellat, "Khubz," *EI*², V, 41–43; in Byzantium, see A. Karpozilos and A. Kazhdan, "Bread," *ODB,* I, 321. For *ḥuwwārā* as the bread of the Ghassānids, see Abū al-Faraj Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (Beirut, 1957), XV, 124, verse 14.

[16] See S. Fraenkel, *Die aramäischen Fremdwörter im Arabischen* (1886; reprint, Hildesheim, 1962), 32.

[17] For this piece of rhyming prose, see Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī,* XV, 124–25.

[18] For the simple baked loaves and the double-baked biscuit in Roman and Byzantine times, the *bucellatum* and the *paximadion/paximation*, see J. Haldon, "Feeding the Army: Food and Transport in Byzantium, ca. 600–1100," in Mayer and Trzcionka, eds., *Feast, Fast or Famine,* 87.

Bread was accompanied by cheese, either *jubn* or *aḳiṭ,* and by honey, *ʿasal,* and also "clarified butter," both of which are documented in contemporary poetry.[19] Olives and olive oil also went with bread as part of the Ghassānid meal. The olive tree grew in the regions where the Ghassānids were settled; indeed, Oriens was the major area of olives and oil production for Byzantium until the Arab Muslim Conquests.

III. Meat

A bread and meat broth called *tharīdat Ghassān* was highly prized among the Arabs and acquired proverbial fame in the words of medieval authors such as Thaʿālibi (quoted above). According to some, the meat in the dish was brains (viewed as particularly choice).[20] Two distinguished personages sang its praises: a hadith says that the Prophet Muḥammad likened his favorite wife ʿĀʾisha to the *tharīda,* saying that she surpassed all other women just as the *tharīda* excelled all other delicacies.[21] Ḥassān, his poet, also employed the *tharīda* in a remarkable simile: "The butter that appears on the sides of the *tharīda* looks like the stars of the Pleiades." Although the point of the simile is not clear to a modern observer, the verse plainly implies that the *tharīda* is a great delicacy.[22]

Reference to meat in *tharīdat Ghassān* raises the question of what other kinds of meat were served at the Ghassānid table. A Syriac passage explicitly refers to mutton and beef eaten during the encounter between a Monophysite Ghassānid king, Arethas, and a Chalcedonian patriarch of Antioch, Ephraim, ca. A.D. 536.[23]

[19] For these items, see M. Rodinson, "Ghidhā," *EI*², II, 1057–61. For their appearance in the poetry, see Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 17, verse 6; 519 note 361. *Aḳiṭ* is sometimes described as goat cheese, sometimes as sour-milk cheese. It is mentioned in the poetry of Imruʾ al-Qays; see his *Dīwān,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1958), 137. The Ghassānids, his maternal uncles, also had it. Honey was well known in the Arabian Peninsula, where places famed for its production included Ṭāʾif; see H. Lammens, *La Cité arabe de Ṭāif à la veille de l'hégire*, Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph 8, fasc. 4 (Beirut, 1922), 153–54, and M. Lecker, "Ṭāʾif," *EI*², X, 115–16.

[20] See Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab* (Beirut, 1997), I, 476; Murtaḍa al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿArūs,* ed. ʿA. Hārūn (Kuwait, 1970), VII, 462–64; and *An Arabic-English Lexicon,* ed. E. W. Lane (London, 1863), Book I, part 1, 334–35.

[21] See van Gelder, *God's Banquet,* 25.

[22] Ibid., 19–20. Both the Prophet and Ḥassān actually use the term *tharīd,* not *tharīda*. For Ḥassān, the choice may reflect metrical necessity; but the reading also brings to mind the great-grandfather of the Prophet, Hāshim, who is credited in the sources with introducing *tharīd*—simply bread dipped in some broth—to Mecca. Over the following century, *tharīda* was developed into the choice dish described above. For Hāshim and the *tharīd,* see the English version of the *Sīra* of Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muhammad,* trans. A. Guillaume (1955; reprint, Karachi, 1990), 58. For a fairly detailed treatment of *tharīd*/*tharīda*, see Jawād ʿAli, *al-Mufaṣṣal fi Tārīkh al-ʿArab qabl al-Islam*, VII, 577–78.

[23] See *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche jacobite d'Antioche (1166–1199),* ed. and trans. J. B. Chabot (Paris, 1909), II, 246–47, discussed in *BASIC* I.2, 748–49.

The same Syriac passage also mentions camel meat,[24] which the Arab pastoralists often ate in the Peninsula. Camel meat was forbidden to the Jews by the dietary laws prescribed in Deuteronomy (14:7), but not to Christians. The reference to it in the Syriac passage clearly suggests that it was offered to Patriarch Ephraim for a special reason, with the full knowledge on the part of the Ghassānid king that the patriarch would not partake of it. The Syriac passage reveals the tripartite ethnic division in Oriens. The Semites of the region were divided into Jews, who could not eat camel meat, and the Arabs and Arameans, who could but probably did not; the third group, the members of the Graeco-Roman establishment, would not, but their refusal was not based in any religious sanction or dietary law. The Ghassānid Arabs in the limitrophe provided a kind of dietary bridge between the Graeco-Roman establishment and the Arabs of the Peninsula.

In addition to sheep and cows, goats roamed the Ghassānid countryside and formed part of the livestock that they raised, attested in the poetry composed on them.[25] The meats of these various animals were either boiled, as clearly implied in the Syriac passage, or broiled, as indicated by Arabic verb *shiwā'*, used by the poets.[26]

The Ghassānids supplemented the meats provided by sheep, cattle, goats, and camels with the game they bagged when they hunted. The limitrophe was contiguous with the steppe land and deserts of North Arabia, where game was plentiful. And, as has been discussed in Chapter 13, the hunt was one of the favorite Ghassānid sports, pursued especially by the aristocracy. Of the many varieties of game they succeeded in capturing, the gazelle, a type of antelope, was among the choicest.

A delicacy not explicitly linked to the Ghassānids is *al-maḍīra,* a "stew of meat, cooked in sour milk."[27] It is associated with Muʿāwiya, the founder of the Umayyad dynasty, and is sometimes called *maḍīrat Muʿāwiya*.[28] It is possible that Muʿāwiya encountered this delicacy in the capital of the Ghassānids, Jābiya, where he lived for two decades as the governor of Oriens before he became caliph in 661. *Maḍīra* seems to have been a development or variation of the *tharīda,* associated with the Ghassānids.

[24] Discussed in *BASIC* I.2, 752–53.

[25] See Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 17, verse 3.

[26] See al-Nābigha al-Jaʿdi, *Dīwān,* ed. A. Rabbāḥ (Damascus, 1964), 37, verse 17; this verse also characterizes the Ghassānids as *Āl-Jafna*.

[27] van Gelder, *God's Banquet,* p. 49; for a more detailed description, see Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon,* Book I, part 7, 2720, and G. Yver, "al-Maḍīra," *EI*², V, 1010. This dish attained celebrity by being the subject of a *maqāma* (a literary séance) by the brilliant Abbasid belle-lettrist al-Hamaḏānī. For the translation of this *maqāma* into German, French, Italian, and English, see van Gelder's bibliography.

[28] The reference appears in the section titled "Shaykh al-Maḍīra," on the Companion of the Prophet Abū Hurayra, in ʿAbd al-Malik al-Thaʿālibi, *Thimār al-Qulūb,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1965), 112. It is also associated with Muʿāwiya by al-Hamaḏānī; see his *Maqāmat,* ed. M. ʿAbduh (Beirut, 1983), 101.

IV. Fruits

Though vegetables and legumes are not mentioned in the sources on the Ghassānids, they must have been consumed. But fruits are mentioned, especially apples and grapes. The fame of the first reached even al-Andalus, where one of the region's major poets, Ibn Khafāja, speaks of the apples of Lebanon.[29] Grapes were more important, however, since their juice produced wine—in Arabic, "the daughter of the grape"—a beverage that played an important role in the social life of the Ghassānids and is well documented in contemporary poetry. Moreover, it was hallowed as a beverage of Christian association (as discussed in the following chapter). Its dried form—the *zabīb,* the raisin or currant—must also have been known and eaten by the Ghassānids.[30] And they must also have eaten mulberries, especially after the introduction of the silkworm and the rise of the silk industry in Oriens during the reign of Justinian. To these may certainly be added dates. The date palm was almost the "national tree" of the Arabs, remembered in pre-Islamic poetry. The Arabs depended on dates for their staple food, just as they depended on milk for their beverage.[31]

Another fruit for which the region was known was the fig. The extant sources have not preserved references to its appearance on the Ghassānid table, but indirect reference to it and to olives has survived in the Koran (95:1–3). Fruits such as figs, olives, and grapes were not grown in Mecca or its region, which the Koran (14:37) describes as "a valley devoid of plantation or vegetation." This was true of most of Ḥijāz, with the exception of Ṭā'if and the Jewish oases. Thus Oriens, with its luxuriant orchards, had the edge over Ḥijāz in terms of crop production. The Arabs to whom the Koran was addressed, including the Prophet Muḥammad, must have become acquainted with such fruits in the southern part of Oriens, which their caravans reached.[32] Similarly, Ḥassān, the poet laureate of the Prophet, tasted the apples of Oriens when he used to come from Yathrib/Medina in Ḥijāz and visit his relatives, the Ghassānids, as their panegyrist.[33]

[29] For Ibn Khafāja's verse that mentions the apples of Lebanon, see *Dīwān* (Beirut, 1961), 267, verse 5. Apples are also mentioned by Ḥassān in a well-known poem whose first part treats the pre-Islamic Ghassānids in Oriens; see *Dīwān,* I, 17, verse 7.

[30] On *zabīb*, see G. J. H. van Gelder, "Zabīb," *EI*², XI, 369–70.

[31] Even when they reached al-Andalus, Spain, the Arabs remained nostalgic for dates and the date palm. The Umayyad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Dākhil (d. 788), who reconquered Spain for the Umayyads after the dynasty fell in the Muslim Orient, remembered the date palm in a touching quatrain of verses; see R. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (1907; reprint, London, 1969), 418.

[32] See the appendix, "Paradise in the Koran."

[33] The contrast between the arid and relatively infertile Arabian Peninsula, including Ḥijāz, and the fertile regions of Oriens, such as the Golan, Bāshān, and Auranitis, where the Ghassānids were partly settled and where Ḥassān used to visit them, is nowhere more poignantly stated than in a triplet in which he refers to Ḥijāz as the "nursling of hunger and misery." See Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 426, verse 2.

V. Spices

Although food spices are not mentioned in the extant sources on the Ghassānid diet, they must have been used. After all, spices were carried to the ancient and Byzantine worlds by Arabian caravans, which the Ghassānids protected when they reached their termini in Gaza and Bostra. Indirect evidence on spices at the Ghassānid table may be sought in the Koran, where there are descriptions of the food of the elite, of those in paradise, including ginger, *zanjabīl,* and camphor, *kāfūr.*[34] The natural presumption is that these were spices known to the Meccans whom the Koran addresses. The use of spices would have been common in the Peninsula, but a sophisticated use of them in meals and banquets probably came from Ghassānland in Oriens. The Prophet Muḥammad is said in the sources to have accompanied his uncle Abū Ṭālib on the latter's journeys to Oriens as a caravaneer.[35] So it is possible that some Meccans tasted Ghassānid spiced food in Oriens. Two hadith of the Prophet support Meccan acquaintance with Ghassānid food. In addition to the hadith on his wife ʿĀʾisha mentioned above, in which he likens her to the *tharīda* of Ghassān, in another the Prophet tells his followers that Yawm ʿĀshūrāʾ, a Muslim feast day, is better for them than the Christian Yawm al-Sabāsib, Palm Sunday, mentioned by al-Nābigha in his most famous ode on the Ghassānids.[36] The celebration of Palm Sunday in Mecca or Medina is most likely to have been introduced by the Ghassānids, devout observers and propagators of Monophysite Christianity. The Prophet's relations with them were quite close, and it is likely that in Ghassānland he witnessed the celebration and the banquets associated with Palm Sunday.

VI. Fasting

To understand the Ghassānids' relationship to food, it is necessary also to understand the place of fasting in their lives. The Ghassānids wrote an important chapter in the history of monasticism in Oriens, which has been elucidated in great detail in the preceding volume of this series. As monasticism institutionalized the earlier phase of Christian asceticism, which involved fasting and abstinence, it is useful after discussing Ghassānid food to sketch briefly this other side of their relationship to food.

BASIC II.1 has explained the relationship of the Ghassānids to monasticism as Arabs, as Monophysites, and as *foederati* of Byzantium, examining how each of these dimensions of their identity contributed to their strong interest in the ascetic life.[37] A brief restatement follows.

[34] See the appendix, "Paradise in the Koran."
[35] See Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muhammad,* 79.
[36] Al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 47, verse 25. On this hadith, see Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab,* III, 235.
[37] Ibid., 164–212, especially 171–76.

1. As Arabs with whom the desert was always associated, the Ghassānids welcomed and admired the anchorites and eremites who had chosen to live in the deserts of the region.

2. As Monophysites whose doctrinal persuasion emphasized Christ's *divine* nature, the Ghassānids were naturally interested in the expression of that divinity, one dimension of which was the renunciation of the world illustrated by his forty-day fast. Asceticism as *imitatio Christi* became a Christian ideal, especially for the Monophysites.

3. As *foederati,* the Ghassānids guarded the Byzantine frontier in Oriens against the Persians, the Lakhmids, and the pastoralists of the Peninsula, fighting as soldiers of the Cross. Near their military stations along the frontier, the *maslaḥa*s and *ḥīra*s, stood many a cell of the eremites and anchorites and possibly some monasteries. Hence a strong bond formed between the *foederati,* athletes of the body, and the monks, athletes of the spirit. Indeed, as mentioned above in Chapter 2, after the battle of Chalcis in A.D. 554, a number of the Ghassānid warriors decided to stay with St. Symeon the Younger, who, they believed, had aided in their victory.

It was, therefore, not surprising that the Arab attachment to asceticism and fasting impressed Aḥūdemmeh, a Monophysite bishop who was spreading the faith among the Arabs in Persian Mesopotamia. His *Life* contains the following revealing paragraph on the Arabs:

> And not only did they give their donations to the churches, the monasteries, the poor, and the strangers, but they loved *fasting* and the *ascetic life* more than any other Christians, and so much so that they started the holy fast of the Forty Days (Lent) one week before all the other Christians. Many individuals among them never tasted bread throughout the whole period of the fast, and this was true not only of the men but also of numerous women. They were fired by zeal for the orthodox faith, and each time the holy church was persecuted, that is, when it was pursued by its enemies, (the Arabs) gave their necks (suffered martyrdom) for the church of Christ, particularly the chosen and numerous groups among them, namely the ʿAquoulayê, the Tanoukhâyê and the Ṭouʿāyê.[38]

The Arab federates of Byzantium in Oriens were not behind those of Persia in their attachment to monasticism and the ascetic life. The Tanūkhids of the fourth century and the Salīḥids of the fifth were both devoted to monasticism, and many monasteries were associated with their names.[39] One of their kings, the

[38] PO 3 (Paris, 1909), 28–29; the italics are mine.

[39] On the Tanūkhids, see *BAFOC,* 418–35, 550–52; on the Salīḥids, see *BAFIC,* 289–301.

Salīḥid Dāwūd, actually renounced his kingship, became a monk, and gave his name to a well-known monastery in Oriens, Dayr Dāwūd.[40] But the Ghassānids of the sixth century were the Arab federates whose association with monasticism and the ascetic life was the most impressive. As often noted in this volume, they helped revive the Monophysite church, dominated the Provincia Arabia at a time when it contained at least 137 Monophysite monasteries, and felt an especially strong tie to the Holy Land, to which their camps were adjacent and which they protected.

Given this background, it is certain that fasting was observed regularly and strictly by the Ghassānids, although the sources are silent on this aspect of their life. No *Typika* for Monophysite or Ghassānid monasteries in Oriens have survived; and the work that might have provided this information—namely, *Akhbār Mulūk Ghassān*—is not extant. However, it is certain that the Ghassānids, as devoted Christians, observed the many fasts of the liturgical year—especially the Great Lent, the sole fasting period mentioned in the extant poetry composed for the Ghassānids by al-Nābigha and Ḥassān.[41] The reference in one of al-Nābigha's poems to Palm Sunday clearly and explicitly documents the celebration by the Ghassānids of the feast, and the Ghassānids would have observed the Holy Week fast until the following Easter Sunday. Easter itself is also explicitly mentioned by Ḥassān, in a verse in which he writes "Easter was approaching" and describes the Ghassānid maidens stringing coral as they were preparing the Easter wreaths.[42] Surely this action was set at some time during the *Tessarakoste,* the Great Lent, which they observed.

Appendix

Paradise in the Koran

Unlike the Hebrew Bible of the Jews and the New Testament of the Christians, the Koran contains a detailed description of paradise, focused on the righteous who live in it: their food, their drink, and the appointments of their abode. The origins of the description of paradise in Islam's Holy Book are not entirely clear. Persian and Judaeo-Christian provenances have been suggested,[1] but closer to the Meccans as a possible source of inspiration than either were certain urban centers in West Arabia, such as Najrān and Ṭāʾif, both fertile oases where a relatively high degree of urban life developed. Ṭāʾif is referred to in Koran 34:31 as one of the two cities, *al-qaryatayn,* the other being Mecca. Henri Lammens, who wrote perceptively on

[40] On Dāwūd, see *BAFIC,* 257–62. The Salīḥids owed to monks their conversion to Christianity; see 253–54.

[41] Discussed in Chapter 14, "Ghassānid Banquets," below.

[42] Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 255, verse 6.

[1] For the views of Hubert Grimme and Tor Andrae on the Persian and the Judaeo-Christian provenance of the Islamic Koranic paradise, see L. Gardet, "Djanna," *EI*², II, 447–52, especially 448.

Ṭāʾif, was the first to suggest a connection between it and the Koranic paradise.[2] Ṭāʾif could not compete, however, with the more advanced urban life that obtained in Byzantine Oriens by the Ghassānids, with whom the Meccans had close relations.[3] It is therefore possible that Ghassānid banquets may have been to some degree an inspiration for the Koranic paradise.

The description of Paradise in the Koran that appears in various suras may be summarized as follows.[4]

(1) The righteous occupants recline on raised, lofty thrones, like couches, *surur,* which have cushions, called *arāʾik* and *namāriq;* (2) under the couches are carpets, called *zarābi;* (3) their clothes are of fine green silk and silk brocade, *dībāja, sundus, istabraq;* (4) they dine on fruits; (5) their beverages are mixed with ginger and camphor; (6) they drink from gold and silver cups and eat from golden plates; (7) the women are pure and wear bracelets of gold and silver; (8) young children, *wildān,* serve them; (9) and under them flow streams of water.

The royal banquets of the Ghassānids could easily match this description of the Koranic paradisal scene, though no detailed and accurate account of a Ghassānid banquet has survived in the extant primary sources. However, judging by their affluence and prosperity in Oriens, it can easily be concluded that their banquets must have contained all or most of these constituents of the Koranic paradisal scene. The survival of one such description in the source *al-Aghānī,* as reported by the Ghassānid poet laureate, Ḥassān, is detailed enough to include many of these elements, when due allowance is made for the difference between a heavenly and a terrestrial paradisal scene.[5] Some of the commonalities between the Koranic version of paradise and the Arabic sources, verse and prose, on the Ghassānid banquets may now be listed, keyed to the list above.[6]

[2] See H. Lammens, *La Cité arabe de Ṭāif à la veille de l'hégire*, Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph 8, fasc. 4 (Beirut, 1922), 139, 153; M. Lecker, "Ṭāʾif," *EI*², X, 115–16.

[3] The very close relationship between Mecca and Ghassān will be treated at length in the next volume of my series, *Byzantium and Islam in the Seventh Century.* I will simply note here that a whole clan in Mecca, Banū Āsad ibn ʿAbd al-ʿUzzā, were the *ḥalīf*s of Ghassān, their allies, and they included Muḥammad's wife Khadīja and her uncle Waraqa, whose importance in Muḥammad's life and mission cannot be forgotten or ignored; on the *ḥalīf*s, see the detailed discussion in Jawād ʿĀli, *al-Mufaṣṣal fi Tārikh al-ʿArab qabl al-Islam* (Beirut, 1970), IV, 370–88.

[4] The relevant verses have been collected together by L. Kinberg in "Paradise," in *The Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾan,* ed. J. D. McAuliffe (Leiden, 2000), IV, 12–20, and before her by Gardet in "Djanna," 447.

[5] For the prose account of Ḥassān, see Abū al-Faraj Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (Beirut, 1959), XVII, 105–6; translated into English by R. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (1907; reprint, London, 1969), 53. A fragment of Ḥassān's poetry that describes the scene in a tavern in Ghassānid Oriens refers *inter alia* to three elements of paradise mentioned in the Koran: *numruq* (singular of *namāriq*), *zarābi,* and *dībāja;* see *al-Aghānī,* IV, 172. The appointments of the Ghassānid royal courts must have been far more elaborate and luxurious than those of a modest tavern in Oriens.

[6] For the various elements, see Chapters 4, 5, and 14.

1. Throne-like couches are common to both: *surur* (plural of *sarīr*) are used.

3. The clothes are strikingly similar, green in color and made of fine silk and brocade, *dībāj.*

4. Though fruits are not mentioned in the prose accounts of Ghassānid banquets, apples are mentioned in Ḥassān, and the region of Oriens was known for its grapes and apples; so they undoubtedly would have been served.

5. Drinks are provided, especially the best wines, which produce no ill effects.

6. Vessels and plates of gold and silver are common to both.

8. The banqueters are served by young children, the *walāʾid* referred to by al-Nābigha and Ḥassān, who present the symposiasts with attractive gifts.

9. Even the reference to gardens under which rivers flow in paradise, as described in the Koran, may be related to Ghassānland, with its streams in the Golan and around Damascus. These waters would have attracted the attention of the Meccans, whose city was arid and infertile, as stated in the Koran itself; Ḥijāz similarly was an arid region without rivers.[7] Meccans may have been aware of the description in Genesis (2:10–14) of the four rivers of the Garden of Eden, but they were certainly more familiar with the landscape of Ghassānland, which their caravans visited annually.[8]

The difficulties of drawing conclusions from this comparison of the Koranic text with the Arabic sources on the Ghassānids, both verse and prose, are obvious. The Ghassānid paradisal scene is a composite, featuring elements drawn from both secular and religious banquets. But this reflects the familiar problem of source survival, which the very close relationship that obtained between Ghassān and Mecca helps to negotiate. It is on this relationship that the comparison of the two sets of sources has rested.

[7] For Mecca as a "valley devoid of cultivation or vegetation," see Koran, 14:37; for Ḥijāz as the "nursling of hunger and misery," see *Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit,* ed. W. ʿArafāt, Gibb Memorial New Series 25 (London, 1971), I, 426, verse 2.

[8] A final element of comparison is less obvious, and thus has been relegated to this footnote. The Koran's description of *azwāj muṭahhara,* "pure consorts" for righteous men in paradise (2:25), brings to mind the *ajsād muṭahhara* of the Ghassānid kings described by al-Nābigha; see *Dīwān al-Nābigha al-Ḏubyānī,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1977), 101, verse 4. The same sentiment about the chaste Ghassānids is echoed in the phrase *ṭayyibun hujuzātuhum* in the poet's famous panegyric (47, verse 25). It is, however, striking that the same term—*muṭahhara,* "pure, purified"—is used of men at court and of women in paradise. It is possible that al-Nābigha found the Ghassānids' chastity particularly appealing because of the contrast with the Lakhmids, their rivals in Ḥīra whom he also eulogized; the Lakhmid court was associated (rightly or wrongly) with some sexual scandals, from which the Ghassānid court apparently was singularly free. Hence it is not difficult to argue from the chastity of Ghassānid men to that of their women. Moreover, in his prose panegyric on the Ghassānid kings, al-Nābigha explicitly referred to the chastity of Ghassānid wives and mothers (*al-Aghānī,* XV, 124, verses 9–10).

V

Drink

I. Water

Most of the Arabian Peninsula was and is arid, ensuring that access to water—the most important beverage in the life of the pre-Islamic peninsular Arabs—was of prime importance.[1] A body of water, *mā'* (plural *miyāh*), and the *marʿā,* "the pasture, grazing ground," essential for the Arab and his livestock, were considered *aḥmā',* "protected preserves," which belonged to a tribe or a group in Arabia and were jealously guarded by them.[2]

Water had other functions for the Arabs, beyond the strictly utilitarian; according to one view it was "like perfume, used in the rituals over the making of pacts and alliances."[3] In pre-Islamic times, water acquired a symbolic meaning in rituals of hospitality. When a stranger tasted the water of an Arab in his dwelling, he immediately acquired the status of a guest. In Arab ethos and mores, the guest becomes immune to harm or aggression, even if he is a prisoner of war.[4]

On the more mundane level of water as a staple beverage for *foederati* living mostly in the arid part of Oriens, the water they drank may have sometimes been flavored with fruit, as they lived not only in arid areas but also in those known for their fruits, such as grapes and figs. But the extent of this practice is not clear from the sources.[5]

[1] On beverages in general, see J. Sadan, "Mashrūbāt," *EI*², VI, 72–73. The article is relevant despite its focus on beverages in the Islamic period (some of which were survivals from the pre-Islamic period). On water, in particular, see E. Bräunlich, *Islamica,* ed. A. Fischer (Leipzig, 1925), I, 41–76, 288–343, 454–528.

[2] On *aḥmā'* (plural of *ḥimā*), see the discussion in *BASIC* II.1, 57–60.

[3] T. Fahd, "Mā'," *EI*², V, 860.

[4] This custom persisted well into later Islamic times. Its most celebrated example was the encounter during the Crusades between Saladin and the two Frankish chiefs, Guy de Lusignan, the king of Jerusalem, and Reginald of Châtillon, the prince of Kerak. After the Muslims' resounding victory of Ḥattin in A.D. 1187, the two fell captive to Saladin. The first, Guy, was spared after he drank water that Saladin himself had given him, thereby ensuring that he had his *amān,* "security" or "safety"; but Reginald was not, since the water he drank was not given him by Saladin. See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh* (Beirut, 1966), XI, 537.

[5] Flower-scented water (*mazahr*), and specifically rose-scented water (*mawarḍ*), was known to the

II. Milk

The second most important beverage of the peninsular Arabs was milk, particularly camel's milk. The peninsular Arab was sometimes rightly described as the parasite of the camel, the region's most important animal, and its milk was one of the blessings that the camel provided. Its nutritional value was appreciated, giving rise to many terms in Arabic that denote its properties and varieties. The basic word for it was *laban,* "milk," but later the distinction was made between sweet milk (*halīb*) and curdled milk (*laban*). Lactic products, especially cheese, were also produced. It is certain that the Ghassānids continued to drink milk when they emigrated from South Arabia and settled in Oriens in the limitrophe, a region not unlike certain parts of the Peninsula in its aridity.

III. Wine, "The Daughter of the Grape"

Wine was also an important beverage for the Arabs of the Peninsula. The grape was not native to Arabia;[6] it was imported thither and grew in a few oases such as Ṭāʾif in southern Ḥijāz and ʿAsīr in northern Yaman. Of all the neighboring regions known to the Arabs—Persian Mesopotamia, Byzantine Oriens, and Ḥimyarite Yaman—Oriens was the most celebrated for its wines. Wine thus had great appeal to the Arab *foederati* of Oriens, especially the Ghassānids, and the sources that refer to Ghassānid social life indicate that it became a principal beverage.[7] The paramountcy of Oriens as a wine-producing region is attested by Byzantine poetry, such as Flavius Corippus' panegyric on the accession of Justin II in A.D. 565. In Book III of *In Laudem Justini Augusti Minoris,* Corippus describes the imperial banquet in Constantinople and refers to the various places in Oriens famous for their wines:

> Meanwhile the happy emperor with his holy wife (85) had begun to partake of the blessed joys of the imperial table, the royal banquet and the sweet gifts of Bacchus, which wild Sarepta and Gaza had created, and which lovely

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Arabs. But the few extant sources on the social life of the Ghassānids do not mention them or such fruit-flavored water as lemonade, orangeade, tamarind water (made from the *tamr hindī,* or "Indian date"), and licorice drink (made from *sūs*).

[6] The term for wine, *khamr,* is a loanword from Syriac/Aramaic; see S. Fraenkel, *Die aramäischen Fremdwörter im Arabischen* (1886; reprint, Hildesheim, 1962), 160–61.

[7] The sources note Ghassānid partiality to the fine wines of Maqadd, a place that has not been precisely located in the Provincia Arabia; on the wine called *maqaddī,* see Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-Buldān* (Beirut, 1957), 165. These wines remained so popular in Umayyad times that the adjective *Maqadiyy* came to mean "(good) wine." But neither *Maqadd* nor *Maqaddiy* is attested in the extant poetry composed for the Ghassānids. The term's survival in Umayyad poetry and in later prose sources, identified as a Ghassānid wine, supports the attempt to recover from such documents material for the social life of the Ghassānids, by whom the Umayyads were deeply influenced; see *BASIC* II.1, 375–91, 403–4.

> Ascalon had given to her happy colonists; or what ancient Tyre and fertile Africa send, (90) and what Meroe, Memphis and bright Cyprus have: and what the ancient vines bear with their mature strength, which Ithacan Ulysses planted with his own hands, . . . (95) and the draughts that the farmer squeezed from the grapes of Methymna, fragrant, full of glassy Falernian. The ancient gifts of the Palestinian Lyaeus were mingled in, white with the colour of snow and light with bland taste. They poured dusky chrysattic wines into the yellow metal, (100) produced by nature without need of liquid honey, and blended in the gift of Garisaean Bacchus. Who will tell of all that the world brings forth for her rulers, all the provinces that are subject to the Roman Empire?[8]

The importance of Oriens as a wine-producing diocese is demonstrated by the eight toponyms in the passage: four are in Oriens (Sarepta, Gaza, Ascalon, and Tyre), and of those two (Gaza and Ascalon[9]) were in Palestine. Furthermore, the Roman god of wine, Bacchus/Lyaeus, was referred to as Palestinian. He was the patron of a Palestinian town, Bēth-Shān, or Skythopolis, in Palaestina Secunda. The Arabic sources on the Ghassānids provide a few additional names of places in Oriens that were famous for their wines.[10]

Byzantium itself, with its imperial banquets,[11] was another important influence in promoting wine drinking among the Ghassānids. Through their long tenure as *foederati,* the Ghassānids assimilated much of the Byzantine way of life. Wine was an important component of the imperial banquet, which the kings of Ghassān as *patricii* attended when they visited Constantinople.[12] Byzantine connoisseurship of wine was known among the Arabs and was recorded in their sources on wine.[13]

The Christianization of the Roman Empire in the fourth century gave a new impetus to the importance of wine in the consciousness of the newly Christianized Arab *foederati* and *Rhomaioi,* as bread and wine came to be spiritualized. Jesus'

[8] For the panegyric, see Corippus, *In Laudem Iustini Augusti Minoris,* ed. and trans. Av. Cameron (London, 1976), 104. See also the appendix "Garisaean Bacchus," below.

[9] On recent discoveries on wine production at Ascalon/Ashqelon, see P. Fabian and Y. Goren, "A Byzantine Warehouse and Anchorage South of Ashqelon," *ʿAtiqot* 42 (2001), 211–19.

[10] These include al-Kurūm (literally, "the vineyards") and al-Khawābi ("the wine casks"); see *BASIC* II.1, 240, 241.

[11] For Byzantine banquets, see Ph. Koukoules, *Byzantinon bios kai politismos* (Athens, 1948–57), V, 194–204, and M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge, 1986), passim (see index), especially 104–5.

[12] On these Ghassānid visits to Constantinople, see *BASIC* I.2, 736–40, 805–24.

[13] See Ibn al-Muʿtazz, *Kitāb Fuṣūl al-Tamāthīl fi Tabāshīr al-Surūr,* ed. G. Qanāziʿ and F. Abū-Khadra (Damascus, 1989), 117–18.

first miracle was the conversion of water into wine at Cana, and wine figured prominently at the Last Supper. Consequently, wine became a crucial element in the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist, which involved its transubstantiation into the blood of Christ.[14] Thus the vine, the "mother of the grape," and the vineyard also have Christian associations.[15]

Such then was the ambience in which the Ghassānids flourished, in which drinking wine was popular and widespread. Wine's strong presence among the Ghassānids can be traced in Ghassānid social life: at home, in the tavern, at fairs, and at royal banquets. The present study of wine in Ghassānid society in Oriens supplements what is known in the Byzantine sources on wine in the diocese and *inter alia* it provides a list of new locations that were celebrated for their wines in Oriens. In the strictly literary Arab context, it adds a new name to those pre-Islamic poets such as al-Aʿshā and ʿAdī ibn Zayd who were known for their lyrics on wine—namely, Ḥassān, who composed verses inspired by the Byzantine scene in Oriens. This study also clarifies the role of wine in the social life of the Umayyads, who succeeded the Ghassānids as the new masters of Oriens.[16]

Wine in the *Dīwān* of Ḥassān

Ḥassān was the principal poet who frequented the court of the Ghassānids.[17] He was in effect their poet laureate and was related to them in the larger context of affiliation with the group Azd. Though more of his poetry has survived on their social life than that of the other poets, it is only a fraction of what he must have composed on the Ghassānids.[18] His verses that treat their social life and wine in particular may be divided into two groups: (1) clusters of verses embedded in the structures of longer poems on more general themes and (2) individual verses that appear in various contexts. He may have composed poems exclusively devoted to wine (Bacchic poetry); if so, they, like many of his poems on the Ghassānids, have not survived. Since he also became later the virtual poet laureate of the Prophet Muḥammad, the later Muslim tradition was naturally more interested in preserving his poems on Islam and the Prophet.[19] Historians of Arabic poetry consider his contemporaries ʿAdī ibn Zayd, the urban poet of Ḥīra, and al-Aʿshā, who belonged

[14] See Luke 22:17–20. The Arabs who later accepted Islam viewed wine as a beverage to be avoided, since the Koran, after initial toleration, strictly prohibited it (5:92).

[15] In biblical exegesis, the vineyard became a metaphor for the Christian Church, as Jesus was identified with the vine; see John 15:1, 5.

[16] On the strong Ghassānid presence in the Umayyad state, see *BASIC* II.1, 375–91, 403–4.

[17] See Abū al-Faraj Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (Beirut, 1958), XV, 124, 132.

[18] See *BASIC* II.1, 287–91.

[19] See Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī,* XV, 130, where a Muslim takes exception to Ḥassān's eulogizing the Ghassānids, whom he considered "infidels," *kafara*. The account may be apocryphal, but it illustrates attitudes in the new world in which Ḥassān found himself.

to the group Bakr in eastern Arabia, the pre-Islamic poets of wine;[20] but Ḥassān was certainly a third. He was a spiritual ancestor of the great Umayyad wine poet al-Akhṭal, who, like Ḥassān, was Christian and was inspired by the wines and vineyards of the same region, Bilād al-Shām, formerly Byzantine Oriens.[21]

Wine apparently meant much to Ḥassān, and seems to have released his inhibitions and fired his imagination. Though much of his poetry has been irretrievably lost, enough has survived to make him the leading wine lyricist of the Ghassānids, and his wine lyrics give an intimate glimpse of social life in Ghassānland. Ḥassān's verse reveals a wide range of references to various aspects of wine and its consumption: the varieties of wine; its containers, vats and casks; vineyards; the tavern, the *ḥānūt* or the *ḥāna;* the *sāqī,* the server of wine; the boon companion; the songstress; the praise of wine; the towns in Oriens whence the wine was exported; and the foreign lexicon of his verse on wine.

The Clusters

1. In Poem 1, verses 6–10 are an elaborate simile involving a lady-love named Shaʿthā', whose phantom inspires the comparison.[22]

Verse 6 refers to the wine as *khabīʾa,*[23] "hidden," for a long time and thus desirable (vintage). Its provenance is Capitolias, for which the Semitic Arabic/Aramaic term Bayt Rās is used (also found in a verse by al-Nābigha, discussed below). Reference is made to honey and water with which wine was mixed.

Wine is praised as the best of all beverages, *al-ashribāt;* wine is also *al-rāḥ,* presumably a beverage that induces comfort. Its effects on the one who drinks it sometimes invite criticism; Ḥassān playfully shifts responsibility for whatever he is accused of from himself to the wine. But in verse 10 he returns to its praise; it makes its devotees feel royal as kings and invincible as lions.[24]

2. Poem 13 is the well-known ode in which Ḥassān praised the Ghassānids after their demise, as a *laudator temporis acti*.[25] It has ten verses on wine: a quartet

[20] See A. Wensinsky and J. E. Bencheikh, "Khamr" and "Khamriyya," *EI*², IV, 994–98, 998–1009 respectively.

[21] Al-Akhṭal could not acknowledge Ḥassān's influence on him, since Ḥassān was one of the *Anṣār,* the Helpers of Medina, who were opposed to his patron, the Umayyad ʿAbd al-Malik; indeed, al-Akhṭal lampooned the Anṣār out of loyalty to his patron. See *Shiʿr al-Akhṭal,* ed. A. Sālhāni (Beirut, 1969), 314; in this sextet against the Anṣār, verse 6 specifically ridiculed Ḥassān.

[22] *Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit,* ed. W. ʿArafāt, Gibb Memorial New Series 25 (London, 1971), I, 17.

[23] A more meaningful term than *sabīʾa*. On both terms, see Fraenkel, *Die aramäischen Fremdwörter,* 158–59, 169.

[24] That the first ten verses of this poem are Ghassānid is made amply clear by the Ghassānid toponyms mentioned in the first verse. The second part of the poem, on the conquest of Mecca in A.D. 630, is strictly Islamic. Hence, in view of the first part's focus on wine, prohibited by Islam, critics are divided on whether the parts are in fact two independent poems; see Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* II, 5.

[25] Ibid., I, 74–75.

(13–14, 16–17), a quintet (21–25), and a single verse, the last of the poem (33). So, one-third of the poem is on wine. Four of these verses are set at the Ghassānid court, while five verses describe the wine he drank in a tavern, *ḥānūt*.[26]

Verse 13 refers to the Ghassānid custom of offering wine mixed with water. The toponym al-Barīṣ appears in this verse, and possibly Barada, the river of Damascus (the Abana of the Bible).[27] Barada has also been read not as a proper noun but as ice, *bardan*.

Significantly, in verse 14 wine is considered a *diryāq,* an antidote, that counteracts poison or disease. Here, the reference is to the medicinal use of wine; this is one of the earliest appearances of the Greek loanword θηριακή in Arabic.[28]

In verse 16 Ḥassān describes his journey from the area of Barīṣ to his Ghassānid host, with whom he reclines in a *manzil,* either a tavern or a banquet hall, surrounded by pleasant companions. So here is a reference to a symposium of some sort.

Verse 17 provides more detail on the drinking party: there was a songstress, the *musmiʿa,* who both sang and played an instrument, as well as a *nājūd,*[29] a goblet or the beaker of wine. *Kurūm* in this verse may be either a toponym or a common noun, meaning "vineyards."

In the quintet on wine in the tavern, Ḥassān refers to wine as *khamr,* in the *ḥānūt;* it is pure and *ṣahbāʾ,* reddish, in color. Wine is brought to him in a cup (*kaʾs*) by a server who is wearing either an earring or a girdle around the waist, *mutanaṭṭifun*.

In verse 23, he asks the server to give him wine that has not been mixed with water.

In verse 24, he goes on to say that the two varieties of wine, mixed and pure, have been well pressed but asks the server to give him a glass, *zujāja,*[30] full of the wine that is better at loosening his joints.[31]

[26] A Syriac/Aramaic term; see Fraenkel, *Die aramäischen Fremdwörter,* 172.

[27] Cf. Richard Lovelace's reference to a river in a similar context in "To Althea, from Prison" (1649): "When flowing cups run swiftly round / with no allaying Thames."

[28] The term is attested again in Ḥassān as *diryāqa;* see *Dīwān,* I, 106, verse 13. The Greek medical term thus entered Arabic in pre-Islamic times, either through Syriac in Bilād al-Shām or through Aramaic in Mesopotamia, since the poet al-Aʿṣhā of Bakr uses it, probably transliterated directly from Greek, at the medical school of Jundīshāpūr in Sasanid territory. The entire corpus of Greek medical literature was translated into Arabic in Baghdad and Samarra in Abbasid times; see the present writer in "Islam and Byzantium in the IXth Century: The Baghdad-Constantinople Dialogue," in *Cultural Contacts in Building a Universal Civilisation: Islamic Contributions,* ed. E. Ihsanoğlu (Istanbul, 2005), 139–58.

[29] Another Syriac/Aramaic term in Ḥassān's lexicon of wine; see Fraenkel, *Die aramäischen Fremdwörter,* 167.

[30] A Syriac/Aramaic term; ibid., 64.

[31] Ḥassān's partiality for the variety of wine that loosens his joints is repeated in *Dīwān,* I, 106,

In verse 25, he further describes the glass he desires—one in which the wine "dances" in its bottom with whatever had been thrown into it, such as saffron, to enhance its taste.

In the last verse (33) of this poem Ḥassān says that he drank wine with his Ghassānid host in the morning (*bākartu*) in a glass cup, *zujāja,* and that the wine came from the best of vineyards, where the vines were possibly trellised, *ahdal*.

3. Poem 18 is a septet in which the poet describes a *convivium* that he attended in Ḥijāz as a guest of a certain Ṣāliḥ ibn ʿIlāṭ from the group Sulaym.[32]

Verse 5 describes the wine party, composed of attractive ladies, fair complexioned and luxuriating in *riyāṭ* (plural of *rayṭa*), literally a precious robe of one piece.[33]

Verse 6 describes boon companions, *nadāma,* also fair-complexioned and generous.

Verse 7 describes the wine as *kumayt;* it was vintage wine that had been kept in its cask for a long time (*ʿuttiqat*) and it came from the country of the Nabataeans—in Byzantine terms, the Provincia Arabia. It is described as *sulāfa,* that is, "the best and purest."

In verse 8 the poet lauds the host, Ṣāliḥ ibn ʿIlāṭ,[34] for spending money to buy good wine.

Verse 9 returns to the songstresses (*qiyān*) who remained around him, playing on their instruments (*ʿāzifāt*).

Verse 10 describes these songstresses circling to offer the cup (*kaʾs*) of wine to the drinking party (*sharb*); carpets, *anmāṭ* (plural of *namaṭ*), covered the floor of the room.

Finally, in verse 11, the host gives these songstresses away to Ḥassān and his boon companions.

It is possible that the Ghassānids had similar *convivia,* models for those in Arabian Ḥijāz.

4. Poem 23 is an octet that describes a drinking party in a tavern, *ḥānūt*.[35]

Verse 8 describes the wine as *ṣahbāʾ,* "reddish." Its provenance is Bayt Rās (Capitolias), and it was old wine that had been left for a long time, *ʿuttiqat,* in sealed casks (*khitām*).

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verse 13. The relaxation induced by wine recalls the epithet Lyaeus, Greek Λυαῖος, sometimes used of the Greek god of wine, Dionysus, in Greek and Latin poetry—so Horace describes Teucer's temples as *uda Lyaeo,* "moist with wine"; see *Odes,* I.vii.22.

[32] Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 91, verses 5–11.

[33] These presumably were the songstresses/hostesses at the *convivium,* referred to again in verses 10 and 11.

[34] On Ṣāliḥ ibn ʿIlāṭ, see Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* II, 87.

[35] Ibid., I, 106–7, verses 8–15.

Verse 9 refers to the tavern where the wine had been kept year after year, *ʿuttiqat*.

Verse 10 refers to the custom of drinking wine two ways: sometimes undiluted and sometimes mixed with other beverages. The ambiance is also described; the poet drinks in marble houses, *buyūt al-rukhām,* in which wine-bibbers could hear singing.

Verse 11 describes wine's effect on the body.

Verse 12 refers to the cup, *kaʾs;* if an old man drank from it five times, he would feel like a young man.

Verse 13 mentions the wine's provenance from Baysān, Bēth-Shān (Skythopolis), the city of Dionysus himself, known for its vines and wines. Furthermore, the poet chose it for its medicinal value as an antidote, *diryāqa*—its good effect on his bones.[36]

Verses 14 and 15 return to the tavern. The waiter is described as a blond who dons a *burnus* (a robe) and a long hat (*qalansuwa*), and whose belt is tightly tied around his waist. He is also attentive to the needs of the guests, and quick to serve them wine. He is the *sāqi,* a familiar figure in later Islamic wine lyrics.

5. Poem 40 is also ascribed to the Umayyad poet al-Akhṭal, who is more likely than Ḥassān to be its author. The custom of drinking wine in the morning (*al-sabūḥ*) is referred to in verses 3 and 5.[37]

6. Poem 41 is a triplet in which the poet advises one who, as a result of excessive drinking, is suffering from a headache.[38] He facetiously tells him to drink again, in view of the fact that transience is the fate of every good thing.

7. Poem 150 is a triplet embedded in a poem, definitely pre-Islamic, in which the poet takes pride in his clan and in himself.[39]

Verse 9 relates how he went to the tavern for his morning drink (*ṣabūḥ*), in order to quaff mixed wine.

Verse 10 describes the morning spent in the tavern together with boon companions (*nadmān*): reclining on a pillow (*mirfaqa*), having fun (*lahw*), listening to music and song (*ismāʿ*).

Verse 11 declares that the waiter would pour him wine from a full wineskin.

8. Poem 154 is a short poem describing his journey in Ḥijāz, which contains a couplet on wine.[40]

The first line of the couplet (verse 7) refers to the *ziq* (the wineskin), the *nutfa*

[36] Dionysus, Bacchus, was the patron of Baysān/Bēth-shān, one of the cities of the Decapolis. For the term *diryāq*/*diryāqa* in the poetry of Ḥassān, see note 28, above.

[37] Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 139, verses 1–7.

[38] Ibid., 141, verses 1–3.

[39] Ibid., 302–3, verses 9–11.

[40] Ibid., 310, verses 7–8.

(the small quantity of wine that remained in it), and the *qaʿb* (another term for cup), all of which were ready for the poet.

The more significant second line says that he approached the wine in the *ziq;* the verb used is *shanantuha,* which means either that he poured the wine and drank it straight or that he mixed it with water before drinking it. All these terms are of interest for the lexicon of wine lyrics in this pre-Islamic period.

Ḥassān also refers to wine as *qahwa,* the term also used in later Islamic times for wine, and much later for coffee. The term is fairly rare in pre-Islamic poetry.[41] It raises questions of whether coffee was really known to the Arabs in pre-Islamic times, and whether the term is the Ethiopic *kaffa* or—less likely—an Arabic word, which lexicographers relate to the verb *qahā*.

9. Poem 156 is a sextet, an independent wine lyric.[42] According to the scholiast, the occasion was an encounter with the poet Aʿshā, who accused Ḥassān of being stingy, whereupon Ḥassān bought all the wine in the tavern and emptied it on the floor.[43] The sextet describes in detail the drinking party, the *sharb,* at the tavern.

Verse 1 introduces the drinking party at the tavern and lauds their generosity.

Verse 2 describes the effect of wine on Ḥassān and his group; when they drank they felt like kings and sons of kings,[44] a sentiment he had expressed before (in Poem 1, verse 10). He refers to the *ṣabūḥ,* the morning drink, in a context of generosity.

Verse 3 refers to himself and his group, and to the scent of musk and saffron in the tavern.

Verse 4 mentions the appointments and furniture of the tavern: on its carpets (*zarābi*) were to be found shoes (*niʿāl*), slippers (*qassūb*), and expensive cloth (*rayṭ*).[45]

In verse 5, he amusingly describes the party that had drunk to satiety and fallen asleep, as if they had died on the field of Yawm Ḥalīma, the famous Ghassānid victory over the Lakhmids.[46] But he hastens to say that those who approach them on the morrow and consort with them will praise their camaraderie.

[41] The attestation of the term *qahwa* in Arabic pre-Islamic poetry has passed unnoticed in the literature on coffee; see C. van Arendonk, "Ḳahwa," *EI*², IV, 449. The term appears in other pre-Islamic poets such as Aʿshā and Muraqqish al-Aṣghar.

[42] Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 312–13, verses 1–6.

[43] The tavern at which the two poets met was either in Oriens or in Iraq, which al-Aʿshā used to visit more frequently because it was closer to the homeland of his group, Bakr.

[44] Perhaps an echo of his connection with the royal Ghassānid house, who were his relatives through their affiliation with the Azd group, to which Ḥassān belonged.

[45] The *rayṭ* is described as *muʿaddad,* having *aʿḍud,* which means "upper arms." The epithet is variously explained by the lexicographers, not very satisfactorily. See *An Arabic-English Lexicon,* ed. E. W. Lane (London, 1874), Book I, part 5, 2073.

[46] Another echo of the Ghassānid connections of Ḥassān.

Verse 6 describes the waiter, who wore an earring, *naṭaf,* and carried a *dībaja,*[47] handkerchief—evidence of the tavern keeper's or owner's concern that the waiter be correctly attired.

10. This last cluster, in Poem 266, consists of two couplets; each, according to Ibn ʿĀsākir, was related to the Ghassānid context.[48] Jabala, the last Ghassānid king, asks Ḥassān to vilify wine so that he might be weaned from his addiction to it. So, Ḥassān composes a couplet in which he inveighs against its vices. He says it would be priceless were it not for three evils consequent on inebriation. Then Jabala asks him to compose verses in praise of wine. Ḥassān comes to its defense, saying that it chases away cares and griefs.

If accurate, this dialogue between Ḥassān and the last Ghassānid king could provide some evidence for the authenticity of the picture of Jabala given in the Arabic sources, as one fond of wine, and of his glittering court in which wine and songstresses figure.

The Individual Verses

Individual verses in Ḥassān's *Dīwān* are also informative on wine in Ghassānland and on the circles in which the poet moved. The following data may be gleaned from these verses.

1. That good wine is old wine is expressed in a verse in which the terms *ʿatīq* and *mudām* appear;[49] the latter, after being attributively used, became a substantive for wine.

2. Some names of the various wines—*ūqār, sulāf,* and *khurtūm*[50]—may be added to the legion known from Islamic times.

3. Wine may be drunk pure and straight, *ṣirf,* or mixed with other liquids, *mizāj.*[51] Though their employment in the verse is metaphorical, the two terms are a useful addition to the Arabic lexicon of wine in pre-Islamic times.

4. Containers—*akwāb* and *akwās* (plurals of *kūb* and *kaʾs,* respectively)—are used at the Ghassānid court, where mixed wine was drunk.[52] The plural *akwās* is unusual, and the verse suggests that in the Ghassānid *symposion* the cups were carried around (*ṭīfa fīhimū*) by a *sāqi,* the serving waiter.

[47] Explained in this context as a *mandīl/mindīl;* Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* II, 229. *Dībāj* usually means "silk brocade," a Persian loanword in Arabic already used in pre-Islamic times. In this context it is explained as a kerchief, a *mandīl/mindīl*, used by the waiter to cover his mouth or nose and protect the wine he was pouring. For the function of the *mandīl* at drinking parties, see F. Rosenthal, "A Note on the Mandīl," in *Four Essays on Art and Literature in Islam* (Leiden, 1971), especially 78–83.

[48] Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 442.

[49] Ibid., 29, verse 2.

[50] Ibid., 204, verse 4; 341, verse 2; 439, verse 2.

[51] Ibid., 171, verse 1.

[52] Ibid., 204, verse 4.

5. Moderation in drinking wine is recommended; the term used for alcoholism is *idmān*.[53]

6. Drinking wine without becoming intoxicated became a virtue, a demonstration of affluence and generosity. The label *sharrāb khamr,* being a wine-bibber, was a moral tribute as lofty as "courageous in war," since Ḥassān described the chivalrous Ibn Mukaddam as "blessed" with both qualities.[54]

Four Other Poets on Wine

In addition to Ḥassān, other poets who composed for the Ghassānids should be remembered in this context: to al-Nābigha al-Ḏubyānī, al-Aʿšā, and al-Nābigha al-Jaʿdi may be added ʿAmr ibn Kulthūm. Although his poem does not specifically mention the Ghassānids, it provides information on wine in Oriens, in areas where an Arab presence obtained, and implicitly refers to the Ghassānids.

Al-Nābigha al-Ḏubyānī

The poet was a serious man;[55] therefore, his *Dīwān* (unlike Ḥassān's) contains little on wine. But in the famous *mīmiyya* in which he lauds the Ghassānid king and his army on the march, there is a valuable sextet of verses describing the wine in an amatory context; the first triplet is on wine and the second describes the pure water with which it was mixed.[56]

The first line in the sextet, verse 9, speaks of the wine of Buṣrā/Bostra, the casks or vats of which were well sealed and were transported by camels.[57] The wine is proleptically described as mixed, as was customary among the Arabs.

Verse 10 describes its casks (*qilāl,* plural of *qulla*)[58] as transported from Capitolias, a city of the Decapolis to which the poet gives its Arabic name, Bayt Rās. The casks were transported to Luqmān,[59] a word which has been explained as either the name of a wine merchant or a toponym in the region. The poet adds that the casks were transported to a *sūq,* a fair, market.

In verse 11 the poet says that when the seals of the wine casks (*khawātimuhā*)

[53] Ibid., 340, verse 6.

[54] Ibid., 410, verse 2.

[55] A distinguished pre-Islamic poet, who belonged to the tribe of Ḏubyān and was an older contemporary of Ḥassān; see *BASIC* II.1, 220–32, and *GAS,* II, 110–13.

[56] See *Dīwān al-Nābigha al-Ḏubyānī,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1977), 131–32, verses 9–14.

[57] The verse is informative on Bostra as a city associated with wine; in these pre-Islamic sources it is more often linked to swords, as it apparently contained a *fabrica* where swords were made.

[58] For *qulla* as a Syriac term, see Fraenkel, *Die aramäischen Fremdwörter,* 170.

[59] The reference to Luqmān is tantalizing. It is the name of a sura in the Koran (31), which Koranic exegetes have interpreted as the Arabic version of Aḥiqār, the counselor of the Assyrian king Sennacherib; see B. Heller and A. Stillman, "Luḳmān," *EI*², V, 811–13. Its appearance in the verse does not help solve the Koranic exegetical problem, but it does indicate that Luqmān was a familiar term on the eve of the rise of Islam.

are undone, their wine effervesces and is topped by foam (*qummaḥān*).[60] Furthermore, the wine is good old wine (*mudām*).

Al-Aʿshā

Al-Aʿshā, a major pre-Islamic poet who is considered one of the poets of the Suspended Odes, visited the Ghassānids and tasted their wines.[61] Since he was a devotee of the "daughter of the grape," as wine is described in Arabic poetry, he certainly enjoyed the wines of Oriens; as an eastern Arabian poet, he was more familiar with the wines of Ḥīra and Iraq,[62] which were not as good as those of Oriens.

One of his verses has preserved a reference to a variety of Byzantine wine that he calls *al-khandarīs,* which he could have tasted in Oriens.[63] It must also have been known to the Ghassānids, his hosts, and to Ḥassān, in whose surviving poetry the term does not appear. Al-Aʿshā's *Dīwān* attests three toponyms in Oriens: Ūrishalim (Jerusalem), Ḥims (Emesa), and Sarkhad (Salkhad).[64] If he visited Salkhad, a place known for its wines, he would have sampled them; he evidently tasted the wines of Palestine during his trip to Jerusalem, since he refers in one of his verses to a Palestinian wine, *filisṭiyyan;*[65] and he must have also drunk wine in Ḥims, a place mentioned by another poet, Imruʾ al-Qays, who was known for his drinking bouts.[66] While Ḥassān uses the Syriac term *ḥānūt* for tavern,

[60] The term *qummaḥan,* which may be a *hapax legomenon* (al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 132 note 1), is explained as the effervescing foam. On *khātam* as "seal," see Fraenkel, *Die aramäischen Fremdwörter,* 252.

[61] For al-Aʿshā, see Sezgin, *GAS,* II, 130–32, and *BASIC* II.1, 272–78. The standard edition of the *Dīwān* is *Gedichte von Abû Baṣîr Maimûn Ibn Qais al-Aʿšâ,* ed. R. Geyer, Gibb Memorial Series (London, 1928).

[62] Hence his wine lyrics were more influenced by Sasanid Persia and Lakhmid Ḥīra, as his vocabulary shows. Many Persian terms entered Arabic as loanwords, mediated through him and other poets who moved in that milieu, such as ʿAdī ibn Zayd.

[63] See *Dīwān al-Aʿshā al-Kabīr,* ed. M. Ḥusayn (Cairo, n.d. [1950]), 173, verse 24 (an edition that in a few cases usefully supplements the excellent standard edition of R. Geyer, cited above). *Al-khandarīs* has been considered a loanword in Arabic. Most commentators, including the medieval author Jawālīqī, consider it a Byzantine Greek term (*rūmiyya*); see Abū Manṣūr Jawālīqī, *al-Muʿarrab min al-Kalām al-Aʿjamī ʿalā Ḥurūf al-Muʿjam,* ed. and annot. A. Shakir (reprint; Tehran, 1966), 124–25. Apparently it is related to the Greek χόνδρος, which originally meant a grain or lump of salt, then gruel (oatmeal boiled in milk), and finally wine; see Fraenkel, *Die aramäischen Fremdwörter,* 163–64. The editor of *al-Muʿarrab* contributed many footnotes on *khandarīs;* in one, Shakir quotes the lexicographer al-Zabīdi, who suggested in *Sharḥ al-Qamūs* that it may be a Persian loanword (125 note 7). The term survived well into later Islamic times, and is attested in the tenth-century poetry of al-Mutanabbi; see his *Dīwān,* ed. ʿA. al-Barqūqī (Cairo, 1930), I, 362, verse 1. Perhaps *al-khandarīs* is a Persian term; *al-musṭār* (Greek μουστάριον, Latin *mustarium*) is attested in the poetry of al-Akhṭal, the poet laureate of the Umayyads of Oriens/Bilād al-Shām, ca. A.D. 700. For *al-mustār,* see T. Nöldeke, ed., *Delectus Veterum Carminum Arabicorum* (1890; reprint, Wiesbaden, 1966), 54, verse 13, and Fraenkel, *Die aramäischen Fremdwörter,* 163.

[64] For his references to these cities, see *BASIC* II.1, 272–78.

[65] See Aʿshā, *Dīwān,* ed. Geyer, 160, verse 7, and *BASIC* II.1, 274 note 264.

[66] For Imruʾ al-Qays in Ḥims, see *BASIC* II.1, 263–64.

al-Aʿshā uses also the Arabic term *mashrabāt,* the noun of place from the verb *shariba* (drink), when speaking of the taverns of Najrān.[67]

al-Nābigha al-Jaʿdi

Like his namesake, al-Nābigha al-Dubyānī, al-Nābigha al-Jaʿdi, too, visited the Ghassānids and left a cluster of verses in which he remembered their hospitality.[68] The reference comes in his famous long poem that rhymes in *R,* the *rāʾiyya,* a text with several versions.[69] The cluster of verses is a sextet in which he speaks of his boon companions at the court of Mundir, who could be Lakhmid or Ghassānid, but in this context are likely to be Ghassānid.[70] His companions are handsome and attractive as the *danānīr,* the dinars from "the land of Caesar." Reference is made to Najrān, which he frequents so often that he was afraid of being converted to Christianity (a remark that demonstrates the importance of Najrān as a great Christian center). The specifically Ghassānid dimension of the cluster comes in verses 12–14.

In verse 13 al-Nābigha states that the king of the house of Jafna, the eponym of the Ghassānids, was his host.

He refers to the cup of wine he drank there; to the *shiwāʾ,* the broiled meat, he ate; and to the expensive robes he was given as a present.[71]

Verse 14 states that he received Iraqi linen cloth from Oriens (Bilād al-Shām),[72] as well as musk from Dārīn at the Ghassānid court.[73]

ʿAmr ibn Kulthūm

The so-called Suspended Ode of ʿAmr ibn Kulthūm[74] is structurally exceptional in that it opens with a wine lyric rather than a description of a deserted encampment,

[67] See Aʿshā, *Dīwān,* ed. Ḥusayn, 173, verse 29.

[68] For the poet al-Nābigha al-Jaʿdi, see Sezgin, *GAS,* II, 245–47. Citations to his *Dīwān* are from the edition of A. Rabbāḥ, *Shiʿr al-Nābigha al-Jaʿdi* (Damascus, 1964); M. Nallino's edition (Rome, 1953) was not available to me.

[69] See al-Nābigha al-Jaʿdi, *Dīwān,* 35–59, 60–69, 70–76.

[70] Ibid., 61–62, verses 9–14.

[71] The robes he received at the Ghassānid court came from Ḥaḍramawt, known for its elegant cloth even in Islamic times, as indicated in the poetry of the Umayyad poet Jarīr. The Ghassānids had close relations with inhabitants of South Arabia, especially their relatives in Najrān.

[72] The reference to fine cloth from Oriens may reflect the rise of the silk industry there during the reign of Justinian, after the introduction of the silkworm. The political tensions between Byzantium and Persia did not affect trade relations; similarly, hostilities between the Ghassān and Lakhm, inveterate enemies, did not affect social and economic intercourse between Ḥīra in Lower Mesopotamia (Iraq) and Jābiya in Bilād al-Shām (Oriens), especially after the fall of the Lakhmids ca. A.D. 600.

[73] Dārīn was a town in Baḥrayn, in eastern Arabia; at the time, Baḥrayn included parts of the Arabian mainland.

[74] For the poet, see Sezgin, *GAS,* II, 128–29. In *BASIC* II.1, 268–72, ʿAmr ibn Kulthūm was discussed mainly in connection with the toponyms in his poem.

the conventional prelude of pre-Islamic odes. These opening verses may have been a separate lyric, erroneously linked to the ode in the long process of transmission.[75]

In verse 1, the poet calls on the waitress/songstress to entertain him with a drink in the morning (*ṣabūḥ*). He refers to the wines of Andarūn, apparently a famous wine-producing region, and uses the term *ṣaḥn* for the more common *kaʾs* (cup).

In verse 2 he asks for wine mixed with *ḥuṣṣ,* saffron; he likes it warm, *sakhīn,* presumably because the mornings on the steppe are cold.

Verse 3 names the places where he drank wine: Baʿalbak/Heliopolis, Damascus, and Qāṣarīn. Arab communities had presumably lived in those cities since the days of the Ituraean Arabs in the first century B.C.

In verse 4 he speaks of the progress of the cup, which was passed around a group of partygoers starting from the right-hand side, presumably the auspicious direction.

IV. The Tavern

The taverns that these Arab poets visited were centers of social life, as they were in Oriens. Out of the fragmentary verse of Ḥassān and other Arab poets, it is thus possible to reconstruct the ambience of the taverns that these poets—whether federate Ghassānid or Rhomaic Arab—frequented in Oriens. Their elements included the following.

1. The waiter. Only the male server is described in the surviving poetry of Ḥassān.[76] He appears with an earring and a long hat or robe (*burnūs*) and an expensive *mandīl,* kerchief. Ḥassān notes that he has his hair cut behind his ear,[77] his belt tightly fastened around his waist. He is also alert and quick to respond to requests. He is the *sāqi,* the one who pours wine for the patrons in the tavern.

2. The songstress. Equally important was the *musmiʿa* (from the root *samiʿa,* "hear"), who often was also an instrumentalist (*ʿāzifa*), playing a lute or a zither.[78] No names of songstresses have survived, as did those of the *qiyān* (plural of *qayna*), "songstresses," in Mecca and Medina/Yathrib.[79] Ḥassān must have seen songstresses in Medina and possibly in Mecca, but he naturally saw more of them in the taverns of Byzantine Oriens, where both music and song were much more

[75] See the perceptive remarks of T. Nöldeke in *Fünf Moʿallaqat* (Vienna, 1899–1901), 13–14. For the text of the wine lyric, see al-Zawzani, *Sharḥ al-Muʿallaqāt al-Sabʿ* (Beirut, 1963), 118–19, verses 1–7.

[76] For descriptions of the waiter, see Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 75, verse 22; 106–7, verses 14–15; 313, verse 6.

[77] In Arabic, *muḥtalaq al-dhifrā;* see ibid., 106, verse 14. The *dhifrā* is the bone behind the ear.

[78] For the *musmiʿa* in Ḥassān, see *Dīwān,* I, 75, verse 17; 426, verse 2. For the *ʿāzifa,* see 91, verse 9.

[79] On the *qiyān* of Uḥayḥa ibn al-Julāh in Medina, see C. Pellat, "Ḳayna," *EI*², IV, 820; for those of Ibn Judʿān in Mecca, the so-called *jarādatān,* see ibid., 821.

developed.[80] *Tarab* was the term used to describe the ecstatic state induced by song in the tavern.

3. The boon companion. The *nadīm* (plural *nudamāʾ, nadāma*) was another important member of the drinking party in the tavern. Ḥassān refers to these companions in Arabia as well as in Oriens.[81] He is careful to emphasize their quality, as conducive to a more pleasurable experience in the tavern. Just as the waiter, *sāqi,* was regularly featured in pre-Islamic wine lyrics, so too was the *nadīm,* both in Ḥassān's time and in the later Islamic period.

4. The importance of the tavern. Apparently Arabs of this period, whether in Arabia or Oriens, frequented the tavern both in the morning and in the evening. Therefore new technical terms were coined: drinking in the morning was called the *ṣabūḥ;* in the evening, the *ghabūq.*

5. The manner of serving wine. The wine in these taverns was drunk straight or mixed.[82] Ḥassān also specifies what was added: sometimes honey,[83] sometimes water or saffron or musk for a better bouquet. The mixing water was warm, as in the wine ʿAmr ibn Kulthūm drank in various cities of Oriens he mentions (see above). It may sometimes have been mixed with ice.[84]

6. Perfumes. Perfumes were perhaps used to make the ambience of the tavern more seductive.[85] The musk mentioned in Ḥassān's verse may have been the substance extracted from the musk rose, not from gazelles.

7. Seating. It is uncertain whether these poets who frequented the taverns sat on chairs or reclined on couches, as was common in the Roman *convivium* or the Greek *symposion.* Two terms used by Ḥassān—*mirfaqa,* "pillow," and the verb *ittakaʾa,* "recline," "place the elbow"[86]—suggest that they reclined. But the terms are ambiguous, since *mirfaqa* may be the armrest of a chair, on which an elbow might be placed (an action described with the verb *ittakaʾa*). Ḥassān also uses the term *jalasa,* "to sit on a chair."[87]

One verse of Ḥassān is remarkable for its inclusiveness.[88] It combines three of the elements listed above (numbers 2, 3, and 4) and expresses his notion of the per-

[80] The prose accounts that describe entertainment at the Ghassānid courts such as that of Jabala are not unauthentic, although they may have been embroidered.

[81] For boon companions in Arabia, see Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 91, verse 6; in Oriens, 279, verse 9.

[82] Ibid., 106, verse 10.

[83] Ibid., 17, verse 6.

[84] In a particular verse, *baradā* may be a misreading of *bardan,* which *inter alia* can mean "hail"—in this context, a form of ice with which the wine described as *raḥīq* was mixed; ibid., 74, verse 13.

[85] Or perhaps the patrons' use of musk and saffron was responsible for the fragrance in the tavern, as in ibid., 312, verse 3.

[86] For *mirfaqa,* see ibid., 303, verse 10; for *ittakaʾa,* 74, verse 16.

[87] Ibid., 312, verse 3.

[88] Ibid., 279, verse 9.

fect tavern experience. His lady, Shaʿthāʾ, had wished he would shake off his intoxication—presumably incurred by quaffing one cup (*kaʾs*) of wine after another. He replies that what he desires, even hankers after, is camaraderie in the tavern, boon companions (*nadmān*), and their conversation for his early morning drink, the *ṣabūḥ.* During his later visit to the tavern for his evening drink, the *ghabūq,* he enjoys the conversation of his evening companion, *al-musāmir,* especially when the latter is also endowed with an appealing voice as a singer, *gharid*. The verse reveals his hedonism.

V. The Vineyard

As a piece of cultivated land, the vineyard, *karm,* was highly valued in Oriens, as was the olive grove. Its grapes were a prized fruit: when partially dried, they became raisins; when squeezed, they produced juice; and when pressed and fermented, they created wine. Ghassānland, especially in the Provincia Arabia and the Golan, was blessed with vineyards, where the vine flourished as it still does to the present day, especially in Lebanon and northern Jordan.

The term *karm* for vineyard is originally Syriac, as are many terms in Arabic. It appears in the *Dīwān* of Ḥassān both as a common noun and as a toponym, *al-Kurūm* (plural of *karm*), much as the common terms for fort and monastery, *qaṣr* and *dayr,* were transformed into proper nouns. The Byzantines apparently left their vines untrellised,[89] as the Ghassānids and other *foederati* in Oriens may also have done. The *Dīwān* of Ḥassān, however, applies to the vine or vineyard some terms, such as *ahdal,*[90] that suggest a shaded bower or arbor, an *ʿarīsh,* possibly trellised or covered with a roof to protect the plants within it from the blazing sun. The term as a *nomen patientis* is attested in the Koran, *maʿrūshāt.*[91] Presumably it was used by the poets of the Ghassānids who visited Oriens and must have seen the bowers and arbors of the Arabs in that diocese, but the term is not attested in the surviving poetry of Ḥassān. The Ghassānid bowers/arbors may be added to the list of elements that appear in the Koran as descriptions of paradise, possibly inspired by what the Arabs of those days saw in federate Byzantine Oriens: hence the *jannāt maʿrūshat,* the bowered gardens of paradise.[92]

The Ghassānids came from a peninsula that was baked by the sun; hence the bower or arbor in the vineyard must have been a most welcome retreat for them

[89] See J. Nesbitt and A. Kazhdan, "Vineyards," *ODB,* III, 2170.

[90] Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 75, verse 33. When applied to branches, the adjective *ahdal* connotes dangling or overhanging.

[91] See Koran, 6:141. *Maʿrūshāt* (plural of *maʿrūsha*) can be applied to gardens that have these bowers.

[92] One of the terms related to *ʿarīsh,* namely *ʿarsh,* came to mean "throne," and it is used in this sense throughout the Koran.

and for the poets who visited them from Arabia. The vineyard became pleasant surroundings for drinking wine in the open air rather than within the walls of a tavern. Ḥassān availed himself of this locale for drinking parties, as may be seen from an analysis of the relevant part of his celebrated *lāmiyya,* or rhyme in *L,* in praise of the Ghassānids.[93]

Some of its verses refer to the urban tavern that Ḥassān used to frequent (verses 21–25), while others (13–18) refer to drinking wine in the bower of the vineyard. The description of the latter is more vivid.

He describes his journey to the Ghassānid rulers in whose royal company he drinks wine, for him the antidote of all cares. His explicit reference to the Ghassānids in three verses (15, 18, 30) supports the prose sources where he describes in detail the time he spent tasting the wine of the Ghassānid kings as their boon companion (see Chapter 3, above).

Verses 16 and 17 clearly describe his journey: he leaves the district of the Barīṣ and then reaches the vineyard (which he specifies as located between al-Kurūm and al-Qasṭal), where he reclines, drinks his wine, and listens to the warblings of the songstress, the *musmiʿa*.

VI. The Wines of Federate Oriens

Out of the *dīwān*s of Ḥassān and other poets who have been discussed in detail, it is now possible to draw some conclusions about wine and its history in federate Oriens.

1. The poetry records that wine was produced in Bostra, Bayt Rās (Capitolias), and Gaza. These are well-known cities of Oriens, and the first were in the Provincia Arabia, the headquarters of the Ghassānids. Others are not well known to the Byzantine sources, such as Maqadd, in Trans-Jordan, to whose wines the Ghassānids were partial. Its wines remained popular even in Umayyad Islamic times, when poets sang its praises. Salkhad/Sarkhad in the Provincia Arabia may also be added to the list.[94]

Apparently the wines of Palestine were particularly well known and sought after, as is clear from a passage of Corippus' Latin panegyric on Justin II, discussed at the beginning of this chapter. The poet speaks of two cities of Palestine, Gaza and Ascalon, known for their wines, but more significantly he refers to the god of wine, Dionysus, by his other name, Bacchus, as Palestinian. His use of the epithet Palestinian, like that of his younger contemporary al-Aʿshā, an Arab poet, could

[93] Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 74–75.

[94] The philosopher-poet of Arabic medieval Islam, Abu al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī, included in his work the names of places in Oriens where wine was produced, thus confirming some known in Byzantine times and others unknown, such as Adriʿāt and Shibām; see his *Risālat al-Ghufrān,* ed. A. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (Cairo, 1963), 150–59.

reflect the importance of the province as a whole in wine production and its exportation abroad, including Constantinople, where Corippus finds it served at the imperial banquet given by Justin II.

2. The poetry provides information on the containers that transported the wine from these places of production to the markets and cities where it was in demand, the *qilāl* (plural of *qulla*), the vats. To these may be added other vessels of various sizes and functions, including the *dann* and *ḥantam,* a green-colored jar. Smaller in size were the *ziq* or *nājūd,* wineskins to be found in taverns, and *ibrīq,* the jug, flask.[95] The term *ḵẖābiya* is especially interesting: it indicates that the wine was hidden, kept for a long time, and its plural, *ḵẖawābī,* gave rise to a toponym and a monastery of that name. It is still in existence in Syria; presumably the place was well known for its winepresses.[96]

3. Wine trade was important both in Byzantium and in the Diocese of Oriens. Wine merchants were either *vinarii, oinopolai*—that is, wholesale merchants—or *caupones, kapeloi,* the retailers who ran the taverns. There is only one possible reference to such an individual, Luqmān, in the poetry of al-Nābigha, if indeed the word indicates not a toponym but a *vinarius* or a *caupo* (as discussed above). If so, he probably was a *vinarius,* who would receive the large casks transported by the camels from their place of production, Capitolias, and then would place them in the market.

4. In the verse that has survived, many terms are used to refer to wine. Certain authors in later Islamic times provide long lists of such terms, some of which no doubt go back to pre-Islamic times.[97] They may be found in the verse of Ḥassān and the other poets who frequented the Ghassānids in Byzantine Oriens. Some of the names refer to its color.

a. Two terms relating to color became in later Islamic times common words for wine. Both *al-ṣahbāʾ* and *al-kumayt* usually connote a dark color with a dash of red.

b. *Qahwa* is attested in this period and in the later Islamic period as meaning wine; only later did it come to mean "coffee."

c. *Mudām* indicates that the wine is vintage, has been kept a long time;[98] a synonym also in use was *muʿattaqa*.

d. *Sulāf* and *raḥīq* are words attested in this period as terms for very good wine; the latter even appears as a choice drink in the Koranic paradise.[99]

[95] *Khurṭūm* may be added to terms that meant a jug, though for some it meant wine; see Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 439, verse 2, and II, 87, line 18; also Fraenkel, *Die aramäischen Fremdwörter,* 164–65.

[96] On al-Ḵẖawābī, see *BASIC* II.1, 240.

[97] See Ibn al-Sikkīt, *Kanz al-Ḥuffāẓ fi Kitāb Tahḏẖīb al-Alfāẓ,* ed. L. Cheikho (Beirut, 1895), 211, where thirty-three names for wine are given.

[98] It is the *nomen patientis* from the verb *adāma,* "to make to last long."

[99] Koran, 83:25; see also Fraenkel, *Die aramäischen Fremdwörter,* 158.

e. *Khandarīs* and *musṭār* also connoted wine. While the second is not attested until the Umayyad period, its usage then was likely a continuation of its popularity in the immediately preceding Ghassānid-Byzantine period.

f. Two very common terms are *al-rāḥ* and *al-ʿuqār,* which will be discussed shortly.

g. Finally, the generic term for wine, *khamr,* has remained in use to the present day. It is the word employed in the Koran. Another term for wine was *sharāb. Khammār* was the word for the wine merchant and, more often, for the tavern keeper.

5. The effect of wine on its devotees was noted by the poets and was given various names. In a dialogue with the Ghassānid king Jabala, the poet Ḥassān lists its three vices and its three virtues.[100] It induces a mood not unlike insanity, madness; it leads to *masraʿ*, which can mean "to fell someone to the floor or ground," but in this context probably means fall to the ground as a result of intoxication, having lost one's rational faculty.[101] Conversely, wine relieves the one who drinks it of his sorrows; cares vanish.[102] The three vices and three virtues discussed in this dialogue were succinctly expressed by two native Arabic terms for wine: *al-ʿuqār,* the wine that silences or even kills the rational faculty, and *al-rāḥ,* the wine that induces comfort in the one who drinks (probably a shortened form of *rāḥa,* "comfort").

The most pleasant state that the wine used to induce in Ḥassān and the other poets was *nashwa,* "ecstasy"; it made them *nashāwā* (plural of *nashwān*), "ecstatic."

As noted above, of particular interest in this lexicon of wine in Arabic is the appearance of the term *tiryāq, diryāq, diryāqa,* a medical expression meaning "antidote" borrowed from Greek medical literature and indicating the Arabs' familiarity with it even in pre-Islamic times.

6. Reference has been made to various cities in Oriens where the poets of the Ghassānids visited taverns, but to what strictly Ghassānid localities did they come for their wine? The previous volume in this series has examined the Ghassānid urban centers, especially two: Jābiya, the Ghassānid capital in the Golan, and Jalliq, whose location remains in dispute.[103] Taverns must have existed in the capital, but Jalliq is more likely to have been frequented by these poets—it is Jalliq that is remembered in Umayyad times as the place visited in the seventh century by the caliph Yazīd, a hedonist, for his entertainment. He was married to a Ghassānid princess, Umm Ramla, and the Ghassānid presence in the Umayyad state was

[100] Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 442.

[101] Roughly the same sentiment is expressed in a verse in one of his poems, in which he says that when an old man drinks wine, he starts behaving like a child; ibid., 106, verse 12.

[102] The third virtue is expressed by the term *imātatuhā*—probably a corrupt reading, unless it implies that wine dispels cares; ibid., 442, verse 4.

[103] On Jābiya and Jalliq, see *BASIC* II.1, 96–104, 105–15.

strong. As important as Jalliq was another town, Ḥuwwārīn,[104] also frequented by Yazīd; it was there that the young Umayyad caliph died.

Taverns must often have been centers of social life in many Ghassānid localities as they were in Oriens generally. As is well known, the Arabic sources are much more informative on the Lakhmids of Ḥīra in Sasanid Persia than on the Ghassānids of Jābiya in Byzantine Oriens. These sources provide much specific information about the taverns of Ḥīra, including their names,[105] and by analogy taverns in Ghassānid Oriens were likely very similar. The surviving fragments from the *Dīwān* of Ḥassān depict a Ghassānland in which the tavern was a well-known social center, prominently positioned in the layout of the Ghassānid town.

As has already been pointed out, wine had a special place in Christianity (unlike Islam), which gave it much visibility. To this may be added the dimension of its association with monasteries, whose members cultivated vines and pressed grapes, giving wine a place at monastic meals. As monasteries also became a reflection of Christian *philanthropia*, its wines were offered to the stranger and the wayfarer. Ḥassān spent a night at Dayr al-Khammān, the monastery of al-Khammān.[106] Although he must have tasted its wines, they are not mentioned in his extant poems. It is ironic that in later Islamic times and because of the prohibition imposed on wine by the Muslim *Sharīʿa*, conventual wine became the most important element that attracted Muslims to Christian monasteries; thus the monastery was later perceived not as a place for *imitatio Christi* but primarily as a venue for the consumption of wine.[107]

Appendix

Garisaean Bacchus

The phrase "Garisaean Bacchus" appears in the passage from Corippus discussed in Chapter 5, but Averil Cameron made no attempt to explain it in her 1976 edition, and it has been left as of uncertain origin.[1] In the same year, a German version of Corippus with a commentary appeared; its author, Ulrich J. Stache, suggested that the phrase means Bacchus of Mount Garizim in Samaria.[2] Several points might be adduced to support this view.

[104] For its association with the Ghassānids, see *BASIC* I.1, 152. On Yazīd, see G. R. Hawting, "Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya," *EI*², XI, 309–11. On Ḥuwwārin/Evaria, where he used to spend time, see D. Sourdel, "Ḥuwwārīn," *EI*², III, 645.

[105] For the taverns of Ḥīra and their names, see A. ʿAbd al-Ghani, *Tārīkh al-Ḥīra* (Damascus, 1993), 75–80.

[106] For Ḥassān at Dayr al-Khammān, see his *Dīwān,* I, 116–17.

[107] As may be seen from al-Shābushti, *Kitāb al-Diyārāt,* ed. G. ʿAwwād (Baghdad, 1966), passim.

[1] Corippus, *In Laudem Iustini Augusti Minoris,* III.102, ed. and trans. Av. Cameron (London, 1976), 184 note 102; for a translation of the passage, see p. 104.

[2] See U. J. Stache, *Flavius Cresconius Corippus, In Laudem Iustini Augusti Minoris: Kommentar* (Berlin, 1976), 400.

1. The vocalic sequence is identical with Mount Garizim as presented in such Greek texts as Procopius.[3]

2. Mount Ephraim and Samaria were famous among the ancient Israelites for their wines.[4]

3. The identification is consonant with the praises of Palestine as a wine-producing area.

4. Of the two mountains of Samaria, Garizim was the one that was blessed.[5]

On the other hand, it is most unusual to connect wine with a mountain, especially one linked in Byzantine times with the Samaritans, who often rebelled and caused much trouble in the Holy Land. The mountain was associated with Samaritan *loca sancta* and Christian shrines; it is doubtful that it ever became known for its wines, let alone produced them in commercial quantities.

A possible alternative to Garizim is one of the cities of the Decapolis, Gerasa. There are several points in its favor.

1. This city was located in the midst of the vine-growing area in Trans-Jordan.

2. Gerasa had a temple of Dionysus,[6] which suggests that it was a city where wine was popular or an important commodity for trade.

3. The vocalic sequence in Ge-ra-sa is not as close as in Garizim to Garisaean, but the *consonantal* skeleton—*g-r-s*—is identical. Besides, vocalic changes often occur when a Semitic term is transliterated into another language, such as Greek. For example, the name of a Jewish rabbi thought to have perhaps been a native of Gerasa appears in Talmudic literature as Garsi,[7] illustrating the same alteration of vowels as in Corippus.

[3] See Procopius, *Buildings,* V.vii.7, 16.

[4] See J. Feliki, "Vine," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica,* XX, 535.

[5] See Deuteronomy 11:29.

[6] Wine festivals were popular in a city where Dionysus, the god of wine, had a temple. It has been suggested that the celebration of Christ's miracle at Cana was a Christian adaptation of the former pagan wine festival held there; see B. Brenck, C. Jäggi, and H. Meier, "The Buildings under the Cathedral of Gerasa," *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 39 (1995), 211–27.

[7] See M. Avi-Yonah and S. Gibson, "Gerasa," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica,* VII, 506.

VI

Clothes

As important as what they ate and drank is the clothing of the Ghassānids. Dress, as social historians generally recognize, is a fundamental element in the expression of self-identity. It reflects cultural and ethnic affiliation as well as social and economic status, and is sometimes used to distinguish one people from others. The ancient Romans, as a *gens togata,* distinguished themselves from the Greeks, who were *palliati*, wearers of the *pallium,* and from the barbarians, *bracati,* who wore trousers.

So too did the Arabs employ clothing in ancient times and in the medieval and modern eras, especially after most of them adopted Islam.[1] This is reflected in the vast number of terms in Arabic for dress in all its various aspects,[2] and in their tenacious attachment to their characteristic attire even in the face of social and political revolutions.

The Ghassānids were Arabs who had hailed from the Arabian Peninsula

[1] On the retention by Muslims of certain elements of dress as an expression or even assertion of identity, see the appendix, "The Vestimentary System: Further Observations." Of particular note is headgear, especially the *ʿimāma,* the turban, worn by men (nowadays mainly by Muslim *ʿulamāʾ*, mullahs), and the *ḥijāb,* the veil, worn by women.

[2] Collected by S. Dāghir for the pre-Islamic period alone; see his *Madhāhib al-Ḥusn* (Beirut, 1998), 282 note 7. The best brief account of Arab dress is the entry by Y. K. Stillman (with N. A. Stillman), "Libās," *EI*[2], V, 732–42 (on the pre-Islamic period, see 732–33). It summarizes Y. K. Stillman's *Arab Dress: A Short History: From the Dawn of Islam to Modern Times,* edited after her death by N. A. Stillman (Leiden, 2003), which contains an extensive bibliography as well as pictures of Arab dress. It also has an account of early studies on the subject (175ff.), beginning with the well-known works of R. Dozy, *Dictionnaire détaillé des noms de vêtements chez les Arabes* (Amsterdam, 1845) and *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes,* 2 vols. (Leiden, 1881). Not included are a very specialized standard work on pre-Islamic Arab dress, based on attestations in Arabic poetry, Y. al-Jubouri, *al-Malābis al-ʿArabiyya fi al-ʿAṣr al-Jāhili* (Beirut, 1989), and M. al-Jamīl, *al-Libās fi ʿAṣr al-Rasūl,* Annals of the University of Kuwait, Monograph 91 (Kuwait, 1994). Because Arab dress during the lifetime of the Prophet Muḥammad—al-Jamīl's theme—was largely a continuation of that in pre-Islamic times, it contains much relevant material.

The most recent works on dress in general in late antiquity are a special issue (12) of *Antiquité Tardive, Tissus et vêtements dans l'antiquité tardive,* ed. J.-M. Carrié (Turnhout, 2004), with more up-to-date bibliography, and J. Ball, *Byzantine Dress: Representations of Secular Dress in Eighth- to Twelfth-Century Painting* (New York, 2005), especially chapter 3.

from its most sedentary part, South Arabia. In Oriens they became both *foederati* of Byzantium and also devotees of the Christian faith. Although they kept a strong sense of Arab self-identity, they were inevitably influenced by Romanitas and Christianity in their dress, as in many other aspects of their life. The problem of source survival makes it difficult to determine what they retained of the Arab dress that they brought with them from the Peninsula and what they adopted and adapted in Oriens from the Byzantines and various other peoples. It is easier to enumerate and discuss the influences upon them while they were in Oriens, though the main sources on their social life, such as *Akhbār Mulūk Ghassān,* have been lost. Their congeners, the Rhomaic Arabs in Oriens, Palmyrenes and Nabataeans, left behind them monuments that offer substantial visual representations of their clothing.[3] Nothing of this sort has survived from the Ghassānids. So the conclusions in this chapter on the vestimentary systems of the Ghassānids will remain partly inferential and partly evidential, relying on the few invaluable references to them in the contemporary sources, mainly poetry.

I. Influences on Ghassānid Dress

The Arabian

After leaving the Arabian Peninsula, the Ghassānids continued to have close relations with the Arabs. Influences on their dress must have come from two main sources: Najrān in South Arabia and Ḥīra on the Lower Euphrates.

Especially important in this context were their relations with Najrān, the city peopled by their relatives and co-confessionalists, Monophysite Christians. South Arabia had been a region of *de luxe* articles, which it exported to the Roman world of the Mediterranean, and it remained prosperous in late antiquity. Najrān was the main center of the textile industry and produced luxury cloth.[4] Its garments were also known all over the Peninsula and among the Arabs. They are referred to in the sources, and they were in demand. One source lists about eighteen different types of men's and women's robes for which Najrān was known, including the *burd/burda,* the *ḥabara,* the *ḥulla,* and the *rayṭa*.[5] Of these, the *burda* or *burd* became the most famous in Islamic history: it became the most prized of Muḥammad's

[3] See R. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs* (London, 2001), 133, 135, 143, 144.

[4] On Najrān as a center of the textile industry, see L. Massignon, "La Mubāhala de Medine et l'hyperdule de Fatima," in *Opera Minora,* ed. Y. Moubarac (Beirut, 1963), I, 550–72. Because few sources have survived, it is not clear whether the Najrānis were influenced in the manufacture of their textiles by the Ḥimyarites, in whose shadow they lived.

[5] See Jubouri, *al-Malābis,* 35–51, which discusses South Arabian and Najrāni dress. For a description of the various items of Arab dress, see the glossary in Stillman, "Libās," 740–42. Various authors sometimes give slightly different descriptions of these items. *Rayṭa* became a name given to Arab women, some of whom came from Najrān; because a certain Rayṭa was the wife or mother of the first Abbasid caliph, the Ḥārithids of Najrān came to be known as *al-Akhwāl,* the maternal uncles of the Abbasids.

relics, assumed by the caliphs on ceremonial occasions, after the Prophet threw his *burda* on Kaʿb ibn Zuhayr following the poet's recital of a panegyric on him.[6] Also famous was the *ḥulla* of Najrān, a two-piece costume composed of a robe and an outer wrap. One condition of a treaty concluded between Muḥammad and a Najrāni delegation to Medina was that Najrān should deliver 2,000 *ḥulla*s every year to the Muslims.[7] Surely these Najrāni robes, highly prized and worn by distinguished Arabs in this period,[8] were not unknown to the Ghassānids, though no specific evidence on this point remains.

On a smaller scale than Najrān, Ḥīra was also an Arab urban center in which the textile industry flourished. Because more poetry has survived on Ḥīra than on Ghassānid Jābiya, some references to its textile industry—such as one to the weaver, the *nassāj*—are extant. Additionally, the poetry attests a number of luxurious garments associated with it and mentions cloth such as silk and linen. When Khālid ibn al-Walīd captured Ḥīra, one of the conditions of the peace treaty was its contribution of a number of garments to the Muslims, namely, *al-sāj* and *al-taylasan*. Especially noteworthy were *athwāb al-riḍā,* "the robes of pleasure," which the Lakhmids used to present to favored individuals, such as poets who eulogized them.[9] All these articles of clothing must have had their counterparts at the Ghassānid court in Jābiya.

Ḥīra always maintained ties with Mecca and Najrān, which became closer after the Persian occupation of South Arabia. The sources speak of the *laṭīma,* the caravan of silk and perfume, which traveled from Ḥīra to Mecca, and to Najrān in South Arabia.[10] They thus bring to mind the influence of the Sasanids, the overlords of the Lakhmids, who long monopolized the silk trade, since the route from China passed through their territory.[11]

[6] On Kaʿb and the Burda, see Sezgin, *GAS,* II, 229–30. According to one account, the provenance of this Burda was Najrān; Jubouri, *al-Malābis,* 87. On the *burda,* presented by Yūḥanna, the bishop of Ayla, to the Prophet Muḥammad, see al-Jamīl, *al-Libās fiʾAsr al-Rasūl,* 55.

[7] On the treaty with Najrān and the *ḥulla,* see M. Ḥamīdullāh, *Majmūʿat al-Wathāʾiq al-Siyāsiyya* (Beirut, 1987), 175.

[8] On the Najrāni robes worn by the Prophet Muḥammad, see al-Jamīl, *al-Libās fiʾAsr al-Rasūl,* 50–90. On his death, the Prophet was shrouded in the Najrāni robes (67, 93).

[9] For all this material on Ḥīra, see Y. R. Ghunayma, *al-Ḥīra* (Baghdad, 1936), 84–85.

[10] On the *laṭīma,* see Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat al-Nabiyy,* ed. M. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (Cairo, 1937), I, 199; for the correct etymology of this term, see S. Fraenkel, *Die aramäischen Fremdwörter im Arabischen* (1886; reprint, Hildesheim, 1962), 176–77. On Ḥarb al-Fijār, "the Sacrilegious War," caused by this *laṭīma,* see J. W. Fück, "Fidjār," *EI*², II, 883–84.

[11] Persian influence is reflected in technical terms found even in the Koran, such as *sundus* and *istabraq* for fine silk and silk brocade; see A. Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary of the Qurʾan* (1938; reprint, Leiden, 2007), 179–80, 58–60. *Sundus* and *istabraq* were the garments worn by the righteous in the Koranic paradise. For the possibility that the depiction of paradise in the Koran may have been influenced by what the Arabs of Mecca saw in Oriens and at the Ghassānid court, see the appendix "Paradise in the Koran," above.

The Arabs of late antiquity, especially the sixth century, whether urbanites or pastoralists, were in close touch with one another, especially through the many fairs, *aswāq,* which spread throughout the vast Arab areas; hence products such as textiles and garments were traded across the region. Robes from Hierapolis, Manbij, in Syria were known in Medina, since the Prophet Muḥammad asked specifically for a *manbijāniyya,* a robe made in Manbij.[12] Robes from Ḥaḍramawt in the distant south were available at the court of the Ghassānids in Oriens, as may be gathered from a verse of al-Nābigha al-Jaʿdi, whose description of the liberality of the Ghassānid dynasty included the gift to him of a *ḥadramiyy,* a robe from Ḥaḍramawt.[13] The poet Ḥumayd ibn Thawr, who belonged to the tribe of ʿĀmir, which lived far to the south of the Ghassānids, alluded to their white robes in one of his similes, which implied his acquaintance with their fabrics.[14]

Byzantine

The Byzantine influence was more important than the Sasanid Persian influence.[15] After all, the Ghassānids were *foederati* of Byzantium, living close to the Byzantines. This influence found expression in various ways.

1. One emanated from the Ghassānids' congeners, the Rhomaic Arabs of the diocese: Byzantinized Nabataean and Palmyrene Arabs. The two Nabataean cities of Bostra and Petra were both accessible to the Ghassānids.

2. Another must have come from the Graeco-Roman communities living in the Decapolis, which geographically was within the two Ghassānid provinces of Arabia and Palaestina Secunda.

3. After the introduction of the silkworm, mulberry trees proliferated in Oriens and sericulture flourished, as did silk production in centers such as Tyre and Berytus, not far from the Ghassānids. It is natural to think that the

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The Arab groups who moved in the orbit of Sasanid Persia were naturally influenced by the dominant culture of their overlords. That this influence included Persian clothing can be inferred from a verse by Ḥassān addressing a delegation of Tamīm, which came to the Prophet in Medina and accepted Islam. He accused them of dressing like the *Aʿājim,* "the non-Arabs"—in this case, the Persians; see *Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit,* ed. W. ʿArafāt, Gibb Memorial New Series 25 (London, 1971), I, 110, verse 12. The relevance of this pattern of influence to Byzantium's influence on its own allies, the Ghassānids, in matters of dress is obvious.

[12] On the *manbijāniyya* worn by the Prophet, see Stillman, *Arab Dress,* 13, and Jubouri, *al-Malābis,* 128.

[13] See al-Nābigha al-Jaʿdi, *Dīwān,* ed. A. Rabbāḥ (Damascus, 1964), 61, verse 13.

[14] Quoted by Bakri in his *Muʿjam* (Cairo, 1951), IV, 1134.

[15] On Byzantine dress, see Ph. Koukoules, *Byzantinon bios kai politismos* (Athens, 1948–57), II, 2, 5–59; VI, 267–94; and N. Ševčenko, "Costume," *ODB,* I, 538–40. The excellence of Byzantine textiles was proverbial, according to the Arabic sources; see ʿAbd al-Malik al-Thaʿālibi, *Thimār al-Qulūb,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1965), 525, 535. Because of their high prestige, Byzantine garments sometimes functioned as imperial gifts to promote diplomatic ties with foreign potentates.

Ghassānids were beneficiaries of this proximity to the silks and other textiles of the diocese.[16]

4. Finally came influence from Constantinople, resulting from gifts presented to the supreme Ghassānid phylarchs and kings by the Byzantine emperor on their visits to the capital.[17]

II. The Ghassānid Vestimentary System

The scanty evidence on Ghassānid dress is set within three venues: the court, the battlefield, and the tavern, with its songstresses and waiters. The tavern has already been discussed above, in Chapter 5, "Drink." Most of the discussion will therefore focus on the Ghassānid king Arethas and his son Mundir of the sixth century, especially the former. Contemporary poetry, the principal source, will be assessed in light of the relevant Byzantine sources, which are informative on certain aspects of the Ghassānid vestimentary system that have never been examined before. The Ghassānid leader will be discussed in various contexts: as king at Jābiya, as *patricius* in Constantinople, and as phylarch, commander in chief, on the battlefield. His garb on each occasion and in each venue reflects identities that sum up the complex personality of the Ghassānid as a federate of the new Christian Roman Empire, Byzantium.

The King

In documenting the conferment of the *basileia* on the Ghassānid Arethas in A.D. 529, Procopius omits any description of the attendant ceremony.[18] Some details can be recovered, however, from his two accounts of similar ceremonies, in Constantinople and in the provinces, in which he describes the insignia and the costumes worn by the "barbarian" kings on whom the *basileia* was conferred; another account is provided by Malalas. Nevertheless, precisely what garb was presented to the Ghassānid kings Arethas and Mundir remains unclear.

After Justinian's suspension of the Armenian pentarchy, Procopius gives the following description of the insignia of the Armenian king:

> It is worthwhile to describe these insignia, for they will never again be seen by man. There is a cloak made of wool, not such as is produced by sheep, but gathered from the sea. *Pinnos* the creature is called on which this wool grows. And the part where the purple should have been, that is, where the insertion

[16] If the textiles of Manbij reached the Prophet Muḥammad in Medina, they certainly reached the Ghassānids in Oriens (see note 12).

[17] The garments received by the Ghassānid king Mundir in Constantinople, a gift of the emperor Tiberius, are discussed later in this chapter.

[18] Procopius, *History,* I.xvii.47.

> of purple cloth is usually made, is overlaid with gold. The cloak was fastened by a golden brooch in the middle of which was a precious stone from which hung three sapphires by loose golden chains. There was a tunic of silk adorned in every part with decorations of gold which they are wont to call *plumia*. The boots were of red color and reached to the knee, of the sort which only the Roman emperor and the Persian king are permitted to wear.[19]

Elsewhere, he describes the royal "wardrobe" presented to the Mauri chiefs:

> Now these symbols are a stuff of silver covered with gold, and a silver cap—not covering the whole head, but like a crown and held in place on all sides by bands of silver—a kind of white cloak gathered by a golden brooch on the right shoulder in the form of a Thessalian cape, and a white tunic with embroidery, and a gilded boot.[20]

Malalas gives the following description of the coronation of the king of the Laz:

> As soon as his father Damnazes died, he immediately traveled to the emperor Justin in Byzantion, put himself at his disposal and asked to be proclaimed emperor of the Laz. He was received by the emperor, baptized, and having become a Christian, married a Roman wife named Valeriana, the granddaughter of Nomos the patrician, and he took her back with him to his own country. He had been crowned by Justin, the emperor of the Romans, and had put on a Roman imperial crown and a white cloak of pure silk. Instead of the purple border it had the gold imperial border; in its middle was a true purple portrait medallion with a likeness of the emperor Justin. He also wore a white tunic, a *paragaudion*, with gold imperial embroideries, equally including the likeness of the emperor. The shoes that he wore he had brought from his own country, and they were studded with pearls in Persian fashion. Likewise his belt was decorated with pearls. He received many gifts from the emperor Justin, as did his wife Valeriana.[21]

The title awarded to the Ghassānid ruler or chief by his own people was neither *patricius* nor phylarch but king, *malik*. This title, established beyond doubt

[19] Idem, *Buildings,* III.i.17–23.

[20] Idem, *History,* III.xxv.4–8.

[21] John Malalas, *Chronographia,* ed. L. Dindorf (Bonn, 1835), 412–13; here translated by E. Jeffreys, M. Jeffreys, and R. Scott as *The Chronicle of John Malalas* (Melbourne [and Sydney], 1986), 233–34.

by Procopius,[22] is confirmed by the contemporary poetry of Ḥassān and of later poets who continued this authentic tradition, but the strongest evidence is supplied by contemporary epigraphy—the Usays inscription carved by one of Arethas' commanders, Ibn al-Mughīra, who refers to him around A.D. 530 as *al-malik,* the king.[23] There is also no doubt that the Ghassānid Arethas was dressed as a king on important occasions in Ghassānland, since the poet laureate of later times underscores his own eminent position among his Ghassānid patrons by noting that he used to sit not far from their crowned head.[24]

Only the headgear of the Ghassānid king is explicitly mentioned in non-Byzantine contemporary sources on the Ghassānids. In the first three-quarters of the century, he wore not the royal crown of the Byzantine *autokrator,* the diadem (διάδημα), but the circlet, possibly the equivalent of Greek στεφάνιον (a diminutive of στέφανος) assumed by Tzath, the king of the Laz. The Ghassānids may have worn something that resembled the royal headgear of a contemporary Semitic ruler, the Negus of Ethiopia; his was called both a στέμμα and a φακιόλιον.[25] The Ghassānid circlet was in Arabic an *iklīl,* in Syriac a *klīla.*[26] The Arab Labīd, one of the pre-Islamic poets of the Suspended Odes, referred to the *kharazāt,* the beads or jewels, with which the Ghassānid crown was studded.[27]

Thus, during the long reign of Arethas from 529 to 569, the Ghassānid headgear was a circlet. After his death, during the reign of his son al-Mundir, the Ghassānid crown became more impressive: in the words of the contemporary source John of Ephesus, the *klīla* was replaced by a *tāgā,* a crown (Arabic *tāj*), to express the appreciation of the emperor Tiberius of the Ghassānid king on the latter's visit to Constantinople.[28] This was the crown seen by the later poets of the Ghassānids, such as Ḥassān; hence he hailed the Ghassānid king as *du al-tāj,* "the crown holder," a term employed by later Islamic poets such as Abū Nuwās to describe the Ghassānid rulers.[29]

The importance of the insignia of the Ghassānid king is reflected in the events that followed the abduction of their king Mundir by Magnus, and Mundir's dispatch to Constantinople. His sons revolted and successfully demanded that the

[22] Procopius, *History,* I.xvii.48.

[23] That his father, Jabala, was also officially king is vouched for by the conclusion of the *Letter* of Simeon of Bēth-Arshām, who visited King Jabala around A.D. 520, when he invoked his aid for the martyrs of Najrān; see *Martyrs,* 63; on the Usays inscription, see *BASIC* I.1, 117–24.

[24] Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 255, verse 10.

[25] For these four Greek terms, see *BASIC* I.1, 105–6 note 221.

[26] On the *klīla, iklīl,* see ibid., 105, 402, 518.

[27] Labīd ibn Rabīʿah, *Die Gedichte des Labîd,* ed. C. Brockelmann (Leiden, 1891), 42, verse 50. See *BASIC* I.1, 106 note 222.

[28] *BASIC* I.1, 399–400.

[29] See *Dīwān Abū Nūwās,* ed. A. al-Ghazālī (Beirut, 1982), 160, a poem written ca. A.D. 800.

symbols of their father's *basileia* be surrendered by the governor of the Provincia Arabia, at whose capital, Bostra, these symbols were deposited.[30]

Two other items of the royal "wardrobe" are indirectly referred to in the contemporary Arabic sources: their robes and their shoes or boots. Briefly touched upon in the Arabic poetry that eulogized the Ghassānids, these are depicted in detail in the Byzantine sources that report on the kings and chiefs of the Armenians, the Mauri, and the Laz, as well as in the sources that describe the dress of the *patricius,* the title conferred on Arethas and his son Mundir.

Robes

A triplet of verses in the most famous of all panegyrics on the Ghassānids is a mine of information on the royal wardrobe, despite its brevity.[31]

In this panegyric on the Ghassānid king ʿAmr (ca. A.D. 600), al-Nābigha speaks of the "robes of *iḍrīj,*" *aksiyat al-iḍrīj,*[32] which were hung on trestles (*al-mashājib*) when the Ghassānid kings would receive visitors on Palm Sunday. The term *iḍrīj,* according to the lexicographers, meant expensive red silk. This is consonant with the popularity of the color red for royal dress and with the description of the *sagion,* the red robe of the official promoted to the patriciate. Another term for red silk, *khazz,* is also used in this connection. In his description of the robes of the Lazic king quoted above, Malalas speaks of his *paragaudion* as a white tunic—possibly a mistake, since both the Greek lexicon and the lexicographers who glossed pre-Islamic Arabic poetry (where the term appears in the form *barjad*) interpret it as a purple-colored garment.[33]

White robes were part of the royal wardrobe. Most descriptions of the dress of the client kings or chiefs in Procopius and Malalas emphasize the white tunic. White robes were well known at the Ghassānid court, worn by their princesses[34] and presented by Ghassānid kings as gifts to distinguished visitors and poets who eulogized them. Sometimes, these white robes were perfumed, *rayṭan rādiʿan*.[35]

[30] See *BASIC* I.1, 469. This episode indicates clearly that the Ghassānids had a residence in Bostra, in which they deposited these symbols of their *basileia,* perhaps to be assumed on important occasions held in the capital of the *provincia* of which Arethas and later Mundir were phylarchs.

[31] See *Dīwān al-Nābigha al-Ḏubyānī,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1977), 47, verses 25–27.

[32] Ibid., verse 26.

[33] See LSJ, s.v. *paragaudion;* on *barjad* in the poetry of the pre-Islamic poet Tarafa, see Jubouri, *al-Malābis,* 79. The significance of the color red in Byzantium and among the *foederati* is not clear. The Byzantine *autokrator* wore red boots, but his robes were purple. The Ghassānid client-kings and phylarchs may have wanted to avoid purple lest they seem to be inappropriately encroaching on the imperial dignity, as expressed in that color.

[34] On *rayṭ,* white robes, used by Ghassānid princesses, see Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 255, verse 7; they are discussed later in this chapter.

[35] Although it was Ḥātim, the *sayyid* of the group Ṭayyiʾ, who visited the court of the Ghassānids and composed poetry on them, it was another member of the Ṭayyiʾ that remembered their royal gifts to

These presents clearly resemble the imperial gifts that were showered on client-kings such as the Lazic Tzath and his wife Valeriana, as well as on federates in Oriens, such as those given the Ghassānid Mundir in A.D. 580 by the emperor Tiberius, described in detail by John of Ephesus.[36] The Gothic historian John of Biclar is likewise informative on the gifts of "barbaria" that Mundir brought with him from Oriens for Tiberius.[37] He does not name these gifts, but they may have included expensive garments or cloth from Najrān that were accessible to the Ghassānids. In return, Tiberius gave him a number of gifts, including "magnificent garments" for which Byzantium was known; perhaps Mundir had brought with him a similar kind of gift,[38] deluxe garments, and the emperor wanted to reciprocate in kind.

A further note on the royal federate clothing comes from al-Nābigha. In the third verse of the triplet devoted to the Ghassānids' clothes, mentioned above, he refers to the sleeves, *ardān,* of their robes. They were pure white, *khāliṣat al-ardān,* but the upper extremity of the sleeve near the shoulder was green, *khudr al-manākib*.[39] The color green attained great significance for Muslims; it became and still remains the distinctive color of Shiʿite Islam. It already had received scriptural authority in the Koran itself. In three suras, the blessed are described as clothed in green garments of fine silk and brocade, and as reclining on green cushions.[40] The appeal of the color green to the Arabs, dwellers in an arid area, is readily understandable, as it suggests well-watered oases. The Ghassānids, Arabs living in a mostly arid area of Oriens, would naturally have responded positively to the color green; it is not clear whether the color had any religious symbolism for them as Christians.[41]

Among the descriptions of life of the Ghassānids at court is an account by Ḥassān of how they changed their robes seasonally: "During winter aloes-wood

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those who came to their court. He was Thurmula ibn Shuʿath, who in the third verse of a triplet remarked on the Ghassānids' gold (certainly gold coins, *denarii, solidi*); platters, *jifān;* and expensive cloth, *rayṭ,* further described as fragrant, *rādiʿ;* see *Dīwān Shiʿr Ḥātim at-Ṭāʾi,* ed. ʿĀ. S. Jamāl (Cairo, 1980), 325.

[36] John of Ephesus, *Ioannis Ephesini Historiae Ecclesiasticae Pars Tertia,* Latin trans. E. W. Brooks, CSCO, Scriptores Syri 106, ser. 3, III (Louvain, 1936), 164; see *BASIC* I.1, 399–400.

[37] John of Biclar, *Chronicum,* ed. T. Mommsen, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, *Auctores Antiquissimi,* XI 1, *Chronica Minora* 2 (Berlin, 1893), 214; see *BASIC* I.1, 384.

[38] See *BASIC* I.1, 388.

[39] The scholiasts explained *khāliṣat al-ardān* as "white," "pure white"; for their commentary on this verse, see *Dīwān al-Nābigha,* ed. S. Fayṣal (Beirut, 1968), 63 note 27.

[40] Koran, 76:21; 18:31; 55:76.

[41] See A. Cutler, "Color," *ODB,* I, 482–83. The Islamic veneration of the color green may have been Ghassānid in inspiration. Al-Nābigha's verse mentioning green as favored by the Ghassānids was written before the suras of the Koran that extol this color. In addition, in the first hemistich of the verse he uses the term *naʿīm,* "worldly bliss"—a word that appears some twenty times in the Koran in the phrase *Jannat al-Naʿīm,* "the Paradise of Bliss"; see *al-Muʿjam al-Mufahras li alfāẓ al-Qurʾan al-Karīm,* ed. M. ʿAbd al-Bāqi (Cairo, n.d.), s.v. Jannāt. Perhaps the Ghassānids similarly associated green with the life of the blessed in the other world, in which case the sleeve described by the poet might represent the addition of green to a color (white) already linked to Christian martyrs.

was burned in [the king's] apartments, while in summer he cooled himself with snow. Both he and his courtiers wore light robes, arranged with more regard to comfort than ceremony, in the hot weather, and white furs, called *fanak*, or the like in the cold season."[42] On *fanak,* Reynold Nicholson has the following note: "The *fanak* is properly a kind of white stoat or weasel found in Abyssinia and northern Africa, but the name is also applied by Muhammadans to other furs." He adds that although the account may not contain the poet laureate's *ipsissima verba,* "this does not seriously affect its value as evidence."[43]

Shoes/Boots

The shoes or boots of the Ghassānids attracted the attention of the poets who eulogized them and the scholiasts who annotated pre-Islamic poetry. They were included in the list of items that the "barbarian" kings were given or allowed to wear, and they were red, the same color as the boots of Byzantine emperors. The Arab poets noted that the boots of the Ghassānids had "thin soles," *riqāq al-niʿāl,*[44] interpreted by the scholiast as meaning that the shoes were designed for treading on soft or smooth floors or ground, not for traversing the hard terrain of desert and steppe. What is more, the Ghassānids were prosperous enough to throw away their shoes when they needed resoling, a process that would make the soles thick.[45]

Expensive clothes were not only worn by the Ghassānids but also used as gifts for distinguished visitors. They were sometimes referred to as *athwāb al-riḍā,* "the robes of satisfaction or pleasure," though the more common name for a presentation garment or robe was *khilʿa* (plural *khilaʾ*). Sometimes they were given to express the Ghassānid patron's extreme satisfaction for a panegyric or some special service rendered; in such a case the dynast would throw his own robe on the honorand as a special favor.

Such Ghassānid gifts are attested in the prose account of the poet laureate, Ḥassān, which Nicholson cited to illustrate the gaiety of Jabala's court. The relevant part may be quoted here: "and, by God, I was never in his company but he gave me the robe which he was wearing on that day, and many of his friends were thus honoured. He treated the rude with forbearance; he laughed without reserve and lavished his gifts before they were sought."[46] The verses of the poet al-Nābigha

[42] Translated by R. Nicholson, with comments, in *A Literary History of the Arabs* (1907; reprint, London, 1969), 53 and notes 2–4.

[43] Ibid., note 3. See also F. Viré, "Fanak," *EI*², II, 775.

[44] See al-Nābigha al-Ḏubyānī, *Dīwān,* ed. Ibrāhīm, 47, verse 25.

[45] See Jubouri, *al-Malābis,* 318; quoting al-Jāḥiz, *Al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn,* ed. ʿA. Hārūn (Cairo, 1960), III, 107. The importance that Arabs accorded shoes is reflected in the many pages devoted to them by Jubouri (317–35).

[46] Translated in Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs,* 53.

al-Jaʿdi also enumerated various gifts from the Ghassānid dynast: *inter alia,* robes from Ḥaḍramawt, linen from Iraq, and *rayṭ* from Oriens.[47]

The *Patricius*

The Ghassānid kings were also *patricii,* as is attested in inscriptions for both Arethas and Mundir.[48] The garb of *patricii* during the ceremony of investiture is described in two chapters of *De Ceremoniis* by Constantine VII Prophyrogenitus, the first of which is devoted to the promotion of the military to that status.[49] During the ceremony, the *patricius* appeared wearing a purple robe, σαγίον ἀληθινόν, and then a red robe, σαγίον ῥοῆς.[50]

Those who were promoted to the rank of *patricius* received the acclamations of the demes. After describing these acclamations, Constantine mentions those who dine with the *patricius;* among them were the *demarchoi,* who wear a robe called ἀββδία—which may be the Arab *ʿabāʾa*.[51] Supporting that provenance is the renown of Arabian textiles, which Byzantium imported.[52] In A.D. 580, as noted above, the Ghassānid Mundir brought with him to Constantinople some gifts for the emperor, Tiberius, including some garments from Arabia, or "barbaria." Could one of these have been an *ʿabāʾa*?

The Phylarch

As *foederati,* who fought regularly alongside the Byzantine army of the Orient, the Ghassānids were almost certainly dressed like the Byzantine troops. They were trained to fight in the Roman manner, as shown by the short obituary notice on Jabala,[53] the father of the famous Arethas, who died fighting for Byzantium against the Persians at the battle of Thannūris in A.D. 528.

The Ghassānid contingent in the army of the Orient was mainly composed of

[47] See al-Nābigha al-Jaʿdi, *Dīwān,* 61–62, verses 13–14.

[48] See *BASIC* I.1, 260, 490, 495.

[49] For the Greek text and its French rendition, see Constantine VII, *Le livre des cérémonies,* ed. and trans. A. Vogt (Paris, 1939), II, chapters 56, 57 (in Reiske's numbering 47, 48), pp. 44–50, 51–60.

[50] Ibid., chapter 56, pp. 48, 49. The color red, which figures prominently in federate Ghassānid dress, is considered the most striking of all colors; see A. B. Greenfield, *A Perfect Red: Empire, Espionage, and the Quest for the Color of Desire* (New York, 2005).

[51] Constantine VII, *Le livre des cérémonies,* chapter 57, p. 60 and note 1. Errors of transcription are common, particularly in reproducing faithfully the *ʿayn* and the *hamza;* hence *ʿabāʾa* could easily have become *abdia*.

[52] On the vogue of Oriental garments at court, see Ševčenko, "Costume," 537, quoting N. P. Kondakov, "Les costumes orientaux à la cour byzantine," *Byzantion* 1 (1924), 7–49.

[53] "Armis Romanorum multum exercitatus erat"; see Zacharia Scholasticus, *Historia Ecclesiastica,* ed. E. W. Brooks, CSCO, Scriptores Syri, ser. 3 (Paris, 1924), VI, 64. The *sayf,* "sword," the weapon of which the Arabs were proud and which elicited from them so many complimentary tributes, was a Greek loanword, ξίφος. And the tactical unit in the army, *kurdūs,* derived from Latin *cohors, cohortis*.

cavalry. The military uniform and armor of the supreme phylarch and king, as well as those of the rank and file, may be visualized from contemporary illustrations of Byzantine uniforms in works on military history in the sixth century.[54] The battle dress of the Ghassānid troops may not have been an exact replica of what the Byzantines wore, but it could have been similar to it.

Just as the contemporary sources, especially poetry on the Ghassānids, have preserved some evidence for civilian costume, so has contemporary poetry preserved some verses on their military outfits. They have survived in two odes: one by al-Nābigha and the other by ʿAlqama, a poet from northeast Arabia, who belonged to the group Tamīm and who traveled to the Ghassānid court to plead for the release of his brother, who had been captured by the Ghassānids in battle.[55]

Al-Nābigha's ode simply describes the swords and spears of the Ghassānids,[56] but the verses have attained celebrity in the annals of Arabic poetry owing to the portrayal of their swords: its most celebrated verse was quoted by none other than the Ḥamdānid Sayf al-Dawla, after a great victory scored by his troops during the epic Arab-Byzantine conflict in the tenth century.[57]

ʿAlqama's ode is unique among all panegyrics on the Ghassānids, as a fairly detailed *ekphrasis* of the celebrated Arethas leading his troops at the battle of Chalcis, or Yawm Ḥalīma, in A.D. 554.[58] The most relevant portion is a sextet of verses describing the king, mounted on the famed *equus caballus,* the Arabian horse.[59]

1. Verse 25 of the ode describes Arethas as a horseman. In giving the name of his famous horse, al-Jawn, it provides another way to name him: he is *Fāris al-Jawn,* "the Rider of al-Jawn."

2. Verse 26 describes him spurring his horse forward until the white patches on the horse's knees vanish, obscured either by the blood of the enemy or by the press of their ranks. He takes this action while striking his opponent hard with his sword. His adversaries wore helmets (*bayḍ*) and also cuirasses that enveloped their chests and backs.

3. Verse 27 supplies evidence for the armor of the commander in chief of the Ghassānid *foederati,* as a cataphract. As is well known, cataphracts were deployed

[54] E.g., see G. Ravegnani, *Soldati di Bisanzio in età giustinianea* (Rome, 1988), Figures I, III, and IV, which respectively represent a Byzantine general, a *magister militum,* a rank Arethas held *de facto;* a cavalryman with his lance, such as constituted most of the Ghassānid contingent in the army of the Orient; and a rank-and-file soldier in the Byzantine army.

[55] On the two poets, see Sezgin, *GAS,* II, 110–13, 120–22.

[56] See al-Nābigha al-Dubyānī, *Dīwān,* ed. Ibrāhīm, 43, verse 14; 44, verses 17, 22.

[57] Ibid., 44, verse 19; for its citation by Sayf al-Dawla, see al-Mutanabbi, *Dīwān,* ed. ʿA. al-Barqūqī (Cairo, 1930), II, 286 and note 4. This incident is discussed further in "Poetry," Chapter 7 in Part III.

[58] On the battle, see *BASIC* I.1, 240–51.

[59] See al-Aʿlam al-Shantamarī, *Dīwān ʿAlqama al-Faḥl,* ed. D. al-Khaṭīb and I. Ṣaqqāl (Aleppo, 1969), 43–45, verses 25–30.

in the Roman/Byzantine army in response to the rise of the Sasanids and the threat that their cataphracts posed. Rome had to adopt body armor to counter its eastern adversary more effectively. This verse mentions two *sarābīl* (plural of *sirbal*),[60] coats of mail, that the Ghassānid commander wore while he was fighting. This immediately suggests the cataphract, who wore a protective coat of varied length and a surcoat that protected him from the blows or thrusts of lances. The sixth verse in this sextet, discussed below, addresses the material of which the coats were made.

After describing Arethas' two layers of protective armor, the coat and the surcoat of mail, the poet says that the king carried two choice swords, *aqīlā suyūf,* which he names *Mikhdam* and *Rasūb,* indicating that both were very sharp. Just as the horse had a name, so did the two swords, reflecting the importance which the fighters attached to their armor, especially the sword. For Arabs the swordsman was braver than the spearman, because his weapon is shorter; hence the sword's wielder proved his courage in coming close to his adversary.[61] Just as the swords of the Ghassānids in the ode of al-Nābigha resonated in later Islamic times, in the tenth century, so did these two swords in ʿAlqama's poem. The life of one of them was much longer, since the Prophet Muḥammad gave it to his son-in-law ʿAli and it came to be known, because of its proverbial efficacy, as *Du al-Faqār,* "the Sword of the Vertebrae."[62]

4. Verse 30 describes the coats of mail of the rank and file of the Ghassānid army, who are said to be wearing *abdān al-hadīd,* "coats of iron," which emit a sound like the rustling of dry leaves when the south wind blows on them. The term for the sound is almost onomatopoetic, *takhashkhash*. The phrase "coats of iron" clearly indicates that their coats were made of iron rings or chains.

Queens and Princesses

As is true of male Ghassānids, the sources are interested mainly in members of the royal house. The queens and the princesses are mentioned sporadically, and very briefly.[63]

[60] A Persian loanword, which appears even in the Koran; see Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary of the Qurʾan,* 168–69, and E. Yarshater, "The Persian Presence in the Islamic World," in *The Persian Presence in the Islamic World,* ed. R. G. Hovannisian and G. Sabagh (Cambridge, 1991), 53. Naturally, the allies of Persia whom the Ghassānids fought also wore two coats of mail; in his ode on the Ghassānids, al-Nābigha al-Dubyānī called the double-breastplate *al-salūqiyy al-muḍāʿaf nasjuh; Dīwān,* ed. Ibrāhīm, 46, verse 21.

[61] In one of his epinician odes on Sayf al-Dawla, Mutanabbi said that the Muslim hero so despised spears that he threw them away; see *Dīwān,* II, 275, verse 4.

[62] For the fateful history of the two swords, see the discussion below in Chapter 11, "Votive and Victory Offerings."

[63] On female dress in this period, see M. Harlow, "Female Dress, Third–Sixth Century: The Messages in the Media?" in Carrié, ed., *Tissus et vêtements dans l'antiquité tardive,* 203–15.

1. The queens. The wife of the Ghassānid king was certainly a queen. Her Christian counterpart, Hind, the wife of the Lakhmid Mundir, was called queen, *malaka*, in a famous inscription.[64] The clothes worn by these federate queens are nowhere described in the scant extant sources. The only article that can be safely inferred from other solid sources is the veil, *naṣīf* or *khimār* or *burquʿ*. The Lakhmid queen al-Mutajarrida, the wife of the last Lakhmid king, al-Nuʿmān, was described by al-Nābigha in an ode entirely devoted to her. But of the ode's thirty-four verses, only two refer to dress items, namely, her veil (*naṣīf*) and her necklace.[65]

These items were consonant with the Byzantine style of female dress, which included the wearing of the *maphorion* as a head covering. It was also consonant with the mores of a Bible-centric society like the Christian Roman Empire of Byzantium, which followed St. Paul's recommendation that women should wear a veil during church services.[66] The queens of so strongly Monophysite a confession as the Ghassānids would also have obeyed Paul's injunction. Although his recommendations involve only the hair, the Ghassānid queens most likely also veiled their face. This can be inferred from the practice at the Lakhmid court, reflected in a verse of al-Nābigha where the context makes clear that the queen had her face covered before her veil fell off.[67] Apparently aristocratic Arab women normally covered their faces with the *khimār* or *naṣīf* or *burquʿ*, a practice evident in the speech that Ruhm, the chief female martyr of Najrān, delivered before her death.[68] The Ghassānid queens were the relatives of Ruhm who shared her devotion to Monophysite Christianity, and they must have looked to her as a role model.

2. The princesses. The sources do provide information on the dress of the Ghassānid princesses. In one of his odes, when he was in a nostalgic mood remembering his Ghassānid patrons, Ḥassān refers to the young Ghassānid maidens weaving coral wreaths for the celebration of Easter; in a single verse he describes them as draped in *rayṭ* (plural of *rayṭa*), "white garments," and also in *majāsid kattān,* "linen robes."[69]

[64] See the present writer in "The Authenticity of Pre-Islamic Poetry: The Linguistic Dimension," *al-Abḥāth* 44 (1996), 11.

[65] See al-Nābigha al-Dubyānī, *Dīwān,* ed. Ibrāhīm, 91, verse 10; 93, verse 17.

[66] I Corinthians 11:5–6, 13.

[67] See al-Nābigha al-Dubyānī, *Dīwān,* ed. Ibrāhīm, 9, verses 17–18.

[68] See *Martyrs,* 57–58. The practice among Arab women of wearing veils that covered the face is confirmed by another verse that mentions the *qināʿ* of a *ḥurra,* a free Arab woman (not a slave); see al-Nābigha al-Jaʿdi, *Dīwān,* 72, verse 15.

[69] Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 255, verse 7. This verse, which has already been discussed in various contexts, undoubtedly involves Ghassānid princesses. They are referred to as *walāʾid* (the plural of *walīda*), "daughters," in verse 6, and the use of the term *majāsid* for "robes" confirms their royal character. A couplet of verses by a pre-Islamic poet makes clear that they were robes worn by affluent women, luxuriating in fine clothes; see Jubouri, *al-Malābis,* 82.

Appendix

The Vestimentary System: Further Observations

1. The first dynasty in Islamic history, the Umayyad, had for its metropolitan province the Oriens of Byzantium and of the Ghassānids. Before the inception of his caliphate in A.D. 661, the founder, Muʿāwiya, had made Jābiya, the capital of the Ghassānids, his own capital for some twenty years. And during his forty years of rule in Bilād al-Shām as *amīr* and caliph, the Ghassānids and other *foederati* had a strong presence in Bilād al-Shām and in the Umayyad state.[1] Furthermore, Muʿāwiya was the first Arab ruler to openly depart from the old modest and conservative dress recommended in Islam, assuming the more luxurious dress he found available in the ex-Byzantine Diocese of Oriens, now Bilād al-Shām. Consequently, the sources for Umayyad history are rich in data on the pre-Umayyad period of Bilād al-Shām, including its dress and textiles. Particularly useful is Arabic poetry composed for the Umayyads, such as the verses of al-Akhṭal and ʿUbayd Allah ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt, in which such terms as *sariq* (Gr. σηρική) for silk occurs. The *dīwān*s of Arabic poetry are indeed a mine of information for the history of the dynasty,[2] including the history of pre-Islamic Arab dress, which Umayyad dress continued in many important ways. Needless to say, the identification of the Byzantine element in, and influence on, Arab Ghassānid dress as more significant than the Persian will revive interest in the argument—presented as early as 1952 by Ernst Kühnel and Louisa Bellinger—that the Umayyad *tirāz,* the textile workshops in the Umayyad period, were related to the Byzantine *gynaecea* in Oriens.[3]

2. Of the various kinds of textiles and fabrics, silk, *ḥarīr,*[4] had a privileged position, reflected in the many terms that designated it. Some were Greek loanwords, including *sariq* from σερική, *mustaka* from *metaxa* (by metathesis), and *siyarās* from Σῆρες, the proper noun for Chinese or Indians. These were the terms known to the pre-Islamic and Umayyad poets. But the fortunes of silk experienced a setback with the rise of Islam.[5] While Byzantine Christianity embraced silk, both in its ecclesia and its imperium, and emperors used it extensively in their dress and as imperial gifts, Islam frowned on it and the Muhammadan traditions are replete

[1] See A. Shboul and A. Walmsley, "Identity and Self-Image in Syria-Palestine in the Transition from Byzantine to Early Islamic Rule: Arab Christians and Muslims," *Mediterranean Archaeology* 11 (1998), 255–87.

[2] See Ş. Agha and T. Khālidi, "Poetry and Identity in the Umayyad Age," *al-Abḥath* 50–51 (2003), 55–120.

[3] See E. Kühnel and L. Bellinger, *Catalogue of Dated Ṭirāz Fabrics: Umayyad, Abbasid, Fatimid* (Washington, D.C., 1952). See also Y. K. Stillman and P. Sanders, "Ṭirāz," *EI*², X, 534–38.

[4] The etymology of the most common word for silk in Arabic, *ḥarīr,* is still uncertain.

[5] For silk in Islam, see N. Seedengaard, "Ḥarīr," *EI*², III, 209–21.

with warnings against its use by Muslims. The blessed in the Koranic paradise are described as dressed in fine silks, however.[6]

3. Poetry was important as a means of spreading publicity and propaganda for the Ghassānids in Oriens and in the Arabian Peninsula. The panegyrics were probably recited in an odeum specifically constructed for poetry recitation and other similar functions.[7] This practice raises the question of whether the poets wore a special outfit during their recitations. In the days of al-Jāḥiẓ of the ninth century, the poets used to wear a special kind of dress, such as red silk. He also describes a poet who dressed in "the style of those who belonged to the past," *ziyy al-māḍīn;* he used to don a black robe, *burd,* both in summer and in winter.[8] This term *al-māḍīn,* "those of the past," could refer to the pre-Islamic period; thus the Ghassānid poet may have worn an outfit that was appropriate to the occasion.

4. Another question pertains to Ghassānid identity and the extent to which Byzantine dress affected it. Although the Ghassānids' Arab identity remained strong, they were naturally influenced by Byzantine dress in two important areas of their Byzantine experience: as *patricii* and as *phylarchoi* on the battlefield. Especially significant was the *sagion* draped over them when they received the patriciate.[9]

Nevertheless, the Ghassānids undoubtedly wore Arab clothes when they dealt with the Arabs both of Oriens—other *foederati*—and of the Arabian Peninsula. The Arab vestimentary system suited the climate and terrain of the arid region in Oriens and in Arabia Pastoralis.

5. The various items in the vestimentary system of the pre-Islamic Arabs may be consulted in works on this subject.[10] Here, two distinctively Arab items will be briefly noticed.

Because of the hot and dry climate of the Arabian Peninsula, the two most important items for the Arabs were their headgear, which protected their heads from the scorching sun, and footwear, which protected their feet from the hot ground. The two items gave rise to two sayings: *al-ʿamāʾim tijān al-ʿArab,* "the turbans are the crowns of the Arabs," and *al-niʿāl khalākhīl al-rijāl,* "shoes are the anklets of men." The importance of these two items is reflected in the space given

[6] Koran, 76:21; 18:31; 55:76. See also the appendix to Chapter 4, above.

[7] On the possibility of an odeum in Jābiya or Jalliq, see the discussion in Part III, Chapter 3, "Architecture and Decorative Art."

[8] See al-Jāḥiz, *al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn,* ed. A. Hārūn (Cairo, 1960), III, 115, describing poets of his day as dressing *al-muqattaʿāt,* which the editor glosses as attire made of red silk material, *khazz* (115 note 7).

[9] See the section "The *Patricius*" in the chapter above.

[10] See Y. K. Stillman with N. A. Stillman, "Libās," *EI*², V, 732–35 (the portion dealing with pre-Islamic attire); the Ghassānids must have worn some of the items discussed in this entry. The chapter on clothes in this volume has discussed only evidence in contemporary poetry and in some prose works.

to their treatment in works on Arab dress. One such work allocates eighteen pages to the discussion of footwear, and no less than fifty-seven to the turban, *ʿimāma*.[11] The Ghassānid king must have worn a turban when he dealt with his people in Oriens and with others in the Arabian Peninsula, and perhaps when he visited Constantinople. As a headdress, and when elaborately folded, the *ʿimāma* was striking and it imparted dignity to the wearer. In the case of Arethas, the *ʿimama* would have enhanced the remarkable impression he made on those who saw him, as noted by John of Ephesus when Arethas visited the capital.[12]

Headgear has remained the distinctive feature of Arab dress, whether in the form of the *kūfiyya* and the *ʿiqāl,* the scarf and the ringed cord that goes around it,[13] or the *ʿimāma*. The latter has become associated with the *ʿUlamāʾ*, Muslim scholars and "clerics." For Muslims it was considered "the badge of Islam," *sīmā al-Islam,* and a "divider between unbelief and belief," *ḥājiz bayna al-kufr wa al-īmān*.[14] In medieval times, the *ʿimāma* was also worn by secular Arabs, who took pride in making a distinction between it and the crown of the non-Muslim rulers, which they despised. This sentiment was well expressed in one of the verses of Mutanabbi, which praised Sayf al-Dawla, who wore an *ʿimāma,* and scorned his Byzantine adversary, who wore a crown.[15]

Their headgear has also remained a distinctive feature of the vestimentary system of the Arab Muslim women. As has been explained in the chapter on clothes, Arab aristocratic women in pre-Islamic times wore veils that covered their hair and often their faces. With its conservative attitude toward dress, especially for women, Islam favored the veil, though veiling the face is not explicitly prescribed in the Koran. The practice remains widespread to the present day and, as noted in Chapter 2, has become a source of tension in Western secular societies.

[11] Y. Jubouri, *al-Malābis al-Arabiyya fi al-Aṣr al-Jāhili* (Beirut, 1989), 317–35, 196–253.

[12] On the impression Arethas made, see *BASIC* I.1, 287–88.

[13] A new lease on life has been given to the *kūfiyya* and the *ʿiqāl* by the sudden emergence into prominence—driven by oil wealth—of the states of the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf; those living in the West have therefore become familiar with the distinctively Arab headgear that the rulers and citizens of all these states still wear.

[14] See Y. K. Stillman, *Arab Dress: A Short History; From the Dawn of Islam to Modern Times,* ed. N. A. Stillman (Leiden, 2003), 138.

[15] See al-Mutanabbi, *Dīwān,* ed. ʿA. al-Barqūqī (Cairo, 1930), II, 239, verse 3.

VII

Medicine

Because of their constant engagement in warfare, the Ghassānids necessarily had to deal with wounds not only to their soldiers but also to the horses that they rode into battle, which were often hurt by the spears of their foes.[1] They also had to cope with the bubonic plague, an outbreak of which in the sixth century caused many fatalities everywhere. It did not spare Oriens or the army of the Ghassānids. Secular medicine must have been known among the pre-Islamic federates. Greek medical terms that became Arabic loanwords documented during this period—such as *diryāq* ("antidote"), Greek θηριακή, in the poetry of their panegyrist Ḥassān, and *bayṭār,* Greek ἱππιατρός, for veterinarian[2]—attest to this knowledge.

The birth of the Byzantine hospital has been dated to the sixth century, which also witnessed the *floruit* of the cult of the Anargyroi, the "silverless" doctors in whose cult the grace of God was glorified as more efficacious than the skill of the physicians. The emperor himself was cured from what seemed like a fatal illness by two of the most famous Anargyroi, Cosmas and Damian.[3] They received imperial patronage in Constantinople; churches dedicated to them proliferated everywhere; and the plague that broke out only enhanced their prestige and popularity. At the same time, care of the sick and injured was an important aspect of Christian *philanthropia*—perhaps inspired by the ministry of Christ, whose miracles made him a physician.[4]

[1] Noted by their panegyrist al-Nābigha; see *Dīwān al-Nābigha al-Dhubyānī,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1977), 43, 15. The Ghassānids were mainly horsemen and the Ghassānid cavalry was a valuable asset to the Byzantine army of the Orient. Hence the condition of their horses was as important as that of their riders. The verse of al-Nābigha states that some of their horses during the encounter were bleeding (*dami*) and others had wounds that already were being attended to (*jālib*), and the latter implies the work of veterinarians.

[2] For Greek loanwords in Arabic, see D. Gutas, "Greek Loanwords," in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics,* ed. K. Versteegh (Leiden, 2005), I, 198–202. On *diryāq,* see Chapter 5, note 28; on ἱππιατρός as a Greek loanword in Arabic, *bayṭār,* see Chapter 12, especially note 6.

[3] See Procopius, *Buildings,* I.vi.5–8.

[4] As was one of the four evangelists, Luke. Of course, another aspect of their *philanthropia* connected with waging war was the need to look after the many widows and orphans left in the wake of battle.

Theology and Medicine

The sixth century witnessed the impingement of theology on the theory and practice of medicine, evinced in the hostility of Christian medicine to its secular counterpart, as expressed in hagiography.[5] In this development the Monophysite movement, to which the Ghassānids belonged, was heavily involved. The Monophysites sponsored the *spoudaioi* (also called *philoponoi*)[6] who worked in *diakoniai,* charitable institutions that emphasized Christian *philanthropia;* in contrast, the hospitals, *xenones,* sponsored by their opponents, the Chalcedonians, relied on the ancient Greek medical authorities, Galen and Hippocrates, and stressed medical treatment and care. The support of the Monophysites found its outstanding expression during the patriarchate of the Monophysite Paul of Antioch (A.D. 564–581),[7] who became one of the leaders of those *spoudaioi* and supported the movement in Antioch and in Constantinople, founding new *diakoniai.* The tensions between *diakoniai* and *xenones* were exaggerated in hagiography; in practice, however, the two were not so starkly opposed. "The relationship between the hospitals and the *Anargyroi* shrines was so close that the miracle-tale writers often pictured the doctor-saints as though they were *xenon* physicians";[8] and Justinian himself, who according to one source was cured by the two saints, Cosmas and Damian, also introduced the followers of the ancient pagan physicians, the *archiatroi,* into the Christian *xenones*.[9]

The Ghassānids were involved in this tension between the two camps of Christian and secular physicians, especially since their king was not only a fervent Monophysite but also a staunch supporter of the patriarch Paul, who founded the *diakoniai.* Besides, the two outstanding saints among the Anargyroi were Arabs, like the Ghassānids, and their tombs were not far away, in Cyrrhos.[10]

But the sources are silent on the Ghassānid attitude toward the question of medical care, with the exception of one revelatory passage in a hagiographic work of the late sixth century. According to the Syriac *Life of James* (the Monophysite Jacob Baradaeus), the Ghassānid troops were plagued by some ailment, described by the hagiographer as insanity; Arethas crossed the Euphrates to consult a holy

[5] See T. S. Miller, *The Birth of the Hospital in the Byzantine Empire* (1985; reprint, Baltimore, 1997), 56, 63, 65.

[6] Ibid., 131.

[7] On Paul, see *BASIC* I.2, 802–5.

[8] Miller, *Birth of the Hospital,* p. 65

[9] On Justinian and the *archiatroi,* see the many pages cited in the index of ibid., s.v. Justinian and the *archiatroi*.

[10] It was in Palaestina Secunda—where the capital of the Ghassānids, Jābiya, was located—that Christ miraculously cured the woman who had an issue of blood. There, too, the Old Testament patriarch Job, one of the heroes of the Ghassānids, was afflicted with boils; he sought no secular medicine but trusted in God, who cured him.

man, Jacob, who gave him some advice that involved the release of another holy man whom the phylarch had captured. On his return, Arethas found that his troops had already recovered, and so he fulfilled Jacob's request: he freed the holy man from his captivity.[11]

The elucidation of the tension between the two groups involved in medical care and the position of the Monophysites and the Ghassānids in this tension can shed much light on this passage in *The Life of James,* about whose authenticity doubts have been raised. The visit of the phylarch, Arethas, to the holy man, Jacob, no longer seems to be an embroidery or a later accretion, since it is perfectly consonant with what has been established as the Monophysite attitude toward medical treatment. Furthermore, the insanity of the Ghassānid troops can be easily related to a symptom of the plague described in detail by Procopius.[12] Far from being an unreliable account of what happened to some of the Ghassānid *foederati* in the sixth century, the passage becomes a valuable piece of evidence for the incidence of the plague among the *foederati* and the Monophysite reaction to its treatment.

Faithful as Arethas was to the Monophysite position on medical care, it is likely that he also sought help for his troops from those with medical training.[13] This leads back to the general question of the Ghassānids and their involvement in medical practice. They must have had recourse to physicians both as *foederati,* who were subject to wounds and ailments, and as devout Christians who would have been involved in medical care as an expression of their Christian *philanthropia*. Their involvement may be presented as follows.

1. The Ghassānids inherited pre-Islamic Arab knowledge, demonstrated in the appearance of the word for doctor, *ṭabīb,* in the poetry of this period.[14]

2. Their rivals, the Lakhmids, availed themselves of the medical skill emanating from the school of Jundīshāpūr in Persia, which relied heavily on Hellenistic medicine.[15] The Ghassānids would have not lagged behind their rivals in this respect.

[11] PO 19, pp. 233–34. On this passage in *Life of James,* called *The Spurious Life of James,* see *BASIC* I.2, 769–70. Nöldeke has argued that it was written by John of Ephesus himself but was later reworked by another author sometime after his death (see *GF,* 20 note 2).

[12] Procopius, *History,* II.xxii.20–21; see *BASIC* I.2, 770 note 120.

[13] The Ghassānid phylarch would have availed himself of the services not only of Ghassānid women but also of the *depotatoi* in the Byzantine army, who helped unhorsed or wounded soldiers, and possibly also the physicians, the *therapeutai,* who accompanied the army; see E. McGeer, "Medical Services, Military," *ODB,* II, 1327.

[14] The term *ṭabīb* appears in an ode of ʿAlqama, a panegyrist of the Ghassānids, in the sense of one who is knowledgeable, but the references to the ailments of women and how he can cure them as *ṭabīb* suggests a medical connotation; see al-Aʿlam al-Shantamarī, *Dīwān ʿAlqama al-Faḥl,* ed. D. al-Khaṭīb and I. Ṣaqqāl (Aleppo, 1969), 35, verse 8. The plural *aṭibbāʾ* appears in the poetry of the Ḥiran poet ʿAdī ibn Zayd; see his *Dīwān,* ed. M. al-Muʿaybid (Baghdad, 1965), 122, verse 6.

[15] For Jundīshāpūr, see C. Huart and A. Sayılı, "Gondeshāpūr," *EI*², II, 119–20.

3. Even in Ḥijāz, the sources attest the existence of two doctors, al-Ḥārith ibn Kalada and his son, al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārith. The latter was related to the Prophet Muḥammad, and the former is said to have attended the Persian school in Jundīshāpūr. These two may not have qualified exactly as doctors, but they apparently had some scientific knowledge that they applied in Ḥijāz.[16]

4. Living in Oriens, the Ghassānids were close to the Hellenistic centers of Greek medicine, the most important of which was Alexandria. So it is quite possible that they also availed themselves of what the medical profession in Byzantine Oriens had to offer.

As faithful Monophysites, they must also have had faith in the Anargyroi. Especially popular were the two saints, Cosmas and Damian—Arabs who were buried in Cyrrhos, one of the cities of their diocese, Oriens.

The sources also note that women helped attend to the sick during military encounters.[17] The lack of information on what women did during peacetime does not militate against the conclusion that they acted similarly then. Women in Byzantium took part in looking after patients, and sometimes all the nurses were women.[18] So it is safe to assume that Ghassānid women did participate in nursing, possibly supervised by the princesses or the queen.

The question arises whether the Ghassānids constructed any building for medical care. The sources are also silent on this; but in view of the Ghassānids' having been avid builders of a variety of structures,[19] they probably constructed buildings designed for the sick, perhaps dispensaries rather than hospitals. Nor do the sources supply any names of pre-Islamic figures in medicine in the diocese, although in later Abbasid and Andalusian times Arabs were to make substantial advances on the medical knowledge that they had inherited from Galen and Hippocrates. But in early Umayyad times one Arab physician stands out: Ibn Uthāl, the private and personal physician of Muʿāwiya, caliph in Oriens (661–680).

[16] For both doctors, see C. Pellat, "al-Ḥārith B. Kalada," *EI*², supplement (1980), 354–55, and "al-Naḍr ibn-al-Ḥārith," *EI*², VII, 872–73. The doubts cast on Ḥārith's visit to Persia and his attendance at the medical school in Jundīshāpūr are unjustified; see A. Sayili, "Ṭibb," *EI*², II, 1119–20. Both came from Ṭāʾif, which had close relations with Ḥīra in Iraq, as did Mecca (with which both were associated as physicians). Arabs from these two Ḥijāzi cities were to be found in Ḥīra, in Persian territory. Ḥārith thus could easily have gone to Jundīshāpūr and acquired some scientific knowledge of medicine. Accounts of al-Naḍr, who used to tell the Meccans that stories of Rustam and Isfandiyār are more attractive than the Koran, clearly imply some knowledge of *Persica,* derived from Ḥīra and Sasanid Persia. Questions about his relationship to al-Ḥārith are irrelevant to his ties to Ḥīra and to the Sasanid Persian influence on his medical knowledge; see M. A. ibn Abi-Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn al-Anbāʾ fi Ṭabaqāt al-Aṭibbāʾ*, ed. ʿĀ. al-Najjār (Cairo, 2001), I, 395 (and on al-Ḥārith ibn Kalada, see 386–95).

[17] See Jawād ʿAli, *al-Mufaṣṣal fi Tārikh al-ʿArab qabl al-Islam* (Beirut, 1970), IV, 620.

[18] See Miller, *Birth of the Hospital,* 214.

[19] See *BASIC* II.1, 149–56, 183–200, 306–31.

Ibn Uthāl, an Early Umayyad Physician

Ibn Uthāl was the most distinguished of the medical practitioners of the early Umayyad period, and it can be argued that he continued whatever medical tradition existed among the federates in pre-Islamic Oriens. The foremost medieval historian of Arab and Islamic medicine, Ibn Abi-Uṣaybiʿa, is relatively expansive on him and his expertise, and from the notice on him the following may be deduced.[20]

1. He was undoubtedly an Arab. His name, whether vocalized Uthāl or Athāl, is definitely Arab, with various significations (Arabian tree, utensil); when vocalized *Uthāl,* it means "honor, glory."[21] A Muslim by that name, Abū-Athāl, fought at the battle of the Yarmūk.[22]

2. The chances are that Ibn Uthāl was not a Rhomaic Arab but belonged to the federates. The former were assimilated into the Graeco-Roman society in Oriens, and they would have assumed other names, without the patronymic that Ibn Uthāl adopted.

3. As early as A.D. 661 or thereabouts, Muʿāwiya took Ibn Uthāl on as his private physician, when he became caliph and moved to Damascus. Ibn Uthāl thus was clearly born in pre-Islamic Oriens in the last days of the Byzantine and Ghassānid presence.

4. The historian stresses that Muʿāwiya had great respect for him. He deferred to the physician's judgment, and used to converse with him during the day and at night, a sure sign of his competence.

5. Especially important was Ibn Uthāl's knowledge and expertise in toxicology. Muʿāwiya could not always exercise his proverbial *ḥilm* (control of his emotions), and so he used to resort to disposing of his enemies quietly. He availed himself of the expertise of Ibn Uthāl for that purpose. For example, when Muʿāwiya decided to change the office of the caliphate to a dynastic succession—grooming his own son, Yazīd, for it—ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, the son of the famous general Khālid ibn al-Walīd, posed a threat to his plans. He then called on Ibn Uthāl to dispose of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, which the physician did.[23]

6. Ibn Uthāl was killed by Khālid ibn al-Muhājir, a relative of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, an act that greatly displeased Muʿāwiya, who had Khālid ibn al-Muhājir arrested. The caliph would have killed him, if Ibn Uthāl had been a Muslim; instead he

[20] See Ibn Abi-Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn al-Anbāʾ fi Tabaqāt al-Aṭibbāʾ,* I, 401–4. On the author, see I. Vernet, "Ibn Abi-Uṣaybiʿa," *EI*^{2}, III, 693–94.

[21] See *An Arabic-English Lexicon,* ed. E. W. Lane (London, 1863), Book I, part 1, 21. This Arabic lexeme in one of its significations, "vessels," "utensil," has survived in the world of science to the present in the term *aludel* (*al-uthāl*): the succession of bottle-shaped pots used as condensers in sublimation processes.

[22] See Ibn ʿĀsākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq,* ed. ʿU. al-ʿAmrawī (Beirut, 1995), XI, 399–400.

[23] See Ibn Abi-Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn al-Anbāʾ*, 402.

fined Khālid's clan, Makhzūm, 12 thousand dirhams as blood money.[24] Ibn Uthāl, a Christian, never converted to Islam.

It was probably after the death of Ibn Uthāl that Muʿāwiya retained as his personal physician Abū Ḥakam, also a Christian Arab, whose son, Ḥakam, and grandson, ʿĪsā, were likewise medical practitioners and Damascenes.[25] Al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf, the governor of Iraq for the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Malik, also had a personal physician, Tiyādhuq, whose name was an Arabicized form of Theodorus or Theodosius.[26] They all reflect the strong *Nachleben* of Byzantine medicine of pre-Islamic Oriens, both Rhomaic and federate, in the Umayyad state.

[24] Ibid., 402–3.
[25] On Abū Ḥakam; his son, Ḥakam; and his grandson, ʿĪsā, see ibid., 405–10.
[26] Ibid., 410–14.

C. RITUALS, ENTERTAINMENT, AND LEISURE ACTIVITIES

VIII

Music and Song

I. The Sources

The history of music and song among the Arabs in pre-Islamic times owes much to Henry G. Farmer, who discussed it in his well-known volume *A History of Arabian Music to the XIIIth Century,* published in 1929; it has remained a fundamental work on the subject.[1] In 1960, the pre-Islamic period was given a specialized, extensive treatment by Nāṣir al-Din al-Asad in *al-Qiyān wa al-Ghināʾ fi al-Shiʿr al-Jāhili,* based on primary sources—namely, contemporary pre-Islamic poetry.[2] This work was continued by Sharbīl Dāghir, who took up the theme from a lexicographical perspective and provided new insights on the subject;[3] nevertheless, al-Asad's publication has remained the principal work on music and song for the pre-Islamic period. It was, however, too specialized, as it emphasized two themes: *al-qiyān,* the songstresses, to whose names, careers, and influence most of his book is devoted, and the poet al-Aʿshā, to whom al-Asad devoted the remainder of the book. The poet belonged to the tribe of Bakr, in northeastern Arabia, who wandered in various places in the Peninsula and the Fertile Crescent, but his main inspiration was from the East, especially Ḥīra in Sasanid Persia's sphere of

[1] See H. G. Farmer, *A History of Arabian Music to the XIIIth Century* (1929; reprint, London, 1973). The first nineteen pages are devoted to the pre-Islamic period.

[2] See N. al-Asad, *al-Qiyān wa al-Ghināʾ fi al-Shiʿr al-Jāhili* (1960; reprint, Beirut, 1988), which devotes some three hundred pages to the pre-Islamic period. Al-Asad's book was briefly noticed in A. Shiloah, "Music in the Pre-Islamic Period as Reflected in Arabic Writings of the First Islamic Centuries," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 7 (1986), 109–10. Although Shiloah implicitly expresses reservations about al-Asad's work and about the reliability of the sources for music in the pre-Islamic period, al-Asad himself emphasized his dependence on contemporary pre-Islamic poetry, such as relying on the *Dīwān* of Aʿshā when writing on Aʿshā.

[3] In *Madhāhib al-Ḥusn* (Beirut, 1998), S. Dāghir takes a lexicographical approach to the various forms of Arab art and aesthetics; for his views on music and song, see 111–65.

influence. However, little attention has been given to the history of the two arts, music and song, in the *western* half of the Fertile Crescent, in Byzantine Oriens, or to the major poet of the Ghassānids—Ḥassān.

This chapter makes good the omission; its discussion of music and song among the Arab *foederati* of Byzantium in the western half of the Fertile Crescent in Byzantine Oriens is based mainly on the contemporary poetry of Ḥassān. The writer emerges as a major pre-Islamic poet of music and song, inspired by Byzantine Oriens and the urban ambience of Ghassānland, and as the counterpart of al-Aʿshā in Sasanid Persia.[4]

As the Arabic works of later times, especially the Abbasid, have been considered not entirely reliable, the discussion in this section of the two arts in pre-Islamic times avoids drawing too heavily on the later sources. Thus, it primarily examines the best contemporary pre-Islamic source, the poetry of Ḥassān himself. In addition, prose works that mention the Ghassānids cannot be entirely ignored. They will be examined for their kernels of truth, and the details that appear to be embroidered will be ignored.[5] The scanty information provided by the fragmentary extant sources may also be supplemented with some data on music and song from Ḥīra of the Lakhmids, under the influence of Sasanid Persia, and with data on social life under the Umayyads of Bilād al-Shām, who were heirs to the Ghassānid and Byzantine legacy.

Music played an important role in Arabs' secular and religious life, as well as during their battle-days.[6] Secular music and song, both at the court of the Ghassānids and at the tavern, will be discussed in the following pages, based on the few references in the *Dīwān* of Ḥassān.

II. Instrumental Music

"Music accompanied the Arabs from the cradle to the grave, from the lullaby to the elegy. . . . Indeed, the cultivation of music by the Arabs in all its branches reduces to insignificant the recognition of the art in the history of any other country."[7] Thus concluded the distinguished historian of Arabic music Henry F. Farmer after

[4] A comprehensive history of music and song in the pre-Islamic period must do justice to the three or four main urban centers of the Arabs in this period: Jābiya in the Golan, Jalliq in Phoenicia Libanensis, Ḥīra in Iraq, and Najrān in ʿAsīr. There the arts must have flourished at a relatively advanced and sophisticated level, as these centers moved in the wider orbits of cultural dominance: Byzantium, Sasanid Persia, and Ḥimyarite Yaman. The last has received the least research.

[5] See the discussion of prose works in Chapter 3.

[6] See al-Asad, *al-Qiyān,* 149–53.

[7] H. G. Farmer, "Music," in *The Legacy of Islam,* ed. T. Arnold and A. Guillaume (London, 1931), 358.

studying the impressive number of books and manuscripts in Arabic on this art.[8] Exaggerated as the statement seems to be, the substantial element of truth in it cannot be denied. The historian was, of course, primarily thinking of Arab music in Islamic times, when it indeed flourished.[9] But for the pre-Islamic period, the picture is different. Attached as the pre-Islamic Arabs were to music and song, their own contribution to it is far from clear, owing to the scarcity of surviving sources. Those that are extant point to foreign influences that shaped the music, from Persia, Byzantium, Ḥimyar,[10] and possibly Ethiopia. Music in this pre-Islamic period could have developed and matured only in the urban Arab centers of the Ghassānids, the Lakhmids, and the Ḥārithids: that is, in Jābiya and Jalliq, Ḥīra, and Najrān, whence it spread into other urban centers such as Ṭā'if, Mecca, and Medina in western Arabia. The first is the concern of this chapter—the Ghassānids in Byzantine Federate Oriens.

For social life in federate Byzantine Oriens, the poetry of Ḥassān is our only reliable source; but it is practically silent on the subject of musical instruments, which are only implied in his reference to the songstress and the instrumentalist. One of the prose accounts ascribed to him, however, describes a musical party at the court of the Ghassānid king, Jabala,[11] and refers to one musical instrument, the *barbat,* and to entertainers hailing from Byzantium; from Persia through Ḥīra, the Lakhmid capital; and even from Mecca. There is no doubt that music flourished at the Ghassānid court in Oriens and in Ghassānland, where the Ghassānids inherited the musical tradition of the Rhomaic Arabs of Petra and Palmyra;[12] naturally, they were influenced by the music of Byzantium and of Arab centers such as Ḥīra. As for the musical instruments, these must have been the same as were used in other urban centers with which the Ghassānids were in contact, such as Ḥīra (especially after the fall of its Lakhmid masters around A.D. 600).[13] The poets who

[8] Elsewhere Farmer states: "Music and song were with the Arabs from the lullaby at the cradle to the elegy at the bier" (*History of Arabian Music,* 17). Farmer's transports were modified by the reservations of D. S. Margoliouth (see vi).

[9] A zenith of the Arabic contribution to literature on music and song was reached in the tenth century in Aleppo at the court of the Ḥamdānid prince Sayf al-Dawla, where two great figures in this field met and were colleagues: Abū Naṣr al-Fārābi, the great philosopher of whose musicological works only *Kitāb al-Mūsīqī al-Kabīr* has survived, and Iṣfahānī, the author of *al-Aghānī,* which illustrates the employment of poetry in song that is discussed by al-Fārābi in *Kitāb al-Mūsīqī.*

[10] On the little-researched music in Ḥimyar, see Farmer, *History of Arabian Music,* 2–3, 15.

[11] For the account, see Abū al-Faraj Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (Beirut, 1959), XVII, 105–6.

[12] On music and musical instruments among the Nabataean and Palmyrene Arabs, see Farmer, *History of Arabian Music,* 5.

[13] Hence it was possible for Iyās ibn Qabīṣa to send Jabala songstresses from Ḥīra, as indicated in Ḥassān's account (Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī,* XVII, 105–6). Iyās ruled Ḥīra after the Lakhmids were deposed by Chosroes Parvīz. He belonged to the tribe of Ṭayyi', friendly to the Ghassānids; its poet and *sayyid,* Ḥātim, had visited the Ghassānids and eulogized them; see *BASIC* II.1, 246–59.

roamed those regions in northeastern Arabia and in Lower Mesopotamia, close to Ḥīra, preserved in their verse the names of the musical instruments common among the Arabs of the pre-Islamic period. The most important of these poets was al-Aʿshā, who hailed from the region and whose poetry has been thoroughly studied for its importance to this aspect of Arab social life.[14]

The instruments used by the pre-Islamic Arabs mentioned in what has survived of pre-Islamic poetry, especially that of al-Aʿshā, may be listed as follows: *mizhar,* lute; *kirān,* lute; *duff,* tambourine; *nāqūs,* clapper; *jalājil* (plural of *juljul*), bells; *muwattar,* stringed instrument, played with the thumb; *mizmār,* reed pipe; *miʿzafa,* psaltery; *qussāba,* flute; *sanj,* harp; and *ṭunbūr,* bandore.

Among all these instruments, the *ʿūd* held primacy. Originally it was a *mizhar,* a stringed instrument with a leather belly, replaced by wood through Persian influence. The sources state that it was introduced to Mecca by the poet-minstrel al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārith, a Meccan who had traded with the Ḥīrans. The lute had many names: *mizhar, kirān, barbat, muwattar,* and simply *ʿūd*. The names themselves of some of these instruments reflect foreign influences on Arab music; for example, *barbat* is considered Persian, and *kirān* Syriac/Aramaic-Hebrew.[15]

III. Song

Songstresses

Among the Ghassānids, the songstress rather than the male singer was the principal performer. An exception may be the *musāmir,* the nighttime companion, who in the poetry of Ḥassān is referred to as *garid,* an epithet that could imply singing, but the reference remains a *hapax legomenon*.[16] Perhaps more important is the one who recited Arabic poetry in this pre-Islamic period, the *munshid,* but the manner of this recitation has not been determined. The *singing* of verse will be discussed later in this volume in a different context.

In the *Dīwān* of Ḥassān, the most common appellation of the songstress is

[14] See al-Asad, *al-Qiyān,* 209–53.

[15] On the names of these instruments, see ibid., 106–9, and the still valuable discussion of Farmer, *History of Arabian Music,* 615–16 and notes. Al-Asad ferreted out the names of these instruments from pre-Islamic verses, which he conveniently quotes. He claims that he corrected Farmer on *ṭunbūr,* since he found it attested in pre-Islamic poetry (107–8), but Farmer had vouched for its Arabic pre-Islamic origin in *History* (5, 76). On the etymology of *barbaṭ* and *kirān,* see Farmer, *History,* 15–16, 16 notes 1 and 2. For al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārith, see C. Pellat, "al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārith," *EI*², VII, 872–73. *Barbat* became a loanword in Greek, βάρβιτον, and is accepted as probably such in LSJ, s.v. For *miʿzafah,* see Farmer, *History,* 3, 16, 76; apparently, it was a sort of psaltery, or barbiton.

[16] See *Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit,* ed. W. ʿArafāt, Gibb Memorial New Series 25 (London, 1971), I, 279, verse 7. Since the same verse mentions the *nadmān* (boon companion), the *musāmir/gharid* may be a different individual, especially in light of Ḥassān's reference to the *ḥadīth,* "conversation," of the *nadmān* but the *ṣawt,* "voice," of *al-musāmir, al-gharid*. Be that as it may, the overwhelming majority of singers in pre-Islamic Arabia were women.

the term *musmiʿa*—literally, "the one who lets her voice be heard." The *musmiʿa* is a vocal performer and sometimes also an instrumentalist. She appears in the *Dīwān* in three different contexts, and only the first two are Ghassānid: (1) at the royal court, (2) in the local tavern, and (3) in private homes.[17] Although the *sāqi* appears in this poetry as the one who serves wine to the tavern patrons, the songstress sometimes performs that function when she is not singing.

The *Dīwān* of Ḥassān does not describe how the songstress was dressed, but the poets of eastern Arabia did, and the woman singer in Ghassānland must also have dressed similarly. The same is true of the jewelry she must have worn, also described in the poetry of the bards, and of her movements, which may have amounted to a dance.[18] But Arabic poetry had to wait some three centuries before a *musmiʿa* was featured in a poem exclusively devoted to her, in which the poet portrayed her figure, her face, her musical performance, and her voice—namely, Ibn al-Rūmi's famous ode on the songstress Waḥīd.[19] Whether Ḥassān had composed similar odes remains unknown, since only a fraction of his poetry on that period has survived. But it is clear from the fragments of Ḥassān and from other poets who mentioned the *musmiʿa* in Arabia and in the Lakhmid capital, Ḥīra, that the songstress became the most important single figure providing entertainment in the social life of the Arabs.

In addition to *musmiʿa,* the native Arabic term for the songstress, other labels were also coined, such as *dājina, mudjina, ṣadūḥ, ṣadīḥa,* and *jarāda*. *Musmiʿa,* which was sometimes used for the instrumental performer, was the most common, and lasted into the Islamic period. But it finally gave way to another term that became dominant in Umayyad and Abbasid times: namely, *qayna* (plural *qiyān*).

While *musmiʿa* was an Arabic term derived from a root *s-m-ʿ*, meaning "hear," which easily and immediately suggested her function, *qayna* was an old Semitic term, introduced in the pre-Islamic period, whose root meaning has been lost. The songstress was an entertainer whose popularity increased in Umayyad times, reaching a climax in the Abbasid period, when she very often emerged as a talented poetess.

It was these *qiyān* who are found in the prose sources that describe the social life of the Arabs, including the Ghassānids. According to the detailed studies of these *qiyān* in pre-Islamic Arabia, they were found in at least three major cities of western Arabia: in Najrān, Mecca, and Yathrib/Medina. Their names are known,

[17] One poem by Ḥassān is devoted to describing a drinking party in the private home of a certain Ṣālih ibn ʿIlāt in Ḥijāz; female instrumentalists performed, and probably also sang (ibid., 91).

[18] See the verses of Ṭarafa, of the tribe Bakr in eastern Arabia, in al-Asad, *al-Qiyān,* 58, 64, and also al-Aʿshā's verse.

[19] For Ibn al-Rūmi's 58-verse ode on the songstress Waḥīd, see A. Motoyoshi, "Sensibility and Synaesthesia: Ibn al-Rūmi's Singing Slave-Girl," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 32 (2001), 1–29.

as are the names of their patrons—wealthy and influential members of those communities who could afford to hire these *qiyān* to entertain their guests, including the poets, who described these songstresses in their odes.[20] South Arabia also had plenty of them, though they remained mostly anonymous; so did Eastern Arabia and of course Ḥīra in Lower Mesopotamia, the principal urban center of the Arabs in this period. Thus the statement that the Ghassānid king Jabala presented at a banquet five *qiyān* from Ḥīra and others from Mecca should be considered trustworthy. Ḥīra was apparently on good terms with the Ghassānids after the fall ca. A.D. 600 of the Lakhmid House of Naṣr. And Mecca had very important commercial relations with the Ghassānids, as did Yathrib/Medina and, of course, Najrān. The same account (discussed below) refers to five *qiyān* of Jabala who sang for him in *al-Rūmiyya,* Greek. *Ḥāwi al-Funūn,* which preserves a list of the names of songstresses, mentions Jabala's *qiyān* but does not give their names. Since they are anonymous, it is not clear whether they were Arab; the fact that they sang in Greek might suggest that they were not.

A number of questions are raised by the appearance of these pre-Islamic songstresses.

1. Were they Arab, or were they foreign? The only explicit and detailed reference to them is in Ḥassān's account of the court of Jabala. Five of these songstresses were *Rūmiyyāt,* that is, "Byzantines" who sang in *Rūmiyyā* (Greek). Jabala, the Ghassānid phylarchs, and the ranking officers in the *phylarchia* no doubt understood the Greek of the songstresses. Even if some did not understand, they would have enjoyed the voices and tunes in much the same way that operas today are heard and enjoyed by those who do not comprehend their original language.

The account then refers to five songstresses who sang in the style of *ahl al-Ḥīra,* the people or inhabitants of Ḥīra, a description that provides no information on their identity. But since Ḥīra was in the Persian orbit, especially influenced by such material aspects of Persian culture as food, song, and music, some of them may have been Persian or Persian-speaking.

The Arab identity of the third group of songstresses who used to come to the Ghassānid court is explicitly stated by Ḥassān, who says that Jabala and the Ghassānid court used to receive Arab songstresses from Mecca and other Arab places. Other songstresses might have been Rhomaic Arabs, from Nabataea or Palmyrena. One Arabic source suggests that a Ghassānid woman did sing on one occasion, although she was not a professional songstress.[21] If authentic, the account

[20] Only one work pays some attention to pre-Islamic *qiyān;* an eleventh-century author who lived in Fatimid Egypt wrote the *Jāmiʿ al-Funūn wa Salwā al-Maḥzūn,* which contains a discussion on pre-Islamic *qiyān;* see al-Asad, *al-Qiyān,* 265–72. The *qiyān* of Iṣfahānī are later Islamic songstresses.

[21] See al-Asad, *al-Qiyān,* 271 on the *qiyān* of Jabala. The author, Ibn Taḥḥān, says their *qiyān* were known as songstresses in Islamic times; it is a pity that he does not give their names.

would reveal the only songstress associated with the Ghassānids known by her name, Dhalfāʾ.[22]

2. Where in Oriens did Ḥassān and others find the taverns which they patronized, and in which they drank their wine and heard the song of the *musmiʿa?* As has been indicated earlier, the songstresses could be heard in private homes, in local taverns, and at the royal court. The sources are completely silent on the first venue and provide some insight into the third. But the second is the most desired destination: the local tavern, *ḫānūt,* which poets such as Ḥassān frequented, where he caroused, and which he described in his poetry. The preceding volume established a large number of localities associated with the sedentary Ghassānids in Oriens; the following places (all discussed in more detail in *BASIC* II.1) may be singled out as likely to have had taverns where song was heard. To these may be added locations in Byzantine Oriens where a strong Arab presence dated to the second and third centuries, when the Nabataean and Palmyrene political entities flourished.

a. Byzantine cities, whose wines were tasted by poets such as Imruʾ al-Qays, ʿAmr ibn Kulthūm, and al-Aʿšā: Emesa (Ḥims), Damascus (Dimashq), Bostra (Buṣrā), Heliopolis (Baalbak), Epiphania (Ḥama), Larissa (Shayzar), Andron/al-Andarīn, Salkhad (Sarkhad), and Tādif.

b. Locations more closely associated with the Ghassānids and visited by Imruʾ al-Qays: Usays and Adriʿāt. Ḥassān, whose relations to the Ghassānids were closer than those of Imruʾ al-Qays, visited and referred to more Ghassānid locations: al-Khammān, al-Khawābi, al-Buḍayʿ, Dūma, Bilās, Dārayyā, and al-Qurayyāt. To these may be added a location named in Umayyad poetry: Maqadd.

c. The two capitals of the Ghassānids—Jābiya and Jalliq. They deserve special mention, for they were the sites of royal entertainments. Jalliq seems to have been the venue for the more sophisticated and highly developed songs, as described in Ḥassān's account of Jabala's feasts, rather than Jābiya. The Monophysite Ghassānid kings, both serious-minded and enthusiastic about song, were apparently too conservative to allow such secular entertainment to be held in their official capital, but they allowed it to be offered in the unofficial one, Jalliq.

3. Given the considerable development of song among the Ghassānids, was there a venue other than the tavern that was especially devoted to it and similar forms of performance?

For sacred music and song, there is no doubt that the church and the conventual chapel in the monastery performed that function. The picture for secular song is not as clear. Did classical practices—the singing in theaters by the chorus

[22] For Dhalfāʾ, see the discussion of *Nihāyat al-Arab* in Chapter 3.

of Greek tragedy, and the performance of song in odeions—continue in Byzantine times, and did the Ghassānids avail themselves of such venues?

Again, the *Dīwān* of Ḥassān is the best source. Verses in it suggest that song, as part of a royal entertainment, was performed either in a special hall reserved for it in the palace or in a special building, some sort of odeion. In one of his verses, Ḥassān says that after drinking wine, his party was entertained by song in *buyūt al-rukhām,* "houses of marble."[23] The phrase suggests that song was performed not in a nondescript local tavern constructed of ordinary stones or brick but in an architecturally attractive building made of marble. In another verse, he refers to such a venue for entertainment as *bunyān rafīʿ,* a "high-towering building."[24] So the Ghassānids may have presented song and other related entertainments in a special building.[25]

4. How original were Arab music and song in the pre-Islamic period? Cultural historians of the period have pointed to foreign influences. Ḥassān himself suggested three influences at the court of Jabala.

a. The Byzantine influence was represented by the five songstresses who sang in Greek and used *barābit* (plural of *barbat*), wooden-bellied stringed instruments. The women probably came from one of the cities of Oriens, where the arts flourished. Greek was the official language of the administration in Oriens, and the Ghassānid kings and phylarchs undoubtedly understood it.

b. As noted earlier, Ḥīra, under Iyās ibn Qabīṣa of the Ṭayyiʾ group, sent Jabala five songstresses. Whether they were Arab or Persian is not clear from the account; they could have been either, or perhaps a mixed group.

c. The dispatch of songstresses from the flourishing urban center of Mecca is more noteworthy. The sources refer to entertainment in Mecca in which ʿAbdallāh ibn Judʿān is involved.[26]

But did the Arab federates of Oriens, represented by the Ghassānids in the sixth century, contribute to the development of Arab song as they contributed to other areas of cultural development? The sources are silent on this, making any answer highly tentative. Some observations might be ventured, however.

The Ghassānids' predecessors in Oriens, the Nabataeans and the Palmyrenes, were not strangers to music and song, and their traditions naturally survived in this region. Just as the Ghassānids availed themselves of the skills of these Rhomaic Arabs in hydrology,[27] they could easily have adopted and adapted their musical

[23] Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 106, verse 10.

[24] Ibid., 316, verse 8.

[25] The possibility of an odeion in Ghassānland is discussed in more detail in Part III, Chapter 3.

[26] For ʿAbdallāh ibn Judʿān, see C. Pellat, "Abdallāh ibn Judʿān," *EI*², I, 44–45, and Farmer, *History of Arabian Music,* 11.

[27] See *BASIC* II.1, 15–20.

traditions, with influences mainly from Byzantium. And it should be remembered in this connection that the Ghassānids had hailed from the most sedentary part of Arabia, Arabia Felix in the south, which must have had a developed tradition of music and song. Even in later times, the sources speak of the two styles of song that emanated from South Arabia, the Ḥimyari and the Ḥanafi.[28]

To sum up: the *qiyān* were an important feature of Ghassānid social life, especially for entertainment. The scene in Jabala's Ghassānid court at which ten *qiyān* were performing cannot have been the exception but must have been the rule—witness a reference to them during the reign of Arethas. One of the sources relates that al-Mundir, the Lakhmid king of Ḥīra, asked the poet Ḥarmala to compose a lampoon against Arethas. The poet, who happened to be related to the Ghassānids, refused to do so. In appreciation of the poet's loyalty, Arethas gave him two *qiyān*.[29]

Qiyān *in Ḥassān's* Dīwān

Perhaps the anonymity of prose accounts on the *qiyān* associated with the Ghassānids may be circumvented by suggesting that the women whom Ḥassān mentions in his *Dīwān* may have been *qiyān* whom he saw in the taverns he frequented in Arabia and in Ghassānland. What commends this view is his reference to them in erotic and sensuous terms. Ḥassān mentions in his verse eight women: Shaʿthāʾ, al-Naḍīra, Layla, Umm ʿAmr, ʿAmra, Suʿdā, Lamīs, and Zaynab. He married two of these eight, Shaʿthāʾ and ʿAmra; some of the remaining six—with the exception of al-Naḍīra, to whom a whole poem is addressed and who is appreciated in the poem for her aristocratic pedigree[30]—may have been mentioned because they were songstresses.

The sources refer to a songstress named Sīrīn, who belonged to Ḥassān. It is possible that she was the sister of Māriya,[31] who was sent to the Prophet Muḥammad from Egypt in response to his letter to the so-called al-Muqawqis. The Prophet gave her to Ḥassān and she bore him his son, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān. It is also

[28] Farmer, *History of Arabian Music,* 3.

[29] For this informative episode, see the tenth-century philologist Abū al-Qāsim al-Āmidi, *al-Muʾtalif wa al-Mukhtalif,* ed. ʿA. al-Sattār Farrāj (Cairo, 1961), 235. The account of the episode in al-Āmidi indicates that the *qayna* was also a *musmiʿa*. The poet was related to the Ghassānids through his mother; the Ghassānid Qātil al-Jūʿ, who appears in one of his Greek inscriptions as *Kathelogos,* was his great-grandfather. The two *qiyān* may have been Samaritan war captives, whom Arethas acquired after he quelled the Samaritan revolt of A.D. 529; see *BASIC* I.1, 92–95. When another poet, Shihāb ibn al-ʿAyyif, was asked by Mundir to lampoon Arethas, he composed a most scurrilous couplet; see ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Baghdādi, *Khizānat al-Adab,* ed. ʿA. al-Salām Hārūn (Cairo, 1982), X, 89–93.

[30] On al-Naḍīra, see Chapter 2.

[31] So considered by Ibn Khurdādhbih, in *al-Mukhtār min Kitāb al-Lahw wa al-Malāhi,* ed. I. ʿA. Khalīfah (Beirut, 1961), 35; also in al-Asad, *al-Qiyān,* 92–93, where she is described as a *qayna*.

possible that the *qayna* who sang for Ḥassān had a different name and that this Sīrīn belonged instead to a certain al-Ḥadrami who had two songstresses, one of whom was called Sīrīn.

The songstress could easily degenerate into a prostitute in Arabia as well as in Byzantium, where many female entertainers of various sorts also engaged in prostitution; the trade in the Peninsula in female slaves flourished in this period.[32] The study of Arab-Byzantine relations in this period could shed some light on this aspect of social life in federate Oriens, on which Ḥassān and his verse are informative. It is in his *Dīwān* that the word for prostitute—not the indigenous word, *baghiyy,* but *mūmis,* a loanword from Greek—appears four times, the earliest attestations of the term in Arabic.[33]

Music and Song in Ḥīra

In one of the striking chapters in Ṭabarī's *History* (ca. 915), the fundamental work on Arab-Sasanid relations, which relies on excellent sources, the author describes the time spent by the Persian crown prince Bahrām, the son of Shah Yazdgard/Yazdajird, among the Arabs of Ḥīra for his education.[34] Drawing on Ṭabarī (and Musʿūdi), Farmer summarized Bahrām's residence in Ḥīra as follows: "It was to al-Ḥīra that Bahrām Gūr (430–438), the Persian monarch, was sent, as a prince, to be educated. Here, he was taught music, among other Arab accomplishments. When he ascended to the throne, one of his first edicts was to improve the status of musicians at the Persian court."[35]

This account shows the influence of pre-Islamic Arab music and song on a Persian, underscoring their important role among the Arabs and in the purely urban Arab center of Ḥīra (which surely influenced the Ghassānids). The Persian influence on Arabic music and song around A.D. 600 is attested in the contemporary poetry of al-Aʿshā, whose lexicon includes a large number of Persian loanwords; but the chapter in Ṭabarī on Bahrām makes clear that the Arabs of Ḥīra cultivated at a high level the two arts of song and music, which affected a Persian crown prince and his formation. This impact was tantamount to a reversal, or at least a modification, of the usual direction of cultural radiation, from Persia and the Persians to Arabia and the Arabs. It is, therefore, necessary to examine this outburst of creativity among the pre-Islamic Arabs in music and song. It will be

[32] For slavery and prostitution in pre-Islamic Arabia, see al-Asad, *al-Qiyān,* 34–42.

[33] See the appendix below, "Μῖμος and μιμάς in Arabic."

[34] For the account of Ṭabarī on Bahrām, see the English version by C. E. Bosworth, *The History of Tabari,* vol. 1, *The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen* (Albany, 1999), 82–106; for the relevant part on the Arabs, see 82–93.

[35] Farmer, *History of Arabian Music,* 4–5.

argued that some development of these two arts in particular among the Arabs of this period should cause no surprise.

The Lakhmids of Ḥīra were the masters of the most important Arab urban center of pre-Islamic times. The dynasty had come from South Arabia, where a high level of civilized sedentary life had developed for centuries. One can easily imagine that in a city such as Ḥīra, where an ambience of urban life had lasted for three centuries, the two arts would have flowered to the point that it could provide a suitable education for a Persian crown prince.

The best support for this sudden surge of cultural activity comes from an examination of the Arab creative outburst in the field of poetry in this very period.[36] A group of pastoralists created a highly complex metrical system that is unique among the verse systems of the world, consisting of fifteen or sixteen different meters, with many variations, and a corpus of poetry was subsequently composed by tens and possibly hundreds of poets all over Arabia.[37] The pinnacle of their creation was the *qasīda*, the polythematic ode that subsequently became the model of medieval Islamic poetry for centuries.[38]

With this extraordinary chapter in the cultural history of the pre-Islamic Arabs in mind, one can visualize their writing a similar, if less impressive, chapter in music in the fifth century. The comparison is appropriate, since the two arts are so closely related. They are allied in other literary traditions, such as the Greek, which featured poetry sung or recited by special rhapsodes. The connection between the two arts in Arabic is not only analogous to that in Greek but can be predicated *a fortiori* in view of the complex metrical structure of Arabic verse, in which each poem is both mono-metered and mono-rhymed. And so, when simply recited aloud, it already sounds melodious. This conclusion is confirmed by the distinguished tenth-century philosopher al-Fārābi in his massive magnum opus, *Kitāb al-Mūsīqī al-Kabīr,* which explains in great detail the relationship that obtained between poetry and music.[39] After reading his work, one has no difficulty

[36] The salience of poetry was well brought out by that distinguished connoisseur of Arabic poetry, the late Sir Hamilton Gibb, who stated that "companies of poets sprang up all over northern Arabia" and that in "the various meters was expressed that astonishing outburst of poetic talent spreading within a few years or decades among all the tribes of Arabic speech from Mesopotamia through Najd and the Ḥijāz down into the wild ranges of ʿAsir, and finally into Yemen" (*Arabic Literature,* 2nd ed. [Oxford, 1963], 13, 15).

[37] The medieval scholar and critic Ibn Qutayba explained his selectiveness in presenting the poets he chose to discuss by noting that the corpus of Arabic poetry was so vast that it was impossible to do justice to one single tribe; see his *al-Shiʿr wa al-Shuʿarāʾ*, ed. A. M. Shākir (Cairo, 1966), I, 60. The same sentiment is expressed by Ibn Sallām in *Ṭabaqāt Fuḥūl al-Shuʿarāʾ,* ed. M. M. Shākir (Cairo, 1974), I. 3. For these strictly pre-Islamic poets, see the many *dīwān*s of the various tribes in N. al-Asad, *Maṣādir al-Shiʿr al-Jāhili* (Beirut, 1988), 543–47.

[38] The *qaṣīda* became the model in Persian and Turkish poetry as well.

[39] See Abū Naṣr al-Fārābi, *Kitāb al-Mūsīqī al-Kabīr,* ed. G. Khashaba and M. al-Ḥifnī (Cairo, 1967), 67–74.

seeing how those who created the very rhythmical music of Arabic poetry could also create the instrumental music that accompanied the recitation of this poetry; indeed, the technical vocabulary of Arabic music is related to Arabic meters, as may be seen in Fārābi's work and in Iṣfahānī's *Kitāb al-Aghānī*. That Arabic poetry in pre-Islamic times used to be set to music and sung adds further weight to this conclusion. Thus the *poetic* outburst among the pre-Islamic Arabs supports the view that there was a corresponding outburst of *musical* talent expressed through the tunes related to the sixteen meters.[40]

This creative outburst in music and song in the fifth century remains anonymous, though we know the names of the poets Ibn Ḥizām and, of course, Imruʾ al-Qays. It may have been a gradual development for which many were responsible, or it may have been due to a single figure, such as Romanus the Melode in Byzantium, a native of Emesa. Romanus is a major figure in Byzantine hymnography, alleged to have composed one thousand hymns and to be responsible for developing the *kontakion*.

Reference to Romanus the Melode brings the discussion back to Oriens and the Ghassānids. The precious information on music and song in the Ḥīra of the Lakhmids was miraculously saved from oblivion by the merest chance—the historian Ṭabarī was a Persian who was naturally interested in preserving from the sources what interested him as a Persian. Hence his account of the Ghassānids is negligible, especially when compared to his copious and full report on the Lakhmids.[41] One may well wonder whether among the Ghassānids there arose one not unlike the Melode.

Music and Song in Najrān

The main source on Arab song, Iṣfahānī, states that the poet al-Aʿsḫā used to visit Najrān, where he would hear song, described as *Rūmi,* Byzantine.[42] This raises questions regarding the extent to which song in the Arab city of Najrān was native or was adventitious, coming from Byzantium and elsewhere, and about the closeness of Ghassānid-Najrānite cultural relations in the field of music and song.

[40] One who should know—namely, Isḥāq bin Ibrāhim al-Mawṣili (A.D. 767–850), the greatest musician of his time—gave expression to this view when he stated that rhythm, *īqāʿ*, in music is what meter is in poetry. He divided rhythm into eight categories and gave two of them the names of meters, *ramal* and *hazaj;* see Ibn Khurdādhbih, *Kitāb al-Lahw,* 55. Isḥāq, who was very well versed in Arabic poetry (favoring the ancients over his contemporaries) and even composed poetry himself (54), was in a good position to render such judgments; on him, see J. W. Fück, "Isḥāḳ al-Mawṣilī," *EI*², IV, 110–11. For the ethos of each Arabic meter, see the original work of A. al-Ṭayyib, *al-Murshid ilā Fahm Ashʿār al-ʿArab wa Ṣināʿatihā,* 3 vols. (Beirut, 1970).

[41] Demonstrating his lack of interest in the western part of the Islamic world, he gave the Arab conquest of Spain only a few lines.

[42] Quoted by al-Asad, *al-Qiyān,* 133.

The sources also refer to two styles of music that obtained in the region of South Arabia; the Ḥimyari and the Ḥanafi.[43] There thus was a native tradition of music and song in the affluent region of Yaman, South Arabia, which, it is natural to suppose, was known in Najrān, an Arab city in the orbit of Ḥimyarite South Arabia. The *vita* of St. Gregentius depicts a society in which singers, instrumentalists, actors, and dancers flourished, as is clear from the strict code of behavior imposed on the Ḥimyarites by the author of that work.[44]

But Najrān was a caravan city, which established relations with the outside world of Ethiopia, with Ḥīra, and with the Ghassānids. It is therefore natural to assume that possible influences from these directions reached Najrān in music and song. The sources do not take note of influence emanating from Ethiopia and Ḥīra, though it must have existed, given the very close relations Najrān had with both. Only the influence from Byzantium, Rūm, is explicitly stated.

Byzantine influence on Najrān was no doubt mediated through the Ghassānids in Oriens, as both Ghassānids and Najrānites belonged to the Azd group. The Ghassānids originally hailed from Yaman and had stayed in Najrān during their trek through western Arabia before they reached the Roman *limes*. Relations remained close: as already noted, it was to Jābiya under the Ghassānid king Jabala that the Najrānites sent appeals for help against the persecution instituted by Yūsuf, the king of South Arabia, ca. A.D. 520. And it was to Najrān that the Ghassānids headed after relations with Byzantium soured during the reign of Maurice, later in the century.[45] The estrangement with Byzantium did not last long; and once the Ghassānid phylarchy was resuscitated and reestablished, the social life of the Ghassānid court was revived. Around 600, at the court of the Ghassānid king al-Ḥārith al-Jafni, the Byzantine influence on Najrān through the Ghassānids was explicitly recognized.[46] In light of the friendly encounters between Najrān of the Ḥārithids and Jābiya of the Ghassānids, it is easy to see that the two cities and the two groups had close cultural relations, represented by such elements as music and song. So, when Byzantine song in Najrān is mentioned, surely its mediators from Byzantium to Najrān were the Ghassānids. Hence

[43] See Farmer, *History of Arabian Music,* 3, 5, quoting al-Masʿūdi. It is not at all clear what these styles in singing were. The name *Ḥimyari* implies a link to the Ḥimyarites, the non-Arab inhabitants of South Arabia; *Ḥanafi* could suggest the Arabs.

[44] *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Bishop of Taphar,* ed. and trans. A. Berger (Berlin, 2006), 431. Though its authenticity has been questioned, for some scholars this *Life* has to a certain point passed the test of *Quellenkritik;* for the latest on this question, see Berger's comments, 82–91. For the argument of its essential authenticity, see A. N. Papathanasiou, *Οἱ νόμοι τῶν Ὁμηριτῶν* (Athens, 1991).

[45] For these two contacts, see *Martyrs,* 62, 63, and *BASIC* I.1, 543–48.

[46] See Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghāni,* XII, 11–13, which describes the visit of the Najrānite Yazīd ibn ʿAbd al-Madan to the Ghassānid court, during which he eulogized the Ghassānid king and was handsomely rewarded.

Byzantine influence in music on the Ghassānids themselves is confirmed by the reference to it at Najrān.

Sacred Music and Songs of Mourning

Psalmody and hymnography formed an important part in the celebration of the liturgy, following the recommendation of St. Paul,[47] and they prevailed over instrumental music, frowned upon by the Church Fathers. And so it was among the Christian Arabs in the three centuries before the rise of Islam.

The case for an Arabic version of parts of the Bible in this period has been made elsewhere in this series;[48] the case for an Arabic *liturgy* is even stronger, as evidenced by the clearly liturgical expressions in the famous Dayr Hind inscription of ca. A.D. 560.[49] The indefatigable Jesuit priest Louis Cheikho hunted for echoes in Arabic poetry and prose of the celebration of the liturgy among the pre-Islamic Arabs, and garnered many references. Terms for liturgical chanting that he culled from pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, such as *rajjaʿa, haynama, zamzama, sabbaḥa,* and *jaʾara,* speak for themselves.[50] The development of sacred songs among the pre-Islamic Arabs has to be sought principally in the three urban centers of Arab Christianity, Ḥīra, Najrān, and Jābiya. And it is to the last, Jābiya and its Ghassānids, and to the Arab federates in general, that the discussion must turn.

Sacred song must have flourished among the federates of Byzantium,[51] especially the Ghassānids. They were devoted to their Monophysite faith, and they lived in an Oriens that witnessed in Emesa the birth of Romanus the Melode (discussed above). In the following century, Damascus witnessed the birth of John of Damascus, the last of the Church Fathers in the Orient and a distinguished hymnographer himself, who perfected the *kanon*.[52] So, the sacred song heard in federate churches and monasteries must have been influenced greatly by the explosion of hymnography in Byzantium in these times.

Extant contemporary sources on the Ghassānids are silent on their sacred song and the possible contribution of their poets to hymnography.[53] The sole

[47] Ephesians 5:18–19; Colossians 3:16.

[48] See *BAFOC,* 435–43; *BAFIC,* 422–29.

[49] See the present writer in "The Authenticity of Pre-Islamic Poetry: The Linguistic Dimension," *al-Abḥāth* 44 (1996), 11.

[50] See L. Cheikho, *al-Nasrāniyya wa Ādābuha bayna ʿArab al-Jāhiliyya* (Beirut, 1923), II, 359–60.

[51] Even as early as the fourth century, when the federate Arab queen warred against the Arian emperor Valens in defense of the Nicene Creed and victory poems celebrated her victory; see *BAFOC,* 274–77, 440–42, 444–46.

[52] On the Arab origin of John of Damascus, see the present writer in "The Arab Christian Tradition," in *Christianity: A History in the Middle East,* ed. H. Badr (Beirut, 2005), 231–32 and note 19, citing Fr. J. Naṣrallah, *Saint Jean de Damas: Son époque, sa vie, son oeuvre* (Harissa, Lebanon, 1950).

[53] Hymns sung in Ghassānid churches may have been translated from Syriac or Greek or may have been original compositions by their own poets, such as those written in the nineteenth century, when

reference to hymns is represented in a faint and distant echo in a single verse of the poet Ḥassān, where he refers to the chanting of prayers in the monastery of Fīq in the Golan Heights or in Dayr al-Khammān in the Bathaniyya/Bāshān.[54] Later Arabic sources, however, on the Ghassānids' relatives, the Arabs of Najrān, preserve some evidence relevant to Christian Arab hymnography in the sixth century. It comes from the invaluable work of the Yamamite historian al-Hamdānī (d. 945) and deserves a detailed examination.[55]

In his invaluable *Ṣifat Jazīrat al-ʿArab,* Hamdānī records certain unique features of South Arabia, including "The places of mourning over the dead"; he lists seven of them.[56] He reports that in one of these places, Khaywān, the practice was that a deceased notable is lamented until another of the same rank dies, and then mourning is addressed to the latter. He further says that women sing in light verse to express their grief and while so doing they cry aloud. The men, however, mourn in tunes that are sung responsively with those of the women.[57]

It seems likely that this practice and style of mourning are related to the martyrdoms of Najrān in the sixth century. Hamdānī says this practice is unique to South Arabia, which is where those martyrdoms took place. They were unique both in when they took place—after the Peace of the Church in A.D. 313, which ended the persecution of Christian martyrs—and in their number.[58]

Hamdānī's discussion thus appears to represent a remarkable survival of a Christian rite of the distant past, involving principally the Ḥārithids of Najrān. These owed the Ghassānids of Oriens, their relatives, the Monophysite version of their faith and liturgy, about which the sources on the Ghassānids themselves say almost nothing. In view of all these considerations, a detailed analysis of this passage in Hamdānī is called for; such analysis strengthens the conclusion that it does indeed strongly evoke the martyrdoms of Najrān, which continued to resonate through the centuries to the time of Hamdānī in the tenth.

1. It was very natural for the Arabs of South Arabia, especially of Najrān, where most of the persecutions and the martyrdoms occurred,[59] to lament their

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the Bible was translated anew into Arabic by the Protestant missionaries in Lebanon associated with the American University in Beirut (see hymnals of the period). See Part III, Chapter 7, note 45.

[54] See Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 116, verse 1; 256, line 7 (on prayers).

[55] For al-Ḥasān al-Hamdānī, see O. Löfgren, "Hamdani," *EI*², III, 124–25.

[56] Al-Ḥasān al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifat Jazīrat al-ʿArab,* ed. M. al-Akwaʿ (Riyadh, 1974), 344–65.

[57] Ibid., 365. I dealt with this passage briefly in "Byzantium in South Arabia," *DOP* 33 (1979), 73. Since then I have come to the conclusion that this practice and style of mourning are related to the martyrdoms of Najrān.

[58] *The Book of the Himyarites,* ed. A. Moberg (Lund, 1924), cxvi–cxvii, cxxi–cxxii. These pages enumerate only the 300 martyrs of Najrān.

[59] That Najrān bore the brunt of the persecutions and the martyrdoms is clear from a look at the table of contents of the *Book of the Himyarites,* ci–civ.

dead. Lamenting and elegizing the dead was part of the Arab mores, and *marāthi,* elegies, were a highly developed subdivision of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, which produced some of the best elegies in the entire corpus of that poetry.[60] The Arabs of Najrān had their own school of poets,[61] and they surely would not have deprived their own dead of threnodies in the aftermath of the war of religion that raged in that region in the sixth century.[62] After these martyrdoms, South Arabia became a sort of a holy land because the martyrs' blood was spilled in many and various parts of the country, but Najrān became the center of Arab Christian pilgrimage. Reflecting the memory of the martyrs in the liturgy was consonant with lamenting the dead *more Arabico,* and so this unique expression of mourning in South Arabia represents the confluence of the two currents—the Arab and the Christian.[63]

2. The toponyms enumerated in the Hamdānī passage point in the same direction, and some of them can be checked with the primary document for South Arabia, *The Book of the Ḥimyarites.* The *Book* makes clear that the three main centers of the persecutions were Najrān, Maʾrib, and Hajaren (in Ḥaḍramawt).[64] Hamdānī mentions five cities: Najrān, Khaywān, Saʿda, al-Jawf, and Maʾrib. So, two of the toponyms that appear in the *Book* are also named by Hamdānī. The *Book,* however, does not necessarily include all the places that witnessed the martyrdoms; it focuses on the three main centers, ranging from Najrān in the north, to Maʾrib in the middle, and to Hajaren in the southeast. Around these three centers may be grouped the others mentioned by Hamdānī, such as Khaywān and

[60] The Andalusian author Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih devoted almost a hundred pages to *marathi* and consolations in his classic work, *al-ʿIqd al-Farīd,* ed. A. Amīn, A. I. Abyārī, and A. Hārūn (Beirut, 1982), III,228–311. These elegies belong mostly to the Islamic period, but they continue an Arabic tradition that went back to pre-Islamic times (and some pre-Islamic elegies are included). The standard work on mourning among the Arabs now is N. M. El-Cheikh, "Mourning and the Role of the Nāʾiḥa," in *Identidades Marginales,* ed. C. de la Puente (Madrid, 2003), 395–412.

[61] For this *dīwān,* collected by al-Sukkari and al-Āmidi, see N. al-Asad, *Maṣādir al-Shiʿr al-Jāhili* (1956; reprint, Beirut, 1988), 543, 546. One of the poets of the school of Najrān, ʿAbd Yagūth, elegized himself before his death in a poem that he recited; it is one of the most famous elegies in the history of Arabic poetry (see Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī,* XVI, 328). ʿAbd Yagūth and his poetry elicited the admiration of al-Jāḥiz, that ninth-century connoisseur of Arabic poetry; see his *al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn,* ed. ʿA. Hārūn (Cairo, 1961), II, 268; IV, 45. As ʿAbd Yaguth elegized himself, so did Ruhm/Ruhayma, the most prominent woman martyr of Najrān; what she said has been preserved in Syriac (see *Martyrs,* 57–58).

[62] Especially as others in various parts of Christendom mourned and remembered the martyrs of Najrān; they include Jacob of Sarūj, who wrote a letter of consolation after the first persecution; the anonymous writer of the *laudes Nagranae* in the *Martyrium Arethae;* and John Psaltes, who wrote a hymn on the martyrs. For the letter of Jacob of Sarūj and the Hymn of Ioannes Psaltes, see R. Schröter, "Trostschreiben Jacob's von Sarūg an die himyaritischen Christen," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 31 (1877), 306–405. On the *Laudes Nagranae,* see *Martyrs,* 211–12.

[63] Islam discouraged mourning but the practice has survived in various parts of the Muslim world. Its most outstanding example is the mourning that continues in Shiʾite communities throughout the Muslim world over Ḥusayn the son of ʿAli, who fell at the battle of Karbalāʾ in A.D. 680.

[64] See *The Book of the Himyarites,* ci–civ.

Saʿda in the orbit of Najrān, and others as well in the region of Maḏḥij.[65] But Najrān remains the primary focus. Perhaps the practice of mourning initiated for these sixth-century martyrs spread in later Islamic times to become the mode of remembering Islamic figures who died or were killed in the neighboring regions. Christian monuments became Muslim ones in South Arabia; one example is the monastery or Church of St. Sergius in Tarīm (Ḥaḍramawt), which became the mosque of Sarjīs.[66]

3. In addition to listing toponyms that point in the direction of the sixth-century martyrs, the passage gives a detailed description of how both the women and the men of these places in South Arabia customarily expressed their mourning through the *responsive* singing of tunes, *luḥūn*. This style in singing, the *tarjiʿāt* in Arabic, certainly brings to mind the antiphonal singing in the church during the celebration of the liturgy, when a choir of men sings *alternately* with a choir of boys or women; this practice is definitely not an Arab custom and suggests Christian influence. South Arabia in its entirety became a very Muslim country in the ninth century, and the presence of such a Christian element surely points to a period, the sixth century, when the country had been Christian; at the same time, the prominence given to mourning suggests the most important event in the Christian history of the region, namely, the martyrdoms at Najrān.[67]

Hamdānī discusses the mourning, the *niyāḥa,* in general in these locales, and says that women mourn in light verse, *shiʿr khafīf,* to tunes that they themselves compose. Then follows a statement that could suggest some responsive singing among the women, who also lament aloud, *yaṣiḥna*.[68]

That mourning was performed in Arabia by women was not surprising, as they perform this function in many societies; the Near East even witnessed

[65] For these toponyms, see A. Jamme, *Sabaean Inscriptions from Maḥram Bilqīs (Mārib)* (Baltimore, 1962), Plate G. The region of the Maḏḥij group, one of these seven toponyms, was near Najrān, since some genealogists believed that the Ḥārithids of Najrān belong to Maḏḥij. The name of a village in the region of Najrān, al-Aṭhār (plural of *ṭāhir*), "the pure ones," which suggests a place associated with the martyrs, is described as being a part of the land of Khathʿam, *arḍ Khathʿam;* see Bakri, *Muʿjam* (Cairo, 1951), II, 562.

[66] On Masjid Sarjīs, see Shahîd, "Byzantium in South Arabia," 84–87. Since writing that article, which discussed whether the Arabic Sarjīs represents George or Sergius, I have concluded that it is more likely to be Sergius and that this demonstrates the influence of the Byzantinized Ghassānids: St. Sergius was their saint and the saint of the army of the Orient.

[67] It is not clear why Khaywān in particular is singled out for this extraordinary style in mourning. However, the practice reflects the importance of mourning as a way of keeping the memory of the deceased alive in the consciousness of the townsfolk, which in turn could go back to the special veneration for martyrs, who had given their most precious lives for their ideals.

[68] Hamdānī uses the verb *yatakhālasnahu,* "they steal, pilfer [the light verse] among themselves," and his meaning is somewhat obscure. The root *kh-l-s,* used in the *tafāʿala* form, endows the derivative with reciprocity, suggesting that each female mourner who composes some verses jealously guards them as her own, but cannot help her colleagues' hearing and using them.

professional female mourners, hired by the bereaved to sing and sometimes to cry for their dead.[69] It is noteworthy, however, that in South Arabia they mourned over the dead in metrical compositions. This is consonant with the fact that some elegies in Arabic—and some of the best—were composed by women; the most famous female elegist in this pre-Islamic period was al-Khansāʾ.[70] It is also noteworthy that the women of South Arabia set these elegiac verses to music.

After mentioning the female mourners, Hamdānī states that the men have their own tunes, different from those of the women, which are used in wonderfully responsive singing that involved both the men and the women.[71] The description confirms the argument for the *antiphonal* nature of mourning in these locations.

Hamdānī's last statement on male mourners refers to them as *mawāli,* that is, non-Arabs who were affiliated with an Arab group and so became their clients.[72] Their involvement suggests foreign influence in this style of mourning. The continuation of the practice by these non-Arab mourners in Islamic times is indeed a remarkable instance of the persistence of a heritage rooted in the distant past, echoes of which are, apparently, audible in present-day Yaman.[73]

Antiphonal singing came from abroad, and in the context of sixth-century Christian Arabia could only have come from the region of Christian cultural dominance—namely, Byzantium in the north, which was mediated to South Arabia principally through the Ghassānids. An explicit statement on Byzantine influence in Najrān comes from Iṣfahānī; in *Kitāb al-Aghānī,* he describes the visit of the pre-Islamic poet al-Aʿshā to Najrān and its rulers, who would entertain him *inter alia* with *al-ghināʾ al-Rūmi,* Rhomaic Byzantine singing.[74] Though this song was undoubtedly not sacred but secular,[75] it does document the Byzantine influence. If this secular song penetrated South Arabia, *a fortiori* sacred song did too, since this was the century of the flowering of Christianity in South Arabia. Evidence for the prevalence of such song is provided by the Laws of St. Gregentius. This draconian code, said to have been imposed on South Arabia by a bishop sent from Byzantium, prohibited all sorts of secular entertainment and instead recommended religious

[69] The Arabs did not equate all expressions of grief, declaring that "the grief of the mourning bereaved mother is different from that of the hired mourner"; see Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *al-ʿIqd al-Farīd,* II, 228.

[70] Al-Khansāʾ belonged to the pre-Islamic period but lived long enough to convert to Islam; on her, see Sezgin, *GAS,* II, 311–14.

[71] The statements end in Arabic: *wa li al-rijāl min al-mawāli luḥūn ghayr dhālika ʿajībat al-tarājīʿ bayn al-rijāl wa al-nisāʾ;* Hamdānī, *Ṣifat Jazīrat al-ʿArab,* 365.

[72] For *mawāli,* see P. Crone, "Mawāli," *EI*^{2}, VI, 874–87.

[73] According to the twentieth-century editor of Hamdānī, M. al-Akwaʿ; see *Ṣifat Jazīrat al-ʿArab,* 365 note 2.

[74] See al-Asad, *al-Qiyān,* 133.

[75] The music was of two kinds, as noted above—Ḥanafi and Ḥimyari—but little is known about them; see Farmer, *A History of Arabian Music,* 3, 15, and see above, note 43.

entertainment—psalmody and hymnography.[76] It clearly illustrates the influence of the Byzantine north, which dispatched a bishop to Christianize the country after military victory was achieved.

To the victory of Christianity in South Arabia, Byzantium contributed much, and in the years that followed it continued to contribute to the arts of peace, both secular and religious,[77] often through the Ghassānids. It is, therefore, natural to assume that in addition to the secular Rhomaic song explicitly referred to by Iṣfahānī, sacred song, supported by the Laws of Gregentius, also penetrated Najrān and South Arabia in general, a conclusion drawn by inference from examination of the passage in Hamdānī's *Ṣifat Jazīrat al-ʿArab*.

The Ghassānids were not only a professional military group but also enthusiastic Monophysites. Their patron saint was none other than Sergius, the soldier who had died as a martyr some three centuries before. Death on the battlefield was a fate they faced and expected, and their reaction to it was shaped by both Arab and Christian influences. This may be illustrated by a recollection of some of the events in their history, and more specifically by the career of the famous Arethas.

1. At the battle of Qinnasrīn, Arethas' son, Jabala, was killed. His father buried him in a *martyrion* in Qinnasrīn/Chalcis.[78] Elegies no doubt were written and recited on that occasion as was customary on the death of warriors in pre-Islamic Arabia, perhaps in this case compounded with Christian sentiments and prayers for the dead.

2. Such must have been the case when the redoubtable warrior Arethas himself died in A.D. 569. Decades after his death, Labīd, one of the poets of the so-called Suspended Odes, could still refer to it simply by mentioning "the Day of Jalliq," where he apparently died and was buried.[79] His death must have inspired elegies as his life did panegyrics, and they were probably set to music and sung.[80] ʿAlqama's celebrated panegyric on him was sung to the Ghassānid king by the poet himself.[81]

3. Even more revealing is a verse in the panegyric of Ḥassān, written in the Islamic period after the fall of the dynasty: it refers to the Ghassānids as sitting or

[76] The code suppresses such performances as those of zither players, lyre players, and dancers and imposes punishments on them, and it recommends psalmody; see section 35 of the code in PG LXXXVI, cols. 600–661 (it again recommends psalmody in section 38, col. 661). For an English translation, see Gregentios, *Life and Works,* 430, 431.

[77] See Shahîd, "Byzantium in South Arabia."

[78] See *BASIC* I.1, 241.

[79] Labīd, *Dīwān,* ed. I. ʿAbbās (Kuwait, 1962), 266, verses 49–52; for a discussion of this remembrance of the death of Arethas, see *BASIC* II.1, 278–80.

[80] See Abū Naṣr al-Fārābi, *Kitāb al-Mūsiqī al-Kabīr,* 73.

[81] See al-Aʿlam al-Shantamarī, *Dīwān ʿAlqama al-Faḥl,* ed. D. al-Khaṭīb and I. Ṣaqqāl (Aleppo, 1969), 33–49.

going around the tomb of Arethas, son of Māriya.[82] The verse attracted the attention of the medieval scholiasts, who were not as well informed on the Ghassānids as they were on the Lakhmids.[83] Though Ḥassān did not become the poet laureate of the Ghassānids until some two or three decades after Arethas' death and his burial in Jalliq or Jābiya, the poet could still speak of the Ghassānids around his tomb. Recognizing that the deceased might be mourned long after his burial (a practice observed in Najrān by Hamdānī) helps us to understand this verse. The Ghassānids kept the memory of the celebrated warrior alive by mourning him even years after his death. Moreover, his tomb must have been a mausoleum that became a pilgrimage or visitation center for the Ghassānids, and thus a site noticed by the poet.

The only document on the Ghassānids that is clearly and explicitly a lament on one of their kings is the ode of al-Nābigha on the death of al-Nuʿmān,[84] which occurred in obscure circumstances (probably his fall on the battlefield); it may have been chanted as a lament. Although the ode belongs to secular poetry, its finale expresses a Christian sentiment that allies it to what was usually said on such occasions during Christian funerals,[85] emphasizing resurrection and life after death. The ode qualifies as an *epitaphios logos,* a funeral oration.

Appendix

Μῖμος and Μιμάς in Arabic

The Arabic term for prostitution is *baghāʾ*, and its practitioner is a *baghiyy*. But Arabic has another term for the latter, namely, *mūmis,* a term that the medieval lexicographers somewhat desperately tried to explain as related to the Arabic root *w-m-s,* "rub off."[1] Impressive as the work of the medieval lexicographers was, its weakness resided in their limited knowledge: they were monolingual, ignorant of Syriac or Greek. Their efforts to etymologize and explain *mūmis,* prostitute, within the autogenous framework of Arabic illustrate this shortcoming. The provenance

[82] "The sons of Jafna [the Ghassānids] are around the tomb of their father"; Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 74, verse 11.

[83] One such scholiast thought that the poet did not say much in praise of the Ghassānids in composing that verse, and so he did not see its point. Another suggested that the verse implied that they were not pastoralists but sedentary urbanites. See Ibn ʿAsākir, *Muʿjam al-Shuʿarāʾ min Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq,* ed. H. Farfūr and S. Faḥḥam (Beirut, 1999), II, 172.

[84] For the ode, see *Dīwān al-Nābigha al-Ḏubyānī,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1977), 115–22. The ode touched even the dour Nöldeke; see *GF,* 38–39.

[85] Al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 121–22, verses 25–30. The sentiment was understood as Christian by Abū-ʿUbayda (see S. Fayṣal's edition of the *Dīwān* [Beirut, 1968], 120 note 31) and by Nöldeke (*GF,* 38 note 3). The expression echoes the words of Jesus before raising Lazarus (John 21:25). The term *muṣallūhu,* "those who prayed for him" at the funeral (verse 25), confirms the interpretation of the sentiment as Christian.

[1] See ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab* (Beirut, 1997), VI, 494.

is clearly foreign, deriving from Greek on phonetic and other grounds. Tracing the route taken by the term into Arabic is a fruitful exercise, since it sheds light not only on the contribution of Byzantine Greek to Arabic lexicography but also on social life among the Arabs of Oriens in this pre-Islamic period.

The principal form of entertainment in antiquity ceased to exist in Byzantine times; the theater of classical Greece degenerated into pantomime and mime (farce), and the latter degenerated further when it became licentious and vulgar.[2] The church reluctantly tolerated chariot races but not mimes, whose low status is evidenced by the fact that the term μιμάς, related to mime, denoted prostitute.[3] Surely this is the term that passed into pre-Islamic Arabic as *mūmis:* though as often happens the vocalic sequence was altered in transliteration, the term's skeleton, its three consonants, was preserved.[4]

Mimes were performed in the Graeco-Roman urban centers of Oriens despite the opposition of the church; through these venues, especially the cities of the Decapolis, the word μιμάς passed into pre-Islamic Arabic.[5] Surprisingly, the *locus classicus* for its attestations in this period is the *Dīwān* of Ḥassān, the panegyrist of the Ghassānids: mimes ran counter to their Arabic ethos and mores as well as the ideals and prohibitions of their Christian faith. The seeming contradiction may be resolved by remembering that Ḥassān was a hedonist who loved wine and song, as is clear from his *Dīwān;* he probably watched a performance of mime in one of the cities of the Decapolis. He would have heard the term there or learned it from the Rhomaic Arabs, who may have already naturalized μιμάς into Arabic as *mūmis,* as they had naturalized *theatron* as *teiatra*.[6]

The Arabic lexica do not cite attestations of the term *mūmis*. Hence the value of the *Dīwān* of Ḥassān, the poet who probably mediated the passage of the term from the mimes of Oriens to the Arabic poetic koine and popularized it elsewhere. In Yathrib, his native city, he composed verses in which he used the term many times.[7]

[2] On the theater and mime in Byzantine times, see A. Karpozilos, "Theater," *ODB,* III, 2031, and A. Kazhdan, "Mime," *ODB,* II, 1375, with their bibliographies.

[3] See E. A. Sophocles, *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods (from B.C. 146 to A.D. 1100),* 2nd ed. (1914; reprint, New York, 2005), II, 760. In classical Greek, the term meant "actress"; see LSJ, s.v. Its slide in Greek to the meaning "prostitute" is easy to follow: the μιμοί were often buffoons (γελοῖοι) and were less respectable than the serious actors, the σπουδαῖοι (to use the terms of Aristotle's *Poetics,* I.1), and female actors (μιμαί) were commonly believed to be involved in prostitution.

[4] Similarly, the Latin Gallica, the name of the legion, became Arabic Gillac, the camp of the legion; see *BASIC* II.1, 105.

[5] The Nabataean Arabs had taken kindly to the theater, and the remains of Petra, their capital, preserved specimens of it; see A. Segal, *Theatres in Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia* (Leiden, 1995), 6–7.

[6] Ibid., 6.

[7] See *Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit,* ed. W. ʿArafāt, Gibb Memorial New Series 25 (London, 1971),

Another verse in the *Dīwān* of Ḥassān is crucial because it both demonstrates the Greek origin of the Arabic term *mūmis* and reveals another loanword from Greek that passed into Arabic, namely, μῖμος, "actor." In lampooning and variously taunting a group in South Arabia, Ḥassān calls them "the *mayāmis* of Gaza" (plural of *maymas*), which the lexicographers distinguished from *mūmis* and which according to them means "a person who elicits from others laughter"—an Arabic amplification of the term "jester," a comic actor such as was cast in a mime.[8] Gaza was a terminus of the spice route that Arab traders coming from western Arabia traversed. It was a city in which the Arabs had a presence since ancient times, and in the sixth century it contained both mimes and brothels.[9]

I, 189, verse 4; 263, verse 3; 343, verse 4; 440, verse 4. The plural for *mūmis* appears in three different morphological forms; this variation could suggest that the loanword was a recent borrowing, and Ḥassān was experimenting in finding a plural for it.

[8] Ibid., 360, verse 3; for the scholium that supplies the meaning "jesters," see II, 256 note 190. The scholiast guessed correctly, distinguishing *maymas* from the almost homophonous term *mūmis,* "prostitute."

[9] See G. Downey, *Gaza in the Early Sixth Century* (Norman, Okla., 1963), 43, 142. Choricius, Gaza's rhetorician, wrote his *Apologia Mimorum* in defence of mimes.

IX

Dance

Dance is a kind of entertainment that is hardly documented in the extant sources on the Ghassānids. This is not altogether surprising, in view of the Ghassānids' conservatism in accepting and allowing performances that could smack of indecency. Nevertheless, some form of dance surely did exist in Ghassānid and federate society, as it did in Byzantium in one form or another.[1]

The Ghassānids' interest in dance must have started while they were still in South Arabia, where dance was no doubt known as a form of entertainment. Early in the sixth century it is documented in the *Laws* attributed to Saint Gregentius, who like the Byzantine Church Fathers rejected dance and imposed strict penalties on its practitioners.[2] Even without the testimony of these laws, which some view as spurious,[3] South Arabia was familiar with dance; a bronze statue has survived that attractively renders a South Arabian dancer.[4] In addition to Ḥimyarite South Arabia, a possible source of influence was Ethiopia, whose inhabitants were known in ancient and medieval times for their love of dance, attested early in the seventh century.[5] Christian Ethiopia did have dealings with the Arabs—with Najrān, Jābiya, and the Ghassānids, all Monophysites—especially during and after the fifty

[1] For dance in Byzantium, see Ph. Koukoules, *Byzantinon bios kai politismos* (Athens, 1948–57), V, 206–44, and A. Karpozilos, "Dance," *ODB,* I, 582.

[2] See *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar,* ed. and trans. A. Berger (Berlin, 2006), 430, 431, where dance and dancers are mentioned four times. In addition to being banished from social life, dancers were liable to be whipped and consigned to a year's hard labor if they were caught performing.

[3] See Chapter 8, note 44.

[4] For this bronze statue, found in Ẓafār, the capital of the Ḥimyarites of South Arabia, see W. Phillips, *Qatabān and Sheba: Exploring the Ancient Kingdoms on the Biblical Spice Routes of Arabia* (New York, 1955), 305.

[5] The sources for the life of the Prophet Muḥammad contain descriptions of the *Aḥābīsh* (Abyssinians) dancing before ʿĀʾisha, the wife of the Prophet; and his own cousin Jaʿfar, when he returned from Ethiopia about A.D. 630 after the first Muslim emigration (*hijra*) to it, started to dance in his presence. See N. al-Asad, *al-Qiyān wa al-Ghināʾ fi al-Shiʿr al-Jāhili* (1960; reprint, Beirut, 1988), 134–35.

years that Ethiopians were present in the Arabian Peninsula, following the victory of their Negus over the Ḥimyarite king Yūsuf ca. A.D. 525.

But the main influence on the Ghassānids regarding dance must have been Byzantine Oriens. As *foederati* of Byzantium for a century and a half, they must also have been influenced by Byzantinized Arab *Rhomaioi* of former Nabataea and Palmyrena.

Unfortunately, the sources reveal next to nothing on dance. The poets of Arabia are interested in the *qiyān* as instrumentalists and vocalists, rather than as dancers,[6] and the same is true of Ḥassān's verse. The term for dance, *raqs,* does appear in his poetry, however, in a description of the wine at the bottom of his cup.[7] There is no extant reference to the attire of Arab dancers in Oriens, but dancers in East Arabia are apparently described as wearing a long dress.[8]

As dance survived in Byzantine society at certain feasts and some occasions, especially weddings, so it must have persisted among the Ghassānids. Chapter 3 has analyzed the account of a Ghassānid wedding in the region of Antioch. It explicitly describes a group of maidens dancing in a circle, in the midst of which the Ghassānid princess Dhalfāʾ was singing. Unlike prose compositions such as Ḥassān's on the court of Jabala, this account is of uncertain authenticity, but it provides the only reference to dance among the Ghassānids. One is therefore reduced to seeking the Byzantine influence indirectly from the social life of the major Arab Rhomaic city, Bostra, the capital of the Nabataean Arabs before its annexation by Trajan in A.D. 106. That city and others close to the Ghassānids, such as Gerasa, were venues for theatrical performances, such as the Maiumas festivities, against which Justinian issued legislation (apparently not strictly enforced).[9] These included mimes and pantomimes of varying degrees of lewdness, with which the Ghassānids may have gained some familiarity. Taverns were probably also common venues for dance, performed by songstresses.

As has been argued in the appendix to Chapter 8, the Arabic word *mūmis,* "prostitute," derived from the Greek μιμάς; and μιμάδοι, women acting in mimes,

[6] Aʿshā may refer to dancers in one of his verses; see ibid., 233, verse 8. Another possible source is a quartet of verses by Ṭarafa; see ibid., 64, well translated by R. G. Hoyland in *Arabia and the Arabs* (London, 2001), 134.

[7] See *Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit,* ed. W. ʿArafāt, Gibb Memorial New Series 25 (London, 1971), I, 75, verse 25. He applies the term *murqiṣāt* (plural of *murqiṣa*), the *nomen agentis* of the verb "to dance," to camels (316, verse 9).

[8] The "dancers" in Aʿshā's verse (see note 6) wear long dresses that reach the floor.

[9] For the Maiumas festivities, Justinian's legislation against them, and their popularity in various cities of Oriens from Antioch to Gaza, see A. Segal, *Theatres in Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia* (Leiden, 1995), 11 note 33. See also G. Greatrex and J. W. Watt, "One, Two, or Three Feasts?" *OC* 83 (1999), 1–21, especially 8ff.

performed in Bostra.[10] Some of the federate Arabs must have watched them, and their poet laureate was one of the early transmitters of the term *mūmis* to Arabic.[11] Ḥassān, the *bon vivant,* must have seen these mimes at which dancers performed with some sensual latitude.

[10] See Segal, *Theatres in Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia,* 53–55.

[11] As noted in the appendix, the term *mūmis* is attested many times in Ḥassān's *Dīwān,* I; see 263, verse 3; 343, verses 4, 9, 11; 440, verse 4.

X

Victory Celebrations

The political and military history of the peninsular Arabs turned largely around the *ayyām*,[1] the battle-days of the Arabs, in which mounted horsemen participated. Memories of these *ayyām* were preserved in later collections—in prose accounts of the battles, but more importantly in contemporary poetry composed on the encounters, which constituted part of the celebrations that followed the victory. One of these *ayyām* of pre-Islamic Arabia was Yawm Khazāza, when a confederation of northern Arabs, usually called ʿAdanānis, fought against the southern Arabs, usually called Qaḥṭānis. Those of the north were led by the two Christian groups of Taghlib and Bakr, and the victory was described by a Taghlibite, ʿAmr ibn Kulthūm, in a passage of his so-called Suspended Ode, *Muʿallaqa*.[2] It described some specific details of the battle, such as the lighting of the Fire of War announcing the impending encounter and the placement of the forces: Taghlib on the right wing and Bakr on the left. The simple life of the pastoral Arabs and the harsh climate of Arabia Pastoralis allowed its inhabitants few pleasures and forms of entertainment. The celebration of battlefield victories was one of their major forms of entertainment, which was mixed with pride in their achievement.

The Arab federates of Byzantium in this late antique period—Tanūkhids, Salīḥids, and Ghassānids—had been peninsular Arabs before they became *foederati*. After their change in status, their victory celebrations—like many other aspects of their social life—were strongly influenced by those of an empire in which such celebrations reflected imperial ideology.[3] For a better understanding of federate victory celebrations in Oriens, it is necessary to preface the discussion with a few words on imperial celebrations in this period.

[1] See E. Mittwoch, "Ayyām," *EI*², I, 793–94.

[2] The passage is translated in A. J. Arberry, *The Seven Odes: The First Chapter in Arabic Literature* (London and New York, 1957), 207, verses 21–34.

[3] Much light has been shed on these celebrations by Michael McCormick in his volume on the subject, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge, 1986).

The Christian Roman Empire inherited from the earlier pagan principate many features that it continued, adapted, and modified. Hundreds of triumphal arches were erected the length and breadth of the empire to symbolize imperial victories during the principate, and trophies were also erected, sometimes invoking religion with such figures as Jupiter Victor and Juno Victrix. Commemorations of victory penetrated the Roman calendar: the first princeps, Augustus, ordered that his great victory of 31 B.C. at Actium be celebrated in the various provinces.[4] The Christian Roman Empire inherited many of these manifestations of victory and emphasized some of its own.[5] Just as Augustus was instrumental in promoting these imperial celebrations, so too Constantine, the first Christian emperor, actively promoted Christian ones.[6] Triumphal arches, so popular during the principate, fell out of favor,[7] and the involvement of religion in the imperial victory celebrations grew.[8] The Christian Church prayed for the victory and for the emperor as he formally set out to begin the campaign, his *profectio;* during the battle, the liturgy of war was celebrated;[9] and after the victory, the church also prayed for the arrival home of the victorious emperor, his *adventus.* All this was repeated in the provinces. The emperors were especially desirous to mount victory celebrations in provinces such as Oriens, as a way of cementing the bonds between the central government in Constantinople and its far-flung subjects in distant provinces.[10] And these provinces felt the impact of victory celebrations, especially during the reign of Justinian,[11] who gave an impetus to these celebrations with his penchant for imperial propaganda and publicity; witness the splendid victory celebration for the successful conclusion of his wars against the Vandals, described by Procopius in colorful detail, which involved the emperor himself; the vanquished Vandal king, Gelimer; and the victorious general, Belisarius.[12]

As one of the dioceses of the empire, Oriens responded sympathetically to imperial victory celebrations. The residents' own conception of such observances, inherited from their peninsular Arab past, must have been enhanced and enriched by those of the empire with which they were now closely associated.[13] In the

[4] See ibid., 11–34.

[5] On these celebrations in late antiquity in Byzantium, see ibid., 35–130.

[6] On Constantine and victory celebrations, see ibid., 100ff.; on banquets as an element in Constantine's victory celebration of his *Vicennalia,* see 104–5.

[7] On arches during the principate, see ibid., 25; in late antiquity, 97.

[8] For the great role of the church in victory celebrations, see ibid., 100–11.

[9] For the liturgy of war during the Byzantine military campaigns and the religious sentiments of the author, see Maurice, *Maurice's Strategikon: Handbook of Byzantine Military Strategy,* trans. G. T. Dennis (Philadelphia, 1984), especially 8, 9, 33, 65, 77.

[10] For celebration of these victories in the provinces, see McCormick, *Eternal Victory,* 231–59.

[11] Ibid., 64–68.

[12] Procopius, *History,* IV.ix.1–16.

[13] It is not easy to disentangle the Byzantine and Arab ways of celebration. The same problem faced

celebration of such victories, the federate cavalry must have played a major role. It was the instrument of victory in the battles that they fought for Byzantium, and their most valuable contribution to the Byzantine war machine.

The victory celebrations of the Ghassānids are the best attested among the Arab *foederati,* for their sources are more abundant; but a brief survey of previous Arab federate celebrations, which the Ghassānids continued and developed, will help to elucidate their practice.

I. Fourth-Century Celebrations

Traces of such celebrations among the Arab federates are detectable as early as the fourth century, when Mavia, the Arab federate queen, won two wars: one against the imperial army of Valens in Oriens and another, shortly thereafter, when a contingent of her mounted federates successfully defeated the Goths, and also defended Constantinople after the disaster of Adrianople in A.D. 378.[14] The poets sang her victories in epinician odes that rang through Arab Oriens and even reached the ears of the ecclesiastical historian Sozomen in southern Palestine.[15]

In the sequel to the revolt, Mavia clinched her victory with a favorable treaty with Rome.[16] The necessarily brief account of the ecclesiastical historians did not accommodate such details as a victory celebration, but one relevant datum has been preserved—namely, the marriage of the victorious queen's daughter to the Byzantine master of horse, Victor, who was involved in the war waged by Mavia and the peace she concluded.[17] Surely the nuptials were duly celebrated after the conclusion of the war and before Victor's return to Constantinople to take part in the Gothic war, and must have included a wedding banquet.[18] Thus, this marriage—not unlike that of Ḥalīma, the daughter of the Ghassānid king Arethas, to the warrior who won her hand after performing so well in the battle of Yawm Ḥalīma[19]—added a romantic element to the victory celebration.

Mavia's second victory, even more spectacular than the first, was achieved in Europe, near Constantinople, against the Goths and in defense of the capital.

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researchers examining Byzantine and Germanic elements in the Roman Occident; see McCormick, *Eternal Victory,* 6 note 17.

[14] On Mavia and her exploits in these wars against and for the empire, see *BAFOC,* 138–83.

[15] Ibid., 152 note 54.

[16] Ibid., 152–58.

[17] Ibid., 158–64.

[18] A marriage between an Arab princess and a Byzantine *magister equitum* must have combined elements of both Arab and Byzantine weddings. According to McCormick, "The institution of imperial banquets was an important classical legacy to Late Antique society" (*Eternal Victory,* 105), and the victory celebrations in late antiquity, started by Constantine, included a magnificent state banquet of the kind he threw during the celebration of his *Vicennalia* (104).

[19] See Chapter 2 , above.

Furthermore, the performance of the *cuneus,* the contingent of horsemen she contributed, was eulogized in detail by Zosimus, who could not have been accused of partiality to the Saracens of Mavia: he was no friend of "barbarian" ethnic groups, and made no secret of his antipathies.[20] He credited the Arab contingent with three virtues: the unconquerable thrust of the long pikes with which they transfixed their adversaries, the speed and agility of their horses, and the riders' skill in fighting on horseback.[21] These details explain the fame of Mavia's *equus caballus,* whose virtues must also have been demonstrated in her first war against Valens, but on which the ecclesiastical historians are silent.

The celebrations for this victory must have resembled those for the first, minus the romantic element of the wedding. But they must have featured the other elements expected on such occasions: (1) a parade of the Arabian horses, since they performed so well in the Gothic war; (2) a banquet; (3) poetry composed to commemorate the victory, as it had been when Mavia won the war against the emperor Valens; and (4) most probably, a religious ceremony.

These celebrations were sponsored by a Christian queen who fought for the Nicene faith; after the peace, she sent her mounted contingent to fight the Goths in successful defense of the Christian Empire and the God-guarded city. It is practically certain that a religious ceremony, offering thanks for the Christian victory and for the safe return of the contingent, was part of the celebration. This was the century opened by Constantine, whose rule encouraged the renaissance of victory celebration and the church's involvement in it—which led to the ultimate Christianization of these celebrations, as Michael McCormick has argued.[22] *Imitatio imperii* took place in victory celebrations, such as Mavia's, in the provinces.[23]

II. Fifth-Century Celebrations

The paucity of the sources for the fifth century in the history of Byzantine-Persian relations is well known, and is explained by the relatively peaceful relations that obtained between the two world powers. The same holds true for the sources on the Arab *foederati,* since they are usually mentioned in the context of the Byzantine-Persian conflicts. An exception to the calm was the war of A.D. 420–421, the more important of the two wars that occurred during the reign of Theodosius II.[24] It was a Byzantine victory that inflicted heavy casualties on the Persians and their Arab allies, thousands of whom were drowned in

[20] See *RA,* 113–22.
[21] See Zosimus, *Historia Nova,* ed. L. Mendelssohn (Leipzig, 1887), IV.22.
[22] McCormick, *Eternal Victory,* 101, 9, 100–111.
[23] Ibid., 255.
[24] For these wars, see *BAFIC,* 25–40.

the Euphrates.[25] While writing on this war, the ecclesiastical historian Sozomen said that the Saracen allies of Byzantium proved themselves "formidable" to the Persians and their allies.[26]

As has been explained in a previous volume, these allies were the Salīḥids, the new *foederati* of Byzantium in the fifth century, who had been converted to Christianity after their chief's wife was cured of her sterility by a Christian monk.[27] Even after the Muslim conquest of Oriens, when the Muslim commander, Abū ʿUbayda, found them in their encampment near Chalcis/Qinnasrīn and asked them to adopt Islam, they refused and remained Christians.[28]

In September of 421, the announcement was made in Constantinople of an important victory over the Persians. Although the details of the victory celebrations have not survived, it has been cogently argued that they did take place, and even that anniversary games were instituted by Theodosius II to commemorate the imperial victory.[29] It is likely that the Salīḥids, zealous Christians and formidable warriors in the Persian war, would also have celebrated the victory to which they had contributed. Details are missing, as they are for the Byzantine celebrations in Constantinople, but they can be inferred by analogy from the aftermath of an inter-Arab war that flared up within the Salīḥid phylarchate in Oriens, when one Arab federate group fueled an insurgency against the Salīḥids and actually succeeded in killing their king, Dāwūd.[30] A surviving triplet of verses clearly expresses the pride of the winning party in the contest—here, the Kalb and Namir tribal groups.[31] The verses by themselves do not prove a celebration, but in view of the established fact that victories were usually followed by a celebration at which poetry was recited, one can argue that the two tribes held a victory celebration and the verses are its sole remnant.

More significant than the victory of these two tribal groups over the Salīḥid Dāwūd was that of Ghassān over the Salīḥids, which resulted in the fall of the Salīḥids as the principal *foederati* of Byzantium in the fifth century. The Ghassānids' victory over the Salīḥids was also expressed in some poetry, which may likewise have been occasioned by a celebration, since this was a major military

[25] Ibid., 28, 30, 32.

[26] Ibid., 32 and note 43; see Sozomen, *Historia Eccelesiastica,* ed. J. Bidez, Griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte 50 (Berlin, 1960), VI.xxxviii.

[27] *BAFIC,* 8.

[28] Balāḏuri, *Futūḥ al-Buldān,* ed. S. al-Munajjid (Cairo, 1956), I, 172.

[29] See McCormick, *Eternal Victory,* 58.

[30] See *BAFIC,* 257–62.

[31] For the verses, see Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-Buldān* (Beirut, 1957), IV, 331. On the two regicides, from two powerful tribal groups, Kalb and al-Namir ibn-Wabara, see *BAFIC,* 258–59, 309–10.

encounter that marked the end of one phylarchate in the Orient and the rise of another—that of the Ghassānids.

III. Ghassānid Celebrations

As noted often in this volume, the Ghassānids of the sixth century were the most powerful of all the *foederati* in the service of Byzantium. Furthermore, their century, the sixth, witnessed, after the previous long lull, the outbreak of the Persian wars and their continuance in the reign of every emperor until that of Heraclius in the seventh century. Hence it is possible to discuss Ghassānid victory celebrations in a more meaningful way than was possible for their federate predecessors. The reign of Arethas (529–569) coincided with that of Justinian, the great propagandist of the invincibility of the *imperium Romanum* and its *anikētos,* the *autokrator.* During his reign, community participation in victory celebrations was cultivated through such means as public rejoicing, *gaudia publica*.[32] All these elements influenced the Ghassānids, who had close relations with Byzantium, and so they present the best chance of gaining insight into celebrations conducted in Oriens by the provincials. Furthermore, the Ghassānids lived in an Oriens in which manifestations of victory celebrations were visible. Triumphal arches erected during the principate were in cities all around them, though during late antiquity fewer were constructed.[33] But trophy monuments could still be seen.

The Reign of Arethas

The Battle of Daras

Victory celebrations were started by Justinian quite early after his accession. In A.D. 530, Belisarius, who had been recently appointed *magister militum per Orientem,* won his spurs at the battle of Daras and the emperor celebrated this victory in Constantinople.[34] Justinian's bronze equestrian statue was one of its manifestations.[35] The Ghassānid Arethas, too, had just been promoted to the supreme

[32] For the *gaudia publica* and the *laetitiae publicae,* which reached the provincials in late antiquity, see McCormick, *Eternal Victory,* 234.

[33] Ibid., 25.

[34] Ibid., 64.

[35] Ibid. To the equestrian statue as a manifestation of victory celebrations may be added the church of St. Sergius and Bacchus, since Sergius was perceived as the palladium of Byzantium against Persia. See the present writer in "The Church of Sts. Sergios and Bakhos in Constantinople: Some New Perspectives," in *Byzantium: State and Society, N. Oikonomides Memorial Volume,* ed. A. Abramea, A. Laiou, and E. Chrysos (Athens, 2003), 467–80. This was an article in which I suggested an alternative to Cyril Mango's view on the church as one built by Theodora rather than Justinian in order to accomodate the Monophysites of Constantinople. In a personal letter Mango was sympathetic to this view, but B. Croke expressed dissent from C. Mango and myself in an article, "Justinian, Theodora, and the Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus," *DOP* 60 (2006), 25–63. In n. 140, p. 53, the author states that

phylarchate in Oriens after distinguishing himself in the punitive expedition that Byzantium had mounted against its inveterate enemy, the Lakhmid Mundir. He similarly won his spurs at the battle of Daras, which was entirely a cavalry engagement,[36] in which the Ghassānid horse must have done well and contributed to the victory of Belisarius.[37]

The Ghassānids with their *equus caballus* were employed as *foederati* protecting Oriens against the Persians and the Lakhmids. The battle of Daras was typical of engagements that protected Oriens,[38] and the Ghassānids must have participated in its provincial victory celebration. The Nabataean Arabs of Bostra celebrated the victory of Augustus at Actium through the *Actia Dousaria*.[39] Surely the Ghassānids would have marked the victory of Daras, since unlike the Bostran Arabs, they actually participated in the battle being celebrated.

The victory celebrations of the battle of Daras in 530 set the tone for the subsequent Ghassānid victory celebrations as the sequels to their victorious campaigns. These lasted for some thirty years more during the reign of Arethas, but came to an end in 561 with the peace treaty that Byzantium concluded with Persia and that Arethas and the Ghassānids scrupulously observed till the end of his reign in 569. Of all these battles and subsequent victory celebrations, that of the battle of Chalcis in A.D. 554 was the most memorable.

The Battle of Chalcis

The victory of Chalcis/Qinnasrīn, attained against the Lakhmid Mundir, and its celebrations are well attested.

The relatively abundant sources, all contemporary and authentic, relate to three different traditions—Greek, Syriac, and Arabic—complementary to one another: the *Vita* of St. Simeon the Younger; the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian,

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"war with Persia did not break out until AD 530" and he refers to G. Greatrex, *Rome and Persia at War, 502–532*. See also p. 348, below.

[36] See J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire* (1889; reprint, New York, 1958), 84–85. Justinian's statue was equestrian possibly to reflect the fact that Daras was a cavalry engagement.

[37] All this was obscured by Procopius in his account of the battle of Daras; see *BASIC* I.1, 131–34.

[38] For recent thoughts on Daras see Shahîd, "The Church of Sts. Sergios and Bakhos," 470–72; idem, "The Last Sasanid-Byzantine Conflict in the Seventh Century: The Causes of Its Outbreak," in *Convegno internazionale La Persia e Bisanzio,* (Rome, 2004), Appendix 2, p. 244; and K. Karapli, "Daras: A City-Fortress in Upper Mesopotamia," in *Κλητόριον εἰς μνήμην Νίκου Οἰκονομίδη*, ed. F. Evangelatou-Notara and T. Maniate-Kokkine (Athens, 2005), 137–60.

[39] For the *Actia Dousaria* in Bostra, see M. Sartre, *Bostra, des origines à l'Islam* (Paris, 1985), 156–58. For insightful comments on the *Actia Dousaria,* see G. W. Bowersock in *Roman Arabia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), 121–22, and idem, "The Cult and Representation of Dusares in Roman Arabia," in *Petra and the Caravan Cities: Proceedings of the Symposium Organised at Petra in September 1985 by the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, and the Iconographic Lexicon of Classical Mythology (LIMC) with the Financial Support of UNESCO,* ed. F. Zayadine (Amman, 1990), 33.

quoting earlier Syriac documents; and the panegyric of ʿAlqama on Arethas, the victor of Chalcis.[40]

It was natural that such rich source material should be available on the battle, since it was the greatest military encounter between the Ghassānids and the Lakhmids. Because the *foederati* served as proxies to the two world powers, it was both inter-Arab and Byzantine-Sasanid. Moreover, this decisive battle saw not only the crushing defeat of the Lakhmids but also the death of their king, Mundir, who had terrorized Oriens for fifty years.

The Arabian *equus caballus,* found in the contingents of the federates on both sides of the Persian-Byzantine conflict, receives its due share of attention in accounts of the battle in both Greek and Arabic. The Greek source praises the Lakhmid horse, while the Arabic ode of ʿAlqama does justice to the Ghassānid.

The Ghassānid *foederati,* who were zealous Christians, conducted their wars against both the Persians and the Lakhmids as soldiers of the cross, fighting fire worshippers and pagans respectively. This can be inferred from what is known about them and from the liturgy of war celebrated in Byzantine battles, reflected so clearly in the *Strategikon* ascribed to Maurice.[41] That they fought as Christians at the battle of Chalcis is confirmed by the Greek *Vita* of St. Simeon. Also explicitly confirmed for that battle, in contrast to the inferential evidence for other victory celebrations in this period, is the victory bulletin clearly mentioned in the *Vita*.[42]

As *foederati* of Byzantium, the Ghassānids were well integrated into Byzantine society in Oriens, living as they did among the Arab *Rhomaioi* of Nabataea and Palmyrena, and having been converted to Christianity. Hence their assimilation of much from Byzantium, including the way that the empire conducted its military campaigns and the victory celebrations that followed Byzantine victories. It is thus appropriate to describe both the campaign that culminated in the battle of Chalcis and its victory celebrations in Byzantine terms, in addition to whatever the Ghassānids had retained of their Arab heritage with regard to victory celebrations.

1. The *profectio bellica,* or military departure.[43] News reached Jābiya that Mundir had crossed the frontier and was near Chalcis in the north. Arethas, the

[40] For the *Vita* and the *Chronicle,* see *BASIC* I.1, 241–51. For ʿAlqama's verse, discussed above in Chapter 6, see al-Aʿlam al-Shantamarī, *Dīwān ʿAlqama al-Faḥl,* ed. D. al-Khaṭīb and I. Ṣaqqāl (Aleppo, 1969), 43–45.

[41] See Maurice, *Maurice's Strategikon,* 89, 33, 65, 77, for, *inter alia,* the blessing of the flags and the cry "Nobiscum Deus" during the battle. For the attribution of the *Strategikon* to the *magister militum,* Justinianus, see *BASIC* I.1, 568–71.

[42] See P. van den Ven, ed., *La vie ancienne de S. Syméon Stylite le Jeune (521–592),* Subsidia hagiographica 52 (Brussels, 1962), I, 165, sec. 187; discussed in *BASIC* I.1, 248–49.

[43] For the *profectio bellica,* see the index of McCormick, *Eternal Victory,* s.v., and *BASIC* I.1, 250–51. For a description of it in the tenth century, see McCormick, 249.

Ghassānid phylarch, prepared to advance against him. The long march from Jābiya in the south, in Palaestina Secunda, to distant Chalcis in the north, especially in anticipation of a bloody and dangerous encounter with the formidable Lakhmid adversary, must have started with a *profectio* in Jābiya, in the Golan, the grazing ground where the Ghassānid horse was reared and kept. When al-Nābigha, the panegyrist of the Ghassānids, described in one of his odes the Ghassānid king leading his cavalry from the Golan for a campaign in the south of Oriens,[44] he was expressing what the people in Jābiya actually saw at the start of each campaign: the ceremonial march of their horses from the place where they were kept, ready for combat elsewhere in defense of Oriens. In this case Arethas was leaving the capital to take the field against Mundir.

2. The liturgy of war. The battle of Chalcis was joined and fought (according to the poet al-Nābigha) for two days.[45] The Ghassānids fought in true Christian manner, as the *Strategikon* amply documented, with, *inter alia,* the blessing of the flags and the cry of "Nobiscum Deus."[46] In addition to these Byzantine formulas, the Ghassānids customarily invoked their patron saint, Sergius, and two figures from the Bible: Job and Jesus.[47] In the particular case of the battle of Chalcis, the Ghassānids invoked another saint, St. Simeon the Younger, who was still living as a stylite on his column, not far from the scene of the battle, on Mons Admirabilis, near Antioch. The Ghassānids firmly believed that he extended aid to them during the battle and thereby decided its outcome in their favor.[48] The federate Ghassānid victory at Chalcis against Mundir was thus a Byzantine victory, which elicited victory celebrations in Jābiya. It had attractive features, which are worth presenting.

a. As in all Ghassānid encounters, the horse played the main role. The Greek source, the *Vita* of St. Simeon, describes the devastating effect of the charge of the Lakhmid cavalry under Mundir;[49] it was only when they met their match in the Ghassānids, commanded by the famous Arethas, that Mundir was vanquished and killed. The Arabic source, a contemporary poet, composed an ode on the battle of Chalcis that contained an attractive *ekphrasis* of Arethas' conduct, mounted on his horse, al-Jawn, and carrying two swords, Mikhdam and Rasūb. The Ghassānid

[44] See *Dīwān al-Nābigha al-Dubyānī,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1977), 50, verse 4, in which the horses are described as *mun'ala,* "shod," in preparation for the campaign.

[45] Ibid., 206, verse 4.

[46] See note 41.

[47] al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 53, verse 16; out of metrical necessity, *Jesus* is spelled *sū'* rather than *Yasu'*.

[48] See *BASIC* I.1, 244.

[49] Van den Ven, ed., *La Vie ancienne,* I, 164, sec. 186; see *BASIC* I.1, 247–48.

king appears *more Byzantino* as a cataphract, on horseback and wearing two coats of mail.[50]

b. Of the members of his family who accompanied Arethas, one is mentioned by name: Jabala, his firstborn, who laid down his life in the course of the battle. It is consonant with the Christianity of Arethas that he should have carried back the body for burial in a martyrium at Chalcis.[51]

c. The most Arab aspect of the battle of Chalcis was the participation in it of the princess Ḥalīma. The presence of women, who perfumed the warriors and helped them put on their armor,[52] represented the Arab contribution to the conduct of operations in military encounters.

As noted above, according to the Greek source, the *Vita* of Simeon, after the successful conclusion of the battle a victory bulletin, ἐπινίκια, was sent to Antioch, the seat of the *magister militum;* probably another was sent to Jābiya, the capital of the victor of Chalcis.

3. The *adventus*.[53] The return of the victorious commander to his capital surely was followed by celebrations, *more Arabico* and also *more Byzantino.*

In true Byzantine and Christian manner, there must have been a church service of thanksgiving to all the warriors who contributed to the victorious outcome. A memorial mass must also have been celebrated for Jabala, who fell a martyr at the battle. A church or a monastery may possibly have been built for some saint who helped, such as Sergius, much as Justinian had built the Church of Sergios in Constantinople as a palladium for Byzantium in the war against Persia.[54]

In secular and Arab fashion, the victory celebration might have included the following.

a. Since the cavalry played an important part in the victory, there must have been a horse parade for displaying those valiant animals—especially al-Jawn, the horse of the commander in chief, which served him so well during the encounter.

b. Surely a banquet, *walīma,* must have been prepared and served to celebrate the victory. In the case of Queen Mavia's victory celebrations, the wedding of her daughter to the *magister equitum,* Victor, was an added attraction to the celebration, no doubt accompanied by a sumptuous banquet that befitted the status of the distinguished couple. At the battle of Chalcis, the princess Ḥalīma was involved

[50] See al-Aʿlam al-Shantamarī, *Dīwān ʿAlqama al-Faḥl,* 43–44, verses 25–28. The *ekphrasis* is an eloquent defense of Ghassānid loyalty to the empire, which enlisted them as *foederati,* defenders of Oriens, especially against the Lakhmid Mundir.

[51] See *BASIC* I.1, 241.

[52] As discussed in Chapter 2.

[53] On the *adventus,* see the many references to it in the index of McCormick, *Eternal Victory,* s.v.; see also *BASIC* I.1, 251.

[54] See Shahîd, "The Church of Sts. Sergios and Bakhos."

in a romantic relationship with one of the warriors; the promised marriage of the two may have been celebrated in a wedding and a banquet as part of the victory celebrations.

c. Most important was the recitation of poetry in the *rajaz* meter, the short poems related to battle in pre-Islamic Arabia. In the case of this particular engagement, in addition an ode on Arethas' victory at Chalcis was featured, with its well-known *ekphrasis* of Arethas in action, noted above. This may have been recited at the parade grounds, but probably it was recited as well in more formal surroundings such as an odeion, which would have provided a venue for the many poets seeking the patronage of the Ghassānids who composed panegyrics and for the orators who had various reasons to address the Ghassānid kings.[55]

The Reign of Mundir

The reign of the Ghassānid Arethas came to an end in A.D. 569 and was followed by that of an even more formidable Ghassānid warrior king—his son Mundir, whose training to succeed him had begun after Arethas' visit to the capital in 563 to arrange for the succession. Mundir's brilliant campaigns against the Lakhmids were noted by the primary Syriac source, John of Ephesus, not by the Greek authors, who were hostile to him on doctrinal grounds.[56]

Victory celebrations no doubt took place throughout the career of this Ghassānid, who never lost a battle. The Arabic sources on his reign have been lost, with the exception of a few references, but he was well attested by John of Ephesus' *Ecclesiastical History.* It is by blending the two sets of sources, the Arabic and the Syriac, that victory celebrations during his reign may be discussed.

ʿAyn Ubāgh: A.D. 570

Mundir opened his career as Ghassānid king and successor of his father, Arethas, with a smashing victory over the Lakhmids in 570, known in Arabic as ʿAyn Ubāgh. The victory, though not its name, was noted in the Syriac sources,[57] but it was Arabic contemporary poetry composed on both sides—the Lakhmids on their defeat, the Ghassānids on their victory—that remembered the victor.

One poem, consisting of nine verses, has survived, written by a Ghassānid who took part in the battle and prided himself on the victory; it has been analyzed

[55] On possible Ghassānid odeions, see Part III, Chapter 3.

[56] Ernst Stein and Theodor Nöldeke, a Byzantinist and an Orientalist, were two distinguished scholars who did him justice (see *BASIC* I.1, 425). Stein considered Mundir one of the most distinguished generals of Byzantium; see his *Studien zur Geschichte des byzantinischen Reiches vornehmlich unter den Kaisern Justinus II und Tiberius Constantinus* (Stuttgart, 1919), 95–96.

[57] For these Syriac sources and the campaign, see *BASIC* I.1, 340–46.

earlier in this volume in a different context.[58] On the Lakhmid side, a touching couplet was composed by a woman lamenting the death of her father or brother.[59] The battle was also mentioned by the Ghassānid panegyrist al-Nābigha thirty years later, together with Yawm Ḥalīma, and the poet clearly implied that it was as important as the latter.[60]

Most significant in the description of the battle is the statement of a Syriac source. In addition to giving a precise date for the battle, May 570, which coincided with Ascension Day, it declares that the Lord helped Mundir, he defeated Qabūs, and the Cross triumphed.[61] In the perception of the Syriac authors to whose religious denomination the Ghassānid Mundir belonged, it was a Christian victory—and what is more, on Ascension Day! Such a happy coincidence must have called for a celebration in Jābiya.

Ḥīra: A.D. 575

Monophysite Ghassānid relations with Chalcedonian Constantinople soured in A.D. 573, on doctrinal grounds. But they were normalized in 575 after the Ghassānid king Mundir met the *magister militum,* Justinianus, at the church of St. Sergius in Ruṣāfa.[62] Immediately thereafter, Mundir mounted his lightning campaign against the Lakhmids and captured their capital, Ḥīra. It was an astounding victory, which reverberated in Byzantium and Persia itself and was well-described by John of Ephesus: "And he was extolled by all men. The two powers [Persia and Byzantium] also regarded with astonishment and admiration his spiritedness and courage and the victories he had achieved."[63] Even the Arab poet of the Persian *foederati,* the Lakhmids, extolled the Ghassānid king's victory and his capture of Ḥīra, while reprimanding the Lakhmid for being away, relaxing, while his capital was being occupied and set on fire by the victorious Ghassānid king.[64]

During the thirty years or so between the exile of Mundir to Sicily, ca. 580,[65] and the Persian occupation of Oriens, ca. 610, Arabic poetry by both al-Nābigha

[58] Discussed in Chapter 2 in connection with Ibn al-Raʾlāʾ; for the poem and its poet, see M. Muhammad al-Marzubāni, *Muʿjam al-Shuʿarāʾ*, ed. ʿA. al-Sattār Farrāj (Cairo, 1960), 86.

[59] Quoted by G. Rothstein in *Die Dynastie der Laḫmiden in al-Ḥira* (Berlin, 1899), 85.

[60] See al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 206, verse 4.

[61] "Et auxiliatus est Dominus Mundaro, et devicit Qabus et Crux triumphavit"; see *Chronicon Maroniticum,* trans. J. B. Chabot, *Chronica Minora,* pars secunda, CSCO, Scriptores Syri, ser. 3, vol. 4 (Paris, 1904), 111, lines 14–15.

[62] See *BASIC* I.1, 373–78.

[63] *Ioannis Ephesini Historiae Ecclesiasticae Pars Tertia,* Latin trans. E. W. Brooks, CSCO, Scriptores Syri, ser. 3, vol. 106 (Louvain, 1936), 271. For John of Ephesus' Syriac description of the campaign in its entirety, see *BASIC* I.1, 381.

[64] On the couplet of ʿAdī ibn Zayd that compares Mundir and his capture of Ḥīra to a falcon, see ʿAdī ibn Zayd, *Dīwān,* ed. A. Muʿaybid (Baghdad, 1965), 114–15.

[65] For the exile of Mundir in the early 580s, see *BASIC* I.1, 538–40.

and Ḥassān alluded to Ghassānid campaigns and victories;[66] it is difficult, however, to identify the sites of these victories or their dates. For the next two decades, while the Persian-Byzantine conflict continued during the reign of Heraclius, there were of course no Ghassānid victories. It is only with the final victory of Heraclius over the Persians that the Ghassānids were remembered in a triumphal context.

After Nineveh, A.D. 628

The victory bulletin of the emperor Heraclius after his defeat of the Persians at Nineveh in A.D. 628, addressed to the Senate in Constantinople, referred to the Saracens[67]—that is, the Ghassānids, who had withdrawn with the Byzantine army into Anatolia after the Persian occupation of Oriens. They must have celebrated their return and their contribution to the victory of Heraclius, as they assumed an even more prominent presence in the defense of Oriens; but because the sources on these few years before the fateful battle of the Yarmūk in 636 are almost nonexistent, no record has survived of celebrations, either marking their own return to Oriens or echoing the celebration of the great victory in Constantinople. The defeat of Byzantium by the Persians and their conquest of Jerusalem in 614 was mentioned in Arabian Mecca in a chapter of the Koran on the *Rūm,* Byzantines, that assures the faithful in Mecca that Byzantium will redeem the defeat, and win the final victory.[68] When news of this victory reached the Muslim Arabs in Medina in 628, they rejoiced, and one of the faithful had even wagered on the prospective victory.[69] If the Arabs of Mecca, not involved directly in the Byzantine-Sassanid conflict, noted the victory of Nineveh and expressed their satisfaction, *a fortiori* the Ghassānids, who took part in the campaigns that resulted in that victory, must surely have celebrated.

In a previous chapter, an important landmark in the Ghassānid ecclesiastical calendar was noted, namely, Yawm al-Khurūj, the Day of the Exodus, either on Palm Sunday or Easter Sunday. To this may now be added Yawm al-Naṣr, Victory Day, which marked each Ghassānid victory. Perhaps the two most important ones, those of Yawm Ḥalīma and ʿAyn Ubāgh, were celebrated annually.[70]

[66] See al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 42, verses 8–10; Ḥassān, *Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit,* ed. W. ʿArafāt, Gibb Memorial New Series 25 (London, 1971), I, 308, verses 9–10.

[67] *Chronicon Paschale,* ed. L. Dindorf (Bonn, 1832), I, 155–56; see *BASIC* I.1, 642–43.

[68] Koran, 30:1–6.

[69] This wager has been noted by McCormick (*Eternal Victory,* 2), citing A. Shboul, "Byzantium and the Arabs: The Image of the Byzantines as Mirrored in Arabic Literature," in *Byzantine Papers,* ed. E. Jeffreys, M. Jeffreys, and A. Moffatt (Canberra, 1981), 47–48 with notes 32, 33.

[70] Their mention together by al-Nābigha, decades after their occurrence, could suggest an annual observance of the two victories; see *Dīwān,* 206, verse 4. That both victories were precisely dated would also support an annual observance—and because Yawm Ubāgh happened to fall on Ascension Day, it could be celebrated as both a religious and a secular holiday.

XI

Votive and Victory Offerings

Related to victory celebrations was the custom of offering symbols of military victories to shrines, reflecting the gratitude of the Ghassānid victors to the saint whom they invoked for aid during their military encounters. Contemporary Arabic poetry on the Ghassānids describes one such offering, while the later Islamic sources preserve traces of two others. These sources do not explicitly identify the objects they mention as victory symbols, but they arguably can be interpreted as such, especially when set against the background of the Byzantine practice of offering such victory symbols to shrines. Ghassānid history itself provides such a background during the career of Mundir. Before he mounted his lightning offensive against the capital of the Lakhmids, Ḥīra, Mundir called on God for help. After the spectacular victory that delivered the Lakhmid capital into his hands, he dedicated the abundant booty he seized to the churches and the monasteries.[1] The historian does not specify the nature of Mundir's dedicatory offerings, but since he carried away from Ḥīra horses and possibly camels, these probably were included. So the practice of the dedication of victory symbols to Christian structures is established for the Ghassānids; it will be further supported by reference to specific offerings from the Byzantine world.

I. Sergiopolis/Ruṣāfa: *Extra Muros*

In a panegyric on the Ghassānid king al-Nuʿmān, the poet al-Nābigha refers in one of the verses to a herd of camels outside the walls of Sergiopolis, roaming near its cross.[2] These camels are described as *muʾabbala*—that is, according to the medieval

[1] For the campaign of Mundir against Ḥīra, see *BASIC* I.1, 378–84; on the dedication of the booty, see 379, 381. The dedication of camels and their consecration to deities was apparently a well-known practice among the Arabs (e.g., for the consecration of a camel to God, see Koran, 7:73, 77); dedication of animals to God and their sacrifice are an essential part of the Islamic hajj (Koran, 5:2, 97); see also *BASIC* II.1, 120 note 171.

[2] See *Dīwān al-Nābigha al-Dubyānī,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1977), 52, verse 10. The term for herds, *anʿām,* could refer to camels or cows; in this context it most likely means "camels." Sergiopolis is called in Arabic both Ruṣāfa and al-Zawrāʾ (see *BASIC* I.1, 119–21), and the cross was probably set up over its gate.

lexicographer, choice camels, kept only for breeding purposes and never employed as beasts of burden.[3] Such choice camels, allowed to roam around Sergiopolis, which the Ghassānids protected, were surely victory symbols dedicated by the Ghassānid king, whose *praetorium* still stands outside its walls. The following arguments may be adduced in support of this conclusion.

1. The verse comes in an epinician ode celebrating the victory of the Ghassānid king al-Nuʿmān over two tribal groups, Asad and Fazāra. In the same ode, a verse clearly indicates that the Ghassānid forces invoked biblical figures, Jesus and Job, Ayyūb.[4] So, the ode combines the invocation of religious figures and the victory made possible by that invocation; hence, a victory offering, as Mundir had made after his defeat of the Lakhmids and the occupation of Ḥīra, was the natural sequel.

2. The point of dedicating the camels to the saint may be related to geography: the city, isolated in the desert, arid region of Euphratensis, could have been provisioned only through caravans of camels. In fact, a medallion of an Arabic camel driver has survived that testifies to the existence of such caravans.[5] The camels may have taken part in the campaign of the Ghassānid king, and so could have belonged to his army or to that of his adversaries; in the latter case, they would have been spoils of war, dedicated to the patron Ghassānid saint.[6]

3. Analogies from the Byzantine world are not wanting. In A.D. 880, the Arabs had attacked the port of Methone in their attempt to invade the Peloponnese. The Byzantine admiral eventually defeated the invaders, burning many of their ships and capturing others. These were dedicated to the church at Methone. So presumably the ships that would have attacked Methone became its spoils.[7] The camels may have performed a similar function at Sergiopolis. Closer to the animal kingdom of camels, in 753, during the spring festival, a Paphlagonian peasant dedicated a cow to the chancel screen of the church of St. Theodore.[8]

II. The Two Ghassānid Swords, Mikhdam and Rasūb

The two famous swords have been mentioned in the discussion of the Ghassānid victory of Chalcis/Yawm Ḥalīma in 554. An early Islamic source, Hishām

[3] The term *muʾabbala* is unusual, and the monolingual medieval lexicographers may have fallen short in discovering its signification. In Syriac, the word *abīl* means a monk who devoted or consecrated himself to God, and the Syriac term *abīl* is attested in Arabic; for this sense of *muʾabbala,* see *BASIC*, II.1, 120 note 169.

[4] For Fazāra and Asad, see al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 49; for the biblical figures, see 53, verse 16. On Job/Ayyūb and the Ghassānids, see the appendix.

[5] On the medallion, see *BASIC* I.1, 507.

[6] In a verse, Sergius may be invoked between Jesus and Ayyūb; see *BASIC* II.1, 120 note 170.

[7] For the defeat of the Arab fleet in A.D. 881 by Nasar and his gift of ships to the church of Methone, see *Theophanes Continuatus,* ed. I. Bekker (Bonn, 1838), 304.

[8] For St. Theodore and his miracles, see *Acta sanctorum* (Brussels, 1925), Nov., IV, 49–55.

al-Kalbī, relates that these swords were found in one of the two pagan shrines of Arabia—dedicated either to al-Fals, the idol that belonged to the Ṭayyiʾ tribe, or to Manāh, the idol of al-Khazraj of Medina/Yathrib. ʿAli, the cousin of the Prophet Muḥammad and the future caliph, was sent by Muḥammad to smash these idols; he brought the two swords back to the Prophet, who gave him one of them. It became known as Dhu al-Faqār, the famous sword of ʿAli.[9]

It is unclear how the two swords, which were unsheathed at the battle of Chalcis by the Christian Ghassānid king Arethas, ended up in a pagan shrine of Arabia. One plausible scenario is that they were dedicated after the victory to a Christian shrine such as that of the military saint, Sergius, whom the Ghassānids invoked in their battles.[10] Much confusion reigned in Oriens after the defeat of the Byzantines and the Ghassānids in A.D. 614 by the Persians, who then occupied Oriens for some fifteen years. Perhaps during this period the shrine at Ruṣāfa/Sergiopolis was raided, and after being seized by some Arab pastoralists the two swords found their way to one of the pagan shrines.[11]

A more plausible explanation is suggested by a statement in Balāḏurī that Arethas himself sent them as a victory offering to al-Qalīs, to the church (Greek *ekklēsia*) built by Abraha, the Christian ruler of South Arabia in this period in Sanʿāʾ.[12] The statement in Balāḏurī has the ring of authenticity, because he explicitly states that the two swords were sent as a votive offering, using the correct technical term: "and he *vowed* (*naḏara*) that if he were to be victorious over his enemy [in the battle] he would send them [the two swords] as a gift to al-Qalīs."[13] The dispatch of the two swords to al-Qalīs also makes sense in view of the intimate relations between the Ghassānids and South Arabia, the region of their relatives, the

[9] For ʿAli's mission to the two idols, see Hishām ibn al-Kalbī, *The Book of Idols,* trans. N. Faris (Princeton, 1952), 13–14, 52–53. For another account of the sword, see E. Mittwoch, "Dhuʾl Faḳār," *EI*², II, 233.

[10] For the Barbarikon at Ruṣāfa/Sergiopolis, at which gifts to St. Sergius were stored, see E. K. Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius between Rome and Iran* (Berkeley, 1999), 65 note 28.

[11] Another scenario could be related to the group al-Aws, who fought with Arethas at the battle of Chalcis. They came from Medina/Yathrib in Ḥijāz, a circumstance that might explain why the shrine of Manāh near Medina had the two swords. As Hishām explains, "Khazraj" was a label applied to both the Arab tribes of Medina, al-Aws as well as al-Khazraj; see Hishām, *The Book of Idols,* 13. For the Aws at the battle of Chalcis, see al-Aʿlam al-Shantamarī, *Dīwān ʿAlqama al-Faḥl,* ed. D. al-Khaṭīb and I. Ṣaqqāl (Aleppo, 1969), 48, verse 32.

[12] See Balāḏurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf,* ed. M. Ḥamīdullāh (Cairo, 1959), I, 522. The reading "al-Qalīs" appears twice (notes 3, 4), following the Istanbul MS, on which the edition of Balāḏurī depended. Of significance here are the vow and particularly the reference to al-Qalīs, which provide evidence for the role played by South Arabia, the region of the great Arabian martyropolis Najrān, in the consciousness of the Christian Arabs of pre-Islamic times. On the location of al-Qalīs and Sanʿāʾ in South Arabia, and on the possibility that the church in Sanʿāʾ had within its precincts some relics of St. Arethas, see the present writer in "Byzantium in South Arabia," *DOP* 33 (1979), 81–83.

[13] Balāḏurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf,* I, 522.

martyrs of Najrān, whose chief saint, Arethas, was the namesake of the Ghassānid warrior king Arethas.

The dedication of swords at religious shrines is not unknown in other parts of the Byzantine world. A soldier, after scoring a victory in a military encounter, commonly dedicated his sword to a military saint, Theodore.[14] And in Islam, spoils of war were often dedicated at mosques.[15]

The mystique of these Ghassānid swords continued in Islamic times, and Dhu al-Faqār became the most famous Islamic sword, reputedly resting now in Istanbul in Topkapi Saray. A Byzantine source mentions this sword in the tenth century during the reign of Nicephorus Phocas. Leo the Deacon relates that during an encounter with the Muslims in Oriens, it was acquired by the Byzantines. Nikephoros dispatched an embassy to the Fatimid ruler in Tunisia with the view of ransoming the *patricius* Niketas, who had been captured by the Fatimids. His offer of the sword of Muḥammad in exchange for the *patricius* was accepted, and al-Muʿizz released his captive.[16]

III. The Two Earrings of Māriya

The Islamic sources also report that two earrings of the Ghassānid queen Māriya, the mother of Arethas, were dedicated by her to the Kaʿba in Mecca.[17] This may sound strange, but it should be remembered that religion in pre-Islamic Mecca, including the pilgrimage,[18] was syncretistic: in its pantheon, Allah, the biblical God, was represented, and the Kaʿba contained a picture of Mary and Jesus.[19] Thus the dedication of the two earrings to the Kaʿba ceases to sound so incredible.

[14] See A. Sigalas, "Ἡ διασκευὴ τῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ Χρυσίππου παραδεδομένων θαυμάτων τοῦ ἁγίου Θεωδώρου," *Ἐπετηρὶς ἑταιρείας βυζαντινῶν σπουδῶν* 1 (1924), 295–339.

[15] See C. Foss, "Byzantine Responses to Turkish Attacks: Some Sites of Asia Minor," in *Aetos: Studies in Honour of Cyril Mango Presented to Him on April 14, 1998,* ed. I. Ševčenko and I. Hutter (Stuttgart, 1998), 154–71, Plates XXXIV–XXXVII, nos. 9–15.

[16] On this Byzantine-Fatimid episode, see *The History of Leo the Deacon: Byzantine Military Expansion in the Tenth Century,* trans. A.-M. Talbot and D. F. Sullivan (Washington, D.C., 2005), 126–27 (note 5 discusses what may be an Arab-Muslim version of the episode involving the sword). For more on the fortunes of this sword and the involvement of the Fatimids, see P. E. Walker, "Purloined Symbols of the Past: The Theft of Souvenirs and Sacred Relics in the Rivalry between the Abbasids and Fatimids," in *Culture and Memory in Medieval Islam: Essays in Honour of Wilferd Madelung,* ed. F. Daftary and J. W. Meri (London, 2003), 364–87.

[17] See Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Maydāni, *Majmaʿ al-Amthāl,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1978), I, 411.

[18] For Mawqif al-Naṣrāni, "the station of the Christians" was one of the stations on the pre-Islamic pilgrimage route to Mount ʿArafāt. It appears as Wādī Muḥassir or Baṭn Muḥassir in the *maʿājim* of Yāqūt and Bakri, s.vv.

[19] See M. Azraqi, *Akhbār Makka,* ed. R. Malḥas (Mecca, 1965), I, 165. On the conquest of Mecca in A.D. 630, the Prophet Muḥammad moved the many idols out of the Kaʿba, and he protected the pictures of Mary and Jesus from destruction; see ibid. and Ibn Hishām, *Life of Muhammad,* trans. A. Guillaume (1955; reprint, Karachi, 1990), 552.

The Ghassānids were zealous propagators of the Christian faith in Arabia, and their bishop Theodore, whose episcopate lasted from 540 to 570, had Ḥijāz under his jurisdiction.[20] The Ghassānids had as allies in Mecca the clan of Banū Asad ibn ʿAbd al-ʿUzzā,[21] one member of which was the Christian Waraqa—the uncle of Khadīja, the wife of the Prophet Muḥammad. It is thus not altogether impossible that the Ghassānid queen whose name was Māriya/Mary sent her two earrings to the Kaʿba, which housed a picture of her namesake, the Virgin Mary.

These two earrings are described as being as large as the eggs of a pigeon. They gave rise to the proverbial saying—*Khudhu wa law bi-Qurtay Māriya,* "Take it (buy it), even though it costs as much as the two earrings of Māriya"[22]—uttered when a commodity is expensive but worth buying at any price. Because these two earrings had a history in later Islamic times, they give rise to two questions: what was the provenance of these two earrings, and what is the truth about their fate in post-Ghassānid Islamic times?

The Provenance of the Earrings

The Ghassānid kings traveled to Constantinople on various occasions, especially when they were endowed with the patriciate or kingship. Their wives could accompany them on these journeys. The wife of the prospective patrician had a function to perform during the ceremony of promotion. On such occasions, royal gifts were extended to the spouse of the honorand, as has been documented in at least in two cases (discussed below). Both Arethas and his son Mundir are attested as having been in Constantinople;[23] the sources are silent on whether Jabala visited Constantinople, where his wife Māriya might have acquired these famous earrings as a gift.

A passage in the Syriac text of Zacharia, which illuminates so much on Jabala, may provide the key to the answer.[24] In the obituary notice on him, Zacharia says in the Latin version of the notice that Jabala was "bellicosus et sapiens," "armis Romanis multum exercitatus est," and "et in locis diversis pugnis illustris factus erat." This sheds light on the career of Jabala, so ignored by the Greek sources such as Procopius, who was no friend of the Ghassānids. It can easily be concluded from this notice that Jabala became a faithful ally of the Byzantines, as shown by his assimilation of Byzantine military tactics and by his fighting for their cause

[20] On Theodore, see *BASIC* I.2, 771–74.

[21] On this clan, see al-Zubayr ibn-Bakkar, *Jamharat Nasab Quraysh wa Akhbāruhā,* ed. M. Shākir (Cairo, 1961), 425–38. Its relations with the Ghassānids will be treated in detail in the next volume of this series, *Byzantium and Islam in the Seventh Century.*

[22] See al-Maydāni, *Majmaʿ al-Amthāl,* I, 410–11.

[23] *BASIC* I.1, 282–88, 384–89.

[24] Ibid., 65.

in various engagements in which he distinguished himself. The Syriac source also referred to him as Aṭfar/Aṣfar, which has been correctly interpreted to mean that he also became *Flavius*[25]—another sign of his loyalty to the Byzantine *autokratores,* who since Constantine claimed to be the second Flavians. The title was most probably conferred on him rather than assumed by him, reflecting the confidence reposed in him by the central government. The crowning sign of his loyalty was his death at the battle of Thannūris, fighting for Byzantium. Under such circumstances, it seems quite possible that he was asked to visit Constantinople, where he was honored.[26] This provides the background for the hypothesized visit of his wife Māriya, a woman who the Byzantine intelligence service knew came from a powerful and influential group, Kinda.

The hypothesis of a visit by Jabala and Māriya to Constantinople sets the stage for understanding the possible provenance of the two earrings that became so famous. At this time, late in the 520s, Justinian was ruling as well as reigning, after the death of his elderly uncle, Justin, in 527. Alternatively, the visit may have taken place toward the end of Justin's reign, when Justinian and Theodora were the *de facto* rulers.

The imperial gifts of Theodora to various female personages were an effective instrument of Byzantine diplomacy. The sources present analogies that support the proposition that the two earrings of Māriya emanated from her: (1) when the queen of the Iberians appeared with her husband in Constantinople in 534, Theodora gave her all kinds of jewelry decorated with pearls;[27] (2) when the queen of the Sabir Huns, Boa, came to Constantinople, she was given gifts that included raiment, silver vessels, and money;[28] and (3) gifts were also given to Valeriana, the wife of the Lazic king, Tzath.[29]

Byzantine imperial gifts were sometimes given to the recipient not in

[25] For the identification of Aṭfar/Aṣfar with Flavius, see *Martyrs,* 273–76; *BASIC* I.1, 66–67. The title Flavius (Yellow), translated into Arabic as Asfar, was applied to the Ghassānid ruler Jabala, the father of Arethas, and it became a generic name for the *Rhomaioi: Banū al-Asfar,* the Children of the Yellow One. On *Banū al-Asfar,* see I. Goldziher, "Aṣfar," *EI*[2], I, 687–88. See also *Martyrs,* 273–375, where, in 1971, I entertained various interpretations for the Syriac term *Aṭfar,* applied to the Ghassānid king Jabala in A.D. 528. Since then it has become clear that Aṭfar was none other than Flavius/Aṣfar.

[26] Jabala was referred to as king in the two incontestable authentic Syriac sources—Zacharia and the *Letter* of Simeon of Bēth-Arshām, for which see *BASIC* I.1, 66 note 4; *Martyrs,* 63. It is not clear from the scant sources whether he was also *patricius*. Although obscured by the pitiable remnants of the sources, the principal facts of his reign were salvaged and put together from the Syriac sources with help from the Greek in *BASIC* I.1, 48–49.

[27] Ὁμοίως καὶ αὐγούστα τῇ αὐτοῦ γυναικὶ κόσμια παντοῖα διὰ μαργαριτῶν ἐχαρίσατο; Theophanes, *Chronographia,* ed. C. de Boor (1883; reprint, Hildesheim, 1963), I, 216.

[28] Καὶ προτραπεῖσα ὑπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως Ἰουστινιανοῦ ξενίοις πολλοῖς βασιλικῆς φορεσίας καὶ σκευῶν διαφόρων ἐν ἀργύρῳ καὶ χρημάτων οὐκ ὀλίγων; John Malalas, *Chronographia,* ed. L. Dindorf (Bonn, 1835), 431.

[29] Ibid., 413; Malalas does not specify what gifts Tzath and his wife received from Justinian.

Constantinople but at his or her place of residence, as was done with the gift of Theodora to the wife of the Persian king in Ctesiphon.[30] This example clearly indicates that the recipient did not have to be in Constantinople. Thus the two earrings could easily have reached Māriya in Oriens. The analogy with the gift to the Persian queen is especially apposite. That gift was understandable, addressed, as it was, to her counterpart, the queen of the other superpower, Sasanid Persia. Māriya, on the other hand, came from a small federate entity, a vassal of Byzantium; but she would have had spiritual kinship with Theodora, since she was the wife of the chief federate figure in Oriens, Jabala, a Monophysite and a faithful servant of Byzantium in wars with Persia. Hence, the importance of enlisting the powerful federate queen in the service of Theodora's cause—the resurrection of the Monophysite church in Oriens. It is worth noting that this particular empress, Theodora, boasted of jewelry that included earrings visible to the present day in the famous mosaic at San Vitale. Both earrings, those of Theodora and those of Māriya, became famous: while Theodora's can still be seen, Māriya's have disappeared.

The Fate of the Earrings

The two earrings were well known in later Islamic times. The sources state that they ended up in the possession of the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān (A.D. 685–705), who gave them to his daughter, Fāṭima, on the occasion of her marriage to ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-Azīz, the future Umayyad caliph (717–719).[31] It is difficult not to accept the authenticity of this account and its sequel.[32] Before the earrings came into the possession of ʿAbd al-Malik, the Ghassānid queen, according to the sources, had presented them as an offering to the Kaʿba.[33] A question thus arises of which Kaʿba is meant: the one in Mecca or the one in Najrān.

In support of the Kaʿba of Mecca, the following may be adduced. There was a strong Ghassānid presence in Mecca represented by Khuzāʿa, the lords of Mecca before Quraysh; as Azdites, they were the relatives of the Ghassānids. In addition,

[30] Both Justinian and Theodora sent gifts to the Persian king and queen: ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἡ Αὔγουστα κατέπεμψε τῇ βασιλίσσῃ Περσῶν, τῇ οὔσῃ αὐτοῦ ἀδελφῇ (ibid., 467).

Theodora corresponded with foreign queens: for the letter to the Persian queen, see John of Ephesus, "Life of Simon the Bishop," in *Lives of the Eastern Saints,* ed. E. W. Brooks, PO 17 (Paris, 1923), 157, lines 5–8 of the Syrian text. She also wrote to the queen of Gothic Italy; see C. Foss, "The Empress Theodora," *Byzantion* 72 (2002), 151.

[31] See J. ibn Nubāta, *Sarḥ al-ʿUyūn,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1964), 435–36.

[32] The specific details of the story enhance its plausibility: on the orders of her ascetic and conscientious husband, she returned the two earrings to the state treasury when he became caliph; and after his death, out of respect for his wishes, she rejected the suggestion of his more hedonistic successor, Yazīd, that she take them back (ibid.).

[33] See al-Maydāni, *Majmaʿ al-Amthāl,* I, 411.

the clan of Banū-Asad to whom belonged Waraqa ibn Nawfal, the Christian uncle of Khadīja, the first wife of the Prophet Muḥammad, were the allies (*ḥulafāʾ*) of the Ghassānids in Mecca. These were enthusiastic Christians who tried to spread the faith in the Arabian Peninsula. It is possible that traces of Christianity in Mecca—notably the images of Jesus and Mary in the Kaʿba; Masājid Maryam (the mosques of Mary), not far from Mecca; and Mawqif al-Naṣrānī, "the station of the Christians," one of the stations of the pre-Islamic pilgrimage route[34]—were associated with them. So, the presentation of the earrings would have been highly appropriate within this context, and an act of piety consonant with the practice of votive offerings among the Christians of the early church.

It is equally likely that the earrings were offered to the Kaʿba of Najrān, the famous Christian martyrium erected in the wake of the martyrdoms of ca. A.D. 520. Najrān became the Arabian martyropolis in the Arabian Peninsula; and the Ghassānids were the relatives of the Arabs of Najrān, the Ḥārithids, who endured those persecutions. Especially relevant was the fact that at least one hundred of those martyred in Najrān were women.[35] As often noted in this volume, relations between the Ghassānids of Oriens and the Ḥārithids of Najrān had been close ever since the Najrānites came to the Ghassānid king Jabala, invoking his aid against Yūsuf, the king of South Arabia who started the persecutions and was responsible for the martyrdoms.[36] It should also be remembered that in the 680s, after their quarrel with the emperor Maurice, some of the Ghassānids emigrated to South Arabia, no doubt mainly to Najrān, the city of their relatives.[37] A gift by a Ghassānid queen to the Kaʿba of Najrān, a city of martyresses, would have been very fitting and in harmony with the dedication by the Ghassānid king of his two swords, Mikhdam and Rasūb, also to a Christian shrine.

Islam inherited many of the relics of the pre-Islamic period. As already noted in this chapter, after the conquest of Mecca by the Prophet Muḥammad in 630, the idols in the Kaʿba were smashed, but the graphic representations of Mary and Jesus were spared; at the same time, the two swords of the Ghassānid Arethas came into the possession of the Prophet. It is, therefore, quite possible that the two earrings from the Kaʿba either of Mecca or of Najrān fell into the hands of Muslims.

[34] See the present writer in *BAFIC,* 390–92; *BASIC* I.2, 997; and "Islam and *Oriens Christianus:* Makka 610–622 AD," in *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam,* ed. E. Grypeou, M. Swanson, and D. Thomas (Leiden, 2006), 12–13. The strong presence of the Virgin Mary in Mecca, represented by her image in the Kaʿba and by Masājid Maryam, would have made it an attractive destination to receive earrings from a Ghassānid queen who was her namesake.

[35] See the present writer in "The Martyrdom of Early Arab Christians: Sixth Century Najrān," in *The First One Hundred Years: A Centennial Anthology Celebrating Antiochian Orthodoxy in North America,* ed. G. S. Corey et al. (Englewood, N.J., 1995), 180.

[36] See *Martyrs,* passim.

[37] See *BASIC* I.1, 546–47.

The Umayyads, in turn, when they were established in Oriens as the first dynasty in Islam, started to acquire relics: for example, Muʿāwiya acquired the *burda,* the mantle, belonging to the Prophet and given by him to the poet Kʿab.[38] So the account of how the two earrings found their way into ʿAbd al-Malik's hands is perfectly credible.

Appendix
The Ghassānids and the Old Testament: Job/Ayyūb

In their military encounters, the Ghassānids invoked religious figures for assistance against the fire-worshipping Persians and the pagan Lakhmids, as did the regular Byzantine troops of Byzantium, the Christian Roman Empire, who even celebrated a liturgy of war before going into battle. It was not unusual that they should invoke God or St. Sergius, their patron saint and that of the army of the Orient. More surprising was the Ghassānids' invocation of the figure of Job, which has survived in the best of contemporary sources: the Arabic ode of al-Nābigha, their panegyrist.[1]

Job, Ayyūb in Arabic, the well-known Old Testament figure who epitomized the concept of patient suffering, was very much alive among the Semites of Bilād al-Shām, especially those in the region of the strongest Ghassānid presence, the northern part of the Provincia Arabia and in Palaestina Secunda. The village of Dayr Ayyūb evidenced that presence toponymically, as did the *sūq* that used to be held there and that the traders of Arabia and Mecca used to frequent.[2] And it was to them and their congeners who engaged in trade along the *via odorifera* that the Koran was addressed, which contains a passage on Job/Ayyūb, on the rock over which he sat, and on the spring of water that was supposed to have cured him of his ulcers.[3] The name itself, so Arabic-sounding, was assumed by some Arabs in the pre-Islamic era.

But Job's special place in the life of the Ghassānids calls for an explanation. The Ghassānids were *foederati,* employed to fight the wars of Byzantium in the Orient and to defend the Holy Land, around the boundaries of which they were settled. One of the military virtues of warriors was *ṣabr,* endurance during military encounters, and the Ghassānids were especially celebrated for it. This concept

[38] For the *burda* and other relics in Islamic history, see P. Hitti, *History of the Arabs,* 10th ed. (New York, 1981), 186 and note 2.

[1] See *Dīwān al-Nābigha,* ed. S. Fayṣal (Beirut, 1968), 53, verse 16.

[2] On Dayr Ayyūb and its *sūq,* see I. M. Ḥammūr, *Aswāq al-ʿArab* (Beirut, 1979), 196–97; see also above, Part I, Chapter 4. There is another toponym, Heptapegon, which has his name, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Its curative water is said to have rid Job of his skin sores. Hence the name; for this, see E. S. Srouji, *Cyclamens from Galilee: Memoirs of a Physician from Nazareth* (Lincoln, Neb., 2003), 211.

[3] For Job/Ayyūb in the Koran, see A. Jeffery, "Ayyūb," *EI*², I, 795–96.

of *ṣabr,* sometimes referred to as *ḥifāz,* was sung by the panegyrist.[4] It was such a distinctive feature of Ghassānid military prowess that a unit or group among them was called *al-ṣubur/al-ṣubr* (plural of *ṣābir* or *ṣabūr*), "those who endure."[5] This appellation, together with the Ghassānid invocation of Ayyūb, Job, on the battlefield, suggests that an elite Ghassānid unit identified itself with Job as the biblical figure who suffered patiently through many trials. Indeed, the Arabic term *ṣubr* or *ṣubur* was apparently transliterated into Greek, *soborenoi,* in one of the inscriptions of the region.[6]

The name Ayyūb acquired some currency after the rise of Islam, owing to its appearance in the Koran as the name of the biblical figure. Its most famous attestation is the name Abū-Ayyūb al-Anṣāri, the companion of the Prophet Muḥammad, who died near the walls of Constantinople during the caliphate of Muʿāwiya and whose name survives in the well-known district in Constantinople/Istanbul, Eyüp.

[4] *Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit,* ed. W. ʿArafāt, Gibb Memorial New Series 25 (London, 1971), I, 308, verses 13, 17. For the concept, so well described by H. Lammens, see his *L'Islam: Croyances et institutions* (Beirut, 1943), 16: "La plus incontestable qualité du Bédouin—encore un fruit de son individualisme—c'est son *sabr*. . . . C'est une qualité positive supposant une tension énergique et continuée. . . . C'est une ténacité indomptable à lutter contre la nature ennemie, contre les éléments implacables, contre les fauves du désert, et surtout contre les hommes."

[5] For this group or unit among the Ghassānids, see Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *al ʿIqd al-Farīd,* ed. A. Amīn, I. Abyārī, and A. Hārūn (Cairo, 1949), III, 387.

[6] For the inscription, see H. MacAdam, *Studies in the History of the Roman Province of Arabia: The Northern Sector,* BAR 295 (Oxford, 1986), 128 note 18. Other Arabic appellations were transliterated into Greek; for example, *Kātil al-Jūʿ* appears in a Ghassānid inscription as Καθελόγο(ς) (see *BASIC* I.1, 509–12, and *BASIC* II.1, 45). Remarkably, this appellation for the Ghassānids survived after the fall of the dynasty in the poetry of al-Akhṭal, the poet laureate of the caliph ʿAbd al-Malik, ca. A.D. 700; he specifically mentions "Ṣubr of Ghassān" in his most famous ode on the caliph. For a translation of the entire ode into English, see S. P. Stetkevych, *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy: Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode* (Bloomington, Ind., 2002), 89–97; for the verse in Arabic, see 296 note 55.

XII

The Horse

Much of Ghassānid life, social and professional, revolved around the horse. The horse was the Ghassānids' main contribution to the Byzantine army of the Orient, and their cavalry always performed well in battles against the Persians—notably, at Daras in A.D. 530 and at Callinicum in 531.[1] This was the famed Arabian that won the victories of the early Islamic Conquests and so became renowned in medieval times.[2] The horse was equally important in pre-Islamic times, although not so well known or celebrated. Procopius obscured its significance when he projected his false image of its riders.

I. The Horse in War and Peace

As the camel was essential to the Arabs in Arabia Pastoralis in the Peninsula, so was the horse to the *foederati* of Byzantium in Oriens, in peace as well as war. When they were not riding it as cataphracts in the army of the Orient, they rode it during leisure and recreational activities. The Ghassānids shared with the Byzantines their love and interest in horses both in war and in peace, and they benefited from the military skills that Byzantium could teach them. As early as the fourth century, the cavalry of the federate Arab queen Mavia charged in a *cuneus,* or wedge formation, which helped save Constantinople from the Goths. Horse and horseman in the *cuneus* were Arab. As noted in Chapter 10, the Byzantine historian Zosimus went out of his way to attribute the Arab victory over the Goths to the skill of their horsemen.[3] The Arab *foederati* continued to benefit from the Byzantine

[1] Daras was an entirely cavalry engagement that must have involved the horse of the Arab *foederati;* it was the first victory won by Belisarius as *magister militum per Orientem*. The testimony of Malalas is clear on the contribution of the Ghassānids under Arethas at Callinicum, in A.D. 531, who kept fighting after others had fled. Procopius obscured and falsified the role of the Ghassānids in both engagements; see *BASIC* I.1, 131–42.

[2] Before the horse won its victories in Islamic battles, it had been eulogized in the Koran itself in five suras (51, 73, 77, 79, 100). In 38:30–33, the Israelite king Solomon is presented as a lover of horses.

[3] For the performance and quality of the Arab horse and horsemen at Adrianople, see *BAFOC,* 178–81.

advances in warfare and in the use of the horse. In his obituary on the Ghassānid king Jabala, the sources, Zacharia and Malalas, say that he fought in the Roman manner for Byzantium and he died when his mount stumbled and fatally unhorsed him at the battle of Thannūris in 528.[4]

It is not an exaggeration to say that the *equus caballus* reached its finest form in pre-Islamic times in Ghassānland. The Arab warhorse, which benefited from the Byzantine experience of its rider, was also kept fit by Graeco-Roman expertise in two important areas, which also show Byzantine influence.

Medically, that expertise was directed not only toward human beings but also toward animals, especially horses[5]—hence the rise of hippology and hippiatry, the diagnosis and treatment of horse diseases. The Greek influence is reflected in the term ἱππιατρός, which entered Arabic as the loanwords *bayṭār,* the veterinary surgeon, and *bayṭara,* hippiatry. Bayṭār still survives in modern Arabic as a family name.[6]

Another term underscores the debt of Arabic and the Arab federates to the Roman military establishment, namely, *iṣṭabl,* a loanword in Arabic from Latin *stabulum,* "stable."[7] The royal stables of the Ghassānids were one of the most important structures in the Ghassānid townscape. They entailed much expenditure, as accounts from the early Islamic period make clear; the Muslim Arabs modeled their stables in part on those of Byzantium, as mediated through the Ghassānids. The hierarchy of personnel responsible for their stables had three levels: *ṣāḥib al-iṣṭabl,* the stable master, the most important officer; the *ghulām,* the stable boy in charge of such manual chores as cleaning, at the lowest rung; and between the two the groom, the *sā'is*.[8] The Ghassānid royal stables probably had the same organization.

Since the extant sources on the Ghassānids yield little on the stables, evidence from sources for their contemporaries, the Lakhmids of Ḥīra, is very helpful, as is that from sources on the Umayyads.

In the Ḥīra of the Lakhmids, the man in charge of the stables of King Mundir (A.D. 505–554) was Abū Du'ād al-Iyādi, a celebrated poet of pre-Islamic Arabia

[4] See *BASIC* I.1, 64–66, 76–79.

[5] See A. McCabe, *A Byzantine Encyclopaedia of Horse Medicine: The Sources, Compilation, and Transmission of the Hippiatrica* (Oxford, 2007).

[6] On the *bayṭār,* the veterinary surgeon, see M. Plessner, "Bayṭār," *EI*², I, 1149; on *bayṭār* as a loanword in Arabic, see S. Fraenkel, *Die aramäischen Fremdwörter im Arabischen* (1886; reprint, Hildesheim, 1962), 265.

[7] On the term and the structure *iṣṭabl* in Arab and early Islamic times, see F. Viré, "Iṣṭabl," *EI*², IV, 213–16; on the term as a loanword in Arabic, see Fraenkel, *Die Aramäischen Fremdwörter,* 123–24. Viré is aware of the role of the Ghassānids in transmitting the term to Arabic and influencing the appearance of stables among the Arabs (214).

[8] See Viré, "Iṣṭabl," 215–16.

who was well-known for his odes in praise of the Arabian horse.[9] Such a talent in a stable master was no doubt rare.

It is possible that in Damascus there were Ghassānid royal stables that the Umayyads inherited, as has been argued by François Viré.[10] The earliest phase of the development of Islamic Damascus was under the first Umayyad caliph Muʿāwiya, who began his rule in 661. He built his residence, al-Khaḍrāʾ, near the old Ghassānid royal residence. Alongside it was Dār al-Khayl, the House of the Horses—the stables of the Ghassānids. These must have been built after Heraclius' victory at Nineveh, and the return of Oriens to Byzantine rule. In the five years or so after Nineveh, the Ghassānids were given even more power and influence in the new military reorganization of Oriens; hence their strong presence in Damascus and its *jund,* the military circumscription.[11]

It is therefore certain that the stable formed an important element in the layout of the Ghassānids' camp and town, since the horse was their most valued possession.[12] Future excavations in and near Jābiya in the Golan should reveal the layout of the city, the Ghassānid capital, in a region ideal for grazing the horses. The sites of such structures remain unknown, as are the names of the stable masters of the Ghassānids. The only name extant of a Ghassānid in charge of a facility not unlike a stable is that of al-Ghiṭrīf al-Ghassāni, who was in charge of the hunt, especially falconry, for the last Umayyad caliphs. He later saw service under the Abbasid caliph al-Mahdi, for whom he wrote a treatise on falconry, *Kitāb Ḍawāri al-Ṭayr.*[13]

Although the Arabian horse attained its fame for its strength and beauty in the early Islamic period, apparently it had a similar reputation in pre-Islamic times as well. The sources state that the Tobiad Hyrcanus (220–175 B.C.) in Trans-Jordan sent Ptolemy, king of Egypt, two white Arabian chariot horses as a special gift.[14]

[9] On Abū-Duʾād al-Iyādi, see C. Pellat, "Abū-Duʾād," *EI*², I, 115–16; Sezgin, *GAS,* II, 167–69; and G. von Grünebaum, "Abu-Duʾād al-Iyādi: Collection of Fragments," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 51 (1948–51), 83–105, 249–82.

[10] See Viré, "Iṣṭabl," 214.

[11] On the Ghassānids and Damascus, see *BALA* I, 119–280.

[12] When the poet Ḥātim came from Arabia to visit the Ghassānid king in southern Oriens late in the sixth century, he referred in his poem to *ṣiyar* (plural of *ṣīra*), "enclosures," within which the Ghassānid horses or camels were kept. It is not clear, however, whether these *ṣiyar* were open paddocks or covered stables. For Ḥātim's visit, see *BASIC* II.1, 246–49.

[13] On al-Ghiṭrīf al-Ghassāni, see the following chapter, "The Hunt."

[14] On the gift of Hyrcanus to the Ptolemies, expressed in the phrase δύο ὑποζύγια Ἀραβικὰ λευκά in P. Cair. Zenon I.59075, see E. Will and F. Zayadine, *ʿIraq al-Amir: Le château du tobiade Hyrcan,* Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 132 (Paris, 1991), 11 (*deux attelages arabes blancs*). In a letter to the author, Leslie MacCoull has suggested the English version "two white Arabian chariot horses."

II. Contemporary Sources

From their Arab and Arabian background in the Peninsula and from their experience in Byzantine Oriens, the Ghassānids inherited expertise regarding the horse, used in war as the mount of their cavalry and in peace as the instrument of their recreational activities, such as races and the hunt.

1. The reservoir of horses they kept in Arabia, where horses were bred and kept in special reserves called *aḥmāʾ* (plural of *ḥimā*), is illustrated by one such *ḥimā* in Ḥijāz, referred to in a verse of al-Nābigha.[15] The region to which the horses from Arabia were brought and left to graze was the Golan. It is mentioned by both Ḥassān and al-Nābigha, the Ghassānid panegyrists. Such *aḥmāʾ* were the cradles of the famed *equus caballus,* which proved its mettle in the battle *for* Byzantium in pre-Islamic times and *against* it in Islamic times.

2. Ghatafān, one of the tribes of the Outer Shield, specialized in horse breeding in these horse reserves in Arabia.[16] It was to one of its subdivisions, Dubyān, that al-Nābigha belonged, and the close relationship of his tribe to horse breeding could explain the warm welcome he received from the Ghassānids.[17]

3. Procopius refers to one of Arethas' sons who was pasturing his horses when he was captured by the Lakhmid Mundir in the 540s.[18] Noteworthy in the account is that the pasturing was not left to an attendant but was done by the prince himself, evidence that he enjoyed watching his horses graze.

4. Of the names of Ghassānid horses only four have survived: (a) al-Jawn, the horse of Arethas; (b) Mawdūd, the horse of Ziyād ibn al-Ḥārith; (c) Khasāf, the horse of Mālik ibn ʿAmr (apparently a popular name, applied to more than one horse); and (d) al-Zaytiyya, the mare of Labīd ibn ʿAmr. All of these riders were sometimes identified by the name of their horse (e.g., Arethas was known as Fāris al-Jawn, "the Rider of al-Jawn").[19]

5. A Ghassānid panegyrist, the poet ʿAlqama, who came from northeastern Arabia, the sphere of influence of the Lakhmids, described a Ghassānid horse and its rider, King Arethas, in a remarkable set of verses. Both horse and rider fought the Lakhmid foes all day until sunset: the king is referred to by the name of his horse, as Fāris al-Jawn, "the Rider of al-Jawn." The horse's *ḥujūl,* the

[15] For the *ḥimā,* see al-Nābigha, *Dīwān al-Nābigha al-Dubyānī,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1977), 75, verse 1, and *BASIC* II.1, 231–32. For the *aḥmāʾ* in general, see *BASIC* II.1, 57–59.

[16] On the Ghaṭafān, the *ḥimā,* and horses in Arabia, see F. Viré, "Khayl," *EI*², IV, 114. See also *BASIC* II.1, 53; on the Outer Shield, 54–57.

[17] See *BASIC* II.1, 56.

[18] Procopius, *History,* II.xxvii.12–14.

[19] See ʿAli ibn Hudhayl, *Ḥalbat al-Fursān wa Shiʿār al-Shujʿān,* ed. M. Ḥasan (Cairo, 1951), 161; Hishām al-Kalbī, *Kitāb Nasab al-Khayl,* ed. G. Levi della Vida (Leiden, 1928), 34; Muḥammad ibn al-ʿArābi, *Kitāb Asmāʾ Khayl al-Arab wa Ansābihā wa Dhikr Fursānihā,* ed. M. Sultāni (Damascus, 1981), 116, 227.

white patches on his knees, are noted.[20] Horses that demonstrated their speed and endurance in war would also be used by the Ghassānids on the *maydān,* the race course.

6. More detailed are the descriptions by al-Nābigha of the Ghassānid horse in two celebrated odes. The first is on the Ghassānid king ʿAmr;[21] the second is on another Ghassānid king, Nuʿmān. The Ghassānid horses start their march from the Golan and are described in three verses that allude to their endurance and their speed.[22]

7. Another panegyrist of the Ghassānids, Ḥassān, refers to two kings of the Ghassānids as *fārisay khaylin,* "two riders of horses." Later, in the 620s, he became attached to the Prophet Muḥammad, while the Ghassānids were away in Anatolia during the Persian occupation of Oriens. In a poem from his Islamic period, he refers to *rihān,* betting or wagering on horses, a practice surely also known in Ghassānland.[23]

III. Horse Racing

The Arabs prized their horses as their most valuable possession and expressed their love in terms that suggested that horses were members of their households and should be treated as such.[24] Sometimes they were even more partial to their horses than to their children. They demonstrated this love in various ways, all displayed by the Ghassānids even before they became *foederati* of Byzantium. The following is a brief enumeration of the various aspects of Arab devotion to their horses even before they entered the *maydān,* the race course; many of these aspects are typically Arab.

1. The well-known Arab partiality to purity of blood and descent found expression in the many works composed on genealogy, and it applied to their horses as well. Their anxiety to keep the blood of the horse pure through mating with the right sire, the *faḥl,* the stallion, led to works on the genealogy of horses.[25]

2. For the Arab, the beauty of the horse consisted *inter alia* of the white star on its forehead and the white patches on its knees and legs. A horse endowed

[20] For ʿAlqama's ode and its description of al-Jawn and his rider, see al-Aʿlam al-Shantamarī, *Dīwān ʿAlqama al-Faḥl,* ed. D. al-Khaṭīb and I. Ṣaqqāl (Aleppo, 1969), 43–44.

[21] al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 43, verses 16, 15; 44, verse 16.

[22] Ibid., 50–51, verses 4–7.

[23] For *fārisay khaylin* in Ḥassān, see *Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit,* ed. W. ʿArafāt, Gibb Memorial New Series 25 (London, 1971), I, 308, verse 11; for *rihān,* see 153, verse 7.

[24] See Ibn Hudhayl, *Ḥilyat al-Fursān,* 177.

[25] See, for instance, Hishām al-Kalbī, *Kitāb Nasab al-Khayl,* and Muḥammad ibn al-ʿArābi, *Kitāb Asmāʾ Khayl.*

with such beauty spots was called *agharr* and *muḥajjal,*[26] respectively, and these complimentary terms were often applied to human beings in panegyrics.[27]

3. Power was also associated with the horse; the collective term for horses, *khayl,* is etymologically related to *ḥayl,* power. So is "horse" itself, *ḥiṣān*.

4. Moral qualities were also predicated of the horse, as reflected in such terms as *karīm* and *jawād* ("generous" or "noble"), human characteristics transferred and applied to horses.

5. As already observed, distinguished personages who were also horsemen were identified sometimes not by their own name, patronymic, or tecnonymic but by their association with the horse. Such a personage would be called "the Rider of [his horse's name]."[28]

6. The names of horses that distinguished themselves for their power, beauty, and speed were recorded and remembered. As noted above, the Ghassānid horse had its share in this equine onomasticon.

A uniquely Arab naming practice is related to racing: when race horses competed in a group, usually of ten, called *ḥalba,* each was given a name indicating its place in the result of the race. For example, the winner was called *al-Sābiq,* the runner-up *al-Muṣalli*.[29] Much excitement attended the race as each faction in the crowd shouted in encouragement of its own horse, a mood captured in Arabic poetry.

The enthusiasm that attended the race carried over to other activities associated with it: the victory of the horse and its rider was saluted with a poem—usually in the *rajaz* meter,[30] the same as that used for the hunt; on such occasions betting was popular.[31] No doubt a meal, possibly a banquet, was prepared after the end of the race.

The surviving sources, however, provide little information on the Ghassānid *sibāq,* horse race, beyond fragments that mention the names of horses and their riders. It is thus necessary to turn to sources on the subject for the pre-Islamic, the Muhammadan, and the Umayyad periods. The first two describe the *sibāq* scene of Arab societies contemporary with the Ghassānids and related to them in various ways; the Umayyads flourished in Oriens immediately after the Ghassānids.

1. The most revealing account on the importance of horse races among the pre-Islamic Arabs is related to a lengthy war between two peninsular Arab groups, ʿAbs and Ḏubyān, occasioned by a horse race whose outcome was sharply disputed.

[26] Ibn Hudhayl, *Ḥilyat al-Fursān,* 86–90.
[27] See, e.g., *Dīwān Abī Tammām,* ed. M. ʿAzzām (Cairo, 1964), III, 100.
[28] See note 19.
[29] Ibn Hudhayl, *Ḥilyat al-Fursān,* 144–46.
[30] See Ḥ. ʿAṭwān, *al-Walīd ibn-Yazīd* (Beirut, 1981), 268–69.
[31] Ibid., 265.

The war took its name from the stallion and mare who raced, and is therefore called "the War of Dāḥis and al-Ghabrāʾ."[32]

2. Even closer to the Ghassānids in time and place are horses and horse races during the twenty-two years of Muḥammad's ministry as a prophet, 610–632. Abundant sources have been carefully collected on the Prophet's love for, and the names of, his various horses, and on his approval and encouragement of races.[33] Above all, horses are remembered in the Koran itself, in oaths involving them and in passages on their worth in military encounters.[34]

3. But the closest to the Ghassānids was the *sibāq* of the Umayyads. Of all the Umayyad caliphs, Hishām (A.D. 724–743) is the one for whom the descriptions of horse races are most abundant. He is especially relevant for the Ghassānid substrate in this aspect of Umayyad social life, since it was at the old Ghassānid site, Ruṣāfa/Sergiopolis, that his horse races took place.[35] He was so fond of horses and horse racing that he is said on a single occasion to have had more than a thousand horses run, for which purpose he widened the race course.[36] The following data may be gathered from references to Hishām's horse races.

a. Ruṣāfa emerges as one of the sites for Ghassānid horse races. Already in pre-Islamic times, Arabic verse refers to a federate *sharak,* the road that surrounded Ruṣāfa, as a clear wide road, *lāḥib,*[37] presumably wide enough to accommodate a large number of horses.

b. The group of horses prepared for each race was called a *ḥalba.* The term probably survives in the Umayyad structure in Jordan usually referred to as Qaṣr al-Ḥallabāt; if so, its proper name should be Qaṣr al-Ḥalbāt (plural of *ḥalba*).

c. The reign of Hishām documents the composition and recitation of poems in the *rajaz* meter that celebrate the winning horse, its rider, and its owner, a practice no doubt prevalent in Ghassānid times as well.[38]

[32] See R. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (1907; reprint, London, 1969), 61–62, and the longer and more detailed account in J. A. Bellamy, "Dāḥis," *EI*², Supplement 1–2 (1980), 177–79.

[33] On the horses of the Prophet, and on his interest in horse racing, see Ibn Hudhayl, *Ḥilyat al-Fursān,* 151, 141–42, respectively.

[34] Koran, 100:1–5.

[35] For the Ghassānid substrate in Umayyad history and for Sergiopolis/Ruṣāfa as a Ghassānid site, see *BASIC* II.1, 372–91, 115–33, respectively.

[36] See ʿAṭwān, *al-Walīd ibn-Yazīd,* 267–69.

[37] See al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī, *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt,* ed. A. Shākir and A. Hārūn (Cairo, 1943), II, 6, verse 15. On Sharak, see *BASIC,* II.1, 116–18, where I argued that the path around Ruṣāfa/Sergiopolis was used for a religious *ṭawāf,* circumambulation, around the city; but it could also have served as a race track, a function made clearer in Umayyad times.

[38] For the various *rajaz* poems recited on the Umayyad *sibāq,* conducted under the auspices of Hishām, see ʿAṭwān, *al-Walīd ibn-Yazīd,* 268–69. One of the most attractive pre-Islamic poems on horse racing was composed by the famous al-Khansāʾ who belonged to the tribe of Sulaym in Ḥijāz. The

IV. Horse Parades

Of the many occasions for which Arabian horses were paraded, the race and the victory celebration were perhaps the most important. But the parade itself must sometimes have been the main attraction, demonstrating the Arabs' attachment to the horse, their admiration of it, and the part it played in their social life. In early Islamic times such parades are known to have existed, even when the resources of the Muslim Arabs became so vast that they could have undertaken events that were far more grand. The resources of the pre-Islamic Arabs (including the Ghassānids) were relatively modest, and so they must have engaged in such social activities as parades as one of their few affordable entertainments.

As happens so often in studies of pre-Islamic times, lack of evidence makes it necessary to turn to sources from early Islamic times, such as those describing horse parades during the caliphate of the Abbasid al-Manṣūr (754–775), and before him parades of the Umayyads, Muʿāwiya (661–680) and Hishām (724–743).[39] Closer to the Ghassānids in time and place is an allusion in the Koran to a parade; this reference, to the Israelite king Solomon, could have been intelligible to the Meccan Arabs during the Prophet's ministry in Mecca (610–622) only if they were familiar with parades.

Verse 31 of sura 38 reads "When steeds were displayed in the evening before him," and verse 33 reads "bring them back to me and he started stroking their legs and necks."[40] Verse 31 contains the crucial verb *ʿuriḍa,* "was paraded, displayed," from which the verbal noun *ʿarḍ,* "parade" or "display," is derived. The parade was clearly known to the Arabs, including the Arabs of Mecca to whom the Koran was first addressed.

The Ghassānids, to whom as *foederati* the horse was so important, no doubt had their horse parades. To landmarks on their social calendar such as Yawm al-Naṣr (victory) and Yawm al-Ḥalba (races) may be added Yawm al-ʿArḍ, the day of horse parades. On such an occasion some *rajaz* poetry in praise of the horses was possibly recited.[41]

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sextet of verses describes a race in which the horses of her father and brother were competing and details its stages, including the cheers and exclamations (*hutāf*) of the spectators; see *Dīwān al-Khansāʾ,* ed. K. al-Bustāni (Beirut, 1986), 6.

[39] On parades and parade grounds during the caliphate of al-Manṣūr, see Viré, "Iṣṭabl," 215. For parades during the caliphate of Muʿāwiya and Hishām, see respectively M. al-Jazāʾiri, *Nukhbat ʿIqd al-Jiyād fi al-Ṣāfināt al-Jiyād* (Damascus, 1985), 15, and ʿAṭwān, *al-Walīd ibn-Yazīd,* 267–68.

[40] This pampering of horses is also reported about the Prophet Muḥammad, whose love for horses is established in the sources; see al-Jazāʾiri, *Nukhbat ʿIqd al-Jiyād,* 14.

[41] The abundance of poetry in praise of the horse may be seen in the many pages devoted to it; ibid., 101–85.

XIII

The Hunt

Before they became *foederati* of Byzantium, the Ghassānids had hunted extensively in the Peninsula—especially in South Arabia, where hunting was very much developed, as it was in Arabia Pastoralis in the northern part of the Peninsula. It was especially important not only as sport but to provide sustenance in a region of the world lacking in rivers and fertile expanses. The best indication of the importance of hunting in pre-Islamic Arab peninsular life was its appearance as a motif in the Arabic polythematic ode, the *qasīda*.[1]

After the Ghassānids became allies of Byzantium, the hunt remained one of their chief preoccupations; their new status even enhanced their involvement in it and its importance for them. Since they were now settled in the arid eastern portion of the diocese, they lived near an area where game animals for sustenance were found in abundance. The hunt also grew more popular as a form of entertainment, as other forms of sport were unavailable. In Ghassānid society, like others, it was the sport of the military aristocracy. The hunt was also important to the Ghassānids as professional soldiers. Since hunting entailed riding horses; using weapons, especially spears and arrows; and facing hostile and sometimes ferocious opponents, such as lions and tigers, which apparently still existed in Oriens, it functioned as military training for them in peacetime and kept them fit for combat duties. Their overlords, the Byzantine *autokratores,* were also enamored of the hunt as a pastime:[2] three of them—Theodosius II, Basil I, and John II—died while hunting.

Contemporary sources on the Ghassānid hunt are scant and fragmentary, but they are significant, supported by authentic later sources.

1. Three of their kings are described as falcons: one of them, Ibn Salmā, was

[1] The theme is found in many of the *qasīda*s of pre-Islamic poetry, but its most frequent and outstanding appearance is in the *Dīwān* of Imruʾ al-Qays, the foremost poet of that period, on whom see Sezgin, *GAS,* II, 122–26.

[2] On the hunt in Byzantine times, see A. Karpozilos, "Hunting," *ODB,* II, 958. Hunting in the Near East has been dealt with extensively in G. Fowden, "Desert Kites: Ethnography, Archaeology and Art," in *The Roman and Byzantine Near East*, II, *JRA* Supplementary series 31(Ann Arbor, Mich., 1999), 107–36.

eulogized by Ḥassān; another was the famous Mundir, described as a *ṣaḳr,* a large lanner falcon, that soared high and then swooped down on Ḥīra and burned it; a third was Abū Karib, whose sobriquet was *qaṭām* (eagle). Their standard in battle was called al-ʿUqāb,[3] variously interpreted as the kite or eagle. Their panegyrist al-Nābigha describes a hunting scene in one of his poems (though not a specifically Ghassānid one).[4]

2. Graphic art supports the importance of the hunt in Ghassānid times in the Provincia Arabia, wherein lay their headquarters. A church in Madaba contains a mosaic that displays a figure holding a falcon in his hand ready for the hunt. In Jabal Usays (a hundred kilometers southeast of Damascus) there is a rock drawing of men hunting with bow and arrow.[5]

3. Although the extant poetry on the Ghassānids has not preserved any description of them conducting a hunt or a chase, their ally and relative the Kindite prince Imruʾ al-Qays gave prominence to the hunt in his *Dīwān*. In his most famous poem, the so-called Suspended Ode, he devotes some eighteen verses to the hunt, describing his horse, the pounce on a flock of ewes, and the cook's preparation of the meal.[6]

Circumstantial evidence, both substantial and significant, demonstrates the central position that the hunt and the chase had in Ghassānid social life.

1. Of all the Umayyad caliphs who ruled Bilād al-Shām, Yazīd I represents the best link between the Umayyad and the Ghassānid periods. First, as an early Umayyad dynast he was very close in time to the Ghassānids; there are extensive accounts of the hunt and other forms of entertainments and sports that became popular during his caliphate.[7] Second, he was the son of a Christian Arab woman from Kalb, former allies of Byzantium, and the husband of a Ghassānid. Third, he lived for a time in the *bādiya,* the steppe land of Kalb, under the tutelage of his fiercely independent mother, who preferred the open air of the desert to the stifling air of Damascus.[8] And it was there, as Philip Hitti notes, that "the youthful

[3] See the poem by the Ghassānid Ibn al-Raʿlāʾ in Muhammad al-Marzubāni, *Muʿjam al-Shuʿarāʾ*, ed. ʿA. al-Sattār Farrāj (Cairo, 1960), 86, verse 9.

[4] See *Dīwān al-Nābigha al-Ḏubyānī,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1977), 17–20, verses 10–19.

[5] In the Madaba church, the falcon (on the hand of one of the companions of Hippolytus) appears in the mosaic in the Hippolytus Hall. The mosaic is in the lower level of the church, which apparently belonged to a house over which the sixth-century church was built; see M. Piccirillo, *Madaba: Le chiese e i mosaici* (Milan, 1989), 51. For the rock drawing in Jabal Usays, see R. G. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs* (London, 2001), 190 note a.

[6] Imruʾ al-Qays, *Dīwān,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1958), 19–23, verses 47–66.

[7] See the work of Ḥ. ʿAṭwān, *al-Walīd ibn Yazīd* (Beirut, 1981), 176–282, which provides more extensive documentation of these activities during the reign of Walīd II.

[8] Sentiments she expressed in a celebrated poem; see R. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (1907; reprint, London, 1969), 195–96 (included below in Chapter 15). Maysūn is briefly discussed above, in connection with the Ghassāni Maysūn, in Chapter 2.

crown-prince became habituated to the chase, hard-riding, wine-imbibing, and verse-making" for which he earned the sobriquets "Yazīd of the Fuhūd" (Yazīd of the Cheetahs) and "Yazīd al-Khumūr" (Yazīd of the Wines). "He was the first who trained the cheetah to ride on the croup of a horse . . . and assigned to each of his hunting dogs a special slave."[9] During his caliphate (680–683) the hunt became a state-sponsored sport indulged in by the head of the state himself, a reflection of the importance that hunting would acquire during the Umayyad caliphate. In this respect Yazīd departed from the practice of his father Muʿāwiya, founder of the dynasty, who was a serious man with no time for such diversions.

Before their elevation to the caliphate, the Umayyads had been a clan in Mecca, engaged in trading enterprises. Their zest for the hunt must have arisen in Bilād al-Shām when they became its masters, acquired from those who had engaged in it in that region, such as the Ghassānids and other Arab allies of Byzantium in Oriens. All this argues that the popularity of the hunt in Umayyad times was a continuation of Ghassānid traditions.

2. Explicit involvement in the hunt by the Ghassānids is attested in the Umayyad period, during which they maintained a strong presence in the Umayyad state. One of them, al-Ghiṭrīf al-Ghassāni, was the chief master of the hunt for two of the last Umayyad caliphs, Hishām (724–743) and Walīd II (743–744), and lived long enough to serve al-Mahdi, the caliph of the Abbasid dynasty, which supplanted the Umayyad. Al-Ghiṭrīf composed for him a work on falconry.[10]

The professional involvement of a Ghassānid in hunting at the Umayyad courts suggests that the tradition of intense interest in the activity went back to Ghassānid times. Furthermore, al-Ghiṭrīf says in his book that one of the kings of Kinda was the first to use the *ṣaḳr* in falconry. Kinda and Ghassān were sister groups; the two intermarried, and expertise in a skill such as hunting with falcons could easily have passed from the one to the other. Kinda's foremost poet, Imruʾ al-Qays, composed brilliantly on his horse and also acknowledged the Ghassānids, whom he visited as his maternal uncles. Al-Ghiṭrīf could also be cited as someone who illustrates the influence of Byzantium on the Ghassānids' hunting and their knowledge of the use of animals in hunting, especially the cheetah; it has been suggested that "from the beginning of the Umayyad dynasty, a team of anonymous translators, possibly bilingual Ghassānids, had put into Arabic some of Aristotle's writing, in particular his *History of the Animals*."[11] This is not unlikely,

[9] P. Hitti, *History of the Arabs,* 10th ed. (New York, 1981), 195, 228.

[10] On al-Ghiṭrīf al-Ghassāni, see D. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early ʿAbbāsid Society (2nd–4th/8th–10th Centuries)* (London, 1998), 74 and note 26. For his treatise on falconry, see Al-Ghiṭrīf, *Kitāb Ḍawāri al-Ṭayr* (Frankfurt, 1986).

[11] See F. Viré, "Fahd," *EI*², II, 240.

and al-Ghiṭrīf's treatise on falconry thus might have benefited from what he had learned from Aristotle through his Byzantine connection.[12] The Byzantines evinced greater interest in hawking, which they (like the Ghassānids and the Arabs of Kinda) viewed as the sport of the ruling class.[13]

3. Some evidence for the Ghassānid hunt is also available in the reign of the Abbasid al-Maʾmūn (813–833), grandson of al-Mahdi. Iṣfahānī in his *al-Aghānī* states that when al-Maʾmūn visited Bilād al-Shām he went hunting in the region that extended from Damascus to Mount Hermon[14]—the Jabal al-Thalj of Ḥassān, the panegyrist of the Ghassānids. In Byzantine administrative terms, this region included Palaestina Secunda and the Golan, where the Ghassānids had their capital, Jābiya. The statement in *al-Aghānī* reveals that this region was a hunting ground; and if the Abbasid caliph who came from distant Baghdad chose to hunt in that region, it must have been a hunting ground in earlier times when the Ghassānids were settled there as the *foederati* of Byzantium.

Circumstantial evidence on the Ghassānid hunt in Byzantine Oriens is provided by a book written in the twelfth century, during the period of the Crusades, on the hunting scene in Bilād al-Shām. It is *Kitāb al-Iʿtibār* by the Muslim Arab author Usāma ibn Munqidh,[15] who was born in 1095, four years before Jerusalem fell to the Crusaders, and who died in 1188, a year after its recapture by Saladin. As a courtier and man of letters, Usāma was close to the Zangids and the Ayyūbids. He belonged to a princely family of Shayzar, which had a passion for hunting. According to him, he spent seventy of his ninety-three years in public service but his entire life in hunting. Thus, his memoirs on the hunt are most valuable in this Ghassānid context. The Munqidh family to which he belonged were the military aristocracy in the region; they were settled in Bilād al-Shām and divided their time between war against the Crusaders and the hunt, in which falconry figured as the

[12] The name Ghiṭrīf means "falcon" in Arabic, and as a personal name in the Ghassānid onomasticon meant "high-born," "lord"—thereby providing further evidence of the importance of this raptor in the social life of the Ghassānids. Al-Ghiṭrīf al-Ghassāni's name may now be added to the list of royal Ghassānids given above (Ibn Salmā, Mundir, and Abū Karib) to whom the term *falcon* was applied. On *ghiṭrīf,* see *An Arabic-English Lexicon,* ed. E. W. Lane (London, 1877), Book I, part 6, 2270.

[13] On hawking in Byzantium, see A. Karpozilos, "Hawking," *ODB,* II, 903–4. In discussing the practice of hawking in Byzantine history, Karpozilos refers to the *Oneirokritikon* of Achmet Ben Sirin, the dream interpreter of Caliph al-Maʾmūn; see M. Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation: The Oneirocriticon of Achmet and Its Arabic Sources* (Leiden, 2002). The role of hawking in the Ghassānid hunt makes it necessary to revise the statement that "for the Arabs, hawking only assumed importance with them after the great Muslim conquests, which brought them in contact with the Persians and the Byzantines" (F. Viré, "Bayzara," *EI*², I, 1152).

[14] See Abū al-Faraj Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (Beirut, 1955), IV, 355.

[15] See Usāma ibn Munqidh, *Kitāb al-Iʿtibār,* ed. Q. al-Sāmarrāʾi (Riyadh, 1987), translated by P. K. Hitti as *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman and Warrior in the Period of the Crusades: Memoirs of Usāmah Ibn-Munqidh* (New York, 1929).

most important of all methods of hunting. So, *mutatis mutandis,* much of what he says in his book on the hunt is applicable to the Ghassānids.

1. The importance given to falconry in Bilād al-Shām is striking. Much of the portion of Usāma's book that deals with hunting is devoted to falconry with the *bāz* (goshawk), for which he had a special keeper, called the *bāzyār*. Its importance is underscored in the book in many ways.

a. One prince—Shihāb al-Dīn, ruler of Ḥamā—was so attached to his *bāz* that when the bird died, his master gave him the full honors of Muslim obsequies, with recitation from the Koran, a coffin, and sepulture in a grave.[16]

b. The *bāz* was so much a favorite of Usāma's father that he had a small stone structure made for the purpose of catching the *bāz.* This ingenious contrivance proved successful, and the number of falcons in his father's possession multiplied.[17]

c. Even more striking is his statement that his father was so enamored of the *bāz* that he sent some of his followers to bring him *buzāt* (plural of *bāz*) from Constantinople, which they did; he then used the birds in his hunt.[18] If a twelfth-century Muslim could establish contact with Constantinople during the Crusades, surely the Ghassānids, as *foederati* of Byzantium in the sixth century, could and must have done the same. The likelihood that such connections pertaining to hunting existed lends greater credibility to the suggestion that some of the Ghassānids even translated Greek books on animals.

2. In the vicinity of Shayzar, lions and tigers were still to be found, a fact that implies that they were present there in Ghassānid times. The existence of these animals of prey confirms the challenges that awaited the Ghassānids during the hunt.[19]

3. The relationship of the hunt to war is noted by Usāma; hence its relevance to the Ghassānids and the hunt. He says that his father divided his time between war on the one hand and the hunt on the other. Furthermore, his preparations for a hunting expedition resembled those he made for a military campaign.[20] The Ghassānids of Jābiya, much more than the Munqidhs of Shayzar, were professional fighters, and thus they took the hunt more seriously as practice for war than did the Munqidhs.

4. The Munqidhs hunted as a family. According to Usāma, the hunting party

[16] See Usāma ibn Munqidh, *Kitāb al-Iʿtibār,* 219.

[17] Ibid., 207–8.

[18] Ibid., 207.

[19] Ibid., 125–29, 131–33. The *Cynegetica* of Oppian (4.112–46, 354–424; quoted by Fowden, "Desert Kites," 131) confirms the existence of lions in Oriens along the Euphrates as late as the third century. For the *Cynegetica,* see in *Oppian, Colluthus, Tryphiodorus,* ed. and trans. A. W. Mair, Loeb Classical Library (London and New York, 1928). For Alexander's partiality to hunting lions, see P. Carteledge, *Alexander the Great* (Woodstock, N.Y., 2004), 222–25.

[20] See Usāma ibn Munqidh, *Kitāb al-Iʿtibār,* 209.

included his father and his father's four sons, with no fewer than forty riders and a multitude of servants, attendants, birds, beasts of prey, and instruments.[21] The Ghassānids waged their wars against the Lakhmids as a family, as John of Ephesus has indicated for the campaign of A.D. 570;[22] surely they did likewise while hunting, a far pleasanter pursuit. The importance of the hunt in the region is further demonstrated by its treatment during the Crusades; despite hostilities between the Muslims and the Crusaders, "agreements were entered into so that hunting parties might be free from danger of attack."[23]

In addition to the book of Usāma, other works contain accounts that draw attention to the hunt in the region of the Ghassānids. The fame of Bilād al-Shām for hunting with the falcon reached distant Sicily in the thirteenth century, then under one of "the two baptized sultans of Sicily," Frederick II of Hohenstaufen (A.D. 1215–1250). In the words of Philip Hitti, "Frederick brought from Syria skilled falconers, watched them train the birds and tried to ascertain by sealing the hawks' eyes whether they could find food by smell. He had his interpreter-astrologer Theodore (Thādhuri), a Jacobite Christian from Antioch, translate an Arabic treatise on falconry. This translation together with another from Persian became the basis of Frederick's work on falconry, the first modern natural history."[24]

The Norman king's interest in Syrian falconry reflects the importance of the sport in Oriens and suggests its significance for the Ghassānids, who hunted in that region. It also illustrates the impact on the West of practices from the East during the Norman period, which was receptive to Arab influences.[25]

The importance of the hunt in the Umayyad period, linked to its importance in the Ghassānid, is also reflected in the rise of a new genre in Arabic poetry. The hunt had been one theme among many in the Arabic pre-Islamic *qasīda,* as in the polythematic ode of al-Nābigha mentioned above; but in the Umayyad period, the hunt found its poetic expression in the *ṭardiyya*—the cynegetic or hunt poem—whose invention is credited to a poet of the middle Umayyad period, al-Shāmardal ibn Sharīk (d. after 728).[26] With him, the hunt poem appeared fully dissociated from the *qasīda,* as a monothematic, self-contained poem written in a characteristic meter, the *rajaz*. Moreover, the *ṭardiyya* became a complex poem consisting of three parts: they focus, in turn, on the departure of the hunter with his horse in the early morning, the enumeration of the animals hunted and killed, and finally the

[21] Ibid., 208–9.

[22] See *Ioannis Ephesini Historiae Ecclesiasticae Pars Tertia,* Latin trans. E. W. Brooks, CSCO, Scriptores Syri, ser. 3, vol. 106 (Louvain, 1936), 217.

[23] Hitti, *History of the Arabs,* 643.

[24] Ibid., 610.

[25] For more on these influences, see ibid., 612–14.

[26] See T. Seidensticker, "al-Shāmardal ibn-Sharīk," *EI*², IX, 282.

preparation of the game for the meal. The hunt poem thus is significant, not only because it marks a new genre in the history of Arabic poetry,[27] but also because it provides valuable data in its description of the phases of the hunt. In addition to detailing the various kinds of animals and birds of prey used by the hunters, it specifies the wide range of game hunted and bagged: "The hunting animals are dogs and cheetahs, and as trained birds of prey are named the hawk (*bāzī, zurraḳ*), the saker or lanner (*ṣaḳr*), the peregrine (*shāhīn*), the merlin (*yuʾyuʾ*), the eagle (*ʿukāb*) and the sparrowhawk (*bāshik*). The quarry are antelopes, hares, foxes, cranes, bustards (*ḥubārā*), francolins, geese and other birds."[28] Allusions to the hunt in the traditional *qasīda* provided no such valuable enumerations.[29]

A final point to be discussed is the existence of structural elements related to the hunt: the hunting lodges and game reserves that the Umayyads undoubtedly had, and that the Ghassānids almost certainly also had.

1. The hunting lodge. The hunt was a complex operation, involving hunters, attendants, horses, beasts, birds of prey, and weapons. It is difficult to believe that the Ghassānids did not build structures appropriate to the hunt. The famous Umayyad structure Quṣayr ʿAmra, situated at the entrance of Wādī Sirḥān, is the most celebrated example of such an Arab hunting lodge, with its baths, halls, and frescoes depicting hunting scenes.[30] As no Ghassānid hunting lodge has survived, Quṣayr ʿAmra may give an idea of how a Ghassānid hunting lodge looked; similar Ghassānid hunting lodges—on a much more modest scale and without sexually explicit decorations—may have existed in pre-Islamic times. The Umayyads assimilated much of the Ghassānid tradition, which likely included the custom of building lodges for their hunting parties. Given the strands of continuity that ran from Ghassānid to Umayyad times, it is possible that Quṣayr ʿAmra was originally a modest Ghassānid structure that was later occupied by the new masters of the Near East, who "Umayyadized" and enlarged the original building. The following may be adduced to support the argument for traces of a Ghassānid pre-Islamic substrate and presence in it.

[27] Idem, "Ṭardiyya," *EI*², X, 223–24. This new genre was to find its greatest master in Abū Nuwās in the early Abbasid period.

[28] M. Ullmann, "Rajaz," *EI*², VIII, 377.

[29] Hunting was to find its full expression in the work of the tenth-century poet Kushājim, in *Kitāb al-Maṣāyid wa al-Maṭārid,* ed. A. Ṭalas (Cairo, 1954), and even a fuller expression in the work of Ibn Mangli; see his *Kitāb Uns al-Malā fi Wahsh al-Falā,* ed. F. Viré (Paris, 1984). For a study of the *ṭardiyyāt,* the Arabic *cynegetica,* in Abbasid times, see G. R. Smith, "Hunting Poetry (*Ṭardiyyāt*)," in *ʿAbbasid Belles-Lettres,* ed. J. Ashtiany et al., Cambridge History of Arabic Literature (Cambridge, 1990), 167–84.

[30] The standard work on this much-discussed structure, which includes an extensive and comprehensive bibliography, is G. Fowden, *Quṣayr ʿAmra: Art and the Umayyad Elite in Late Antique Syria* (Berkeley, 2004).

a. Wādī Sirḥān was one of the gateways to Oriens from Arabia Pastoralis, and as *foederati* of Byzantium, the Ghassānids protected it and guarded it as part of their presidial function.[31] It is therefore unlikely that with their passion for hunting, they would have failed to erect a lodge at such a spot, which offered ample opportunities for indulging in the pleasures of the chase.

b. Relevant analogies for a Ghassānid substrate are provided by Umayyad structures such as Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbī and those in Ruṣāfa (Sergiopolis), which point in the direction of a possible original Ghassānid establishment at Quṣayr ʿAmra. Qaṣr al-Ḥayr presents an especially strong case.[32]

c. The Ghassānid substrate in Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbī, the Umayyad palace southwest of Palmyra, is supported by Greek inscriptions;[33] they explicitly associate it with the Ghassānids by referring to Arethas as a *patricius* in welcoming him to the original establishment. No such inscription attests to the possible Ghassānid provenance of Quṣayr ʿAmra, but there is significant circumstantial evidence.

Arabic became the language of the *dīwān* in the Umayyad state in the reign of ʿAbd al-Malik (685–705). Yet Quṣayr ʿAmra has some Greek words and some Christian elements in its graphic art.[34] These features date it more appropriately to the Ghassānid Byzantine period, when both Greek culture and Christianity flourished in Oriens; the Ghassānids were both zealous Christians and conversant with Greek, which they used in their monumental inscriptions. Greek words such as NIKH and possibly XAPIC are especially relevant in view of the fact that Quṣayr ʿAmra is attributed to Walīd II (743–744)—that is, *long* after the Arabicization of the *dīwān*.[35]

Quṣayr ʿAmra may or may not have originally been a Ghassānid structure, but there is no doubt that the Ghassānids availed themselves of hunting lodges. Since these have disappeared, Quṣayr ʿAmra provides the student of this aspect of Ghassānid social life with the sole concrete example of what Ghassānid hunting lodges might have looked like—minus many of the decorative frescoes to which the sensual Umayyad caliph was partial. Their structure would have been more modest in scale, since the Ghassānids, powerful and affluent as they had been, could not compete with the Umayyads and their vast empire.

2. The *ḥāʾir,* the pleasure garden.[36] The park or game reserve attached to the

[31] See *BASIC* II.1, 35–51; for Wādī Sirḥān, see 439, Map X.

[32] See ibid., 206–11, and the index, s.v.

[33] See *BASIC* I.1, 258–61.

[34] See Fowden, *Quṣayr ʿAmra,* 138–40, 192–95, 265–72.

[35] Garth Fowden (*Quṣayr ʿAmra*) has displayed impressive erudition in his intelligent argument for the Greek and Christian elements in Quṣayr ʿAmra as Umayyad; but the more *natural* explanation is that they belong to a pre-Islamic Byzantine past.

[36] *Ḥāʾir* is sometimes used interchangeably with *ḥayr,* but should be distinguished from *ḥira,* the military encampment, and *ṣīra,* the enclosure for cows. See *BAFOC,* 490–98.

palaces and castles of the Umayyads and the Abbasids was an attractive feature of their urban and social life. Traces of it have survived, especially at Umayyad complexes such as Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbī, Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Sharqi, and Khirbat al-Mafjar.[37]

The Ghassānids lived close to nature, and they must have kept animals and birds, such as gazelles and doves, that had been captured alive during the hunt with nets or traps. These must have been kept in enclosures, known from their later designations as *ḥāʾir*s. This is very likely another aspect of Umayyad social life continued from a Ghassānid practice. The Ghassānids, it must be remembered, had hailed from South Arabia, a highly sedentary region where the Ḥimyarites may have had these *ḥāʾir*s. A verse in an ode of Imruʾ al-Qays (whose group, Kinda, resided in South Arabia) refers to what may have been a *ḥāʾir* in that region. While describing some of his women, he says that they looked like the "gazelles of the sand in the mansions of the Qayls" (as the South Arabian members of the aristocracy were called).[38] It is uncertain, however, whether the Ghassānids remembered the conditions in South Arabia after they left that region. Perhaps they modeled their game reserves on those that may have existed in Byzantine Oriens in some cities of the Decapolis, thereby taking a leaf out of the Graeco-Roman notebook.[39]

Appendix

Traps and Snares

As hunters and fowlers, the Ghassānids no doubt availed themselves of traps and snares for catching animals and birds that they wanted to bag alive, some of which they took to their game reserves.[1] Such methods of catching quarry have

[37] See J. Sourdel-Thomine, "Ḥāʾir," *EI*², II, 71. The most detailed work on the *ḥāʾir* is that of F. Ṭūqān, *al-Ḥāʾir* (Amman, 1979).

[38] The poet seems to refer to a deer park; see Imruʾ al-Qays, *Dīwān,* 379, verse 32, where he calls the women *najāʾib*. In the version of the *Dīwān* attributed to Aʿlam al-Shantamarī, the term used for women is *awānis;* see *Ashʿār al-Shuʿarāʾ al-Sitta al-Jāhiliyyīn,* ed. M. Khafāji (Beirut, 1992), 49, verse 32. For Qayl as the civil and military leader of a grouping (*shaʿb*) in the Sabaean social organization, see A. F. L. Beeston, "Ḳayl," *EI*², IV, 818–19.

The hunt in South Arabia, whence the Ghassānids had hailed before they became *foederati* of Byzantium, had cultic associations, and the inscriptions reflect the connection between the hunt and divine blessings; see Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs,* 94, and R. B. Serjeant, *South Arabian Hunt* (London, 1976).

[39] In a recent article, Nancy Ševčenko has divided such reserves into three categories: game parks, menageries, and animal parks. Although she focuses on the Middle Byzantine period, the article is useful and relevant in this context; see "Wild Animals," in *Byzantine Garden Culture,* ed. A. Littlewood, H. Maguire, and J. Wolschke-Bulmahn (Washington, D.C., 2002), 69–86. For references to game reserves in the Islamic world in Baghdad and in Andalusian al-Zahrāʾ, see 76–77, 80–81.

[1] These traps and snares were categorized as (1) *shabak,* nets; (2) snares with draw nets, *ḥibāla, uḥbūla;* and (3) the covered pit trap, *ḥuḳna, ughwiyya, mughawwāt, wadjra, dafīna*. See F. Viré, "Ṣayd," *EI*², IX, 98.

not received much attention, and practically nothing is known about them in Ghassānid times. Garth Fowden has done justice to them in a long article that deserves close examination here.[2] He has argued that the traps used included not just perishable devices, such as nets, but also solid stone structures. Fowden based his argument on the accounts of modern travelers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the Near East, such as the indefatigable Czech scholar Alois Musil, and of very recent writers on these snares and traps, such as the late Jibrāʾil Jabbūr. Fowden has done the field a great service by his research into this aspect of the hunt. The following are some observations on this important article.

1. In his discussion of the morphology of the Arabic term for traps, *maṣāyid,* Fowden pointed out that it derives from the verb *ṣāda,* "to hunt," "to catch."[3] It serves as the plural of two different terms in Arabic, each related to the verb *ṣāda*. As the plural of *miṣyād* or *maṣyada,* it means only "trap," "snare," since it is cast in the morphological pattern peculiar to the noun of instrument.[4] However, it can also be the plural of *maṣād,* the noun of place, meaning the place of the hunt, where the hunters congregate—the hunting lodge.[5]

It is therefore not always clear which meaning the term *maṣāyid* conveys in a given context. To guard against such confusion, a careful author would use another term for lodge: namely, *mutaṣayyad,* which is derived from *tasṣayyada,* the increased form of the verb *ṣāda*. Thus Usāma, the author of *Kitāb al-Iʿtibār,* states that his father had two such lodges, *mutaṣayyadayn*.[6] So when an Arab author uses the term *maṣāyid,* it is important to be clear about which of the two significations he intends.[7]

Similar confusion could occur interpreting such related terms as *ḥīra, ḥayr,* and *ḥāʾir,* derivatives of the verb *ḥāra*. Elsewhere, I have elucidated *ḥīra,* the military camp, as etymologically distinct from *ḥādir* but semantically allied to it as a military term, with the plurals *ḥiyar, ḥiyār,* and *ḥīrān*.[8] These are distinct from *ḥāʾir,* the game reserve, which sometimes is called *ḥayr*. All these terms except *ḥādir* derive from the same verb, but they traveled along different semantic routes.

[2] G. Fowden, "Desert Kites: Ethnography, Archaeology, and Art," in *The Roman and Byzantine Near East*, II, *JRA* Supplementary series 31 (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1999), 107–36.

[3] Ibid., 127.

[4] The terminal *tā marbūta* definitely makes it a noun of instrument.

[5] A third form for "trap," *maṣyad,* also has the plural *maṣāyid*. For all this, see *An Arabic-English Lexicon,* comp. E. W. Lane (London, 1872), Book I, Part 4, 221.

[6] See Usāma ibn Munqidh, *Kitāb al-Iʿtibār,* ed. Q. al-Sāmarrāʾi (Riyadh, 1987), 146, 206, 208.

[7] Ibn Khaldūn contributed to the possible confusion in interpreting *maṣyad,* when he applied the term to the game reserve of the Hafṣid al-Mustanṣir (A.D. 1249–1277), in Bizerte in North Africa; see F. Viré, "Bayzara," *EI*², I, 1152. For *maṣyad* as an instrument of hunting, see *Arabic-English Lexicon,* Book I, Part 4, 221.

[8] See *BAFOC,* 490–98.

2. There is no doubt that in modern times, when European travelers visited the Near East, stone structures were used as *maṣāyid* in both senses. Whether this was the case in late antiquity in Oriens is still an open question. Some of these structures do go back to ancient times, but their purpose is not clear. The dedicated Jesuit priest Antoine Poidebard, who made use of aerial photography, ventured the proposition that these structures—which he called "Saracen enclosures"—were built by the ancient Romans and that Arab pastoralists used them for the defense of Oriens.[9] Under this interpretation, their function was not cynegetic but military.

I found the conclusions of Poidebard attractive, especially as I have been dealing with the contribution of the Arab *foederati* (whom he called *partisans nomades*)! Elucidating their role in the defense of Oriens, I suggested that these "Saracen enclosures" he spoke of were the *ḥīra*s and *ḥādir*s of the federate Arabs, their military stations and camps along the frontier.[10] Poidebard described the structures as enclosures encircled with walls, the salients of which were fortified with round towers. His description seemed to link them to a defense system against the nomads rather than to lodges for chasing gazelles! I ventured these conclusions on the "Saracen enclosures" only tentatively some twenty years ago, with the caveat "If these enclosures turn out to be what Poidebard thought they were."[11]

Fowden rejected Poidebard's conclusions and by association also my support of them, conditional and contingent as it was.[12] His argument is detailed, ingenious, and full of insights, but the claim that ancient stone structures were *maṣāyid,* "traps," remains inferential, not evidential. He himself concludes by saying that "our explicit ancient evidence . . . involves perishable types of trap, while our explicit modern evidence . . . mostly concerns permanent stone structures."[13] Retroactive reasoning is legitimate and convincing when the two periods are so close as to suggest continuity—but not in such a case as this, when some fifteen centuries gape, separating "such massive public works"[14] of ancient times or late antiquity from their use as *maṣāyid* in modern times.

The difference in the conclusions of Poidebard and Fowden may be traced to the different approaches of the two scholars; the former had done extensive research

[9] A. Poidebard, *La trace de Rome dans le désert de Syrie: Le limes de Trajan à la conquête arabe; recherches aériennes (1925–1932)* (Paris, 1934), 191–96.

[10] *BAFOC,* 483–85.

[11] Ibid., 485.

[12] Fowden, "Desert Kites," 114.

[13] Ibid., 134.

[14] Ibid., 113.

on the Roman defense system, manifest in such works as *La trace de Rome dans le désert de Syrie,* while the latter had been dealing with the hunt, which played such a conspicuous role in Quṣayr ʿAmra—on which he was already focusing when he was writing his article.[15]

[15] Fowden devotes seven pages of his article (ibid., 127–34) to the hunting lodge that was the subject of his sizable book published five years later, *Quṣayr ʿAmra: Art and the Umayyad Elite in Late Antique Syria* (Berkeley, 2004). My share in this controversy has been to elucidate the role of the Arab *foederati* in the defense of Oriens (see *BAFOC,* 483–85, on "Saracen enclosures"), which has been treated in the many volumes of this series that correct Poidebard's misconception that the *foederati* were nomads (see especially *BASIC* II.1).

XIV

Ghassānid Banquets

As noted in Chapter 4, "Food," all Arab societies, even the pastoral, accorded food great importance and attention, reflected in the names for their many dishes and for the many different feasts and banquets they held on various occasions.[1] Sedentary Arab groups—such as the Ghassānids—naturally reached higher levels of the culinary art than did the pastoralists, preparing the more elaborate banquets required by the demands of civic life and its complex social structure. The Ghassānids were Arabs, Christians, and *foederati* of Byzantium; the feasts and festivals of the Byzantines can shed light on those of the Ghassānids both secular and religious.[2]

Of all the forms of entertainment given by the Ghassānids, the banquet was the most significant. Although they reached an advanced level of sophistication as they led their sedentary life in Oriens, their capacity to mount entertainments was limited compared to that of their overlords in Constantinople. Because of these limitations, the Ghassānids gave special attention to their banquets, which not only were the most satisfying form of entertainment to the guests but also expressed one of the two elements in the Arab ideal of virtue, enhanced by the spiritual tone that Christianity imparted to banquets as connected with the feasts and festivals of the liturgical year. Because of the scantiness of the extant sources, however, circumstantial evidence and inferential reasoning must be used as necessary to reconstruct Ghassānid banquets.

I. Secular Banquets

As Arabs, the Ghassānids must have given banquets on many occasions, such as weddings, funerals, and births, usually in honor of a son. The wedding banquet was called a *nikāḥ*. Before the wedding was the engagement banquet, when the hand of

[1] For the dishes and the banquets of the Arabs in pre-Islamic times, with about twelve names for each, see Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *al-ʿIqd al-Farīd,* ed. A. Amīn, I. Abyārī, and ʿA. Hārūn (Beirut, 1982), VI, 290–92; for the English version of their names, see G. J. H. van Gelder, *God's Banquet: Food in Classical Arabic Literature* (New York, 2000), 16, 21.

[2] On Byzantine feasts, see R. Taft, "Feast," *ODB,* II, 781–82, with its bibliography.

the maiden was asked for. The party of the prospective bridegroom would ask their spokesman to deliver a speech, called a *khutba;* the same term was applied to the engagement ceremony itself and its attendant banquet.[3]

Only a Syriac source, Michael the Syrian, refers to such a secular banquet, in this case given on the occasion of the visit of the Chalcedonian patriarch of Antioch to Arethas, the Monophysite Ghassānid king. Information on the types of food that might be gleaned from such a source has already been examined in Chapter 4; it also suggests that the participants sat on chairs, not couches.[4]

In light of the dearth of source material, one must rely on inferential and analogical reasoning from the Byzantine scene to which the Ghassānids belonged to suggest another type of banquet: that held after a military victory, celebrated by the Byzantines[5] and surely by the Ghassānids as well. The Byzantines also gave banquets in conjunction with the consecration of churches, and the Ghassānids must have done the same; they would have had many occasions to do so, since they were responsible for the surge in church building after their king, Arethas, revived the Monophysite church around A.D. 540. Such a banquet must have been given by Magnus, the Roman *curator* and *commerciarius* who invited the Ghassānid king Mundir to the consecration of a church at Ḥuwwārīn, Evaria—an invitation that proved disastrous, since the Ghassānid king was treacherously betrayed during his visit.[6]

II. Religious Feasts

The liturgical calendar gives a clear picture of the feasts that the Christian Ghassānids must have observed. Only two will be noted here.

Christmas was one of the two main dates of the Christian calendar and must have been accorded special importance by both the Byzantines and the Ghassānids. The Byzantine celebration of Christmas attracted the attention of even the Muslim Arab Hārūn ibn Yaḥyā, who attended it in Constantinople and left an Arabic description of the Christmas banquet.[7] As noted above, Arabs marked childbirth

[3] For a detailed account of the *khutba* and the *nikāḥ,* see Jawād ʿAli, *al-Mufaṣṣal fi Tārīkh al-ʿArab qabl al-Islam* (Beirut, 1970), IV, 644–50. Other characteristically Arab feasts were given on the birth of a filly or the emergence of a poet among them; see Ibn Rashīq al-Qayrawāni, *al-ʿUmda fi Maḥasin al-Shiʿr,* ed. M. ʿA. al-Ḥamīd (Cairo, 1955), 65.

[4] See *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche jacobite d'Antioche (1166–1199),* ed. and trans. J. B. Chabot (Paris, 1901), II, 247–48; mention of the table at which the phylarch and the patriarch were having their meal implies use of chairs.

[5] See M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge, 1986), 64–68.

[6] See *BASIC* I.1, 455–61.

[7] For the English version of Hārūn's Arabic description, see A. Dalby, *Flavours of Byzantium* (Trowbridge, Eng., 2003), 118–19.

with a banquet, which was followed by another banquet when the child reached the age of seven; these occasions were named *al-khurs* and *al-ʿaqīqa,* respectively.[8] It is not difficult to imagine the gusto with which the Ghassānids must have celebrated the most famous of all childbirths, that of Jesus himself, in Bethlehem—not far from their phylarchal presence in Arabia or Palaestina Tertia.

Even more important in the Christian Orient was Easter, which reminded the Ghassānids of the bereavements that as Arabs they used to mark with banquets named *al-walīma*.[9] So, they must have celebrated the most significant of all deaths, the Crucifixion, with great care and enthusiasm. Again, in reconstructing the tone of their celebration and what it meant to them, it must be remembered that they were the guardians of the Holy Land. The importance of Easter and its dominical feast is reflected in contemporary Arabic poetry on the Ghassānids, which recorded details about Easter rather than Christmas, as discussed below.

III. Ghassānid Receptions and Banquets in Arabic Literature

The Arabic sources are more informative than the Syriac on the feasts of the Ghassānids, both in contemporary poetry and in later Islamic prose literature.

The two major poets of the Ghassānids, al-Nābigha and Ḥassān, described the celebration of Easter at their court. The first refers to it on Palm Sunday by its correct name in Arabic, Yawm al-Sabāsib, and relates how the members of the royal family would receive fragrant flowers from the young maidens/princesses.[10] Ḥassān mentions the approach of Easter, which he calls by its correctly Arabicized name, *F-i-ṣ-ḥ,* the Arabic equivalent of the Greek *Pascha.* He describes the elegant coral wreaths that the Ghassānid maidens/princesses were stringing.[11]

Neither poet described the food; such descriptions were apparently viewed as inappropriate, just as the food at Graeco-Roman banquets "was regarded beneath literary considerations."[12] One poet, however, did refer to the *shiwāʾ,* "broiled meat," that was served, and mutton and beef were mentioned in the Syriac source.[13] Surely the choicest of all must have been the celebrated dish called *tharīdat Ghassān,* and with it the bread of the highest quality, the white *ḫuwwārā*.[14] The

[8] See Ibn Rashīq al-Qayrawāni, *al-ʿUmda,* 292.

[9] See Jawād ʿAli, *Mufaṣṣal,* IV, 685.

[10] For the relevant verses, see *Dīwān al-Nābigha al-Dubyānī,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1977), 47, verses 25, 26.

[11] See *Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit,* ed. W. ʿArafāt, Gibb Memorial New Series 25 (London, 1971), I, 255, verse 6.

[12] S. Malmberg, "Visualising Hierarchy at Imperial Banquets," in *Feast, Fast or Famine: Food and Drink in Byzantium,* ed. W. Mayer and S. Trzcionka, Byzantina Australiensia 15 (Brisbane, 2005), 14.

[13] See al-Nābigha al-Jaʿdi, *Dīwān,* ed. ʿA. Rabbāḥ (Damascus, 1964), 37, verse 17; Michael the Syrian, cited in note 4.

[14] Both are discussed above in Chapter 4, "Food."

food at such banquets must have included many other dishes as well, well known at Byzantine banquets.

Two of the later sources, written in Islamic times, are much more expansive on banquets. In one account, Ḥassān described his visit to the Ghassānid court of Jabala, surrounded by singing girls, while he was still in the service of Byzantium in Oriens. This is the more reliable of the two accounts, despite some inaccuracies that must have crept in during the process of transmission. But it contains no reference to food.[15]

The other is a description of the court of Jabala in Constantinople, where he settled for a while, after the Muslim victory in Oriens.[16] The narrator was an emissary whom the caliph Omar is supposed to have sent to Jabala in Constantinople. Though the long account is full of glaring inaccuracies, it is relevant because it mentions food served on silver and gold plates, which the Muslim emissary refused to eat; he insisted on being served on ordinary plates, since the Prophet Muḥammad had warned against using gold and silver cups and plates.[17] The Ghassānid king was only imitating the Byzantine *autokratores,* who did dine from such plates.[18]

Another account involving Ḥassān refers to etiquette at the royal table: the *ḥājib,* the chamberlain, warns him not to start eating before the king asks him to do so. And Ḥassān is counseled to eat only in moderation, not extravagantly, since such restraint would commend him to the king.[19]

The sources also mention the garb worn by Ghassānid kings at such banquets and on such occasions.

The poet al-Nābigha, in his celebrated ode on the Ghassānids, states that their robes were of red silk (*iḍrīj*) and were hung on pegs (*mashājib*). Another robe was pure white at the sleeves (*ardān*) and green around its shoulders (*manākib*).[20]

[15] See R. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (1907; reprint, London, 1969), 54. The Arabic original may be found in Abū al-Faraj Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī,* XVII (Beirut, 1959), 105–6. Nicholson's footnote rightly vouches for the value of the account as evidence. His reservations on Ḥassān and Jabala are not justified, however; writing in the early twentieth century, he did not know that Ḥassān was a contemporary of Jabala, to whose house he was attached while Jabala was still the Byzantine phylarch and ally of Byzantium in the first two or three decades of the seventh century.

[16] For this account, see Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *al-ʿIqd al-Farīd,* ed. A. Amīn, I. Abyārī, and A. Hārūn (Beirut, 1982), II, 56–62.

[17] See Jawād ʿAli, *Mufaṣṣal,* VII, 565.

[18] See Dalby, *Flavours of Byzantium,* 118.

[19] See Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī,* XI, 34. On etiquette in the Roman world, see Malmberg, "Visualising Hierarchy at Imperial Banquets," 11–24, especially 14–15. Dietary moderation was considered a virtue in the Graeco-Roman world, admired in Julian, Constantius, and Valentinian by Ammianus Marcellinus; for their *temperantia,* see P. Tuffin and M. McEvoy, "Steak à la Hun: Food, Drink, and Dietary Habits in Ammianus Marcellinus," in Mayer and Trzcionka, eds., *Feast, Fast or Famine,* 74–75.

[20] See al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 47, verses 26–27; these robes are discussed in detail in Chapter 6, "Clothes."

Ḥassān provides more details, both in his prose piece describing a reception at the court of Jabala and in his poetry. In the latter, as noted above, he says that the Ghassānid king wore light clothes in summer and so did his courtiers, while in winter he wore fur called *fanak*. The summer robe was called *al-fiḍāl,* worn by "throwing a portion of one's garment over his left shoulder, and drawing its extremity under his right arm, and tying the two extremities together in a knot upon his bosom."[21] And poets such as Ḥassān called the Ghassānid king *du-al-tāj,* "he of the crown,"[22] suggesting that kings must have worn the crown, the symbol of their sovereignty, on formal occasions and at banquets.

The Arabic sources are silent on the seating arrangement at these banquets. As noted above, the Syriac source, Michael the Syrian, speaks of a table at the Ghassānid court on the occasion of Arethas' entertainment of Ephraim, the patriarch of Antioch. In addition, certain passages of the Koran refer to *surur* (plural of *sarīr*), the throne-like seats of rulers; to the *kursi,* the chair; and to couches with cushions, *wasā'id,*[23] all of which must have been seen by the Meccan Arabs of the time of the Prophet Muḥammad (a contemporary of Jabala), most probably at the court of the Ghassānids. They must also have been known to the Umayyad Arabs,[24] who inherited the legacy of the Ghassānids. In a description of a scene from early Abbasid times, when the first Abbasid caliph was trying to decide the fate of captured Umayyads, the throne, chair, and cushions appear; it is clear, moreover, that those reclining on cushions were inferior in status to those sitting on chairs.[25]

Admission to the Ghassānid court for prospective guests was regulated and monitored. The *ḥājib,* chamberlain, controlled access, and he often counseled the guests on etiquette to be observed at audiences and banquets.

[21] For the English version of this prose piece, see Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs,* 53, with notes 2–3. His reading in note 2, *yatafaḍḍalu,* is correct; it points to the robe, *al-fiḍāl*.

[22] See Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 255, verse 10.

[23] These passages are discussed in more detail in "Paradise in the Koran," the appendix to Chapter 4.

[24] References to the *kursi* and the *maqṣūra,* the thronelike chair and the enclosure reserved for the Umayyad caliph, Muʿāwiya, as well as to the table at which the *kātib* or secretary sat, appear in Masʿūdi, *Murūj al-Dhahab wa-Maʿādin al-Jawhar,* ed. C. Pellat (Beirut, 1970), III, 220, 221, 222.

[25] See Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī,* IV, 346.

XV

Recreation in the Countryside: *Tabaddi*

One of the most important aspects of social life among the Ghassānids was *tabaddi*—going out to spend some time in the countryside, the steppe, the *bādiya*. The term is related to *badw,* "nomads," but *tabaddi* has no conceptual relation to nomadism and did not imply a reversion to it.[1] It meant spending some time in the *bādiya* for recreation, an amusement indulged in only by those Ghassānids who could afford it, including the Ghassānid royal house. It was the pastime of a sedentary aristocracy, much as the English aristocracy had their country houses, the Russians their *dachas,* the Italians their *villegiatura,* and the Spaniards their *haciendas*.[2] As is true for other aspects of Ghassānid social life, data on it can be assembled directly from the little surviving evidence and indirectly from the abundant and detailed sources on the Lakhmids of Ḥīra and the Umayyads of Damascus.

I. Sources on the Lakhmids and Umayyads

The Lakhmids of Ḥīra were Arabs from the same region of South Arabia as the Ghassānids and became client kings of Sasanid Persia, serving it as the Ghassānids did Byzantium. They provided a shield for the western Persian frontier against pastoralist invasions from the Arabian Peninsula, near whose steppes they lived. Hence the Lakhmid *tabaddi* resembled the Ghassānid,[3] and it is best illustrated in the life of a member of a noble family of Ḥīra. ʿAdī ibn Zayd, an Ayyūbid, was a statesman and the foremost poet in Ḥīra; as the *kātib,* the chief of the bureau

[1] Nomadism was *taʿarrub,* "going the way of the Aʿrāb," the nomads, of which even the Prophet Muḥammad was censorious. In the Koran the nomads, *al-Aʿrāb,* are often harshly castigated; see, e.g., 9:97.

[2] The pursuit is best captured by the Italian loanword *villeggiatura,* a noun derived from the verb *villeggiare* (Arabic *tabaddā*), "to live at a country villa." On Arab *tabaddi,* see Jawād ʿAli, *al-Mufaṣṣal fi Tārīkh al-ʿArab qabl al-Islam* (Beirut, 1970), IV, 680.

[3] See the account, perhaps slightly embroidered, in Abū al-Faraj Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (Beirut, 1971), II, 114. The Lakhmid king was relaxing during one of these villeggiaturas when the Ghassānid captured Ḥīra and burned it (negligence for which ʿAdī, the poet of Ḥīra, chided the Lakhmid king); see Nöldeke, *GF,* 27–28.

of Arab affairs in the Sasanid chancery, who commuted between Ctesiphon and Ḥīra, he was close to both the king of the Lakhmid dynasty and the Sasanid King of Kings. The sources are informative on how this very urban personage from Lakhmid Ḥīra used to spend his time in the *bādiya,* riding, hunting, carousing, and composing poetry.[4] These were also the pursuits of the Ghassānids during their *tabaddi*. The Persian crown prince, Bahrām Gūr, too, loved the *bādiya* and acted similarly when he "went Arabian" and spent some time in the *bādiya,* as the ward of the Lakhmid king Mundir, in the fifth century; he even composed Arabic poetry.[5]

Even more abundant and detailed are the sources on the Umayyad caliphs, who had at their disposal vastly greater resources than the Ghassānids for indulging in *tabaddi* in all its activities of riding, hunting, banqueting, and carousing. Moreover, the Umayyad *tabaddi* is particularly relevant and informative for the Ghassānid *tabaddi,* because the Umayyads lived in Bilād al-Shām, in the same region as the Ghassānids; ruled it immediately after the Ghassānids; and occupied many other sites and buildings erected by them. The Ghassānid presence was very strong in the Umayyad state, as was that of other federates of Byzantium, such as Kalb. The founder of the dynasty, Muʿāwiya, married a woman from Kalb; she became the mother of his successor, Yazīd, who also married a Ghassānid princess.[6] Hence the strands of continuity that ran between the Umayyad and the Ghassānid periods are clear.

Four of the Umayyad caliphs—Yazīd I (680–683), Yazīd II (720–724), Hishām (724–743), and Walīd II (743–744)—were especially given to *tabaddi*.

The reign of Yazīd I is the closest link, genealogically and chronologically, between the two *tabaddi*s, the Ghassānid and the Umayyad. His mother, Maysūn, had already set the tone when she renounced her husband and chose the life of the steppe near Palmyra, instead of Damascus. Her feelings are well expressed in a poem she wrote:

> A tent with rustling breezes cool
> Delights me more than palace high,
> And more the cloak of simple wool
> Than robes in which I learned to sigh.

[4] Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī,* II, 87, where the term *mabdā* (plural *mabādi*), as well as *bādiya,* is used as the equivalent of the English "steppe." On ʿAdī and his recreational pursuits, see also M. al-Hāshimi, *ʿAdī al-Shāʿir al-Mubtakir* (Aleppo, 1964). Even when he was in Damascus or near it on an embassy to Byzantium, he felt nostalgic for the *bādiya* near Ḥīra; see Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī,* II, 36, verse 1, and *BASIC* I.1, 478–82.

[5] On Bahrām in Ḥīra, see Chapter 8, above.

[6] See *BASIC* II.1, 475–391; on Muʿāwiya's wife Maysūn, see Chapter 2, above.

The crust I ate beside my tent
Was more than this fine bread to me;
The wind's voice where the hill-path went
Was more than tambourine can be.

And more than purr of friendly cat
I love the watch-dog's bark to hear;
And more than any lubbard fat
I love a Bedouin cavalier.[7]

Yazīd I worked hard and played hard, and his activities show how the Ghassānids spent *tabaddi:* riding, hunting, banqueting, and composing poetry. He died while he was at Ḥuwwārin (Evaria), a place associated with the Ghassānids, and was buried there.[8]

The links to the Ghassānid past with respect to *tabaddi* are also clear in the reign of Yazīd II, who spent much of his time in the open spaces of Trans-Jordan, the chief province of the Ghassānids, on or near Ghassānid sites; Hishām, too, left clear traces of his *tabaddi* in such places as Ruṣāfa/Sergiopolis and Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbī, both associated with the Ghassānids. But it was the caliphate of the libertine Walīd II that gives the clearest picture of the extravagance to which *tabaddi* could lead, although his licentiousness may have been exaggerated by Abbasid historians.[9]

II. Sources on the Ghassānids

The wealth of evidence that can be extracted from the sources on the Lakhmid and Umayyad *tabaddi* contrasts with the paucity of the extant sources on the Ghassānids that speak of *tabaddi.* Surprisingly enough, the only contemporary source that provides a glimpse of Ghassānid *tabaddi* comes from the Byzantine historian who obscured the history of the Ghassānids and projected a false image of them, Procopius of Caesarea.[10] In his account of the Ghassānid-Lakhmid war, which the two federates waged against each other independently of their Byzantine and Persian overlords, Procopius says that the Lakhmid Mundir succeeded in capturing a son of the Ghassānid Arethas while he was pasturing his horses,[11] thus suggesting that he was engaged in a favorite princely pastime.

[7] Translated by R. Nicholson in *A Literary History of the Arabs* (1907; reprint, London, 1969), 195.

[8] See *BASIC* II.1, 390.

[9] On Walīd II's *tabaddi,* see Ḥ. ʿAṭwān, *al-Walīd Ibn-Yazīd* (Beirut, 1981), 272–79. For Hishām's, see 169, 266–69.

[10] See *BALA* II, 9–65.

[11] Procopius, *History,* II.xxviii.13.

Another statement, from a later Arabic source, speaks of a Ghassānid king who built in the *barriya,* "the wild," a large structure in which he enjoyed himself.[12] The reference to the *barriya* suggests a type of *tabaddi* that involved some permanent structures rather than ephemeral tents or pavilions.

The various activities indulged in by the Umayyads and the Lakhmids of Ḥīra may suggest those of the Ghassānid *tabaddi,* but with some important differences. In Umayyad times, the whole limitrophe had ceased to exist as a defensive frontier, protected against the pastoralists and the Sasanids by castles since the Muslim conquests of Oriens and Mesopotamia had united the Fertile Crescent under one rule. So it became a pleasure zone for some of the caliphs, who drew on the vast resources of the Islamic empire to finance their luxurious living. The Ghassānids, as *foederati,* naturally were commensurately more subdued in their pursuit of the activities of *tabaddi,* which more closely resembled those of the Lakhmid rulers and such aristocratic figures as ʿAdī of Ḥīra (who, moreover, was a Christian,[13] like the Ghassānids). The Ghassānids were even more reserved than such personages as ʿAdī, since their kings had set the tone for decent behavior, praised by the poets. Thus the motivation of the Ghassānid *tabaddi* was not solely pleasure, as it was during the Umayyad period for some rulers as Walīd II; it was also pursued for reasons of health—a natural desire on the part of urban dwellers to go out to the open spaces of the countryside, the limitrophe with its salubrious air, which was even more attractive in light of the plagues that broke out in Oriens during the sixth century.[14]

The favorite period of going out for *tabaddi* was the spring, *Rabīʿ*, the Arabs' favorite season, which gave its name to the terms *murtabaʿ* and *mutarabbaʿ*, "the place of staying in the spring." Such *murtabaʿ*s were either temporary—tents and pavilions—or more solid structures; in surviving Umayyad examples of the latter, such as Caliph Hishām's in Ruṣāfa/Sergiopolis and in Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbi, the pre-Islamic Ghassānid substrate is evident. The *ḥāʾir,* the game park, which characteristically was an annex to Umayyad[15] and Abbasid structures, must have also graced those of the Ghassānids. Their activities during *tabaddi* consisted of riding on horseback, hunting, and feasting on the game they had bagged. And in view of the partiality of the pre-Islamic Arabs for poetry, listening to the *munshid* or *rāwi,* the rhapsode or reciter of poetry, may also have formed part of the entertainment during this villeggiatura.[16]

[12] Abū al-Fidāʾ (1273–1331) in *Mukhtaṣar Akhbār al-Bashar* (Baghdad, n.d.), I, 73. See also *BASIC* II.1, 352–53.

[13] On his Christianity, see al-Hāshimi, *ʿAdī al-Shāʿir al-Mubtakir,* 57–61.

[14] On plagues in Oriens, see *BASIC* II.1, 235–36, 291–92, 298–300.

[15] For Hishām's *ḥāʾir* in Ruṣāfa, see ʿAṭwān, *al-Walīd Ibn-Yazīd,* 274.

[16] On poetry and the Ghassānids, see Part III, Chapter 7.

III

Cultural History

I

The Ghassānid Limitrophe

Part II of this volume, on social history, has treated Ghassānid culture *generally*, which is related to the subject of this part: culture as the pursuit of higher forms of urban life and activities such as art, poetry, and architecture. This chapter is related even more closely to the previous volume in this series, *BASIC* II.1, which treated the monuments and toponymy of Ghassānland—the venues of their cultural life. That volume revealed the Ghassānids as urbanites, a sedentary group from Arabia Felix, which the classical authors distinctly distinguished from Arabia Pastoralis, and also showed them to be *philoktistai*, great promoters of the urbanization of that portion of Oriens in which they were settled, namely the limitrophe. The conclusions of *BASIC* II.1 thus provide fundamental information on the space that the Ghassānids occupied in Oriens and on the various urban centers they founded or rebuilt. For the Ghassānids, it is in and around cities and towns that culture has to be sought, as it was in the case of the Graeco-Roman world.

I. The Space of Ghassānid Culture

If chronology is the spinal column for history, so is space for cultural history—especially for a group such as the Ghassānids, whom the Byzantine Greek sources erroneously labeled Saracens, associated with pastoralism, who lacked a clearly defined habitat within which their culture can be discussed. The Ghassānid *Lebensraum,* however, as *BASIC* II.1 demonstrated, was the clear arc that extended from the Euphrates to Sinai, plus the transverse wedge consisting of Auranitis, Trachonitis, Batanaea, and Gaulanitis. This was the area that conveniently may be called Ghassānland in Oriens.

When the Ghassānids settled in the limitrophe in the sixth century, that easternmost portion of the Diocese of Oriens had already gone through many phases. It had experienced a certain amount of nomadization and absence of law and order after the fall of the powerful Arab urban center of Palmyra, which had controlled it vigorously and effectively. The *Strata Diocletiana,* a road that formed a defensive line, contributed to the restoration of control, but it could succeed only partially,

since the nomadic threat to Oriens persisted and was even heightened by the policy of the Lakhmids of Ḥīra, who systematically harassed Oriens. It was only after the institution of the Arab *phylarchia* in the reign of Constantine I (A.D. 306–337) that a more effective way of dealing with the nomadic threat emerged.[1] The danger posed by the nomads was met sporadically during the period of the Tanūkhids and the Salīḥid *foederati* in the fourth and the fifth centuries, since their power was limited.

In 529 Justinian put the Ghassānids in charge of all of the limitrophe for the first time. So it was only with the advent of the Ghassānids and their empowerment in the sixth century that the limitrophe was united from the Euphrates to Sinai under one *archiphylarchia,* which reasserted imperial control of the region. Against this background of a united, efficiently run limitrophe, the Ghassānids as a sedentary frontier society accomplished a great deal. The region had suffered some considerable neglect, and they reclaimed part of it where the desert had encroached on the town and reinvigorated it as a zone receptive to the extensive work of urbanization, in part by increasing its capacity to sustain new settlements after they used their hydraulic expertise to discover sources of water.[2] It was within the confines of this vast arc that Ghassānid cultural life unfolded and developed in the urban centers and rural centers that they built in the transverse wedge and the limitrophe.

This culture that arose in the sixth century was a new chapter in the history of the Arabs and of Oriens. It was sharply different from the previous stage of Arab culture in the Roman period, that of the Nabataeans of Petra and the Palmyrenes of Tadmur, and it also differed from the later culture of the Umayyads of Damascus and Ramla in the seventh and eighth centuries. Whereas the former was pagan Arab and the latter was Muslim Arab, the culture of the Byzantine period was distinguished by being Christian Arab. It represented the intermediate stage in the three-phase spiritual journey of the Arabs from paganism to the Christian version of monotheism and finally to Islam. It was the first and last time in the course of two millennia that there evolved a mature Christian Arab culture.[3] This culture of the Ghassānids was not only Christian but also strongly Arab in character, and thus it imparted to Oriens a strong Arab presence that had hitherto been absent. The Nabateans and the Palmyrenes used Greek, Latin, and Syriac almost exclusively in conducting their affairs, employing Arabic in dealing with their congeners in the Arabian Peninsula, with whom they had important trade and other relations, and perhaps to some extent in their domestic life. Hence it was possible for historians and cultural analysts of Oriens to call the diocese bicultural, both Graeco-Roman

[1] For the Roman period, see *RA*.
[2] See *BASIC* II.1, 1–20.
[3] In its Monophysite ecclesiastical aspect, see *BASIC* I.2.

and Aramaic-Syriac.[4] With their strong Arab identity, the Ghassānids stamped the limitrophe with the language, ethos, and mores of the Arabs, thereby imparting to Oriens a new cultural constituent and making it a tricultural diocese through the Arabization of the limitrophe and its transverse wedge.

II. Ghassānid Culture and Oriens

It is generally recognized that Oriens in the sixth century was a flourishing diocese of the Pars Orientalis. Its prosperity is reflected in various ways, including the artistic explosion in its various provinces represented by buildings of various types, particularly churches and all the arts related to monumental architecture. Its economic life was also vigorous, especially as the century witnessed the dominant trade route shift from the Mesopotamian to the West Arabian, the *via odorifera,* as a result of the recurrent outbreaks of war with the Persians throughout the sixth century.

The region could continue to thrive only if it remained secure, defended against the invasions and raids of the nomads from the Arabian Peninsula. Rome had constructed defensive lines, the *Limes Arabicus* and the *Strata Diocletiana,* but it was Byzantium that solved the problem definitively. And it is in this respect that the Ghassānids contributed to the economic welfare of Oriens, which underpinned its cultural prosperity. Together with the Roman army stationed under the various *duces,* the Ghassānids effected the defense and protection of the diocese even more efficiently than the regular Roman *stratiōtai*, since they were more familiar than the Roman army with the military style of their congeners in the Arabian Peninsula; for that reason, Justinian decided in A.D. 529 to turn over to them the duties of the *limitanei* who previously had undertaken that burden.

The Ghassānids achieved new cultural heights in Oriens, a Byzantine diocese within which they lived for a century and a half. Their culture was very much like their social life, deeply influenced by Byzantium in its three aspects: the Roman, the Hellenic, and the Christian.

All three elements of Byzantinism under whose influence Ghassānid culture grew and developed were urban. The Graeco-Roman world developed a civilization that was inconceivable outside the *polis*. And so did Christianity, which originated in a highly urban region, earlier developed feverishly by Herod the Great and his sons; its establishments of church and monastery functioned not in movable tents but in fixed structures in cities and towns. Hence the quest in *BASIC* II.1 for urban and rural centers by ferreting out towns and villages—mostly the latter—that the Ghassānids established. Though these have now mostly disappeared for

[4] See F. Millar, *The Roman Near East, 31 B.C.–A.D. 337* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993), and my review of it in *Catholic Historical Review* 81 (1995), 251–52.

various reasons, their names have survived both in the literary sources and in the toponymy of the region, reflected in two basic terms that are evocative reminders of the Christian character of the region in late antiquity.

Qaṣr, the first term, from the Latin *castrum/castra*, reflected the Roman influence in Byzantinism: it is the legionary military fort/camp, which developed later (especially after the Ghassānids took over the duties of the *limitanei*) into stationary units, mostly villages. Philip Hitti, a historian of the Arabs who belonged to the Christian Arab community of Oriens, Bilād al-Shām, referred to three hundred villages in Auranitis;[5] though the figure may be exaggerated, it nevertheless reflects the density with which the Ghassānids urbanized and "ruralized" the region.[6]

Dayr, "monastery," the second term, reflects the influence of Christianity on the growth of urban life in Oriens under the Ghassānids, who were zealous Monophysite Christians. Many villages in former Ghassānland are still called by names in which Dayr appears as the first part of a construct (*iḍāfa*); sometimes it stands alone as al-Dayr.[7]

The recovery of these toponyms in the limitrophe was achieved by setting the literary sources against the topography, archaeology, and cartography of the region; in this process the latter validated the former, not unlike the way, to use an expression of biblical scholars, "the spade confirmed the Bible."[8] This method revealed the extensive range of Ghassānid culture in Oriens.

The toponymy of the Umayyad period also fruitfully contributes to the process of recovering the Ghassānid past. The former Ghassānid limitrophe became the *bādiya* in which the Umayyads, as devoted to building as the Ghassānids, erected many structures. It is worth noting that they are credited with establishing no cities in Oriens other than Ramla in Palestine,[9] which the caliph Sulayman (715–717)—seeking to run his empire from a new capital—founded for purely political reasons. The implication is that the limitrophe had already been so thoroughly urbanized by the Ghassānids that there was no need for the Umayyads to found more settlements. They may in fact have developed some new sites, but

[5] P. Hitti, *History of the Arabs,* 10th ed. (St. Martin's Press, New York, 1970), 80–81. See also below "On the Archaeology of the Limitrophe," an appendix to Chapter 3.

[6] On "ruralization," see *BASIC* II.1, xxxv.

[7] For *qaṣr* and *dayr* as elements in the toponymy of Oriens, see R. Dussaud, *Topographie historique de la Syrie antique et médiévale* (Paris, 1927), passim.

[8] A reviewer took exception to this dictum in his review of *BASIC* II.1. I was and am aware of its limitations; but while it is not true in all circumstances, it is a valid generalization (despite the legitimate suspicions of scholars concerning such matters as, *inter alia,* the chronology of the Exodus and the conquest of Canaan). For a recent work on this controversial question, see *The Future of Biblical Archaeology: Reassessing Methodologies and Assumptions,* ed. J. K. Hoffmeier and A. R. Millard (Grand Rapids, Mich., 2004). It supports the historical-critical approach of W. F. Albright and G. E. Wright.

[9] To Ramla may be added ʿAnjar (ʿAyn al-Jarr), supposedly built by the Umayyad Walīd I.

very few. Many or perhaps most of the Umayyad sites thus have strong Ghassānid substrates,[10] a conclusion supported by tangible evidence in Ruṣāfa/Sergiopolis and Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbī. So, Ghassānid towns and structures, most of which have disappeared after the lapse of so many centuries, may now be partially recovered, not only through a toponymy that involves the two terms *qaṣr* and *dayr* but more visibly through surviving Umayyad structures.

The Ghassānid contribution to the rise and development of a mature Christian culture in Oriens, which was represented by the establishment of urban centers and the construction of buildings of various types, invites comparison with the Edomite Arabs, who in the first two centuries of Roman rule (beginning in 63 B.C.) engaged in feverish cultural activity in the same region. Just as the Ghassānids were influenced by Christianity after their conversion, so were the Edomites by Judaism, despite a frequent failure to heed its strictures on certain aspects of Graeco-Roman culture. However, both peoples and dynasties, the Edomite Herods and the Ghassānid Jafnids, distinguished themselves as *philoktistai,* although the achievements of the former are more striking.[11] And no Ghassānid or any other Arab dynasty or client king could equal or rival the son of Antipater, the φιλοκτίστης Herod the Great.[12]

Nevertheless, the Ghassānid contribution to the rise and development of a mature Christian culture remains unique in the history of the Arabs. This volume, together with the preceding ones on the Ghassānids, has recovered from near oblivion a culture that flourished in the shadow of the protective shield that Byzantium provided and enjoyed a short but sweet afterlife during the tolerant rule of the Umayyads in Oriens, now Muslim Bilād al-Shām.

This brief sketch of the limitrophe that the Ghassānids so thoroughly urbanized and ruralized provides the background necessary to discuss the new kind of Arab city owed to the Ghassānids and to describe its urban landscape and life at the higher levels of culture.

References in the few surviving sources enable one to conclude that at least four Ghassānid cities or towns were prominent urban centers: Jābiya, Jalliq, Ruṣāfa/Sergiopolis, and Ḥuwwārīn.[13] The first two were capitals of the Ghassānids; Jalliq offered opportunities for entertainment, witness its having become a favorite spot for the Umayyad Yazīd—as was Ḥuwwārīn, the site of his death. Ruṣāfa

[10] The question of how many of these Umayyad establishments were originally Ghassānid can be answered only by archaeologists.

[11] Those that have persisted to the present day include the city of Tiberias at the sea of Galilea, built by Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great.

[12] See A. H. M. Jones, *The Herods of Judaea* (Oxford, 1938); the most recent publication in this area is D. W. Roller, *The Building Program of Herod the Great* (Berkeley, 1998).

[13] Of these four, Ḥuwwārīn is the least known; for all of them, see the index of *BASIC* II.1, s.vv.

apparently was mainly known as the place for horse races, especially popular during the caliphate of the Umayyad Hishām.

Of these four, there is no doubt that Jābiya was the principal Ghassānid city. The caliph Umar came to it from Medina to work out the administration of the newly conquered Oriens; and Muʿāwiya lived in Jābiya for some twenty years (until his accession to the caliphate in A.D. 661), while serving as governor of Bilād al-Shām. The city retained its importance after the capital was transferred to Damascus and also after the Marwānid branch of the Umayyad dynasty came to power in 683; moreover, it was in Jābiya that the famous *ajnād,* circumscriptions or military districts, of the Umayyads received their *aʿṭiyāt,* their stipends. So the following description of the Ghassānid city and its urban landscape applies primarily to Jābiya. Because the site remains unexcavated, it is impossible to draw a satisfactory plan of the city; one can only discuss the amenities and necessities of urban life that existed there.[14]

These towns were the venues where the higher forms of Ghassānid culture such as art and poetry developed; they became for the Ghassānids what the *poleis* had been for the Graeco-Romans. But they were also themselves contributions to culture as *Christian* urban centers—a new phenomenon in the unfolding of urban history in the Arab Near East.

A comparison of Jābiya with another important urban Arab center of the period, Ḥīra, is revelatory in this context. The Arabic and Syriac sources on Ḥīra enable the student of urban topography to give a fairly clear and detailed account of the city, whereas a lack of information makes a similar description of Jābiya impossible. The sources on Ḥīra are extant because such Muslim historians of Abbasid times as Ṭabarī and Balāḏurī were Persians, naturally interested in Ḥīra because it was a client-state of Sasanid Persia. But they had little or no interest in the Ghassānids of Jābiya, the clients of Byzantium. So, until now it is Ḥīra that has been presented as a pre-Islamic Arab urban center with a strong Christian character.[15] Yet Ḥīra was not a Christian city in the sense that Jābiya was. Almost all its kings were pagans, and some—notably Nuʿmān and his son Munḏir—were stridently anti-Christian; it was only during the reign of its last king that Ḥīra officially adopted Christianity. Jābiya, in contrast, was a Christian city from its foundation,

[14] For the historical geography of Jābiya, see ibid., 96–104.

[15] See Ṣ. A. al-ʿAli, "Manṭiqat al-Ḥīra," *Majallat Kulliyat al-Ādāb* (1962), 1–28, in which al-ʿAli examined the landscape of Ḥīra and the region in its vicinity and supplied a map. Although its Christian character is not his primary interest, he is aware of the importance of that character and of the many monasteries in the region. D. Talbot Rice conducted excavations in Ḥīra ("The Oxford Excavations at Ḥīra," *Ars Islamica* 1 [1934], 51–73), and recently a Japanese team has excavated the site, but their publications are unavailable to me.

and its mature Christian culture developed under the influence of a Christian empire, Byzantium. Yet little about it has survived; the observations in this part have been pieced together in various ways, gleaned indirectly from various sources. There is a pressing need to excavate the site to gain knowledge of the urban landscape; an article by Jean-Pierre Sodini has demonstrated the importance of archaeology for research into Oriens generally,[16] and thus specifically into Ghassānland. The serendipity that revealed a glimpse of Ghassānid art in the Nitil church augurs well for excavations of the major urban center of Ghassānland, Jābiya, and of other centers as well.

[16] See J.-P. Sodini, "La contribution de l'archéologie à la connaissance du monde byzantin (IVe–VII siècles)," *DOP* 47 (1993), 139–84.

II

The Ghassānid Sedentary Presence

It was within the limitrophe and the transverse wedge that the Ghassānids had their sedentary units—settlement, village, town, and city.[1] Just as the limitrophe itself suffered severe blows first with the demise of the dynasty in A.D. 636 at the battle of the Yarmūk and again in 750 with the fall of the Umayyads, so too the various towns and villages of the Ghassānids declined into ruins. Of these urban and rural establishments, certain ones stand out in the sources; to the two capitals, Jābiya and Jalliq, others such as Ruṣāfa and Ḥuwwārīn (Evaria) may be added, though known more from Umayyad than from Ghassānid sources. All these urban centers flourished in the century or so of Umayyad rule, but it was Jalliq that lasted well into the Islamic period, possibly because it was associated with entertainment, while the official capital, Jābiya, had a more serious ambience.

Despite the fragmentary available information on Ghassānid urban life, a fairly true, albeit not very detailed, picture of it can be constructed when references in contemporary sources are collected and then examined, interpreted, and set against the background of what is known about the urban culture of Oriens in the sixth century. The urban landscape of the Ghassānids must be related to their identity as *foederati* of Byzantium, as Monophysite Christians, and as Arabs. And

[1] On the rise of village communities and villages in Oriens and Ghassanland, in the wake of the decline of urban centers in this period, see the classic work of G. Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du nord: Le massif du Bélus à l'époque romaine,* 3 vols. (Paris, 1953–58), in addition to C. Strube, *Die "Toten Städte": Stadt und Land in Nordsyrien während der Spätantike* (Mainz, 1996); G. Tate, *Les campagnes de la Syrie du nord du IIe au VIIe siècle: Un exemple d'expansion démographique et économique dans les campagnes à la fin de l'antiquité* (Paris, 1992); J. Shereshevski, *Byzantine Urban Settlements in the Negev Desert* (Beer-sheva, 1991); and H. I. MacAdam, "Settlement and Settlement Patterns in Northern and Central Trans-Jordan," in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East,* vol. 2, *Land Use and Settlement Patterns,* ed. G. R. D. King and A. Cameron (Princeton, 1994), 49–93. On villages in the Orontes valley in Oriens, see C. Foss, "Life in City and Country," in *The Oxford History of Byzantium,* ed. C. Mango (Oxford, 2002), 71–95, especially 91–95.

This chapter complements Hugh Kennedy's classic article, "From Polis to Madina: Urban Change in Late Antique and Early Islamic Syria," *Past and Present* 106 (1985), 1–27, which was published long before my volumes on the Ghassānids started to appear in 1995 and hence devotes little coverage to federate and Ghassānid towns and cities.

as noted in Part II, the element of Byzantinism that most strongly influenced them was Christianity. It was also what distinguished them and their towns both from the earlier *pagan* Nabataeans and Palmyrenes, with their Petra and Tadmur, and also from the later *Muslim* Umayyads, with their Damascus and Ramla.

The Ghassānids' Arab background is manifest in the physical arrangement of their settlements in the following ways.

1. The Ghassānids, both as cavalry in the army of the Orient and as hunters, were highly dependent on horses. So they must have had space for them in their towns. The *maydān* (race course) and its *ḥalba* (groups of race horses) are discussed above (see Part II, Chapter 12).

2. Since hospitality was one of the twin pillars of their *murūʾa,* or *virtus,* they must have had guesthouses for the visitors who came to them, especially those from the Arabian Peninsula. The Christian concept of *philanthropia,* which found expression in the rise of *xenodocheia,*[2] must have merged with the Arab concept of hospitality.

3. Most relevant and important in this urban landscape would have been a special hall to showcase the favorite art among the Arabs, poetry. An odeum or its equivalent for the recitation of poetry undoubtedly formed part of the urban Ghassānid landscape (discussed below in Chapter 3).

The Graeco-Roman influence is reflected in a number of elements.

1. As an archphylarch, the Ghassānid king must have had the equivalent of the *praetorium* of the Roman commander, such as the one that has survived outside the walls of Ruṣāfa/Sergiopolis. The poet Imruʾ al-Qays, who visited the Ghassānids, traveled by the state post, the *barīd* or *veredi,*[3] to which he referred in his poetry; so presumably there was a station for this means of transportation.[4]

2. Because their horses formed an important part of their contribution to the Byzantine army of the Orient, the stable, *stabulum* (a term that has survived in the Arabic *iṣṭabl*),[5] must have been part of the urban landscape. Also present must have been all that pertains to horses and their equipment, such as saddleries.

3. The Ghassānid town surely accepted the public baths of the Graeco-Roman world, in their primary function and not as centers for social activities or mixed

[2] These *xenodocheia* should be distinguished from *pandocheia,* "inns," at which the guests paid for their food and lodgings. On *xenodocheia,* see Part II, Chapter 2.

[3] For the *veredi/barīd* in the poetry of Imruʾ al-Qays, see I. Mumayyiz, "Imruʾ al-Qays and Byzantium," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 36.2 (2005), 150.

[4] The post was obviously important as well for correspondence; that of the Ghassānid kings was stamped by a seal. For the seal of the Ghassānid Jabala, see the present writer in "Sigillography in the Service of History: New Light," in *Novum Millennium: Studies on Byzantine History and Culture, Dedicated to Paul Speck,* ed. C. Sode and S. Takács (Aldershot, Eng., 2001), 369–77.

[5] See F. Viré, "Iṣṭabl," *EI*^{2}, IV, 213–16.

bathing. In addition to being an essential part of the urban scene, the bath was also a feature of the hunting lodges at their country retreats.

4. Water had been a principal concern of the Arab Ghassānids in their peninsular period, and so it remained after they settled in a relatively arid region. The Graeco-Roman nymphaeum may well have formed part of the urban landscape in such towns as Jābiya and Jalliq.[6] Judging from their popularity in Umayyad times, ponds and pools may also have formed part of the Ghassānid landscape.

5. The tavern, *ḫānūt* (discussed in Part II, Chapter 5), was a very important part of the urban landscape. Although addiction to wine was frowned upon by Christianity, the tavern was tolerated. It was the scene of Ghassānid popular entertainment, which included poetry recitals, song, and dance.

Whether the Ghassānid town had the broad colonnaded streets of the Hellenistic and Roman cities is not known. But in view of the importance of victory celebrations to a warrior society such as the Ghassānids', it probably did have the victory arches of Graeco-Roman tradition. That their towns may have been walled can be inferred from a verse of one of their poets, Ḥassān, who refers to the gate of Jalliq, thereby implying that the town had a wall, a *ḫāʾiṭ*.[7]

Perhaps more important than what the Ghassānids adopted was what they rejected. As Christians, they refused to adopt many of the establishments and amenities that adorned the old Greek and Roman *poleis,* such as theaters where mimes and pantomimes were performed. In place of these characteristic features of the pagan *polis,* the Ghassānid urban landscape was distinguished by Christian landmarks.

1. Most notable were churches (whose architecture is discussed in the following chapter). With the reestablishment of the Monophysite church around A.D. 540, largely due to the intervention of the Ghassānid king Arethas, churches were restored and built anew. As their capital, Jābiya no doubt had many churches in addition to the "cathedral" church, the seat of its chief hierarch, Bishop Theodore. In 569 a letter, concerning the Tritheistic heresy, was addressed to the priests and presbyters of the churches in the Provincia Arabia by two Monophysite hierarchs. The letter has survived but the reply of the clerics has not. However, 137 archimandrites answered a previous letter, and an equal number of priests must have

[6] Such drinking and washing facilities, the *mashraba,* assumed even greater significance in later Islamic times, in view of the importance of ablution before each of the five daily prayers. On the aesthetic and recreational aspects of nymphaea, see F. Glaser, "Fountains and Nymphaea," in *Handbook of Ancient Water Technology,* ed. Ö. Wikander, Technology and Change in History 2 (Leiden, 2000), 413–52.

[7] *Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit,* ed. W. ʿArafāt, Gibb Memorial New Series 25 (London, 1971), II, 279, verse 1; for the more natural and appropriate reading *bāb,* "gate," instead of *batn,* see 280 note 1. And though it is not certain that Jalliq was a walled town, many towns of Oriens, exposed to the threat of the nomads, did have walls. The sources specifically identify Dūma and Tadmur (Palmyra) as walled Arab towns in the region; see Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1962), III, 378. Damascus was also a walled city (see Ṭabarī, 435).

been addressed in the second letter. A considerable proportion of their churches must have been concentrated in Jābiya.[8] That Jalliq, too, had many churches is clear from the reference to its *biyaʿ* (plural of *bīʿa,* "church") in the poetry of Yazīd, the Umayyad crown prince who used to visit it.[9]

These churches in various spots of Ghassānland may be categorized as follows.

a. Ordinary churches, not related to any personage and not necessarily built over relics, such as Bīʿat Ghassān mentioned in the Arabic sources.[10]

b. The episcopal church, such as that of Jābiya, presumably the "cathedral" church of the chief Ghassānid hierarch.

c. Martyria, built over relics—most often over those of Najrānites, the martyred relatives of the Ghassānids, such as those at Māṭirūn and Mayṭūr.

d. Churches that served as pilgrimage centers, possibly such as that in Maḥajja.

e. Votive churches, such as that in Najrān in Trachonitis (the namesake of the South Arabian Najrān).[11]

2. The surviving letter signed by 137 archimandrites of monasteries from the Provincia Arabia indicates that Jābiya must have had many monasteries, one of which—the monastery of St. Sergius, Bēth Mār Sargis—is explicitly documented.[12] The Arab and Ghassānid partiality to the monastic life was well known to the writers of the period, and monasteries must have been built in various parts of Ghassānland.

3. In this period, baptisteries may have been built separately from the main church, in view of the importance of this sacrament (heightened by the proximity of the Ghassānids to the Jordan river). If so, these separate structures would have been found in Jābiya and other Ghassānid towns.

4. The expression of Christian *philanthropia* has already been instanced in the case of the guesthouse, which combined Arab and Christian hospitality. In addition, medical care units both for humans and animals must have existed in the Ghassānid town, as suggested by medical terms in Arabic found in the *dīwān*s of contemporary poets.[13]

[8] On this second letter, see *BASIC* I.2, 814–17, and *BASIC* II.1, 148; on the first letter, see *BASIC* I.2, 809–14, 824–38.

[9] For the churches of Jalliq in Yazīd's poetry, see *BASIC* II.1, 109.

[10] For Bīʿat Ghassān, see ibid., 150–51.

[11] For a fuller treatment of this quinary categorization of churches in Ghassānland, with examples illustrating each category, see the present writer in "Ghassānid Religious Architecture," in *Mémorial Monseigneur Joseph Nasrallah,* ed. P. Canivet and J.-P. Rey-Coquais (Damascus, 2006), 115–38.

[12] See T. Nöldeke, "Zur Topographie und Geschichte des Damascenischen Gebietes und der Ḥaurângegend," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 29 (1876), 436.

[13] As noted earlier in this volume, *diryāq* appears twice in the *Dīwān* of Ḥassān: I, 74, verse 14; 106, verse 13.

The power and affluence of the Ghassānids imply the existence of a palace or a mansion worthy of the archphylarch. References in prose sources to their entertainment and reception of visitors suggest that the Ghassānids had palaces, a conclusion supported by the term *qaṣr* used in that sense in one of the odes of Ḥassān.[14] In addition, he mentions tall Ghassānid buildings, and mansions of marble.[15] How monumental these structures were is difficult to tell. But from the evidence of a church they built at Nitil and of the *praetorium* outside the walls of Ruṣāfa, one can conclude that these structures must have been palatial. The church at Nitil in the region of Madaba raises the question of whether the famous mansion in the same region called al-Mushattā (Mshatta), which is anepigraphic, was built by the Ghassānids (as Rudolph Brünnow had originally suggested).[16] Mushattā as it stands now, with its mosque, is certainly an Umayyad structure. But it may have been built over a much less impressive Ghassānid structure.

Two other elements in Ghassānid settlements are tombs and gardens, each discussed in more detail below.

Tombs

References in the odes of al-Nābigha and Ḥassān suggest that the Ghassānids were buried not in modest graves but in elaborate tombs, possibly in mausolea when the deceased was the chief archphylarch. Cemeteries in this Christian period were no longer outside the cities but inside them; they must have formed part of the Ghassānid urban space, though their precise location is not clear.

In his most famous ode, the rhyme in *B* or *bā'iyya,* al-Nābigha refers to two Ghassānid towns as burial places for two Ghassānid kings.[17] The first is Jalliq, one of the two capitals of the Ghassānids, and the other is Ṣaydā'.[18] Three localities had the latter name, and it has been argued that the poet was alluding to Ṣaydā' in the Golan,[19] or possibly the biblical Bēth-Saydā. The language of the references suggests that they were landmarks of which the Ghassānids were proud—most probably mausolea.

While al-Nābigha in the *bā'iyya* simply twice mentions the burial, in another ode, a *lāmiyya* or rhyme in *L,* he is more expansive.[20] The Ghassānid king to whom

[14] Ibid., 53, verse 28.

[15] Ibid., 106, verse 10.

[16] R. E. Brünnow and A. v. Domaszewski, eds., *Die Provincia Arabia auf grund zweier in den Jahren 1897 und 1898 unternommenen Reisen und der Berichte früherer Reisender* (Strassburg, 1909), III, 174–75. See also *BASIC* I.1, 526 note 9.

[17] See *Dīwān al-Nābigha al-Ḏubyānī,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1977), 41, verse 6.

[18] Discussed at length in *BASIC* II.1, 226–28.

[19] For this Ṣaydā', see R. Dussaud, *Topographie historique de la Syrie antique et médiévale* (Paris, 1927), Map I, D3, and *al-Mu'jam al-Jughrāfi li al-Quṭr al-'Arabi al Sūri,* ed. M. Ṭlas (Damascus, 1992), IV, 165.

[20] Al-Nābigha devotes five verses to it; *Dīwān,* 121, verses 25–29.

he refers by name, al-Nuʿmān, is buried in the Golan between two towns, Tubnā and Jāsim.[21] Yet despite the three toponyms, al-Nuʿmān's precise burial site is left tantalizingly unclear.[22] The poet further wishes that the spot continue to have aromatics and fragrant flowers around it. This could imply that the tomb was surrounded by a garden. If so, then gardens constituted an element in the construction of Ghassānid tombs and mausolea, and would have been included in those built within the limits of cities such as Jalliq and Ṣaydāʾ.

Ḥassān's ode has only one verse on the tomb of the Ghassānid king Arethas, son of Māriya.[23] It suggests that the tomb was a most unusual one, which became a Ghassānid landmark and in effect a pilgrimage center for the Ghassānids. The first hemistich of the verse reads: "The Sons of Jafna [the Ghassānids, his descendants] are around the tomb of their father." Ḥassān composed this ode when he was visiting Oriens after its conquest by Islam and was reminiscing about the good old days at the Ghassānid court. Those who were going around it were not Arethas' literal sons but rather Ghassānids who were paying tribute to their king, who had died in A.D. 569.[24]

All this suggests that the tomb was more like a mausoleum—a centralized domed structure that accommodated visitors and his relatives long after his death. He was probably buried in a sarcophagus (the use of which is discussed below), but there was certainly an elaborate tombstone reciting his many achievements, not unlike the epitaph of Imruʾ al-Qays provided by the Namāra inscription in the fourth century.[25] The place of his burial is not clear. A fragment by Labīd, a contemporary poet who had knowledge of the Ghassānids, mentioned the day of his death, Yawm Jalliq, "the Day of Jalliq."[26] Perhaps he was buried in Jalliq, where he died: in hot countries, to avoid putrefaction burial customarily occurs the day after death (unless the body is embalmed). But the ode of al-Nābigha clearly suggests that the elegized king, al-Nuʿmān, was transported from the place of his death back

[21] Tubnā is a better reading than Busrā, as Nöldeke cogently argued in *GF,* 40 note 1. For Jāsim and Tubnā, see Maps IV and V respectively in *BASIC* II.1, 427, 429.

[22] This unspecified place lay between two towns that each contained a Monophysite monastery associated with the Ghassānid king Arethas, as has been noted in *BASIC* II.1, 228–29. So there may have been some religious significance in the choice of that spot.

[23] Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 74, verse 11.

[24] One medieval scholiast, unaware that it was a mausoleum, expressed his surprise that the poet found it necessary to refer to Arethas' tomb surrounded by his descendants, and questioned the point of the reference. Another lauded the poet for the statement, which he understood as a reference to the Ghassānids as a sedentary group (which they were) and not roaming pastoralists; see Ibn Rashīq al-Qayrawāni, *al-ʿUmda fī Maḥasin al-Shiʿr,* ed. M. ʿA. al-Ḥamīd (Cairo, 1955), I, 319–20.

[25] This inscription was studied in detail in *BAFOC*, 31–53, and it appears as the frontispiece of that volume.

[26] See Labīd, *Dīwān,* ed. I. ʿAbbās (Kuwait, 1962), 266, verses 49–52, discussed in *BASIC* II.1, 278–80.

to Gaulanitis; so perhaps Arethas, too, was embalmed and carried back to Jābiya, the more fitting capital for his burial.

In addition to the two poets' allusions to towns where Ghassānid kings were buried, the prose sources refer to other burial sites. Jabala, the son of Arethas, was buried in a martyrion at Qinnasrīn/Chalcis after dying at the famous battle in A.D. 554.[27] A late prose writer speaks of al-Barīṣ, identified near Kiswa, as the burial place of the Ghassānid Jafna.[28] Nevertheless, the Golan was without question the main burial place for the dynasty, and their most famous kings must have been buried in Jābiya.

As for the location of the tombs or mausolea of the Ghassānid royal house, most were attached to churches. This had been customary for emperors since the days of Constantine, whose tomb was attached to the Church of the Holy Apostles. The Ghassānid kings who visited Constantinople must have seen it and that of Justinian, and tried to imitate this imperial burial practice. The Ghassānid church at Nitil supports this inference in a most concrete fashion. The Ghassānid phylarch Thaʿlaba was buried in the church's subterranean vaulted chamber, the hypogeum (where his mortal remains are still apparently preserved).[29] If a simple phylarch was honored by burial within the church, such prominent leaders as those elegized in the two odes must have been similarly honored. Furthermore, that Thaʿlaba's burial place was marked by an epitaph on the phylarch[30] suggests that the much more famous phylarchs, such as Arethas, must have been honored with inscriptions detailing their reigns.

Sarcophagi were used in this period for celebrated personages, and the Ghassānid kings no doubt were buried in them. Support for this hypothesis is provided by the early Abbasid author al-Jāḥiz, who associates sarcophagi with the Ghassānids.[31] The term he uses is *nawāwis* (plural of *nāwūs*), transliterated from the Greek ναός rather than the more correct term, σαρκοφάγος.[32]

It may be stated with certainty that tombs and mausolea were landmarks in the Ghassānid landscape or townscape. Within the Ghassānid city or town, the royal tomb or mausoleum would have been an important landmark, whether

[27] See *BASIC* I.1, 243.

[28] See Ibn Saʿīd al-Andalusi, *Nashwat al-Ṭarab,* ed. N. ʿA. al-Raḥmān (Amman, 1982), I, 208. The reliability of this statement remains to be shown, since it came from a very late writer. Al-Barīṣ is identified as Khān al-Shīḥa, west of Kiswa; see *BASIC* II.1, 241.

[29] See M. Piccirillo, "The Church of Saint Sergius at Nitl: A Centre of Christian Arabs in the Steppe at the Gate of Madaba," *Lib.ann.* 51 (2001), 278–80, and the present writer, "The Sixth-Century Church Complex at Nitl, Jordan: The Ghassānid Dimension," ibid., 285–92, especially 290–91.

[30] For the inscription, see the finispiece of *BASIC* II.1.

[31] See al-Jāḥiz, *Rasāʾil al-Jāḥiz,* ed. A. Hārūn (Cairo, 1964), II, 292.

[32] The choice of ναός reflects the law of phonetic facility in Arabic.

attached to a church or not. Apparently it was built in the midst of a garden, possibly visited by loyal Ghassānids on the anniversary of the death of the archphylarch and king buried in it. On the tomb, or on the sarcophagus itself, the epitaph for each Ghassānid would have been inscribed. These tombs could be set against the background of Byzantine funereal and burial practices of the sixth century.[33]

The Garden

One might expect a palace or royal mansion to have a garden and a game preserve, a *ḥadīqa* and a *ḥāʾir*. In a prose composition attributed to al-Nābigha, the panegyrist refers to the beauty of the Ghassānids' gardens.[34] Adding credence to this statement is a comment by the author of the *Book of Monasteries,* who mentions that their ecclesiastical structures are located near trees and gardens.[35]

References to flowers in contemporary poetry on the Ghassānids are many, suggesting that the garden occupied a space in the Ghassānid cityscape—a conclusion that could receive support from one prose account written in late Islamic times and another that purports to be composed for a Ghassānid king (hence a contemporary document). These two prose sources apply the terms *riyāḍ* (gardens) and *hadāʾiq* (plural of *ḥadīqa*) to the Ghassānids' gardens. This was yet another area in which Byzantium influenced the Ghassānids, for "gardens were essential to Byzantine horticulture."[36] The chances then are that Ghassānid mansions and houses did have gardens, as did their monasteries. A number of references gleaned from the sources support the argument that gardens were an element in Ghassānid structures, both secular and religious.

1. Monasteries were woven into the fabric of the urban scene in Ghassānland cities as well as countryside. Orchards were an essential part of the monastery, whether urban or rural, as attested by a well-known passage in Iṣfahānī's specialized work on monasteries. He states that in choosing where to build a monastery, the Ghassānids and other Christian Arabs such as those of Ḥīra and Najrān looked for sites that abounded in trees, gardens (*riyāḍ*), and streamlets.[37] The Garden of

[33] See A. Sartre, "Tombeaux antiques de Syrie du Sud," *Syria* 60 (1983), 83–99, and idem, "L'architecture funéraire en Syrie," in *Archéologie et histoire de la Syrie,* vol. 2, *La Syrie de l'époque achéménide à l'avènement de l'Islam,* ed. J.-M. Dentzer and W. Orthmann (Saarsbrücken, 1989), 423–46. More generally, see J. Kyriakakis, "Byzantine Burial Customs," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 19 (1974), 37–72, and A. Rush, *Death and Burial in Christian Antiquity* (Washington, D.C., 1941).

[34] For this prose piece by al-Nābigha, see Abū al-Faraj Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (Beirut, 1958), XV, 124.

[35] Abu al-Faraj Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Diyārāt,* ed. J. al-ʿAtiyya (London, 1991), 163.

[36] See A. Kazhdan, "Gardens," *ODB,* II, 822.

[37] See Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Diyārāt,* 163. On the similar approach in Byzantium, see A.-M. Talbot, "Byzantine Monastic Horticulture: The Textual Evidence," in *Byzantine Garden Culture,* ed. A. Littlewood, H. Maguire, and J. Wolschke-Bulmahn (Washington, D.C., 2002), 37–67.

Eden and the Garden of Gethsemane, associated with Jesus in the Gospels, would have inspired a society so devoted to its Christianity.[38]

2. That gardens were attached to Ghassānid secular structures, their mansions and houses, is demonstrated in a prose piece addressed to one of their kings by al-Nābigha, who says that the Ghassānid king had the most attractive and appealing of gardens.[39] These apparently had not only fruits but also flowers, to which the poet refers in his famous ode on the Ghassānids; he describes the scene on Palm Sunday, when the Ghassānid rulers would be greeted by their maidens with *rayḥān,* fragrant flowers.[40] In his elegy on al-Nuʿmān, the same poet prays that *rayḥān* may continue to grace the Ghassānid king's tomb and wishes that two fragrant Arabian flowers called *ḥawdhān* and *ʿawf* may also grace it.[41]

The Ghassānids' association with flowers is further confirmed by a prose piece by Ḥassān, who in early Islamic times often reminisced on Ghassānid entertainment of their guests; he once described how the Ghassānid king Jabala would sit on a couch under which were scattered leaves of myrtle and jasmine and all sorts of fragrant flowers.[42] The cumulative effect of these references is striking and underscores the importance of flowers in Ghassānid life.

[38] The only extant reference to a garden in a Christian city and a strictly Christian context involves Najrān, the Arabian martyropolis. According to the sources, a "Church to the Holy Martyrs and the Glorious Arethas" was built there on a site that had previously bloomed as a luxuriant garden; see the present writer in "Byzantium in South Arabia," *DOP* 33 (1979), 27.

[39] See Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī,* XV, 124, verses 11–12.

[40] Al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 47, verses 25–26.

[41] Ibid., 121, verses 27–28.

[42] See Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī,* XVII, 105.

III

Architecture and Decorative Art

The hiatus in the Arab artistic presence between the Nabataeans and the Palmyrenes of the Roman period (first century B.C.–third century A.D.) and the Umayyads in the early Islamic period (seventh century A.D.) can be bridged by the federate artistic presence in this proto-Byzantine period, especially by the Ghassānids. This chapter aims at examining the remains of that presence in sixth-century Oriens.

Fortunately, a number of monuments of diverse character enable that presence to be examined. Ghassānid secular military architecture is represented by the *praetorium* of Mundir, outside the walls of Sergiopolis;[1] secular civil architecture, by a house in Hayyat;[2] monastic religious architecture, by the tower at Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbī;[3] and church religious architecture, by the church at Nitil in Trans-Jordan.[4] A fifth architectural form, the odeion, has not survived, but the final section of this chapter argues that it must have existed.

The various ethnic groups in *Oriens Christianus*—Armenian, Georgian, Aramaean, Copt, and Ethiopian—responded to the new faith by enlisting all forms of art in its service. Each of these peoples developed a distinctive expression of Christian art; likewise, the Nabataeans of Petra and the Palmyrenes of Tadmur,[5]

[1] See *BASIC* I.1, 501–5, 129; *BASIC* II.1, 129–33. Another example of military architecture is al-Burj (the Tower) of Ḍumayr; see *BASIC* I.1, 495–501.

[2] See *BASIC* I.1, 489–94. Hayyat lies to the north of Philippopolis (Shahbā'); see Map VII in *BASIC* II.2, 433. For the house in late antique Oriens, see the relevant part of C. Castel, M. al-Maqdissi and F. Villeneuve, eds., *Les maisons dans la Syrie antique du IIIe millénaire aux débuts de l'Islam,* Actes du Colloque international, Damas, 1992 (Beirut, 1997). The mansion called al-Mushattā in the region of Madaba may also, in its substrate, represent Ghassānid secular civil architecture; see Chapter 2 above, with note 15.

[3] See *BASIC* I.1, 258–61; *BASIC* II.1, 205–11. The tower is the frontispiece of *BASIC* I.1.

[4] See M. Piccirillo, "The Church of Saint Sergius at Nitl: A Centre of Christian Arabs in the Steppe at the Gate of Madaba," *Lib.ann* 51 (2001), 267–84. The frontispiece and finispiece of *BASIC* II.1, as well as the volume's four color plates, all reflect various facets of this church.

[5] On Petra and the Nabataeans, see S. G. Schmid, "The Nabataeans," in *The Archaeology of Jordan,* ed. B. MacDonald, R. Adams, and P. Bienkowski (Sheffield, 2001), 367–404, especially 403–4; on Palmyra, see *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East,* ed. E. M. Meyers (New York,

as well as the Umayyads of Damascus, developed an art and architecture peculiar to themselves. So, did the Ghassānid Arabs, in the same region, do the same? The question is appropriate, since the Ghassānids served Byzantium a long time and their *floruit* in the sixth century coincided with the explosion of Christian art in the capital and the provinces, including the Oriens of the Ghassānids.

The state of surviving manuscripts precludes any definitive answer to this question, but a number of observations may be made. The Arabic sources of the later period singled out the Ghassānids of all pre-Islamic dynasties, presenting them as lovers of building—what a Greek author would have called φιλοκτίσται; thus Ḥamza (d. 961) credited them with a large number of structures of various types.[6] But he could not comment on the structures' artistic character, since he had not seen them; he was simply quoting earlier Ghassānid sources, such as the no longer extant *Akhbār Mulūk Ghassān,*[7] which had probably listed these structures. Another Muslim author, Iṣfahānī, the author of the monumental *al-Aghānī,* referred to the art and architecture of the Ghassānids, as well as to that of the Lakhmids of Ḥīra and the Balḥāriths of Najrān. In a surviving passage from what must have been an invaluable source on Christian structures in the Byzantine period, *Kitāb al-Diyārāt,* he mentions the following features of their religious structures, the *biyaʿ* (plural of *bīʿa,* "church"): (1) their extreme height; (2) appointments made of gold and silver; (3) *sutūr,* screens and curtains of brocade; (4) mural mosaics; and (5) golden ceilings.[8] Iṣfahānī lived in Aleppo during the renaissance of the Ḥamdānids under Sayf al-Dawla; he both had seen the buildings he described and read the verses of the poets who had visited these churches. So, the statements of Ḥamza and Iṣfahānī indicate that the Ghassānids did contribute to the artistic life of Oriens. And in the artistic development of Christian structures, Ghassānids of Jābiya surely had an edge over the Lakhmids, since they themselves were Christian and lived in the shadow not of Persia but of Byzantium, a Christian empire that itself surpassed Persia's achievements in art and architecture.

Of these four Ghassānid monuments listed above, the tower of Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbī illustrates the first observation by Iṣfahānī, on the height of Ghassānid buildings; the church of Nitil, the only surviving Ghassānid structure in which

1997), IV, 238–44. Two issues of *Aram* are devoted to the Nabataeans of Petra and the Palmyrenes of Tadmur; see *The Nabataeans,* 2.1–2 (1990) and *Palmyra: History and Archaeology,* 7.1 (1995). See also C. E. Bosworth, "Tadmur," *EI*², X, 79–80; J. Taylor, *Petra and the Lost Kingdom of the Nabataeans* (London, 2001).

[6] See Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *Tārīkh Sinī Mulūk al-Arḍ wa al-Anbiyāʾ*, ed. Y. Maskūni (Beirut, 1961), 98–106; Ḥamza is discussed more generally in *BASIC* II.1, 306–41.

[7] See *BASIC* II.1, 364–62.

[8] See Abū al-Faraj Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Diyārāt,* ed. J. al-ʿAṭiyya (London, 1991), 163–64. In his contemporary poetry, Ḥassān documents some of these features, such as the height of their buildings; see *Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit,* ed. W. ʿArafāt, Gibb Memorial New Series 25 (London, 1971), I, 316, verse 8.

some artistic features have survived, illustrates his fourth observation, on mosaics. So, one can conclude that Iṣfahānī's passage contains some measure of truth. Some individual points can be made about three of the monuments.

1. The *praetorium* of Mundir at Ruṣāfa/Sergiopolis. This structure may be analyzed within the context of military architectural monuments of sixth-century Byzantine Oriens, an approach supported by the discussion in *BASIC* II.1 of its various functions during the phylarchate of Mundir in the second half of the sixth century. An architectural historian has recently challenged the view (first presented by Jean Sauvaget) that the structure was a *praetorium,* reverting to the older position that it was a church, but two arguments can be raised here in favor of the newer orthodoxy.[9] First, Mundir was a pious, enthusiastic Christian; he would not, in order to blazon forth his own glory, have engraved a slogan from the hippodrome—NIKA H TYXH[10]—in the holiest part of a church, the apse. Second, Ruṣāfa was well-supplied with churches within its walls; it and its saint needed not another church but a *praetorium* as protection from the pastoralists who used to raid such Christian shrines, attracted by their treasures.

2. The monastery tower of Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbī. This tower is impressive in its height and in the strength of its masonry, and it dominates what must have been an extensive settlement in sixth-century Oriens. In the preceding volume, *BASIC* II.1, it was set within the larger context of Ghassānid religious architecture.[11]

In this context it is enough to draw attention to two features. First, the height and the strength of the tower clearly imply that Ghassānid structures were impressively monumental. Second, the Umayyad occupation of former Ghassānid sites, such as this one, has sometimes obscured the original structure beyond recognition. However, the tower remains an outstanding example of the Ghassānid substrate in later Umayyad structures.

3. The church at Nitil. The remains of Ghassānid structures such as the *praetorium* at Ruṣāfa and the tower at Qaṣr al-Ḥayr allow only a superficial survey of the possible Ghassānid contribution to the art and architecture of the period and the region. Although they have survived, one is dilapidated and the other stands in splendid isolation. Scarcely any other Ghassānid building has survived except as a toponym and possible site. This circumstance explains the importance of the

[9] See J. Sauvaget, "Les Ghassānides et Sergiopolis," *Byzantion* 14 (1939), 115–30—followed by C. Mango, *Byzantine Architecture* (New York, 1976), 94–95, and challenged by G. Brands, "Der sogenannte Audienzsaal des Mundir in Resafa," *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 10 (1998), 211–35. See the present writer in the festschrift for T. Mathews, forthcoming.

[10] See *BASIC* I.1, 501–2, and note 350.

[11] On Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbī, see *BASIC* II.1, 203–11; on Ghassānid religious architecture, see 143–219. The long discussion there focuses mainly on identifying and listing the churches and monasteries related to the Ghassānids, which have survived mostly as toponyms rather than actual structures. For their possible influence in the Roman Occident and the Islamic Orient, see 213–15.

church at Nitil: though it is in ruins, its plan is traceable and some of its mosaics have survived. It remains the sole example of a Ghassānid church, and so to recover the appearance of their churches one must draw on literary evidence. Such efforts will not diminish the value to the researcher of the church of Nitil, which should be a touchstone for testing the validity of the conclusions derived from other sources.[12]

Ghassānid Churches

As frequently noted in this volume, the most significant fact in the religious life of the Ghassānids was the martyrdom of their relatives in Najrān ca. A.D. 520. It profoundly influenced their thought and action, and the translation of the relics of these martyrs to Oriens affected the form of Ghassānid churches. This translation occasioned the rise of pilgrimage centers in Najrān and Maḥajja in Trachonitis, where the relics were deposited. Even more importantly, it encouraged the Ghassānids to include a reliquary or martyrion in their churches, which would gain added sanctity from the relics of their recently martyred relatives. Indeed, the excavation of the church at Nitil has revealed that a reliquary or martyrion had a place in its architectural plan.[13] Should more Ghassānid churches be discovered, they are likely to contain a martyrion as an important element in their architecture.

Their other distinguishing features remain unknown, since to date no Ghassānid church other than the church of Nitil has been discovered or excavated. But in view of the importance of religion in the life of the Ghassānids, many churches must have been built during the episcopate of Theodore. One can therefore hypothesize that Jābiya, their capital, had a more impressive church than the one in Nitil. This church in Jābiya was probably the seat of their newly appointed bishop, Theodore, and thus was something of a "cathedral" church.[14] Its architectural features, which must have reflected those of a sixth-century Byzantine cathedral (possibly nuanced to suggest a partiality to Arab architecture), remain unknown.[15] Three

[12] Long before the church at Nitil was excavated, I wrote an article suggesting that the form of Ghassānid churches might have reflected the Ghassānids' background as Arabs and Monophysites. The dome would have reminded them of the *qubba,* a conical tentlike structure used by the Arabs on important occasions, while the ambulatory would have reflected the importance of circumambulation in the religious life of the Arabs. For these features and others, see my "Ghassānid Religious Architecture," in *Mémorial Monseigneur Joseph Nasrallah,* ed. P. Canivet and J.-P. Rey-Coquais (Damascus, 2006), 115–38.

[13] See Piccirillo, "The Church of Saint Sergius at Nitl," 278. For a picture of the martyrion, see ibid., photo no. 28. To the martyrion of the church at Nitil may be added that of Ḥarrān (Trachonitis), dedicated to St. John by the Ghassānid phylarch Sharāḥīl. For its being a martyrion in the literal sense and not just an *ecclesia,* see *BASIC* I.1, 330–31.

[14] See *BASIC* II.1, 149–50.

[15] Rudolf Brünnow, who visited Jābiya more than a century ago, after recovering a sculpture from its ruins vouched for its "former magnificent buildings"; see "I. Mitteilungen," *ZDPV* 19 (1896), 18 (discussed in *BASIC* II.1, 103–4).

pieces of evidence confirm that the church at Nitil, attractive as it was, did not compare to other, more architecturally advanced, Ghassānid churches.

1. Iṣfahānī, as cited above, refers in specific detail to the beauty of the Ghassānid churches. He notes their height, the mosaics on their walls, and the gold and silver of their appointments and ceilings. It is natural to assume that a "cathedral" church in the Ghassānid capital had all these features.

2. Yāqūt mentions one particular church, the votive church at Najrān in Trachonitis, a Ghassānid-related foundation. Impressed by it, he eloquently calls attention to its splendor and describes it as "great, beautiful, built upon marble columns and decorated with mosaics."[16] Columns, an element not included in Iṣfahānī's general characterization, may thus be added to the speculative reconstruction of the church of Jābiya.

3. Conclusions can also be drawn by analogy from the cathedral of Bostra,[17] which is so close to Jābiya, geographically and otherwise, that it could have been the model for the principal Ghassānid church there. This cathedral was of special interest to the Monophysites and to the Ghassānids in particular, since Bostra had been the capital of the Nabataean Arabs and now was the capital of the *provincia* with which the Ghassānid archphylarch had close connections. In addition, it was the repository of the insignia of the Ghassānid king.[18] In A.D. 512 the cathedral was consecrated with great pomp during the reign of the Monophysitically inclined Anastasius.[19] In attendance were celebrated Monophysite figures, such as the soon-to-be patriarch of Antioch, Severus; Philoxenos of Mabboug; and most likely Jabala, the then Ghassānid king and phylarch—his presence is especially probable in light of the cathedral's dedication to Saints Sergius and Bacchus, the first of whom was the patron saint of the Ghassānids. It was there in November 513 that Severus the Monophysite patriarch of Antioch was consecrated, when he delivered his cathedral homily denouncing Chalcedon and the Tome of Leo.[20]

The cathedral of Bostra was domed, strongly suggesting that the "cathedral" of Jābiya likewise had a dome. This leads the argument back to the question of what other features this church in Jābiya could have had that reflected the Ghassānids'

[16] For the quotation from Yāqūt, see *Muʿjam al-Buldān* (Beirut, 1957), IV, 758, and the present writer, "Byzantium in South Arabia," *DOP* 33 (1979), 79.

[17] For the cathedral of Bostra, see G. G. Guidi, "Problemi di recostruzione della chiesa tetraconca dei SS. Sergio, Bacco, e Leonzio a Bosra," in *La Siria Araba da Roma a Bisanzio,* ed. R. F. Campanata (Ravenna, 1989), 133–70; R. F. Campanata, "Bosra; chiesa dei SS. Sergio, Bacco e Leonzio; I nuovi ritrovamenti (1988–1989)," in *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam: VIIe–VIIIe siècles,* ed. P. Canivet and J. P. Rey-Coquais (Damascus, 1992), 173–78.

[18] See *BASIC* I.1, 469.

[19] See *BASIC* I.2, 699.

[20] Ibid.

character as both Arab and Christian. On the basis of the foregoing analysis, it is possible to say that it probably had a dome, a martyrion, and an ambulatory.[21]

The *Ōdeion*/Odeum

The importance of poetry in the life of the Ghassānids both as an instrument of policy and as a form of entertainment strongly suggests that a special venue was necessary for its performance. As demonstrated in *BASIC* II.1, the Ghassānids were great builders of many structures related to the various aspects of their lives as Arabs, Monophysites, and *foederati*. It would therefore be surprising if there was not in their urban landscape a structure especially designed for poetry recitals, particularly since it would also have been used for oratory and for the performance of some types of music, sometimes accompanying the recitals of poems.[22] Such a structure would have been necessary, in view of the importance accorded by the Arabs to the art of poetry recitation, which they called *inshād*.[23] Although its nature is not entirely clear, it evidently was an art highly prized, and the reciter, the *munshid,* must have been a performing artist who resembled the Homeridae and the rhapsodes of classical Greece.[24] In those days when the culture was largely oral, such performances must have taken place frequently, encouraged by the poet himself and welcomed by an audience that appreciated poetry recitals, an Arab partiality that has persisted to the present day.[25]

The importance of providing the poet or the orator with an appropriate setting was recognized by the peninsular Arabs. The famous Christian orator Quss ibn Sāʿida delivered his speech—heard by the prophet Muḥammad—while mounted on a camel.[26] A red leather dome used to be set up for the poet al-Nābigha

[21] For the inclusion of an ambulatory, see note 12, above.

[22] For example, the Ghassānid king Arethas insisted that he would listen to a panegyric by the poet ʿAlqama only when the latter chanted it; see Abū Naṣr al-Fārābi, *Kitāb al-Mūsīqī al-Kabīr,* ed. G. Khashaba and M. al-Ḥifnī (Cairo, 1967), 73.

[23] An attempt to recover the secrets of *inshād* was made in recent times; see the work of the Franciscan Father Auguste Vicini, translated into Arabic by I. Salim and I. Ḥusayni as *Fann Inshād al-Shiʿr al-ʿArabi* (Jerusalem, 1945); see also D. F. Reynolds, *Heroic Poets, Poetic Heroes: The Ethnography of Performance in an Arabic Oral Epic Tradition* (Ithaca, 1995). Plato's dialogue *Ion* (ca. 390 B.C.) provides a wealth of information on similar recitation in classical Greece; see B. Gentili, *Poetry and Its Public in Ancient Greece: From Homer to the Fifth Century* (Baltimore, 1988).

[24] Much attention has been given to *riwāya* and *rāwī,* usually considered the transmitter of pre-Islamic poetry, but not to the *munshid* and to *inshād,* the artistic recitation of poetry. The verb from which *rāwī* is derived, *rawā* or *rawiya,* primarily signifies not to transmit but "to drink to satiety," though the terms *rāwī* and *munshid* could be used interchangeably and the *rāwī* is often the *munshid*. When the poet had an unattractive voice (as did the ʿAbbāsid poet Abū-Tammām) or a weak voice (as did Ahmad Shawqi, in modern times), a *munshid* recited his poetry. On *rāwī,* see R. Jacobi, "Rāwi," *EI*², VIII, 466–46.

[25] Whereas the Greeks perfected other forms of artistic expression such as drama, the Arabs had only poetry; hence the intensity of their interest in it and response to it as entertainment, and their need to provide an appropriate venue for its recitation.

[26] For Quss mounted on a camel, see al-Jāḥiz, *al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn,* ed. A. Hārūn (Cairo, 1961), I, 308–9. On the delivery of speeches by pre-Islamic Arab orators, who sometimes leaned on a bow, see 370.

in the fair of ʿUkāẓ, near Mecca, to judge the relative worth of poems presented to him.[27] The Prophet himself let Ḥassān, his poet laureate, recite poetry at the mosque in Medina,[28] sometimes from the pulpit. Whatever structures Byzantium had for artistic performances of poetry and music must have strongly influenced the Ghassānids. It is therefore necessary to sketch briefly the rise and development of the *ōdeion* in late antiquity, before its adoption by the Ghassānids.[29]

In fifth-century Athens, Pericles erected at the foot of the Acropolis the first *ōdeion,* a rectangular roofed structure for musical performances; and Herodes Atticus reprised the work of Pericles in the second century A.D. After being a separate structure in Athens, the *ōdeion* became part of a complex of two structures: the *theatron* proper and the *ōdeion,* distinguished from the *theatron* by being smaller and roofed.[30]

The Oriens of the Ghassānids contained a remarkable number of theaters, favored by the Rhomaic Arabs long before the Ghassānids; many were built in the Nabataean towns and cities, such as Petra and Bostra (the two capitals), and in Elusa in the Negev.[31] Before them, the great Herod, representing the Edomite Arabs,[32] filled his domain with Graeco-Roman structures—theaters among them. In the Byzantine world of late antiquity, there was a reaction against the theater and other pagan entertainments. Church Fathers and imperial legislation frowned on them[33]—especially on the mime, the bawdy farce to which the comedy of classical Greece had degenerated.

The Ghassānids were settled in a region in Oriens dotted with towns in which many theaters were to be seen,[34] some of which still presented mimes. The Maiumas festival was still being celebrated in Oriens in the fifth century.[35] The Ghassānids

[27] On Nābigha at ʿUkāẓ, see Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shiʿr wa al-Shuʿarā'*, ed. A. M. Shākir (Cairo, 1966), I, 167–68.

[28] On Ḥassān's recitation of his poetry in the Medina mosque, see Abū al-Faraj Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (Beirut, 1955), IV, 148.

[29] Theaters have received more attention than odeia in scholarship on this early Byzantine period; the *ODB* has no entry titled "odeum."

[30] On this history, see the long footnote in A. Segal, *Theatres in Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia* (Leiden, 1995), 85 note 187; see also 85 note 185.

[31] That *theatron* became *teiatra* in Nabataean also indicates how common the buildings were (ibid., 7).

[32] On the Arabness of the Edomites, see the present writer in *BAFIC,* 240–43, further treated in "The Ethnic Origin of the Edomites," a paper delivered at the Tenth International Conference on the History and Archaeology of Jordan, held in Washington, D.C., in May 2007 (forthcoming in *ADAJ*).

[33] See A. Karpozilos, "Theater," *ODB,* III, 2031.

[34] These included Bostra and Petra in the Provincia Arabia, Elusa in Palestina Tertia, and cities of the Decapolis close to the Ghassānids such as Pella, Skythopolis, and Gerasa; all are discussed in Segal, *Theatres in Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia*.

[35] For this festival, orgiastic and licentious in nature, see "Maiumas," in *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft,* ed. A. F. von Pauly and G. Wissowa (Stuttgart, 1930), XIV, cols. 610–12.

rejected the theater or whatever survived of its performance in the sixth century; as good Monophysites, they viewed the mime and the theater as un-Christian. But they embraced the *ōdeion* as a venue for poetry recitals, oratory, and music, consonant with their ethos and mores as Arabs. These contrary attitudes must have been reflected architecturally in the separation of the odeum—a venue for the performance of their favorite art, poetry—from the theater.[36]

The case for the existence of a Ghassānid odeum, or some structure that was used as an odeum, rests mostly on references in the verses of Ḥassān. These references in his *Dīwān* may first be set against the general background of entertainment venues in Ghassānland.

The tavern was a place where poetry could be heard, sung by the songstress, the *qayna,* to the accompaniment of a musical instrument, such as the *mizhar*. Another venue was offered by the three fairs held in Ghassānland, at Dayr Ayyūb, Aḏriʿāt, and Bostra; they, like the pan-Arab *sūq* of ʿUkāẓ near Mecca, featured cultural activities as well as commercial transactions.[37] The tavern and the fair, however, were frequented by the common people and thus must be distinguished from the royal Ghassānid *odeia;* for both types of location, Ḥassān is the principal source.

In one couplet, Ḥassān commends the union of song and poetry.[38] Song is the *miḍmār* of poetry, the venue where it should be recited, just as the *miḍmār* is the site where horses are trained and their strength is developed. More crucial evidence of an *ōdeion*/odeum in Ghassānland is a verse which says that after drinking wine in the tavern, he would then listen to song in *buyūt al-rukhām,* "marble mansions."[39]

[36] Although there are references to *ōdeia* as independent structures in Italy, Greece, and Cyrenaica, those in the cities surrounding the Ghassānids in the Provincia Arabia and in the Near East in general do not seem to have been separated from *theatra*. The Ghassānids either separated the two themselves or copied *ōdeia* that had already been detached, as more suitable on Christian doctrinal grounds. For the *ōdeion* in Italy, Greece, and Cyrenaica, see Segal, *Theatres in Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia,* 85 note 187, which also discusses the thirty theaters in the Provincia Arabia and Palestine that apparently contained an *ōdeion;* on the latter point, see also A. Retzleff, "Near Eastern Theaters in Late Antiquity," *Phoenix* 57 (2003), 115–38. For an *ōdeion* in Gerasa, see A. Retzleff and A. M. Mjely, "Seat Inscriptions in the Odeum at Gerasa," *Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research* 335 (2004), 37–47.

[37] On the fairs, see above, Part I, Chapter 4.

[38] Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 420. The second verse in the couplet suggests that setting verse to music and singing it is the true test of its quality, just as fire separates false from true silver.

[39] Ibid., 106, verse 10. Although Ḥassān specifically refers not to poetry but to song, the singing of poetry is implied in the verb *nughannā*. Ḥassān was a poet and he would have been interested in hearing poetry, especially his own, sung in these *ōdeia*. He had already expressed his view that poetry is best recited and heard when sung.

The description in *al-Aghānī* of the Ghassānid king in a relaxed mood watching dancers more likely referred to an occasion in an *ōdeion* rather than the palace (given the image of the Ghassānids as seriously devout Christians); see R. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (1907; reprint, London, 1969), 53, and Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī,* XVII, 105.

Ḥassān was the poet who most frequently visited the Ghassānids from the Arabian Peninsula, since he was also their kinsman. He moved between Jābiya in Oriens and Yathrib/Medina in Ḥijāz, living one year here and one year there.[40] His poems on the Ghassānids must have been recited in an appropriate venue while he was in Oriens, either the palace or the odeum; the latter would attract a large audience, especially since the poetry was accompanied by music. *Buyūt al-rukhām* must have been such a venue.

The phrase shows that these venues were monumental buildings in whose construction marble was used. The technical term for the structure (nowadays called *ṣālah*) in the Arabic of that period is not clear. The poet may have used the plural, "mansions," out of a metrical necessity; if so, the popular name of the building might have been the singular *Bayt al-Rukhām.* It is unusual to refer to a structure by the stone with which it was built rather than by its function; on the other hand, the name "Marble House" might have reflected the admiration of the structure by visitors or the Ghassānids themselves.

It was only natural that the Ghassānids should have had a structure especially designed for the recitation of poetry, speeches, and song; the Ghassānid kings were themselves connoisseurs of poetry and some of them composed it. The case of Arethas and ʿAlqama may now be recalled: the king insisted that he would hear the panegyric on his victory only when it was *chanted* by the poet.[41] It is impossible to believe that on such an occasion, the performance occurred anywhere but the most appropriate place, such as a poetry recital hall—an odeum.

Appendix I

On the Archaeology of the Limitrophe

Although this volume deals with culture and not archaeology, it is dependent on the previous volume, *BASIC* II.1, which offered archaeologists a road map for Ghassānid sites. This appendix presents some further observations on these sites.

1. The principal Arabic source that alerted scholars to the Ghassānids as lovers of building is the indispensable *Chronicles* of Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, treated in great detail in the preceding volume.[1] The most extensive account of Ghassānid sites, however, may be found in an article that lists about twenty in the vicinity of Damascus alone; and Philip Hitti, the distinguished historian of the Arabs and Islam, states that traces of no fewer than three hundred villages associated with the Ghassānids can be found in Auranitis.[2] The figures put forth by these two authors

[40] See Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī,* XI, 132.

[41] See note 22, above.

[1] See *BASIC* II.1, 306–41.

[2] M. Khuraysāt, "Dawr Ghassān fī al-Ḥayāt al-ʿĀmmah," in *Proceedings of the Third Symposium:*

are surely exaggerated, but they rest on a kernel of truth: the extensive urbanization performed by the Ghassānids in the limitrophe. But it is not always clear whether the site was an original Ghassānid foundation or one that was rebuilt or restored. Sometimes the Ghassānids' mere presence in a certain location such as Buṣra, where they might have built a structure, earns a mention. It is also possible that the reference may be to Ghassānids who settled in a particular place after the Muslim Conquest of Oriens. Without excavation and archaeological research, the status of many of these toponyms will necessarily remain undefined. They therefore should not be the first resort for archaeologists looking for Ghassānid sites.

2. Toponyms of a different kind are more reliable, coming as they do from sources that have been cleared by what I have called Nöldeke's Law for reconstructing pre-Islamic Arab history—that is, they are found in Greek, Latin, and Syriac texts and contemporary Arabic poetry. Toponyms from the last two sources are the most useful.

a. The string of toponyms included in the odes of the poets who visited the Ghassānid courts is invaluable. They referred to these toponyms from personal knowledge. Ḥassān and al-Nābigha, and to a lesser degree Ḥātim and Aʿshā, are the main poets.[3]

b. The list of 137 monasteries in the letter of the Monophysite archimandrites addressed to the Ghassānid king Arethas is an invaluable source on the ecclesiastical structures.[4] These monasteries should be the subject of a monograph, with map and commentary, to update Nöldeke's celebrated article on them, and the few Ghassānid monasteries included deserve a detailed and careful study. The value of such research is made clear by an investigation of one of the monasteries on this list, Maḥajja in western Trachonitis. The account of it in the *Geographical Dictionary of the Arab Syrian Republic,* published in 1992, confirms that Maḥajja was indeed a monastic site and thus suggests that exciting remains from the Byzantine period may be recovered there.[5]

Epigraphy, both Greek and Arabic, is a highly reliable source for identifying Ghassānid sites. The bilingual Ḥarrān inscription in Trachonitis pinpoints Ḥarran as a Ghassānid site, just as an inscription in Arabic does for Usays, later occupied and developed by the Umayyads.[6] This makes Trachonitis possibly an important

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The Fourth International Conference on the History of Bilād al-Shām during the Umayyad Period, ed. M. A. Bakhīt (Amman, 1989), 191–217; P. K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs,* 10th ed. (New York, 1970), 80–81.

[3] Ibid., 220–87.

[4] *BASIC* I.2, 824–38; *BASIC* II.1, 183–84.

[5] See *al-Muʿjam al-Jughrāfi li al-Quṭr alʿArabi al-Sūri,* ed. M. Ṭlas (Damascus, 1992), V, 167, which refers to the remains of temples, churches, palaces or mansions, cemeteries, cisterns, canals, pools, and wine presses.

[6] For Ḥarrān and Usays, see *BASIC* I.1, 325–31, 117–24.

sector of Ghassānland for sites associated with the martyrs of Najrān, the relatives of the Ghassānids; there the second Najrān, the namesake of the South Arabian original, was also located.[7]

3. The Umayyad period is also relevant to this quest for Ghassānid sites. It has been maintained earlier that the Umayyads took over the Ghassānid establishment of structures in the limitrophe. Thus a new approach to the examination of Umayyad sites is required, one that seeks a Ghassānid substrate in them. Finding those substrates will not be easy, since the affluent and powerful Umayyads, as the new masters of the region, sometimes developed them beyond recognition. Yet Ghassānid substrates have persisted in sites such as Ruṣāfa/Sergiopolis, Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbī, and Usays. And one Ghassānid city in its entirety, Jalliq, survived into Umayyad times and was much frequented by the Umayyad crown prince himself, Yazīd, son of Muʿāwiya.

4. A Ghassānid site has been recovered unexpectedly in the Madaba region in Trans-Jordan—namely, Nitil, where a church was first discovered by Alois Musil almost a century ago, and has been recently excavated by Fr. Michele Piccirillo. This is a most important find of a definitely Ghassānid church, in which some mosaics and the plan of the church have survived. That Nitil is not included in any of the lists of Ghassānid structures demonstrates that despite their detail, these lists are not exhaustive. So the limitrophe may have within it more sites that will surprise those who choose to excavate.

Appendix II

The Monasteries of the Ghassānids

This is a complex of three monasteries in the vicinity of Damascus, described in the *Geographical Dictionary of the Arab Syrian Republic*.[1] In 1994 I visited every Ghassānid site from the Euphrates to the Sinai Peninsula but missed these three monasteries, since the recently published volume was then unknown to me. In the previous volume, I described the complex as follows:

> Under the title Al-Ghassāni, the new *Geographical Dictionary of the Arab Syrian Republic* includes an entry in which three structures are described as monasteries and are attributed to the Ghassānids. They are 30 km east of al-Nashshābiyya, which is about 15 km east of Damascus. The three monasteries are 2 km apart. Of the northern one there remain traces of halls, rooms,

[7] For Najrān in Trachonitis, see the present writer in "Byzantium in South Arabia," *DOP* 33 (1979), 78–79. Apparently it was still flourishing around A.D. 1000 when Abū-Ḥāmid al-Antāki, an expatriate Syrian poet living in Egypt, expressed his longing for it in a poem quoted by Zaki Mubārak; see his *ʿAbqariyat al-Sharīf al-Raḍiyy* (Cairo, 1940), I, 111, verse 6.

[1] See *al-Muʿjam al-Jughrāfi li al-Quṭr al-ʿArabi al Sūri,* ed. M. Ṭlas (Damascus, 1992), IV, 438.

towers, and two cisterns. The middle monastery is square and consists of two stories; east of it are the remains of what must have been a storeroom, while to its west there is a cemetery. The southern monastery is not described, but a photograph of it is provided.[2]

It is clear from the description that the monasteries constituted a major Ghassānid monastic complex. The question arises as to whether it was constructed by either ʿAmr ibn Jafna or al-Ayham, Ghassānid kings to whom Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, the authority on Ghassānid structures, ascribes the building of six monasteries.[3] Only one of the six attributed to ʿAmr, Dayr Hunād, is near Damascus, like the three monasteries of the complex; but it is too close to Damascus, in its very Ghūta,[4] to match the description of their location. It is thus likely that these monasteries are not among those mentioned by Ḥamza, whose list is selective, not comprehensive.[5] The scholar who wrote the *Geographical Dictionary* entry clearly had at his disposal data that enabled him to attribute the complex to the Ghassānid king: he must have found the name Ghassānid (*Ghassāni*) engraved somewhere in one or more of its monasteries.

Apparently the Ghassānid builder or builders of the complex had left one or more inscriptions, much as Hind, the Lakhmid queen of Ḥīra, had engraved in her monastery an inscription that shed much light on Arab Christianity in Ḥīra.[6] The inscription or inscriptions referring to the founder as a Ghassānid might be in Greek or Arabic, as Ghassānids used both languages for their inscriptions.[7] If in Arabic, they would be especially valuable, since so few Arabic Ghassānid inscriptions have survived.

In view of the prospect of recovering new Ghassānid inscriptions, I visited the complex on 4 August 2001. Through the kindness of the Department of Antiquities in Damascus, one of its officers, Mr. Muḥammad Maṣri, accompanied me and my wife to the complex, which we found to be in ruins. Abū-Turki, the local guide who helped us find our way through the difficult terrain, told us that in the 1980s, the complex experienced some damage, and its furnishings and appointments were shipped away to an unknown destination. One can only hope that they have not been irretrievably lost.

[2] *BASIC* II.1, 195. My description was based on the entry in *al-Muʿjam* cited in the preceding note.

[3] Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *Tārīkh Sinī Mulūk al-Arḍ wa al-Anbiyāʾ*, ed. Y. Maskūni (Beirut, 1961), 99, 101; see *BASIC* II.1, 324–25, 332–33.

[4] See M. Kurd ʿAli, *Ghūṭat Dimashq* (1952; reprint, Damascus, 1984).

[5] See *BASIC* II.1, 320–21.

[6] See the present writer in "The Authenticity of Pre-Islamic Poetry: The Linguistic Dimension," *al-Abḥāth* 44 (1996), 11.

[7] See, for example, the Ḥarrān inscription, published in W. H. Waddington, *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie* (1870; reprint, Rome, 1968), 561, no. 2464; discussed in *BASIC* I.1, 325–31.

Appendix III

Al-Jawhara al-Nafīsa

Whether there was a strictly Monophysite style of art and architecture reflecting a theological position and a related liturgy is not clear. One treatise that deals with Coptic Christianity, including architectural features of Coptic churches, is *al-Jawhara al-Nafīsa*. The Copts were Monophysites, but this treatise may reflect only the Coptic version of Monophysitism and not speak for all Monophysites, including those in Byzantine Oriens, such as the Ghassānids. During the reign of Mundir, the influence of the Ghassānid Monophysites extended beyond Oriens into Egypt itself.[1]

The treatise, which discusses various ecclesiastical matters pertaining to the Coptic church in Egypt, was written by the thirteenth-century Coptic scholar Yūhannā ibn Zakariyya, better known as Ibn Sabbā'.[2] It has been translated into French by Jean Périer, with the title *La perle précieuse: Traitant des sciences ecclésiastiques,* and both the Arabic text and the French version were published in Patrologia Orientalis. Only the three relevant chapters will be cited here.

1. Chapter XXVII, "De la construction d'une église; de sa ressemblance avec le Tabernacle,"[3] has the following pertinent data.

a. The Holy Apostles recommended the erection of churches anywhere and everywhere for the worship of God, and enjoined certain specifications.

b. Churches should be oriented toward the east.

c. The side of the church oriented toward the east should be constructed in the course of twenty-one days of the Coptic month of Baouneh.

d. The dimensions of the church should be fixed: twenty-four cubits in length (matching the number of the prophets) and twelve cubits in width (matching the number of the apostles).

e. It should have three gates, reflecting the number of the Holy Trinity: one for men, one for women, and one for those who secretly bring votive offerings.

f. It should be domed, with two cupolas—an external one resembling the Tabernacle of Moses called the Holy, and an internal one called the Holy of Holies.

2. Chapter LV, "Des Lampes et des Oeufs d'autruche placés entre elles,"[4] has the following data.

[1] See *BASIC* I.2, 902–7.

[2] Ibn Sabbā', *La perle précieuse: Traitant des sciences ecclésiastiques (chapitres I–LVI),* ed. and trans. J. Périer, PO 16 (Paris, 1922), 591–760.

[3] Ibid., 658–60.

[4] Ibid., 753–54. It is interesting to note that the chapter on the various kinds of incense employed in the Monophysite Coptic church contains a prohibition against the use of amber/ambergris, on the grounds that it comes from the excrement of a savage sea animal (748). In contrast, the Nestorians in Dayr Hind in Ḥīra did use it; see ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-Abṣār,* ed. A. Zakī Pasha (Cairo, 1924), I, 323.

a. The terrestrial church should be most beautifully fashioned.

b. Its lamps or lanterns should be lit during mass, because the church is really a terrestrial heaven and the lamps are its stars.

c. The "lamps of the east" and the *iskana*[5] should be always lit, day and night.

d. They should be lit both to preclude the need to bring an alien fire within the church and to fulfill the injunction in the Torah that the Tabernacle contain lamps kept always lit.

e. These lamps should be lit by olive oil.

3. Chapter LVI, "Des images et de ceux qui y sont représentés,"[6] has the following data.

a. The church should have icons or images painted in colors and modeled after the martyrs and the saints.

b. The underlying rationale for including this art is the legendary exchange between Christ and Abgar, the king of Edessa, that resulted in Christ's sending the Edessan king a picture of himself.

c. Another reason is the icon of the Virgin Mary with her child that the evangelist Luke is believed to have painted; she told him before her Dormition and Assumption to paint her picture lest she should be forgotten, and the painting met with her approval.

d. Clean, new mats should also be laid over the floor of the church so that those who prostrate themselves in worship can avoid soiling their foreheads with dust.

[5] The *iskana* is explained by Périer as "la partie du temple séparée par le voile, σκηνή" (*La perle précieuse,* 750 note 1).

[6] Ibid., 755–56.

IV

The Monastery as a Cultural Center

The previous volume in this series has dealt with the problem of identifying the monasteries of the Ghassānids.[1] *Inter alia* it drew attention to the partiality of the Arabs in general to monasticism, showing their contribution to the rise of many monasteries in Oriens and beyond in the western part of Arabia.[2]

Of all the venues of cultural life in the Ghassānid city, the monastery was undoubtedly the most important.[3] By the sixth century, the monastery had emerged not only as a place for *imitatio Christi* but also as a cultural center, where the monks were engaged in intellectual and literary pursuits.

Early Centers of Learning

A very informative and detailed account by Arthur Vööbus of the function of the Syriac monasteries of Oriens as educational centers is especially relevant in this context.[4] It treats the golden age of Syriac literature, roughly the period of the Arab *foederati* in the three centuries before the rise of Islam, presenting Edessa as the spiritual capital of the Semitic *Oriens Christianus*. Vööbus discusses the monastery as a center that promoted the rise of the library, study groups, and the instruction of children and adults.[5] Its residents undertook such pursuits as transcribing and reproducing manuscripts; translating Greek thought, secular and ecclesiastical, into Syriac; and producing original creative literary works. There was also a

[1] For the list of these monasteries, see *BASIC* II.1, 183–95.

[2] Ibid., 164–71.

[3] On the monastery as the greatest monument of the Syrian countryside, see C. Foss, "Life in City and Country," in *The Oxford History of Byzantium,* ed. C. Mango (Oxford, 2002), 95.

[4] See A. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient,* vol. 2, *Early Monasticism in Mesopotamia and Syria,* CSCO Subsidia 17 (Louvain, 1960), 388–414.

[5] Learning flourished in this period at the schools of Edessa and Nisibis, the two great Semitic Christian centers of *Oriens Christianus*. For the school of Nisibis with its library, see A. Vööbus, *History of the School of Nisibis,* CSCO 266, Subsidia 26 (Louvain, 1965). For more recent treatments of the two centers, see J. W. Drijvers, "The School of Edessa: Greek Learning and Local Culture," and G. J. Reinink, "'Edessa grew dim and Nisibis shone forth': The School of Nisibis at the Transition of the Sixth–Seventh Century," both in *Centres of Learning,* ed. J. W. Drijvers and A. A. MacDonald (Leiden, 1995), 49–62, 77–90.

"missionary" side to the activity of monasteries, as they propagated their work in other monasteries in Armenia and Syria, stimulating them to do likewise.[6] The great figure in this golden period of Syriac literature was the fourth-century Ephrem in Edessa, whose work was translated into Greek and whose metrical compositions, the *madrāshē,* influenced hymnography through Romanus the Melode when the latter composed his *kontakia*.

The Arab monasteries of Ghassānid Oriens surely could not have escaped the influence of the School of Edessa. The Ghassānid monks were even closer to Ephrem and Syriac Christianity than were the Armenians. Their archphylarchs and kings, such as Arethas, were active in the Syriac Monophysite church, and he remained a close friend of, and co-worker with, the chief Syriac hierarch of that church, Jacob Baradaeus, for some thirty years. These years witnessed the Arab Monophysite renaissance under the joint leadership of the archphylarch Arethas and the archhierarch Theodore. Although the extant sources are scanty and uninformative on cultural achievements in the Ghassānid monasteries, they surely resembled those of the Syriac monasteries, on which the sources are more informative.[7]

Against this background of the educational function of the Syriac monasteries in Oriens, that of the Ghassānid may now be set. This educational function must have been considerable, as an examination of the Arab monasteries of this pre-Islamic period—especially in the eastern part of the Fertile Crescent, in Ḥīra, and in Lakhmid territory—will make clear. Its importance is reflected in the number of monasteries that survived well into Islamic times and in the many volumes written on them, of which only *Kitāb al-Diyārāt* of al-Shabūshti is still extant.[8]

More illuminating about intellectual life in these monasteries is information provided by Hishām on those of Ḥīra. In addition to authoring a monograph on its monasteries, *Kitāb al-Diyārāt,* Hishām made clear that the monasteries were the repositories of books, documents, and inscriptions on the history of Ḥīra and the pre-Islamic Arabs, on the basis of which he was able to reconstruct that history.[9] In

[6] On the impact of the Syriac monastery in Armenia and, more pertinently to the Ghassānids in Syria, see Vööbus, *Early Monasticism*, 393, 425. The mission of Syriac monasticism in Armenia (353–59) may offer insight into activities in Arab monasteries in Ghassānid Oriens. Vööbus refers to translations made by Armenian monks of Syriac literature into Armenian, and likewise monks in the Ghassānid monasteries must have translated texts into Arabic, heightening the Syriac influence on the last stage of the development of the Arabic script in pre-Islamic times (discussed in Chapter 5, below).

[7] One of the pursuits in these Syriac monasteries was the writing of histories of saints and their own founders (ibid., 401). Ghassānid monks probably wrote histories of the Najrān martyrs, especially Saints Arethas and Ruhm; the founders of the monasteries included Ghassānid kings.

[8] See al-Shābushti, *Kitāb al-Diyārāt,* ed. G. ʿAwwād (Baghdad, 1966). The other book on monasteries, Iṣfahānī's *Kitāb al-Diyārāt,* ed. J. al-ʿAtiyya (London, 1991), has been reconstructed from extant fragments.

[9] On Hishām and the *kutub/asfār* of Ḥīra, see *BAFOC,* 349–66, especially 355–57. Some relevant

turn, the distinguished German scholar Theodor Nöldeke used Hishām to work out the history of the Sasanids and of Lakhmid-Sasanid relations.[10]

Because the later Muslim historians Ṭabarī and Balāḏurī were primarily interested in the Lakhmids, owing to their Persian connection, they wrote next to nothing on the monasteries of Ghassānid Oriens. The Muslim historian al-Ḏahabī (d. 1348) enumerated in his monumental *Tārīkh al-Islam* (*The History of Islam*) what he called "the genres of history," *funūn al-tārīkh*. One of the forty-nine genres was *tārīkh al-ruhbān wa uli al-ṣawāmiʿ*, "the history of monks and those of the monasteries."[11] This history no doubt included valuable information on monks and their activities. It is noteworthy that the Muslim historian was interested not in the churches and their priests but in monasteries and in monks, a sure sign that it was the *dayr,* the monastery, that was the cultural center of Christianity.

Despite the lack of resources for reconstructing the cultural life of the Ghassānid monastery in Oriens, it is possible to reach some significant conclusions based on the following observations.

The Ghassānids were the rivals of the Lakhmids, and each tried to outdo the other in various areas. One of these areas of healthy competition was the cultural work of the monks, which in the monasteries of Ḥīra resulted in *kutub* and *asfār* (books and tomes);[12] the natural presumption is that the same result obtained in the monasteries of the Lakhmids' rivals—the Ghassānids.

This presumption is especially strong in view of the fact that the Ghassānids, unlike most of the Lakhmids,[13] were enthusiastic Christians who sponsored monastic institutions. One would therefore expect their monks to engage in the same intellectual pursuits with at least as much intensity.

Around A.D. 540 a special bishop, Theodore, was consecrated as the bishop of the resuscitated Monophysite Ghassānid church, a role he performed for at least thirty years. Before his elevation to the episcopate he had been a monk, and one might reasonably speculate that he was responsible for founding many or most of

material is also provided in F. Rosenthal, "On the Semitic Root S/Š –P.R and Arabic *Safar,* 'Travel,'" *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 24 (2000), 4–21, especially 7–9, 13–14.

[10] See the copious notes and appendices in T. Nöldeke, trans., *Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden* (1879; reprint, Graz, 1973). Ṭabarī's work is now available with an English translation and copious annotation by C. E. Bosworth; see *The History of Tabari,* vol. 1, *The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids, and Yemen* (Albany, 1999).

[11] On al-Ḏahabī and his work, see *BASIC* II.1, 158–59.

[12] For the *kutub* and *asfār* of the Hīra monasteries, see note 9, above; on *sifr* (singular of *asfār*), see Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab* (Beirut, 1979), III, 295, and *An Arabic-English Lexicon,* ed. E. W. Lane (London, 1972), Part I, book 4, 1971.

[13] Christianity penetrated the Lakhmid royal house in the second half of the sixth century. Hind, the wife of the famous Munḏir (son of Nuʿmān), was a devout Christian; her son, King ʿAmr, was according to her inscription also Christian (Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-Buldan* [Beirut, 1956], II, 542) and so was the last Lakhmid, al-Nuʿmān.

the 137 monasteries whose archimandrites wrote a letter to the Ghassānid king Arethas in 569.[14]

After the reestablishment of Monophysitism around A.D. 540, that church experienced a feverish burst of cultural rebuilding, manifested both concretely, in the monasteries that sprang up in the Provincia Arabia, and theologically, in serious discussions and often controversies, culminating in the Tritheistic heresy of Eugenius and Conon.[15] In these controversies, the Ghassānid phylarch played a major role, and his own troops were also involved.[16] It is natural to suppose that the monks of these newly restored monasteries were highly involved in these theological disputes and related matters. They would have reflected upon them, discussed them in the quiet of their monasteries, and written about them.

As has been maintained in all the *BASIC* volumes, the Ghassānids were strongly aware of their Arab identity; they were responsible for Arabizing the limitrophe in Oriens. In this identification, their attachment to the Arabic language was the dominant factor. And in Ghassānid monasteries, with their Arab monks, Arabic was used in whatever pursuits, literary and theological, they undertook. So the discussion of the cultural life of the Ghassānid monastery, based on the observations just made, will focus on the following elements (explored in Chapter 5): (1) The employment of the Arabic language in discussions of the theological questions that rocked the Monophysite church and involved the royal house of the Ghassānids and its troops, and the engagement of Arab monks in literary pursuits such as translation work, like that of their Aramaic brethren, who were translating so actively from Greek into Syriac in this period. (2) The impetus that the monks gave to the development of the Arabic script, now in its final stages of emancipation from the old Nabataean script; it was influenced by Syriac, from which the Arab monks must have made some translations.

Religious Studies and Pursuits

Previous volumes of this series have identified the strictly Arab Ghassānid monasteries. One of them was actually called "the Monastery of the Ghassānids,"[17] and the natural presumption is that its inhabitants were Arabs who took the monastic garb. Some Ghassānid soldiers, after their victory in the battle of Chalcis in A.D. 554, chose to stay with St. Symeon in the religious life, believing that he had come to their rescue during the battle.[18]

The pursuits of these Arab monks at the Monastery of the Ghassānids and

[14] On Theodore, see *BASIC* I.2, 755, 771, 778; *BASIC* II.1, 176–83.
[15] See *BASIC* I.2, 805–38.
[16] Ibid., 818.
[17] See *BASIC* II.1, 183; on Ghassānid monasteries, more generally, see 183–94.
[18] See *BASIC* I.1, 247; *BASIC* I.2, 778–79.

other Ghassānid monasteries are not stated explicitly in any of the sources, but a number of activities seem plausible.

The resuscitation of their church by their own king, Arethas, and the controversies that raged in the next thirty years or so between them and the Chalcedonians, as well as within the Monophysite church itself,[19] must have been major concerns of these Arab monks. Surely the new Arab Monophysite church needed a liturgy for conducting its service, reflecting the new situation in which the church found itself. The monasteries would have prepared one for the Arab worshippers.

Portions of the Bible must have been included in the liturgy, and thus, as previous volumes maintained, the Gospel and the Psalms must already have been available in Arabic.[20] But it is not impossible that a new translation of these books of the Bible was undertaken during this renaissance of the Monophysite church.[21] That the Ghassānids had an Arabic version of the Gospel is confirmed by the *Dīwān* of al-Nābigha. In a celebrated ode he refers to their *majallat* (scroll),[22] which medieval commentators rightly understood to be the *injīl,* the Gospel. Whether this was an old Arabic version available to the Ghassānids or a new one created after A.D. 540 by an industrious monk is not clear.[23]

Literary and intellectual activities must have been pursued in the Ghassānid monastery, especially during the supremacy of a highly literate dynasty under the long secular and ecclesiastical leadership of Arethas and Theodore. This was the period when Greek thought was conveyed to the Semitic world through its translation into Syriac, the culturally dominant language among the Semitic peoples. Whatever translations the Arab monks in Ghassānid monasteries might have undertaken, they were done from Syriac, the lingua franca of *Oriens Christianus,* a matter of considerable importance in determining what was translated; but as none of these texts has survived, the translations are now more important for their influence on the development of the Arabic script and for what can be deduced about the route that its development took.

The Arab monks undoubtedly were aware of the intense theological controversies convulsing the church. As noted above, the Ghassānid phylarch was

[19] See *BASIC* I.2, 925–35.

[20] See *BAFOC,* 435–43; *BAFIC,* 422–29.

[21] Translations of the Bible have been frequently undertaken. The translation of the Gospel from Syriac into Arabic in the early Umayyad period was done at the special request of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, who wanted a new version that was free from what Islam did not accept about Christ; for the encounter between ʿAmr and the Syriac Patriarch John I, see F. Nau, "Un colloque du Patriarche Jean avec l'émir des Agaréens," *Journal Asiatique,* ser. 11, 5 (1915), 257–79.

[22] See *Dīwān al-Nābigha al-Ḏubyānī,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1977), 47, verse 24.

[23] The question of whether an Arabic version of the Bible in its entirety existed in this pre-Islamic period is still *sub judice.* I shall attend to it in a future monograph, treating this verse in al-Nābigha—particularly the tantalizing phrase *dhāt al-ilāh* (literally, "of God," "divine")—in great detail.

involved in these; indeed, at the conference on the Tritheistic movement in Constantinople in 569, Arethas presided and used theological language.[24] The Ghassānid king knew Syriac and Greek since he had to deal with the central government in Constantinople and with the hierarchs of Monophysitism who were Syriac-speaking. It seems likely that the Arab monks of the Ghassānid monasteries were engaged in writing on the theological controversies for the benefit both of the royal house and of the rank and file of the Ghassānid army. In addition, the same verse of al-Nābigha that provides evidence of an Arabic Ghassānid Gospel, as already discussed, suggests even more strongly the existence of theological Arabic. The poet describes their religion, *dīn,* as *qawīm,* "straight,"[25] clearly a technical term reflecting the theological self-image of the Ghassānids. Nöldeke was the first to note that the use of *qawīm* in this verse was not a literary locution but an Arabic substitute for a technical theological Greek term, ὀρθός. So, in his Latin annotation of al-Nābigha's ode, he translated the poet's statement on their *dīn* as *qawīm: Religio eorum est* ὀρθόδοξος.[26] Surely this was the term used by the Monophysite Ghassānids themselves to describe their "straight" orthodox faith, and the chances are good that it was coined by monks of one of the libraries of the Ghassānid monasteries.

The existence of an Arabic Ghassānid Gospel and some Arabic theological texts has been predicated on the basis of two lexemes in contemporary Arabic poetry, *majallat* and *qawīm,* but the evidence provided by al-Nābigha's verse gains weight when set against the historical background of *foederati* whose ordinary soldiers as well as rulers were enthusiastic Christians. The existence of both is much easier to prove in the areas of Ḥīra and Najrān, for which sources are available, but in a chapter that aims at assessing the *Ghassānid* cultural contribution, the support from al-Nābigha is crucial.

[24] Arethas spoke of *Trinitas Deorum;* see *Documenta ad Origines Monophysitarum Illustrandas,* ed. J. B. Chabot, CSCO, Scriptores Syri, ser. 2, vol. 37 (Louvain, 1933), 137. In an earlier conference held in Constantinople, he also used the theological term *quaternitas* in his dialogue with Ephraim; see *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche jacobite d'Antioche (1166–1199),* ed. and trans. J. B. Chabot (Paris, 1899), II, 246–47, discussed in *BASIC* I.2, 748–50.

[25] See al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 47, verse 24.

[26] *Delectus Veterum Carminarum Arabicarum,* ed. T. Nöldeke (1890; reprint, Wiesbaden, 1961), 96 note 22.

V

The Arabic Script

The Arabic script is one of the major writing systems of the world, now sacred to more than a billion inhabitants of this globe—the Muslims. It became the Islamic art par excellence since Islam, like Judaism, rejects representational art; and so to a great extent the artistic talents of Islam's adherents were channeled into perfecting it as a major art form, with the result that it is considered one of the most beautiful forms of writing in existence.[1] The roots of this script, however, go back to pre-Islamic times. This chapter examines the role of the Ghassānids in its development, and explores the possibility that its calligraphic expression, too, may be rooted in pre-Islamic times and reflect Ghassānid involvement.

The Development of the Naskhi Style

It is generally recognized that the main center of the development of Arabic script was Ḥīra, in Lakhmid territory; the style there derived from a Syriac parent script, the Estrangela, which gave Arabic its Satranjīli, later known as Kūfic.[2] The western part of the Fertile Crescent also shared in this development of the Arabic script. In fact the *extant* Arabic inscriptions of pre-Islamic times were found not in the eastern part of the Fertile Crescent but in Oriens.[3] The earliest and the most important Arabic inscription of pre-Islamic times, the Namāra inscription of A.D. 328, written in the Nabataean script, belonged to Oriens.[4] Inscriptions from the sixth century are written in a different style, in an Arabic script now differentiated from the Nabataean.[5]

[1] See S. Ory, "Calligraphy," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān,* ed. J. D. McAuliffe (Leiden, 2001), I, 278–85.

[2] On the development of the Arabic script, see A. Grohmann, *Arabische Paläographie* (Vienna, 1971), II, 7–33; J. Sourdel-Thomine, "Khaṭṭ," *EI*[2], IV, 1113–22; and B. Gründler, "Arabic Script," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān,* I, 135–44.

[3] See Grohmann, *Arabische Paläographie,* II, 16–17.

[4] This inscription, the epitaph of Imruʾ al-Qays, is discussed in *BAFOC,* 31–61, and a facsimile of it is that volume's frontispiece. See also *BALA* I, 1–68.

[5] These are the Zabad, Usays, and Ḥarrān inscriptions; see *BASIC* I.1, 117–24, 325–31.

Although no inscriptions have so far been discovered for the fifth century, it was obviously a period of development for the Arabic script. These changes occurred during the supremacy of the Salīḥids, the *foederati* of the fifth century.[6] The distinguished Austrian papyrologist and epigrapher Adolf Grohmann has suggested that the style of the Arabic script, later called *Naskhi,* was developed in the western part of the Fertile Crescent.[7] The volume on the Salīḥids, taking up Grohmann's fruitful suggestions, explained the role of these *foederati* in bridging the gap between the Namāra inscription of the fourth century and the newly developed Arabic of the sixth-century inscriptions, while these present volumes on the Ghassānids of the sixth century have prepared the way for understanding the final federate development of this script.

The two most important surviving sixth-century inscriptions are Ghassānid. One is secular: the Usays inscription of 529, written by Ibn al-Mughīra, a military commander detailed by the Ghassānid king Arethas to take charge of a fort. The other is contextually ecclesiastical, though written by a Ghassānid phylarch; it was carved in a church dedicated to St. John in Ḥarrān in Trachonitis.[8] The two inscriptions evidence the involvement of the Ghassānids in the development of this Arabic script, involvement that is explained by two main factors. First, sixth-century Oriens contained energetic kings and bishops who were aware of their Arab identity; especially influential were Arethas and Theodore, who controlled federate Oriens between 540 and 570. Even more relevant to the development of the script is the spread of monasticism and the proliferation of monasteries in the Oriens of the Ghassānids. The same monks who were actively producing texts must have been chiefly responsible for the final development in pre-Islamic Arabic script, the style that later came to be called the *Naskhi*.

These monks in Ghassānid monasteries who were involved in the study of ecclesiastical literature and in translation possessed texts written in Syriac, the prestigious lingua franca of Semitic *Oriens Christianus*. It is natural to suppose that when these Arab monks expressed themselves in Arabic, they were influenced by the much more developed Syriac script—the script of the Peshitta, of St. Ephrem's oeuvre, and of other Syriac texts. The likelihood of this influence strengthens the argument that this style of the Arabic script developed in Oriens not from Nabataean but from the Syriac version of Aramaic.[9]

[6] See *BAFIC,* 415–19.

[7] For the views of Grohmann, see *Arabische Paläographie,* II, 28–30.

[8] For the two inscriptions, see *BASIC* I.1, 117–24, 325–31.

[9] Its development recalls the similar development of the other style, the Satranjīli in Ḥīra, the Estrangela, which, according to one etymology, now the regnant, is related to *Injīl,* the Gospel, and not to the στρογγύλη proposed by Assemani, and followed by some other scholars. This conclusion supports members of the French school, who have argued for the derivation of the Arabic script not from

The Development of Calligraphy

Arabic calligraphy is associated with Islam, and there is no doubt that it flowered and was perfected in the Islamic period, when Muslims were eager to make highly visible the word of God.[10] Yet its roots may be traced to pre-Islamic times. In that period, too, religion was crucial to the development of calligraphy: Christianity stimulated and inspired efforts to make the Arabic script not only functional but also attractive, to glorify the word of God. This section explores the possibility that Arabic calligraphy had its roots among the Ghassānid *foederati*.

Just as the term *qawīm* in the *Dīwān* of al-Nābigha (discussed in Chapter 4) indicates the rise of a theological literature, so another surviving term suggests that the pre-Islamic period witnessed the beginning of Arabic calligraphy. In the southern sacristy of the church of St. George on Mount Nebo in the Madaba region is a mosaic, datable to A.D. 536 (see frontispiece). It contains the name of the benefactor in Greek, Σαώλα, and to its left is a Semitic phrase that has been correctly read as *bi-salām,* "in peace" or "with peace."[11] This phrase has often been discussed, as scholars have sought to identify its language and the variety of its script.[12] Although the phrase stands alone, it has great significance and deserves a thorough treatment, since it represents the first attested appearance of the Arabic script in its *calligraphic* expression; other examples that no doubt existed have been lost, along with almost all Christian Arab monuments.

Supporting the Arabic character of the term is the ethnography of central Trans-Jordan and the Madaba region.[13]

Nabataean but from Syriac; see, e.g., F. Briquel-Chatonnet, "De l'araméen à l'arabe: Quelques réflexions sur la genèse de l'écriture arabe," in *Scribes et manuscrits du Moyen-Orient,* ed. F. Déroche and F. Richard (Paris, 1997), 136–49; cf. Gründler, "Arabic Script."

[10] For Islamic calligraphy, see A. Schimmel, *Calligraphy and Islamic Culture* (New York, 1984), with its bibliography on Islamic calligraphy (161 note 5), and S. S. Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy* (Edinburgh, 2006).

[11] For the mosaic and its inscription, see S. J. Saller and B. Bagatti, *The Town of Nebo (Khirbet el-Mekhayyat) with a Brief Survey of Other Ancient Christian Monuments in Transjordan,* Publications of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum 7 (Jerusalem, 1949), 171. The authors rightly understood that Σαώλα is a proper name in the vocative but did not see that the name is Saul (the original name of the apostle Paul).

[12] For the phrase as Arabic, see E. A. Knauf, "Bemerkungen zur frühen Geschichte der arabischen Orthographie," *Orientalia* 53 (1984), 456–58. Moreover, the crucial (second) consonant in the phrase is not a *shīn,* which appears in varieties of Aramaic, but a *sīn,* as appropriate for Arabic. Paleographic oddities such as *lam aliph,* which looks like the two sides of an isosceles triangle, is explicable by the medium: the phrase *bi-salām* is not written with a pen on some writing material but appears in a mosaic composed of various hard cubes. The mosaicist may also have taken liberties in expressing the *lam aliph,* perhaps wishing to emphasize symmetry.

The leading Arabist/Semiticist of the twentieth century, on whom the mantle of Nöldeke fell, the late Professor Franz Rosenthal, gave his support to these arguments for the Arabness of the phrase in a personal letter to the author, dated 6 March 1987.

[13] On the Arabness of the region, see *BAFIC,* 322–24.

1. Its inhabitants were the Arabs of Nabataea before Nabataea was annexed by Trajan in A.D. 106.

2. The Greek and Roman elements in Trans-Jordan were to be found mostly in the various cities of the Decapolis, *not* in Madaba (and thus not in Mount Nebo).

3. The Arabness of this particular Madaba region is vouched for as early as the second century B.C.: I Maccabees calls its inhabitants the Bani Jambri (ʿAmr).[14]

4. The Madaba region had formed part of the phylarchate of the Salīḥids, the Arab *foederati* in the fifth century. This was now territory of the Ghassānids, whose headquarters were in the Provincia Arabia, which included the Madaba region.

5. That this is not an argument from the general to the particular is made plain by an examination of the mosaics of Madaba. Their many inscriptions have preserved the names of donors and patrons of these works of art, and they clearly reflect a Rhomaic Christian *Arab* society; though it adopted biblical and Graeco-Roman names of saints, many of the names have retained their indubitably Arab character.[15]

As an expression of Arabic calligraphy, *bi-salām* sheds new light on Arabic calligraphy in the Islamic period and suggests its pre-Islamic roots. Two of the questions raised by this inscription are the incipience of pre-Islamic Arabic calligraphy and the role of the Ghassānids, if any, in it.

1. The Rhomaic Christianized Arabs and the *foederati* were living in a region that witnessed an explosion of Christian art in the sixth century, and this progression from functional script to decorative calligraphy was a natural manifestation of a general artistic vibrancy, especially as both Syriac and Greek scripts were developing calligraphically to express God's word.[16]

2. The area in which *bi-salām* was found had been part of the Nabataean kingdom, annexed in A.D. 106 by the Romans, when Nabataea became Arabia Provincia. In the sixth century, the Ghassānids established a strong presence in

[14] For "the sons of Jambri," see I Maccabees 9:35–42 in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible,* ed. B. Metzger and R. Murphy (New York, 1991), 208 AP. For "the sons of Jambri" as an Arab Nabataean group, see ibid., note to 9:35.

[15] For one of these Arab mosaicists, "the son of Zayd/Zada," see *BAFIC,* 323 and note 9. Fr. Michele Piccirillo sent me the MS of a short article, titled "Jordan Mosaicists," which identifies at least four in this period who are recognizably Arab: Soel, Naum, Obed, and Salaman.

Arab benefactors of churches are clearly evidenced by such names as Ouadia, Baricha, Soleos, and Robab in one of the churches of this region; in an inscription in the same church appear Arab names such as Soleos, Casiseos, Abdalaos, and Obedos. See M. Piccirillo and I. Alliata, *Umm al-Rasās, Mayfaʿah I: Gli scavi del complesso di Santo Stefano* (Jerusalem, 1994), 243, 259.

[16] Syriac calligraphy is more important than Greek for the Arab monks of Ghassānid monasteries, who had before them mostly Syriac texts when they were engaged in translation into Arabic. That the names of *twenty* Syriac calligraphers of the fifth to seventh centuries are known suggests that the supply of those texts was relatively plentiful; for their names, see I. Barṣoum, *al-Luʾluʾ al-Manthūr* (Aleppo, 1987), 485.

the region and became a new Arab demographic layer. So who is responsible for *bi-salām,* the Nabataean Arabs or the Ghassānid *foederati?*

a. After the Edict of Caracalla in A.D. 212, the Nabataean Arabs became *Rhomaioi* and were thoroughly assimilated into Graeco-Roman civilization.[17] The language in which they wrote was Aramaic/Syriac, not Arabic, which they kept using in their daily life; Arabic appeared only fitfully in their inscriptions, which were written in Aramaic.[18] Hence they would have had little interest in developing the Arabic script from the functional to the decorative. But it could have been a concern of the *foederati,* who were strongly aware of their Arab identity and relied on Arabic for their literary language as well as some of their inscriptions. As noted above, it was Ghassānid monks who were engaged in pursuits that could have led to this development in the script. These monks were conversant with Syriac and probably with Greek, and familiar with illuminated manuscripts of Gospels and Psalters calligraphically written. These might have inspired them to write the new Arabic script in a new artistic idiom; in so doing, they might have converted the Arabic script from the functional to the artistic, the calligraphic, as an act of piety. It is relevant to recall in this context that *bi-salām* appears in an ecclesiastical venue, the church of St. George on Mount Nebo. The artistic presence of the Ghassānids in this very region of Madaba is now established, following the excavation of the sixth-century Ghassānid church at Nitil. Enough of its mosaics have survived to suggest that the Ghassānids were building in the style of Byzantine church architecture in Oriens in the sixth century.

b. How did Ghassānid calligraphy reach the church of Mount Nebo, which though in the Provincia Arabia, the headquarters of the Ghassānids, was outside their phylarchal and federate presence? It was built or endowed by some inhabitants of the *provincia*—the Nabataean Romaic Arabs. There is no great difficulty in understanding this process of cultural transference from the *foederati* to the *Rhomaioi*. Both were Arabs, and their affinity was an important fact in the life of the Ghassānids. It ensured that in Oriens federate-Rhomaic relations were friendly, unlike federate-Roman relations in the Occident, where tensions existed between the Germanic federate newcomers and the established peoples of the Roman Occident, Roman and other. The Ghassānids meshed smoothly with Nabataean

[17] As an example of their thorough assimilation, three Nabataean Arabs may be mentioned. They assumed Greek names, became sophists, and lived in Athens. For Heliodorus, Callinicus, and Genethlios, see *RA,* xxii note 9.

[18] Aramaic/Syriac was the language of the Nabataean Rhomaioi in their inscriptions and communications. Arabic remained, of course, the language they used in their daily life and in dealing with their congeners, who would visit from the Arabian Peninsula. P. K. Hitti described them well: "Arabic in speech, Aramaic in writing, Semitic in religion" (*History of Syria, Including Lebanon and Palestine* [London, 1951], 383–84); Greek can be added to his list.

society, as is well documented by the Petra Papyrus, which describes the Ghassānid phylarch of Palaestina Tertia, Abū Karib, brother of Arethas, as the arbiter chosen to settle a dispute in Sadaqa.[19]

It is therefore quite possible that the achievement of the Ghassānid monks became known to their congeners, the Nabataean Arabs. In this case of the church of St. George, the benefactor who endowed the church and had *bi-salām* engraved calligraphically in the sacristy of the church must have been a Nabataean Arab, who conversed in Arabic frequently; perhaps nostalgia for his native tongue explains his desire that the salutation addressed to him be expressed in Arabic, much as his Nabataean forebears were accustomed to insert Arabic words and phrases in their non-Arabic inscriptions. Perhaps even the Arabicization of the limitrophe by the Ghassānids, and its becoming a venue for the recitation of Arabic poetry, may have revived in the Nabataean *Rhomaioi* their love for their native language and caused one of them, Saola, to have an Arabic phrase engraved in the church that he endowed.

* * *

Bi-salām concludes the series of three Arabic *hapax legomena,* following *majallat* (scroll) and *qawīm* (straight). The first two were culled from contemporary poetry composed on the Ghassānids and the third from contemporary epigraphy; all illustrate Nöldeke's Law for the scientific reconstruction of the history of the Arabs before the rise of Islam. The first suggested the existence of an Arabic Gospel of the Ghassānids, the second indicated that some Arabic theological works were composed in the libraries of their monasteries, and the third revealed the beginning of Arabic calligraphy among the Arabs of sixth-century Oriens, *Rhomaioi* as well as *foederati*.

These three terms, in splendid isolation, could not by themselves have yielded the conclusions on the contributions of Ghassānid culture just enumerated. But when set against the background of the rise of monasticism in Ghassānland, the number of Ghassānid monasteries, and their vibrant, activist Christianity, the three terms become evidence for the reality of these three facets of Ghassānid culture, a chapter in Arab cultural history that, far too long, has remained unknown.

[19] See above, Part II, Chapter 1, note 2.

VI

Chivalry: The Birth of an Ideal

Chivalry was hardly a household word in ancient Greece and Rome, but it was a vital part of culture in Europe, in the Middle Ages. Its original provenance has been a matter of dispute. It certainly appeared in Arabia in pre-Islamic times, especially in the sixth century; some have maintained that the European version of it can be traced to the Arabs in Spain, a view contested by others.[1] The relation of Arab chivalry to the Europeans is not the concern of this volume, but its relation to the Ghassānids is.

The components of chivalry were present in pre-Islamic Arabia before its mature appearance in the sixth century. Its base was Arabic *murūʾa* in its various dimensions, which included bravery in war, hospitality, respect for women and for honor, and protection of the weak and the orphan.[2] When the Arab warrior, who was possessed of all those qualities of *murūʾa,* mounted the horse after its advent in Arabia, chivalry was born. As the rider became a *fāris,* a "knight" as the term was understood later in Europe,[3] the horse became an essential component in chivalry, to which it gave its name in Arabic, *furūsiyya,*[4] as it did in French (*chevalerie*), Spanish (*caballería*), Italian (*cavalleria*), and German (*Rittertum*). This horse that made chivalry possible was not so well known outside pre-Islamic Arabia; it was the Muslim Conquests of the seventh century that made the Arabian famous, after it was enlisted in the service of Islam.[5]

Arabia knew many of these pre-Islamic *fursān,* "knights," by name, but the lord of them all was ʿAntara—called "ʿAntara of the *fawāris*," the "knights"—who not only embodied in his person all the components of chivalry but also became a

[1] See W. B. Ghali, *La tradition chevaleresque des Arabes* (Paris, 1919).

[2] For a complete enumeration of these dimensions, see B. Lewis, C. Pellat, and J. Schacht, "Fāris," *EI*², II, 800.

[3] Pre-Islamic Arabia never had orders of chivalry comparable to the Knights Hospitallers or the Knights Templars, however. The *futuwwa* of later Islamic times, as organized by the caliph al-Nāṣir (1181–1223), may be considered the nearest approximation to those European orders; see C. Cahen, "Futuwwa," *EI*², II, 961–65, especially 964.

[4] On Arab *furūsiyya,* see N. H. al-Qaysi, *al-Furūsiyya fi al-Shiʿr al-Jāhili* (Baghdad, 1964).

[5] And it was hallowed in the Koran; see sura 100.

distinguished poet.[6] His odes, in which his chivalry is displayed, address both his lady love, ʿAbla, and his horse; he engages the latter in something like a dialogue, elevating it to the status of a human being.[7] ʿAntara became the paragon of Arab chivalry in the sixth century.

The Ghassānids were Arabs who hailed from the Peninsula in which chivalry had been born. As Arabs they were possessed of the various components of chivalry, but in the sixth century they imparted to it something new: namely, a militant spirit of Christianity. Some two centuries earlier, Constantine had militarized the image of Christ by adding the Christogram to his labarum (imperial standard) and having the cross painted on the shields of his legionaries. The Byzantine army had chaplains, and there was a liturgy of war. The Ghassānids were soldiers in the service of Byzantium. Although Christianity affected all aspects of their life, it did so in a very special way in their wars, particularly those waged against the Persians and their inveterate enemies, the Lakhmids. The Ghassānid wars against these pagans were a veritable *militia Christi,* fought by *milites Christi*. This Christian dimension to their wars is reflected not only in their participation in the campaigns of the Byzantine imperial army, during which religious services were regularly held, but also in the special way in which they would invoke Christ and Job in combat.[8] This dimension was perceived by the Syriac Christian sources, which recorded the victory of the Ghassānids with the words *crux vicit*. Thus Ghassānid chivalry developed in the sixth century and was spiritualized by Christianity, a process that brought it close to the Christian version of chivalry in medieval Europe.

Of all the military encounters of the Ghassānids, the famous battle of Chalcis in A.D. 554, their greatest victory against the Lakhmids, represents Ghassānid chivalry at its best. It had the warrior Arethas, a *miles Christi;* his horse, al-Jawn; his two swords, Mikhdam and Rasūb; and above all the romantic figure of the princess Ḥalīma, whose hand was won by the warrior who acquitted himself well in fighting for the Ghassānid cause.[9]

The Ghassānids' commitment to Christian chivalry, as one of the ideals that

[6] For ʿAntara, see "The Black Knight," translated in J. A. Arberry, *The Seven Odes: The First Chapter in Arabic Literature* (London and New York, 1957), 148–78, and C. Dover, "The Black Knight," *Phylon* 15 (1954), 41–57, 177–93. Some argue that Venantius Fortunatus, bishop of Poitiers in the sixth century and so a contemporary of ʿAntara's, was the first poet of chivalry; see Av. Cameron, "The Theotokos in Sixth-Century Constantinople," *Journal of Theological Studies* 29 (1978), 105 note 6.

[7] The long internecine war which ʿAntara fought, and in which his famous horse often figures, was caused by a race that went wrong between a horse, Dāḥis, and a mare, Ghabrāʾ (mentioned in Part II, Chapter 12; see note 32 there). For the "dialogue" with his horse, see his ode in Arberry, *The Seven Odes,* 183.

[8] *Dīwān al-Nābigha al-Dubyānī,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1977), 53, verse 16.

[9] For Yawm Ḥalīma, see Part II, Chapter 2.

they developed and tried to live up to, especially in their wars, has hitherto been an unknown chapter in the history of this concept. It had no connection with the later development of chivalry in western Europe, however. The European version either developed independently or was rooted in that of the Arabs in Spain. The latter was a chivalry that had already been Islamicized; it was related to *jihād,* the wars of the Crescent, not those of the Cross.

VII

Poetry

Excessive attention to the role of the Ghassānids in the history of the Persian Wars and the Monophysite movement has thrown into relative obscurity their place in the history of Arabic poetry—a regrettable circumstance, since it is their contribution to Arabic poetry that has been the most enduring. The poetry with which they are associated and which they partly inspired has survived in the literary consciousness of Arabs as part of their literary tradition. This chapter will analyze the role of the Ghassānids in the history of Arabic poetry and its significance for the Byzantinist and for the Arabist, examining a role that the Ghassānids played for 150 years.[1] The interpretation of that role involves the explication of the ways in which poetry served the Ghassānids, the many ways in which the Ghassānids served poetry, and the contribution of poetry to the cultural life of sixth-century Oriens.

Even before they crossed the Roman frontier into Oriens and entered the service of Byzantium, the Ghassānids as Arabs had been involved in poetry, for poetry was the central facet of their cultural life. A well-known medieval critic fully explained this involvement:

> When there appeared a poet in a family of Arabs, the other tribes round about would gather together to that family and wish them joy of their good luck. Feasts would be got ready, the women of the tribe would join together in bands playing upon lutes as they were wont to do at bridals, and the men and boys would congratulate one another. For a poet was a defence to the honour of them all, a weapon to ward off insults from their good name, and a means of perpetuating their good deeds and of establishing their fame forever. They

[1] One sign of their involvement in poetry is that even around A.D. 630, after the Prophet Muḥammad's expedition to Tabūk, the Ghassānids tried to defend Byzantium against the rising tide of Islam by sending a message to the poet Kaʿb ibn Mālik in Medina, attempting to lure him away from his support for the Prophet and the Islamic cause. See *Dīwān Kaʿb ibn Mālik al-Anṣārī,* ed. S. al-ʿĀnī (Baghdad, 1966), 66.

> used not to wish one another joy but for three things—the birth of a boy, the coming to light of a poet, and the foaling of a noble mare.[2]

The Ghassānids belonged to the large group of the Azd, Arabs who had lived in the Arabian South before they spread out into various parts of the Peninsula, which they dominated. South Arabia was the abode of many other groups who contributed substantially to Arabic poetry—especially Kinda, which produced Imruʾ al-Qays (d. 541), the foremost poet of pre-Islamic Arabia. The century of Ghassān's *floruit,* the sixth, witnessed the explosion of Arabic pre-Islamic poetry,[3] much of which has survived. The new *foederati* of Byzantium thus entered the service of Byzantium carrying with them the Arabic poetic tradition, which was part of their peninsular heritage.

Oriens, the abode of the Ghassānids for a century and a half, had seen earlier *foederati,* the Tanūkhids of the fourth century and the Salīḥids of the fifth, and in both centuries Arabic poetry was heard in Oriens. In the fourth century, the Arabs of Queen Mavia composed odes to celebrate her victory over the emperor Valens,[4] while the fifth century witnessed a court poet in the entourage of the Salīḥid king Dāwūd.[5] Of the poetry associated with the Salīḥids, only four lines have survived: a triplet composed by the regicides who killed Dāwūd and one single verse from the response of Dāwūd's daughter to those regicides.[6]

Such was the state of Arabic federate poetry in Oriens in the two centuries before the coming of the Ghassānids. The scantiness of the survivals from this federate poetry makes it difficult to draw conclusions on its nature and range, but it is fair to say that the fifth century, with the rise of the function or office of a federate court poet for the Salīḥids and the appearance of a woman poet who belonged to the royal house, showed development over the fourth. Moreover, it is in the sixth century, with the advent of the Ghassānids, that Arabic poetry in Oriens can be said to have shown a strong presence, which it maintained until the fall of the dynasty. This is consonant with the general state of Arabic poetry, which matured and proliferated in the sixth century in almost all parts of the Arabian Peninsula. The poetry is audible in the Ghassānids' first victorious encounter with

[2] Ibn Rashīq al-Qayrawāni, in *al-ʿUmda fī Maḥasin al-Shiʿr,* ed. M. ʿA. al-Ḥamīd (Cairo, 1955); quoted in Suyūṭi, *al-Muzhir fī ʿUlūm al-Lugha wa Anwāʿihā* (Bulāq, A.H. 1282 [1865]), ed. M. Jād al-Mawlā, ʿA. al-Bajāwi, and M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1971), II, 236, and translated by Sir Charles Lyall in the introduction to his *Translations of Ancient Arabian Poetry: Chiefly Pre-Islamic, with an Introduction and Notes* (1885; reprint, New York, 1930), 17.

[3] This outpouring of poetry resembled that in Greece in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. See M. Schmidt, *The First Poets: Lives of the Ancient Greek Poets* (New York, 2005).

[4] See *BAFOC,* 552–54.

[5] See *BAFIC,* 433–36.

[6] Ibid., 436–38; see also Part II, Chapter 2, with notes 101, 110.

Salīḥ. Because they had their own poets to memorialize their achievements, they did not need poets to come from the Arabian Peninsula to sing their praises. The earliest poetry composed by a Ghassānid is associated with Jidhʿ, who helped spark the Ghassānid-Salīḥid conflict around A.D. 500. A poem of his has survived in which he entertains his *jinn* (spirits) and conducts a dialogue with them.[7] From the reign of Jabala, in the first quarter of the sixth century, a sextet of verses has survived, composed by a poet of Medina named al-Ranq.[8] But it was in the reign of the famous Arethas (A.D. 529–569) that poetry began to flourish, reaching its climax around A.D. 600, in the last decades of the dynasty.[9]

I. Poetry's Service to the Ghassānids

Orients witnessed a flowering of poetry under the Ghassānids, who were its patrons and promoters. What were the circumstances and conditions that caused it, and in what ways did this poetry serve the cause and interests of the dynasty?

1. One of the main assignments of the Ghassānids as *foederati* of Byzantium was to protect Orients against the inroads of the pastoralists in the Arabian Peninsula. This they did on the battlefield when their armies crushed the invaders. But it was also important to deter future raids by making known the prestige of their arms. In those days, the best medium of propaganda among the Arabs was poetry, which was quickly transmitted throughout the Peninsula by various means, including the *aswāq,* the fairs. Hence the value of poetry as a deterrent, well expressed by the Maghribi Ibn Rashīq, a medieval scholar of Arabic poetry: "The Arabs needed to sing about their nobility of character, the purity of their blood and to recall their good battle-days and far-away abodes, their brave horsemen and compliant steeds, in order to incite themselves to nobility and direct their sons to good character . . . to perpetuate memorable deeds, strengthen their honor, guard the tribe and *to inspire the awe of other tribes since others would not advance against them out of fear of their poet*."[10]

[7] The appearance of *jinn* in the thirteen-line poem may incline critics to doubt its authenticity, but Arab poets did continue to refer to *jinn* even in late Islamic times; for the poem, see R. al-Maʿlūf, *Shuʿarāʾ al-Maʿālifa* (Beirut, 1962), 9. On Jidhʿ, see *BAFIC,* 285–86.

[8] See al-Maʿlūf, *Shuʿarāʾ al-Maʿālifa,* 8–9. Nöldeke doubted the authenticity of these verses (*GF,* 7–8), but recent research on Jabala and the early Ghassānids suggests that they may in fact be authentic. On identifying the Abū-Jubayla of the sextet with Jabala, the Ghassānid king and phylarch, see *BASIC* I.1, 49.

[9] No poetry has survived for the reign of Mundir (A.D. 569–582), possibly owing to the period's intense political, military, and especially religious tensions. Similarly, the Iranians during the period of the Safavids were more interested in religion than in poetry; see E. G. Browne, *A History of Persian Literature in Modern Times: A.D. 1500–1924,* vol. 4 of *A Literary History of Persia* (Cambridge, 1930), 24–30.

[10] Quoted and translated by S. Stetkevych, in "The Abbasid Poet Interprets History: Three Qasīdahs by Abū Tammam," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 10 (1979), 49. The italics are mine.

The court of the Ghassānids was a center of attraction to poets, who converged on it in great numbers from all parts of the Arabian Peninsula—western (especially Ḥijāz and Yaman), central (Najd), and eastern (discussed below). Of all these poets, those who frequented the fair of ʿUkāẓ were the most important, since ʿUkāẓ was a pan-Arab *sūq* where poetry tournaments were held (for a time judged by one of the main panegyrists of the Ghassānids, al-Nābigha).[11]

2. Especially important were those poets who came from eastern Arabia, the sphere of Lakhmid influence; some had deserted the Lakhmids for Ghassānid Jābiya.[12] The rivalry between Lakhmids and Ghassānids found expression in a special genre of poetry called *munāfarāt,* strife poems: a poet would laud one of the two royal houses in response to another poet's praise of the other, usually employing the same meter and rhyme. Some surviving examples are represented by specimens of *prose* literature, mentioned below in the chapter on oratory.[13] Sometimes the verse fell to rather low levels, as when a poet at the court of the Lakhmid Mundir, the famous contemporary of the Ghassānid Arethas, composed a quintet of *rajaz* verse denouncing Arethas as a regicide of his father, Jabala[14]—a plainly slanderous accusation, since Jabala died at the battle of Thannūris in A.D. 528 fighting for Byzantium, as the Greek and Syriac sources attest.

Among those who deserted the Lakhmids for the Ghassānid court was a poet of the *Muʿallaqāt,* "the Suspended Odes," ʿAmr ibn Kulthūm. He and other poets gave the Ghassānids the edge over their Lakhmid rivals, whose dynasty fell around 602, making the Ghassānid triumph complete.[15]

3. In addition to the peninsular pastoral groups and the Lakhmids of Ḥīra, the poetry that advertised the military prestige of the Ghassānids was also recited among the other *foederati* of Oriens, especially those whom the Ghassānids had toppled, such as the Salīḥids and their predecessors, the Tanūkhids. When the emperor Justinian in 529 put all the Arab federate groups in Oriens under the command of Arethas, the other federates could not have been thrilled by his decision. Although the Ghassānids were able to control these other federates,

[11] See Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shiʿr wa al-Shuʿarāʾ*, ed. A. M. Shākir (Cairo, 1966), I, 167–68. For the poetry of Ḥassān at ʿUkāz, threatening an adversary, see *Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit,* ed. W. ʿArafāt, Gibb Memorial New Series 25 (London, 1971), I, 153, verse 3.

[12] Christian poets of eastern Arabia were naturally attracted to the Ghassānids, especially as some of the Lakhmid kings, such as the famous Mundir, were violently anti-Christian.

[13] For a *munāfara* in prose at the court of the Ghassānids, see Abū al-Faraj Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (Beirut, 1958), XII, 11–12.

[14] See ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Baghdādi, *Khizānat al-Adab,* ed. ʿA. al-Salām Hārūn (Cairo, 1982), X, 89–93.

[15] See G. Rothstein, *Die Dynastie der Lahmiden in al-Ḥira: Ein Versuch zur arabisch-persischen Geschichte zur Zeit der Sasaniden* (Berlin, 1899), 118–19.

their discontent on occasion revealed itself.[16] So, a poetry that described the prowess of the Ghassānids could deter their potential rebelliousness as well.

4. Poetry was also an important feature of Ghassānid victory celebrations, both after a horse race and after a military encounter on the battlefield.[17] In the case of the former, short poems were composed in a special meter, the *rajaz;* the latter were marked by longer poems in other meters. The most memorable of these victory celebrations were those for the battle of Chalcis, because it witnessed the death of their great adversary, the Lakhmid Mundir, who for fifty years had posed a threat to Oriens and to the Ghassānids.

5. Poetry also had a social function, at times celebrating the various aspects of everyday life discussed earlier in this volume. Many odes must have been composed on such occasions as births, baptisms, weddings, and deaths. Of these, two have survived: the *lāmiyya* by al-Nābigha, an elegy on the Ghassānid king Nuʿmān, and a quatrain on a Ghassānid youth, also by al-Nābigha.[18]

6. A final service that poetry rendered the Ghassānids is that it recorded the war that the Ghassānids waged in Arabia to impose the *Pax Romana* on its turbulent tribes.[19] In so doing, they spared Oriens the invasions of the Arabian pastoralists, and thereby enabled it to flourish in the sixth century. This contribution of the Ghassānids, preserved in poetry, supplies additional evidence that they were not a pastoral group but a sedentary, urban one, which also contributed to the welfare of Oriens by urbanizing the limitrophe.

On these aspects of Ghassānid history, Arabic poetry provides information found nowhere in the Greek, Latin, and Syriac sources, both enabling medieval Arab authors to understand the truth about the Ghassānids' society as urban, not pastoral, and providing modern historians, Arabist and Byzantinist alike, with the data needed to write the history of this dynasty.

[16] Non-Ghassānid federate coolness toward the Ghassānids was suspected during the battle of Callinicum in A.D. 531 (see *BALA* I, 25), as well as in the attempt of one Ghassānid to control two tribal federate groups in Oriens by sowing dissension between them (see Nöldeke, *GF,* 52 note 1).

[17] The most spectacular example occurred in Abbasid times, during the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd: when he returned from his Anatolian campaign against Heraclea, eight poets recited poetry celebrating his victory; see al-Ṣūlī, *Kitāb al-Awrāq,* ed. H. Dunne (Cairo, n.d.), 75, 80.

[18] On these two poems, see *Dīwān al-Nābigha al-Dubyānī,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1977), 115–22, 166. The first moved even the dour Nöldeke; see *GF,* 38–39.

[19] Perhaps a *Pax Ghassanica* may have developed, when Arethas brought to an end the internecine strife between two subdivisions of the powerful tribal group of Ṭayyiʾ called Jadīla and al-Gawth, an achievement remembered in prose and in poetry; see *Dīwān al-Ḥārith ibn Ḥilliza,* ed. U. al-Ṭabbāʿ (Beirut, 1994), 88, no. 16, verse 5. For the best account of the Ghassānids' war in Arabia, see N. ʿA. al-Raḥmān, "Fi Ayyām Ghassān Maʿa al-Aḥālif Fi al-Shiʿr al-Jāhili," *Majallat: Majmaʿ al Lughat al-ʿArabiyya al-Urdunnī* 30 (1986), 97–146.

II. The Ghassānids' Service to Poetry

The efflorescence of Arabic poetry during the Ghassānid period in Oriens was due to their patronage. It is, therefore, necessary to examine the ways in which they contributed to that efflorescence and how they promoted that art.

The Institutionalization of Poetry

The Ghassānid patronage of poetry found expression in a number of services, some of which may be called technical.

1. Pre-Islamic peninsular poetry had not been a profession. The pastoral poet was a tribesman, and composing poetry was only the artistic dimension of his life, for which his tribe did not pay him. Although Zuhayr, a poet of the *Muʿallaqāt,* attached himself to an Arabian chief, Harim ibn Sinān, who had managed to end the internecine tribal Basūs War, and thereby benefited materially from the latter's liberality, he was the exception.[20] But when the Ghassānids (and also the Lakhmids) opened their courts to peninsular poets, who received from them handsome rewards (often in Byzantine denarii), poetry became a profession,[21] and poets thenceforth expected and received remuneration for their verse.[22]

2. The rise of the poet laureate attached to the court was also a new phenomenon.[23] The first recorded court poet was the Iyādi ʿAbd al-ʿĀs, at the fifth-century Salīḥid court of King Dāwūd; but Arab literary consciousness retains merely his name, since none of his poetry has survived. It is, however, the Ghassānids whose name is associated with court poets, two of whom were al-Nābigha and Ḥassān. Al-Nābigha's relation to the Lakhmids suggests that he may not have been technically the Ghassānids' court poet.[24] Ḥassān, in contrast, stayed with them much longer and indeed was their relative; so he may be considered their true court poet.

[20] See L. Bettini, "Zuhayr," *EI*², XI, 556–58.

[21] See H. A. R. Gibb, *Arabic Literature,* 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1963), 18–19.

[22] Alan Cameron has shown that poets in the late antique period began to expect remuneration and became traveling professionals; see his "Wandering Poets: A Literary Movement in Byzantine Egypt," in *Literature and Society in the Early Byzantine World* (London, 1985), article I, 470–509. For the same phenomenon at the Byzantine court of a later age, see M. D. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres,* Wiener Byzantinistische Studien, 24/1 (Vienna, 2003), 36; he suggests that professional poets expected, even begged, to be paid for their services from the twelfth century onward.

[23] The first true court poet of Byzantium was George of Pisidia, who was the "poet laureate" for Heraclius; see W. Hörandner, "Court Poetry: Questions of Motifs, Structure and Function," in *Rhetoric in Byzantium,* ed. E. Jeffreys, Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies 11 (Aldershot, Eng., 2003), 76, where he also endorses the view of Lauxtermann on this point (76 note 4). On the poet laureate of the fifth-century Arab federate king Dāwūd, see *BAFIC,* 261.

[24] But one verse in an ode addressed to the Lakhmids suggests that he had a special relationship with the Ghassānids; see Al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 73, verse 6.

He also functioned later as the poet laureate of the Prophet Muḥammad for a decade during his Medinan period (A.D. 622–632).

3. The third service that the Ghassānids rendered poetry was their contribution to the rise of an appropriate venue worthy of poetry recitals—namely the *ōdeion*/odeum. In his *Dīwān,* Ḥassān apparently makes a specific reference to an odeum, the *buyūt al-rukhām,* "houses/mansions of marble," in which he could hear song and poetry.[25]

New Subjects of Poetry

Other contributions were even more important and substantive. When the Ghassānids gave the peninsular Arab poets the chance to visit their court and eulogize them, they also offered a first glimpse of an outside superior civilization, that of Byzantium, and thus enabled the poets to incorporate into the texture of pre-Islamic poetry new tones and motifs—a particularly important consideration for poetry like that of the pre-Islamic Arabs, whose simplicity of life in Arabia Pastoralis had conduced to a certain exiguity in poetic themes. The poetry composed for the Ghassānids derived not only from the Arabian scene but also from vibrant new developments outside the Peninsula; it thus represents the first stage in the thematic evolution of Arabic poetry and the expansion of its expressive range from its constricted pastoral surroundings to the breadth of the Arab *imperium* in later Muslim times.

The scene that inspired the peninsular poet was now urban Ghassānland and the even more sophisticated urban scene of Byzantine Oriens, with its Decapolis and cities. The three well-known components of Byzantine civilization—the Roman, Christian, and Hellenic—offered inspiration to the Arab peninsular poets, who also were stirred by a fourth component, the Syriac-Aramaic, emanating from the Semitic sector of the multicultural Byzantine Oriens.

1. The phrase "the urbanization of Arabic poetry" perhaps best describes what the Arab poet expressed in his poems after his experience in Oriens. Poets such as Ḥassān rarely allude to the Arabian scene with its desert elements of tents and pegs, referring instead to the urban landscape: the terms *qaṣr* and *qastal* (palace or castle), *haykal* (temple), and *dayr* (monastery) appear in their lexicon. Within the Ghassānid town, they mention the tavern (*ḥānūt, ḥāna*), wine, song, and drinking parties. Within the Ghassānid house or mansion, clothes and furniture are described; the princesses do not busy themselves with such desert vegetation as the colocynth, but instead weave coral wreaths as they prepare for Palm Sunday and Easter.

[25] Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 106, verse 10; on the odeum and the evidence for it in Ḥassān's poetry, see the discussion above in Chapter 3.

2. The sources do not neglect the Roman component of Byzantinism, as their description of the Ghassānid army makes clear: no longer primitive raiders of Arabia Pastoralis, the Ghassānids deployed a *jaysh*, an army composed of *katāʾib,* "divisions," led by commanders who fought in the Roman manner. All this is reflected in the panegyrics composed on the Ghassānids.[26]

3. Hellenism is the least prominent of the components of Byzantinism. This was the age in which "Hellene" and "pagan" were used interchangeably and rejected with equal force by the Christian Roman Empire. It is the century that witnessed Justinian's closing of the Academy in Athens in A.D. 529.[27] However, Greek science was not forgotten or frowned upon; it has survived in loanwords in Arabic such as *diryāq/tiryāq* for antidote (θηριακή) and *bayṭār* (ἱππιατρός) for veterinarian. And in spite of disapproval by the church, mimes continued to be performed in Oriens, as two loanwords in the *Dīwān* of Ḥassān attest: *maymas* (μῖμος) for actor and *mumis* (μιμάς) for prostitute.[28]

An attempt has been made to see direct Hellenistic influence on Arabic poetry, as in the case of al-Muraqqish the Elder, a poet who visited the Ghassānids and was said to have died of love.[29] One might wish to think that Hellenism was the provenance of this kind of love, but it is difficult to trace the route taken by this influence to reach the pastoralist poet of pre-Islamic Arabia.

Yet Hellenism did not fail to leave a remarkable impress on the Arabic poetry of this period. On one of his visits to the Ghassānids, al-Nābigha seems to have gone by Palmyra, possibly when he was visiting his patrons in Ruṣāfa/Sergiopolis.[30] Palmyra inspired him to refer to its legendary builder, Solomon, and to admire its colonnaded streets.[31] More intriguingly, Palmyra may be connected to al-Nābigha's devoting a lengthy poem of thirty-five verses to a detailed, almost anatomical, description of a woman's body.[32] It was said to have been a panegyric on a queen—the wife of his patron, al-Nuʿmān, the king of the Lakhmids of Ḥīra. The king was

[26] See al-Aʿlam al-Shantamarī, *Dīwān ʿAlqama al-Faḥl,* ed. D. al-Khaṭīb and I. Ṣaqqāl (Aleppo, 1969), 33–48; al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 40–48.

[27] See Al. Cameron, "The Last Days of the Academy in Athens," in *Literature and Society in the Early Byzantine World,* article XIII, 7–30.

[28] For what may be the earliest references to these Greek terms, see Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 74, verse 14; 106, verse 13; see also the appendix to Part II, Chapter 8, above.

[29] G. E. von Grünebaum, *Medieval Islam: A Study in Cultural Orientation* (Chicago, 1953), 313–14.

[30] Palmyra was a station on the way to Sergiopolis, which al-Nābigha did visit, as his verse referring to a cross set up on its walls makes clear; see *Dīwān,* 52, verse 10.

[31] See ibid., 20, verse 22; 21, verse 23. Legend has it that Palmyra/Tadmur was built by Solomon and this was known to the pre-Islamic Arabs; see C. E. Bosworth, "Tadmur," *EI*², X, 79–80. A. Arazi has added that knowledge of the legend would have spread through the Arabs of the pre-Islamic period who had converted to Judaism; see his "al-Nābigha al-Dhubyāni," *EI*², VII, 840–42.

[32] Al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 89–97.

not thrilled to have his wife so intimately described and the description alienated him from the poet, who had to flee Ḥīra.[33]

The prosopographical accuracy of this episode is not relevant here; what matters is the surprising description of a woman's body.[34] It has been cogently argued that its inspiration was Palmyra, Dura/Europos, or some other Graeco-Roman city in Oriens, where the poet saw a copy of the famous nude statue of Aphrodite of Cnidus, sculpted by Praxiteles in the fourth century B.C.[35] One could extend this hypothesis further to suggest that the poem in fact was mostly or entirely on the statue of Aphrodite rather than on al-Mutajarrida, the Lakhmid queen.[36] The key point is the possibility that the statue of the famous Athenian sculptor inspired a poet of pre-Islamic Arabia, and that the resulting poem was to some degree an *ekphrasis* of the statue. The ninth century was to see an unambiguous instance of such an *ekphrasis* of a Graeco-Roman work of art: the ode of Buḥtūrī on the mosaic depicting the Persian victory at the battle of Antioch in 540, which the Abbasid poet found in the ruins of the palace of Chosroes in Ctesiphon.[37]

The possibility of *ekphrasis* of Praxiteles' statue of Aphrodite by the Arab poet al-Nābigha, even after the lapse of a millennium between the two artists, suggests the persistence of the Hellenic heritage in Oriens.[38]

4. Of all the components of Byzantinism, Christianity proved to be the most influential, as it was with all the peoples who adopted Christianity through what has been called Byzantium's *mission civilisatrice*. Their conversion entailed the rise and development of Christian literatures among such peoples as the Slavs, the Armenians, the Copts, and the Ethiopians. And so it was in the case of the Arabs. The existence of a substantial corpus of Christian Ghassānid verse is vouched for by the distinguished ninth-century author al-Jāḥiẓ, who specifically referred to

[33] See Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shiʿir wa al-Shuʿarāʾ*, I, 166.

[34] For a similarly surprising description in a funeral oration, see Appendix II.

[35] A. Maydāni, *ʿAyn al-Nābigha, Maḏha Raʾat* (Damascus, 1984).

[36] Evidence within the poem supporting such an argument includes the description of her as a statue of marble, placed on a pedestal (al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 91, verse 16), and the mention of her veil having fallen from her body so that she covered herself with her hand (verse 17). The reference to her complexion as yellow or golden (verse 11) also suggests a statue, since statues at the time were colored; see K. Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form* (Princeton, 1956), 128. Moreover, it seems implausible that al-Nābigha would risk seriously offending the king who was his patron by writing such verses on the queen. Another possibility is that the graphic close of the poem was added later; such additions sometimes occurred in the transmission of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, a process that might also explain the name given to the Lakhmid queen: al-Mutajarrida, "the one who has taken off her clothes."

[37] For a translation of the ode, see A. J. Arberry, *Arabic Poetry: A Primer for Students* (Cambridge, 1965), 75; see the discussion in *BASIC* I.1, 235–36.

[38] See G. W. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1990).

their well-known Christian poems.[39] Most of this poetry has not survived, but a fruitful examination of the remnants is possible.[40] This examination of poetry that has survived makes possible speculation about the poetry that has been lost.

a. The Ghassānids lived in the shadow of a Christian empire, in an age when hymnography was the principal original creative component of Byzantine literature.[41] In the sixth century, their diocese produced the great Byzantine hymnographer Romanus the Melode, born to Jewish parents in the neighboring city of Emesa, which had had a strong Arab character since the days of the empresses of the Severan dynasty in the third century.[42] Arabic no doubt was the language of the Arab Ghassānid church in Oriens, used in its liturgy, lectionary, Gospel, and Psalms—all necessary and indispensable to the service.[43] It is difficult to believe that Christian hymns were not sung in Ghassānid churches, both translations and originals composed in Arabic. New hymns often accompany Christian revival movements, such as occurred in the nineteenth century in Arab Christian Lebanon, when the American mission sponsored the publication of a new Arabic Protestant version of the Bible.[44]

The Arabic hymns sung in Ghassānid churches, like the various other components of the church service, have been lost. The pitiable remains of this poetic tradition have survived only indirectly and allusively in a single verse by Ḥassān. In the *nūniyya* or rhyme in *N,* while reminiscing on his old days among the Ghassānids, he refers to *ṣalawāt al-Masīh,* "prayers addressed to Christ"; to the invocation of the priest, *al-qissīs;* and to the monks, *ruhbān,* in the monastery, *dayr.*[45]

b. Poetry of an entirely different kind must have been inspired by the phenomenal rise of monasticism in Oriens, and by the Ghassānids' great interest in

[39] See Jāḥiẓ, *Rasāʾil al-Jāḥiẓ,* ed. A. Hārūn (Cairo, 1965), III, 312.

[40] The Jesuit priest Louis Cheikho collected a large number of references to this literature; his work is a mine of information for those who wish to pursue the problem of a Christian literature in pre-Islamic Arabia. He did not subject what he had gathered to strict criticism, however, since his main interest was to collect the references: see his *al-Naṣrāniyya wa Adābuhā bayna ʿArab al-Jāhiliyya,* 2 vols. (Beirut, 1912–23). For the state of the problem, see *BAFIC,* 422–49.

[41] See E. Jeffreys, "Hymnography," *ODB,* II, 960–61. The basic work is E. Wellesz, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography* (Oxford, 1961); see also K. Metsakes, *Βυζαντινὴ ὑμνογραφία ἀπὸ τὴν ἐποχὴ τῆς καινῆς διαθήκης ἕως τὴν εἰκονομαχία* (Thessalonike, 1971).

[42] On Romanus, see B. Baldwin, "Romanos, the Melode," *ODB,* III, 1807–8. On the visit around A.D. 540 of the poet Imruʾ al-Qays to Emesa, where he consorted with some of its Arab inhabitants, see *BASIC* II.1, 263.

[43] See *BAFOC,* 435–43; *BAFIC,* 422–30, 449, 450.

[44] The nineteenth-century man of letters Nāṣīf al-Yāzijī wrote many hymns for the church service, as did others; see the often-reprinted hymnal prepared jointly by various Christian missions and groups from Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, *Mazāmīr wa Tasābīḥ wa Aghāni Rūḥiyya* (Beirut, 1913).

[45] See Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 256, line 7. The *dayr* may have been that of Fīq, referred to earlier in the poem (line 3).

monasteries. The Syriac contemporary document of 137 subscriptions of monastic archimandrites to the Ghassānid king Arethas has been mentioned several times in this volume. It was also suggested in earlier volumes that the foundation of these monasteries was probably related to the appointment of Theodore as bishop of the Ghassānid and Arab church in Monophysite Oriens.[46] The devotion of the Arabs to monastic life has also been noted by Syriac writers.[47] The appearance of this new structure, the monastery, in the Ghassānid landscape must have elicited some response from the poets of the period, as it did in the Islamic period, when a whole genre of Arabic poetry related to the monasteries came into existence.[48] It is true that the poets of the Islamic period were interested only in the amenities of the monastery—wine and hospitality; one would not expect Muslim poets to reflect the institution's Christian message. But Christian poets of the sixth century would have reacted differently to the monastery and its ascetic ideal. No poetry of this kind has survived, however. The verse of Ḥassān quoted in the preceding paragraph could be invoked again in this context as expressing the Christian sentiment that the monastery evoked in a poet better known as a hedonist.

c. A kind of poetry called ʿUḏrī, related to the group ʿUḏra, expressed chaste and nonsensual sentiments of love that may be conveniently described as Platonic; though it flourished in early Islamic times, its roots no doubt go back to this pre-Islamic period. A discussion in *BAFIC* related it to the rise among the Arabs of the virtues of chastity as an ideal of Christianity, with the Virgin Mary serving as their role model.[49] Because the Monophysite Ghassānids greatly venerated the Virgin Mary—who to them even more than to the Dyophysite Chalcedonians was *Theotokos,* since the term emphasized the divine rather than the human in Christ—it is natural to expect that some of this chaste poetry might have been composed by or for the Ghassānids. But no poems reflecting this kind of love have survived; only echoes and traces of ἀγάπη remain in contemporary prose and poetry, in the form of single words or phrases. Such are the references in al-Nābigha to Ghassānid chastity in a sexual context, *ṭayyibun ḥujuzātuhum,* "zoned in chastity," and their freedom from the usual sins, *iṯḥam,* that plague humans of lesser moral fiber.[50] The former elicited the admiration of the distinguished medieval critic Ibn Qutayba, who declared it the finest statement on chastity in the whole corpus of Arabic poetry.[51]

[46] See *BASIC* I.2, 773–74, 824–38, 850–60; *BASIC* II.1, 176–95.

[47] See the Syriac *vita* of Aḥūdemmeh, PO 3 (Paris, 1909), 15–51; discussed in *BASIC* II.1, 177–82.

[48] For this poetry, see Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Diyārāt,* ed. J. al-ʿAṭiyya (London, 1991).

[49] See *BAFIC,* 443–49, 453–55.

[50] Al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 47, verse 25; 101, verse 4 (which also includes a reference to their "bodies purified"—that is, from sin).

[51] Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shiʿr wa al-Shuʿarāʾ*, I, 163.

A quintet of verses, however, was luckily preserved in the invaluable *Geographical Dictionary* of Yāqūt;[52] it expresses a combination of monastic poetry and ʿUḏrī poetry, since it unites the two together. The quintet was composed and recited by a female resident of Dayr Buṣra, the monastery of Bostra, in the middle of the ninth century. Its monks were Arabs whose affiliation was described as Banū al-Ṣādir, ultimately related to the group ʿUḏra, the very group associated with this kind of Platonic love poetry. So, if two centuries after the demise of the Ghassānid dynasty, poems of conventual provenance and Platonic sentiment were composed in Bilād al-Shām, then surely such poetry must have been composed in the Oriens of the sixth century, at the heyday of the Ghassānid dynasty, celebrated for its partiality to monastic life and the Christian ideal of chastity.

Influences on the Arabian Ode

A discussion of Byzantinism's influence on the themes of Arabic poetry would not be complete without considering its effect on the structure of the Arabic ode.

The *qasīda,* the polythematic ode, was a major achievement of the poets of pre-Islamic Arabia. It was a mono-metered, mono-rhymed longish poem containing a fixed set of themes. It begins with the halt at the deserted encampment of the departed tribe, a section that includes an amatory passage on the beloved, also departed. Then follows a description of the desert scene in Arabia Deserta, both the mount, horse or camel, and the fauna and flora of the landscape. It may end with some reflections on life or with the praise of the group to which the poet belonged.[53] It was traditional to follow rigorously this canonical sequence of themes,[54] leading to a considerable amount of repetition and imitation. Some of the poets in the late pre-Islamic period lamented the fact that they were replicating what their camels were doing, namely, chewing the cud.[55]

1. The prelude of the *qasīda* was its most important and distinctive component, perfected by the masters of Arabic pre-Islamic poetry. The Ghassānid poets, however, finding themselves now in a highly urban environment, apparently did not feel it necessary to avail themselves of this prelude with its pastoralist associations. Al-Nābigha completely omits it from his finest ode, the *bāʾiyya* or rhyme in *B* on the Ghassānids;[56] so did Ḥassān, who explicitly states that he prefers urban

[52] Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-Buldān* (Beirut, 1956), II, 500–501; the quintet is discussed in *BAFIC,* 447–49.

[53] On the *qasīda,* see F. Krenkow and G. Lecomte, "Ḳasida," *EI*², IV, 713–14; the same entry traces its later development in other Islamic literatures—Persian, Turkish, and Urdu.

[54] See Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shiʿr wa al-Shuʿarāʾ*, I, 76–77.

[55] A sentiment expressed by ʿAntara and Zuhayr; see Sezgin, *GAS,* II, 113–15, 118–20.

[56] Al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 40–48.

life with its amenities to the mounts he used to ride,[57] thereby anticipating the urbanization of Arabic poetry in later Islamic times.

2. When the Ghassānid poets did follow tradition and include a prelude in their *qasīda,* they generally avoided the prelude's constituents, such as tents, pegs, and dung; instead they introduced new elements derived from the urban scene in Oriens. One of the attractive features of the pastoral prelude had been the string of place-names at which the beloved stopped or lingered, a device that added both realism and musicality to the ode. But names such as al-Ablāʾ and Thahmad were hardly intelligible to the urban society of Oriens, and so a new toponymic necklace of well-known places was introduced, featuring towns and cities familiar to the Arabs of Oriens such as Jāsim, Jalliq (Gallica), Jābiya, Dārayyā, Sakkāʾ, Bilās, and Dūma. Two of them attained celebrity—Ḥamāt and Shayzar, the Semitic names of Macedonian-era Epiphaneia and Larissa (both in Syria), which became known even to the poets of faraway Andalusia.[58]

3. The deserted encampment in the pastoral landscape of the pre-Islamic ode gave way when the poets of the Ghassānids saw the splendid *aṭlāl,* decayed and fragmented remains of such Arab metropolises as Petra and Palmyra, both on the way to Jābiya, Jalliq, and Ghassānid Ruṣāfa. Only echoes have survived of their compositions on these urban centers. In one celebrated ode, al-Nābigha described the large slabs of stone of which Palmyra was built as well as the columns still standing in its streets.[59]

The *aṭlāl* theme was also used by Ḥassān, but in a different way. The poet laureate of the Ghassānids came to visit Ghassānland after the demise of the dynasty, and he stood over the remains of a city he had known in his youth and whose fate he poignantly lamented.[60] In so doing, he initiated a new type of Arabic poetry, elegies on fallen dynasties and kingdoms; the last in this Classical Arabic genre were the odes on the fall of Muslim Spain, al-Andalus, to the conquistadors.

4. While the monastery attracted the Ghassānid poets, they were drawn even more strongly to an important constituent of the urban scene—namely, the tavern, with which Ḥassān became most closely associated. As he devoted some of his poems exclusively to wine, the polythematic ode contracted to address a single theme.[61] Hence Ḥassān must be considered one of the poets who initiated

[57] Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, I, 316, verses 6–9; elsewhere he begins a poem by declaring that neither the traces of the deserted encampment nor the departure of the tribe moves or stirs him (106, verse 1).

[58] On Ḥamāt and Shayzar, see *BASIC* II.1, 264. The two toponyms appeared in a passage of the Caesar Ode of Imruʾ al-Qays that attracted the attention of the literary critic ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Baghdādi, who offered a fine analysis in *Khizānat al-Adab,* I, 329–35.

[59] See al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 20–21, verses 22–27.

[60] Ḥassān, *Dīwān,* I, 74–75, 194–95, 316.

[61] Also disentangled from the complex *qasīda* was the monothematic love poem; see, for example, Ḥassān's attractive poem on al-Naḍīra (*Dīwān,* I, 52–54), discussed in Part II, Chapter 2.

the *khamriya,* the wine lyric,[62] a genre whose longevity in Islamic times is especially remarkable in view of the prohibition against alcohol in Islamic law.

5. Finally, although the old ideals of *murūʾa* with its twin virtues of courage in war and hospitality in peace remained in force, there appeared a new set of Christian ideals such as chastity, with which the Arab pre-Islamic poet had not been familiar. The poet who gave this new Christian dimension its best expression was al-Nābigha, in his celebrated *bāʾiyya,* which ends with the following sextet of verses:

> Theirs is a liberal nature that God gave
> To no men else; their virtues never fail.
> Their home the Holy Land: their faith upright:
> They hope to prosper if good deeds avail.
> Zoned in fair wise and delicately shod,
> They keep the Feast of Palms, when maidens pale,
> Whose scarlet silken robes on trestles hang,
> Greet them with odorous boughs and bid them hail.
> Long lapped in ease tho' bred to war, their limbs
> Green shouldered vestments, white-sleeved, richly veil.[63]

III. "Byzantium in Arabic Poetry"

Ever since Meleager of Gadara had left Tyre and settled on the island of Cos sometime in the first century B.C., the literary and cultural life of Oriens lacked high-quality secular poetry, though literary artists continued to compose tolerable verse.[64] The Ghassānids, whose court attracted Arabian poets, brought back poetry to Oriens, with the Provincia Arabia as its center. It was not a classical or an indigenous tradition revived, but an exotic flower transplanted from outside the limits of the *imperium,* from the world of Arabian paganism. At the same time, it underwent considerable transformation in Oriens; "Byzantium in Arabic poetry" would be a convenient rubric for some of the poetry composed for the Ghassānids. For this reason it is relevant to the cultural analyst of Oriens, who recognizes the important distinction between the Greek and Syriac elements in the ethnic and cultural constitution of the area and who thus conceives of the region

[62] See J. E. Bencheikh, "Khamriyya," *EI*², IV, 998–1009.

[63] Al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 46–48; trans. R. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (1907; reprint, London, 1969), 54. Though the version has some inaccuracies, it is adequate to illustrate Ghassānid Christianity.

[64] For Meleager and Antipater, see Al. Cameron, *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1996), 952 and 111. For Philodemus, see P. Treves and D. Obbink, ibid., 1165–66. For specimens of these poets, see P. K. Hitti, *History of Syria, Including Lebanon and Palestine* (London, 1951), 259–61.

in bicultural terms.[65] This biculturalism must now be reexamined as the role of the Ghassānids in Oriens is recognized. A new strand, Arabic poetry, enters into the texture of the cultural life of Oriens, both allied to Syriac in the wider Semitic context and distinct from it in various ways. In the enumeration of the cultural centers of Oriens, the historian gives prominence to Gaza in Palestine, Beirut in Phoenikê, Antioch in Syria Prima, and Edessa in Osroene. This map of the cultural landscape in Oriens is necessarily modified when the Provincia Arabia and Palestina Secunda are recognized as cultural centers of Arabic poetry to be added to the four provinces of the diocese already listed.

Arabic poetry composed for the Ghassānids in the sixth century did not affect Byzantine literary art in Oriens or elsewhere, unlike that of the sister language Syriac; for example, the Syriac metrical hymns of Ephrem influenced those of Romanus the Melode. So the two Semitic peoples, the Aramaeans and the Jews, represented by Ephrem and Romanus, contributed much to Byzantine cultural life directly through sacred song.[66]

Because no sacred poetry or hymns that may have been composed for the Ghassānids have survived, it is not possible to gauge how Syriac works may have affected this form of Arabic poetry. The detectable connections seem to be limited to the poetic lexicon, which has been noted in the case of al-Nābigha.[67] More substantial lexical influence can be found in the *dīwān*s of two poets, Umayya ibn Abi al-Ṣalt and ʿAdī ibn Zayd, who flourished in Ṭāʾif in Arabia and in Ḥīra of the Lakhmids, respectively; Ṭāʾif, in western Arabia, was within the sphere of influence of the Ghassānids and their overlord, Byzantium.[68]

Although Arabic poetry did not affect literary art in pre-Islamic non-Arab Oriens, it did so in Umayyad times, which witnessed a flowering of Arabic poetry and song in Bilād al-Shām, exemplified by the relationship of the Umayyad court poet, the Christian al-Akhṭal, to al-Nābigha.[69] It may even have influenced Byzantine verse through the Arab John of Damascus, the Church Father who was also a distinguished hymnographer and musician. Before he took the monastic garb at St. Sabas, he had been the boon companion of Yazīd, the Umayyad caliph who was also a poet.[70] The extent to which John of Damascus was influenced by

[65] See F. Millar, *The Roman Near East, 31 B.C. to A.D. 337* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993), reviewed by the present writer in *Catholic Historical Review* 81 (1995), 251–52.

[66] For B. Baldwin the Jewish background of Romanus is not certain; see his "Romanos, the Melode" in *ODB,* III, 1807.

[67] See F. A. Bustāni, *al-Nābigha al-Dhubyāni,* al-Rawāʾiʿ 30 (Beirut, 1931), p. KB note 2. Not all the words cited there are loans from Syriac.

[68] See F. Gabrieli, "ʿAdī B. Zayd," *EI*², I, 196; J. E. Montgomery, "Umayya B. Abī l-Ṣalt," *EI*², X, 839.

[69] On Akhṭal, see S. Ghāzi, *al-Akhṭal* (Cairo, 1979), 217–21.

[70] See J. Naṣrallah, *Saint Jean de Damas: Son époque, sa vie, son oeuvre* (Harissa, Lebanon, 1950), 66–69, 150–51.

the explosion of Arabic Umayyad poetry and song around him is not clear, but that it had some impact seems plausible.

In considering the contribution of the Semitic peoples of Oriens to its cultural life, a return to Romanus is appropriate. Although he became a Christian saint and spent his years as hymnographer in Constantinople, whither he went during the reign of the emperor Anastasius (491–518), he was born in Emesa (Ḥims), a city whose strong Arab character must still have been present in the sixth century, as the visit of the poet Imruʾ al-Qays to it around 540 suggests. The two sister Semitic peoples of Oriens have thus contributed two major metrical forms to world literature. Romanus perfected the *kontakion,* while Imruʾ al-Qays and after him al-Nābigha perfected the *qasīda,* both forms that have enjoyed remarkable longevity in the annals of Byzantine and Arabic literature respectively. The Nativity *kontakion* of Romanus, which begins Ἡ παρθένος σήμερον τὸν ὑπερούσιον τίκτει ("Today the Virgin brings into the world the one Transcendent, beyond all being"), is still sung annually every Christmas in the churches of the Orthodox; the Suspended Ode of Imruʾ al-Qays, a *qasīda* with the splendid opening verse "Halt! Let us shed tears in memory of a departed love and her abode," is still in the front rank of Arabic poetry. And no less enduring is the *anastasis* hymn of John of Damascus, which resonates in Orthodox Churches on every Easter Day: Χριστὸς ἀνέστη ἐκ νεκρῶν . . . ("Christ has risen from the dead . . .").

IV. Poetry at the Byzantine Court

The Ghassānids were not the only *foederati* of Byzantium at whose court poetry flourished. That art was well known and welcomed at the courts of other "barbarian" groups and *foederati* in the Roman Occident, such as the Franks and the Vandals. The rulers and kings of these other groups received panegyrics from poets, as the Ghassānids did, and so did the *basileus* in Constantinople.[71]

Arabic Poetry in Byzantium in Late Antiquity

While the poetry composed for the other *foederati* of the Occident is well known to Byzantinists and has often been regarded as part of Byzantine literature in late antiquity, that composed for the Ghassānids is virtually unknown. It has never appeared in a history of Byzantine literature, for very good reasons. In this world of late antiquity, which privileged Greek and Latin, a language such as Arabic must have been viewed as an alien tongue of a "barbarian" group whose image

[71] Scholars believe that poetry became established at the imperial court during the reign of Theodosius II; on poets of the fifth century during his reign and that of Zeno and of Anastasius, see Al. Cameron, "The Empress and the Poet: Paganism and Politics at the Court of Theodosius II," in *Literature and Society in the Early Byzantine World,* article III, 270, 281–82.

in Byzantine historiography was somewhat tarnished. Furthermore, Arabic had no relation to any of the three constituent elements of Byzantinism; in contrast, its sister cognate Semitic language Syriac/Aramaic was the language of Christ himself, and was thus esteemed within the Bible-centered empire of Byzantium. Indeed, Syriac became within that Christian empire the lingua franca of *Oriens Christianus;* through figures such as St. Ephrem, it even influenced Byzantine hymnography.

Viewing Arabic from a biblical perspective, the Byzantines saw it as the language of the Hagarenoi and the Ishmaelites, both pejorative labels related respectively to Hagar, the maid of Sarah, and to Ishmael, the son of Hagar and Abraham, whose descendants, the Arabs, were outside God's promise and covenant. Even in a secular context, Strabo had criticized Arabic as a language difficult to pronounce.[72] It was, therefore, natural that the Byzantines of late antiquity, particularly in the sixth century, should have failed to associate poetry with the Arabs. The people were known to them as *Sarakenoi,* a term that, through Ammianus and others, allied them to the hostile pastoralists, and often identified them with a people whom Procopius and his school accused of treachery to the Roman cause.[73]

Arabic Poetry in Byzantium after Yarmūk (636)

The very same battle, Yarmūk, that caused the downfall of both Byzantium and the Ghassānids in Oriens also brought about a revolution in the fortunes and status of Arabic and its speakers—not the Christian Ghassānids but the Muslim Arabs of the Peninsula. From this time onward, Arabic poetry has close connections with Byzantium; it is no longer peripheral as it had been in a distant province of the empire, namely, Arabia in Oriens. Arabic becomes the language of the Islamic caliphate, which superseded Sasanid Iran as Byzantium's enemy. Previously, it had been the limited concern of the empire's Office of the Barbarians, which dealt with *foederati* and with the Arabian Peninsula. Now, it is the official language of a vast empire, and Constantinople takes it seriously.

Arabic became the linguistic medium of all the poetry that was composed by Muslims on the Arab-Byzantine conflict in Umayyad and Abbasid times, and imperial Byzantium became aware of it. The emperor Nicephorus I (802–811), himself of Arab origin, expressed interest in the poetry of Abū al-ʿAtāhiya, the poet

[72] Strabo, *Geography,* XVI.iv.18. The Arabs countered by calling non-Arabs *ʿAjam,* "dumb," because they were unable to pronounce Arabic correctly. The term already appears in the poetry of al-Nābigha; see *Dīwān,* 122, verse 30. For ʿAjam, whose way of speaking was "incomprehensible and obscure," see F. Gabrieli, "Adjam," *EI*^{2}, I, 205.

[73] See *BALA* II, 9–65. For Procopius and his school, represented by Agathias, Menander, Evagrius, and Theophylact, see *BASIC* II.1, 5.

of asceticism, *zuhd,* in Baghdad.[74] Even more important was what happened in the tenth century during the Byzantine *reconquista*. This was the period of the epic Arab-Byzantine conflict, which featured Nicephorus Phocas and John Tzimisces on the Byzantine side, and the Ḥamdānid Sayf al-Dawla and his chivalrous brother, Abū Firās, knight and poet, on the Arab. The period witnessed also the *floruit* of the foremost Arab poet of medieval Islam, al-Mutanabbi, the poet of Islamic *jihād* against the Byzantines. Consequently, the Ḥamdānids of Aleppo and their poet laureate, al-Mutanabbi, figure prominently in the Arab-Byzantine relationship.

1. Nicephorus Phocas expressed a negative response to a verse composed by al-Mutanabbi.[75] He sent a long comminatory poem to al-Muṭīʿ, the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad. It elicited a reply composed in the same meter and rhyme.[76] It was a remarkable demonstration of a *munāfara,* a strife poem, a form that (as noted earlier in this chapter) was common among the Arabs.

2. The brother of Sayf al-Dawla, the poet Abū Firās, was taken prisoner, and he languished for some years in Constantinople (962–966); during that period he composed his *Rūmiyyāt*.[77]

All this is related to the poetry composed for the Ghassānids before the fall of the dynasty. The stay of Abū Firās in Constantinople, though as a prisoner, evokes the visit of Imruʾ al-Qays to Justinian, around A.D. 540, an incident that the Ḥamdānid poet no doubt recalled.[78] More important and relevant here was the association of another poet of the Ghassānids, al-Nābigha, with the events of this late period. During a campaign against the Byzantines, and accompanied by al-Mutanabbi, Sayf

[74] See N. M. El-Cheikh, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004), 95. El-Cheikh doubts the Arab origin of Nicephorus, but there is good evidence for it, and Bury and Vasiliev accepted it, following the Oriental sources. See J. B. Bury, *Eastern Roman Empire* (London, 1912), 8, and A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire* (Madison, Wis., 1952), 271.

[75] Ferreted out and discussed by G. J. van Gelder, "Camels on Eyelids and the Bafflement of an Emperor: A Line of al-Mutanabbi 'Translated' into Greek," in *Proceedings of the XIIth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association, München 1988,* III, *Space and Boundaries in Literature (Continuation),* ed. R. Bauer and D. Fokkema (Munich, 1990), 446–51. In this article, the Arabic source cited in reference to Nicephorus and Mutanabbi's verse is the eleventh-century man of letters Ibn Sinān al-Khafāji; see his *Sirr al-Faṣāḥa* (Cairo, 1952), 48–49. More recently, Marc Lauxtermann came to the rescue of Mutanabbi and explained away the negative response of Nicephorus in his *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres,* 19–20.

[76] The poem was no doubt composed for Nicephorus by someone in the Arabic-speaking community in Constantinople, clear evidence that Arabic was established as an important foreign language in Constantinople and that Arabic verse had its practitioners in the capital. For the two poems, see G. E. von Grünebaum, "Eine poetische Polemik zwischen Byzanz und Baghdad im X. Jahrhundert," in *Studia Arabica,* Analecta Orientalia 14 (Rome, 1937), 43–64. In fact, not one but two (or perhaps even more) replies were composed to Nicephorus' poem, in an exchange I shall discuss in a future publication.

[77] On Abū Firās, see H. A. R. Gibb, "Abū-Firās," *EI*², I, 119–20.

[78] On this visit, see the present writer in "The Last Days of Imruʾ al-Qays: Anatolia," in *Tradition and Modernity in Arabic Literature,* ed. I. J. Boullata and T. DeYoung (Fayetteville, Ark., 1997), 207–18.

al-Dawla sent one of his divisions on a raiding expedition that was carried out successfully. When he rejoined the division, one of its warriors unsheathed and displayed his sword, bloodied and blunted from the encounter. Sayf al-Dawla admired it and recited a well-known couplet from the celebrated epinician ode of al-Nābigha on the Ghassānids: "One fault they have: their swords are blunt of edge / Through constant beating on their foemen's mail." Al-Mutanabbi watched him recite the couplet, then he extemporized a quatrain in which he expressed his admiration for the couplet of the pre-Islamic Ghassānid poet, lauded the Ḥamdānid prince, said that he understood the place of the poet in the estimation of Sayf al-Dawla, and considered al-Nābigha a happy man for having been remembered by Sayf al-Dawla (a connoisseur of Arabic poetry) on such an occasion so long after his death.[79]

That the Ḥamdānid prince chose a couplet from al-Nābigha's famous ode on the Ghassānids in celebrating his victory makes plain that poetry in praise of the Ghassānids was very much alive in the consciousness of later Arab dynasties—especially those who ruled in the same region—even three centuries after the demise of the Ghassānids. It was ironic that a couplet in an epinician ode composed for a Christian Ghassānid king fighting *for* Byzantium was now used by a Muslim prince fighting *against* Byzantium; the odes of al-Nābigha were clearly still alive in the tenth century.

This long chapter on poetry at the Ghassānid court has targeted a gap in the cultural history of Oriens in the proto-Byzantine period. In addition to filling that gap, the chapter is a prolegomenon for a better understanding of the fortunes of Arabic poetry in the new context of the Arab-Byzantine literary relationship in Islamic times, during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods. The involvement of Nicephorus Phocas of the tenth century in Arabic poetry appears no longer as an isolated aberration but as a link in a long chain of Arabic poetry written in the course of these centuries, some of which was composed in Constantinople. The tracing of the strands of continuity has extended them retrospectively back three centuries before the rise of Islam through a federate Arab literary tradition, the culmination of which was the poetry on the Ghassānids in sixth-century Oriens.

Appendix

Poetry at the Court of the Occidental *Foederati:* The Vandals

Poetry composed for a group of *foederati* in a language such as Arabic naturally remained unknown to members of the Byzantine literary world, outside a narrow

[79] See *Dīwān al-Mutanabbi,* ed. ʿA. al-Barqūqī (Cairo, 1930), II, 286 note 8. The English version of al-Nābigha's verse on the Ghassānids is that of Sir Charles Lyall, quoted by Nicholson, *Literary History of the Arabs,* 54.

circle in Ghassānland and possibly a few in Petra and Palmyra. By contrast, the poetry composed for the other "barbarian" groups of Byzantium in the Roman Occident was well known.

The Vandals provide a useful comparison in this context because of their involvement with the Arabs.[1] The Arab *foederati* of Byzantium in the fifth century, the Salīḥids, were enlisted by Emperor Leo I (457–474) for his Vandal War.[2] It was in its aftermath that the Vandals were recognized as *foederati* in Africa in 474.

1. Like the Arabs, the Vandals are technically *foederati,*[3] although some important differences obtained between the two peoples in this regard.

2. As Arians and Monophysites, respectively, the Vandals and Arabs both were heretics or at least non-orthodox from the point of view of Chalcedonian Byzantium.

3. Both Vandals and Arabs became patrons of poets who eulogized them. Of these Vandal poets, Florentinus may be singled out; he eulogized Tharasamund (497–523), a descendant of the founder of the dynasty, Gaiseric.[4]

Unlike the Ghassānids, the Vandals did not have a tradition of poetry in a native language through which praise could be expressed.[5] Hence it was in Latin, the language of the Roman Empire, that poetry was composed for the Vandals; in contrast, Arabic, the language of Ghassānid poetry, was understood and appreciated only by the Arabs of federate and Rhomaic Oriens.

[1] On the Vandals and poetry, see J. W. George, "Vandal Poets in Their Context," in *Vandals, Romans, and Berbers: New Perspectives on Late Antique Africa,* ed. A. H. Merrills (Aldershot, Eng., 2004), 133–43. See also Y. Hen, *Roman Barbarians: The Royal Court and Culture in the Early Medieval West* (Basingstoke, England and New York, 2007).

[2] See *BAFIC,* 91–96.

[3] The Ghassānids, like the other Arab allies in the preceding two centuries, are called technically ὑπόσπονδοι in Greek and *foederati* in Latin. For the Latin term, see Novella XXIV in the Codex Theodosianus for the fifth-century Arab *foederati, Theodosiani libri XVI cum constitutionibus Sirmondianis et leges novellae ad Theodosianum pertinentes,* ed. T. Mommsen and P. M. Meyer, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1954), II, 61–64. Sometimes they are referred to as ἔνσπονδοι, as in Procopius, *History,* I.xvii.46. See also the discussion of terminology in the Preface, above.

[4] On Florentinus and his poem on the Vandal king Tharasamund, see F. Clover, "Felix Karthago," in *Tradition and Innovation in Late Antiquity,* ed. F. M. Clover and R. S. Humphreys (Madison, Wis., 1989), 151–54.

[5] Vandals are not often associated with praise, for their image has been tarnished by the term "vandalism," but they also contributed the attractive name al-Andalus/Andalusia! For a defense of the Vandals against their identification as vandals, see George, "Vandal Poets in Their Context," 142–43.

VIII

The Poets

The previous chapter has examined the importance of poetry to the Ghassānids and their own services to it, notably through mediating the influence of Byzantinism in Oriens, which enhanced Ghassānid urbanism. As the principal poets who visited the Ghassānids in Oriens have already been discussed at some length in a previous volume in this series,[1] a brief enumeration of them will be given in this section to demonstrate both the power of that court's gravitational pull and the extent of its influence on the verse of the poets who visited it. Because this volume treats the poetry only within the general concept of culture, its purely literary value will not be discussed.

Some fourteen poets wended their way to the Ghassānid court in Jābiya and Jalliq.[2] These can be divided and categorized, so as to reflect their own importance as well as that of their Ghassānid patrons.

1. Five of them—Imruʾ al-Qays, al-Nābigha, ʿAmr ibn Kulthūm, Labīd, and Maymūn al-Aʿshā—are among the foremost poets of Arabia; their poems were included in the so-called Suspended Odes of pre-Islamic poetry.[3]

2. Some of these poets, such as ʿAmr ibn Kulthūm and al-Mutalammis, chose to leave the Lakhmids for their rivals, the Ghassānids. Such desertions were

[1] See *BASIC* II.1, 220–80; there, the discussion focused on the toponyms that the odes of these poets provided, which are crucial for understanding the urban character of the Ghassānid phylarchate.

[2] The number becomes fifteen if al-Ranq, the poet of Medina who composed the sextet on Jabala, is included. Cf. the fifteen poets of the Vandals, discussed in J. George, "Vandal Poets in their Context," in *Vandals, Romans and Berbers: New Perspectives on Late Antique Africa,* ed. A. H. Merrills (Aldershot, Eng., 2004), 138–39. A sixteenth poet may now be added, a Ghassānid of the Royal House, namely, al-Shayẓam Ibn al-Ḥarith. A poem of eleven verses in the *rajaz* metre is attributed to him. The poem is very informative on the Ghassānids: it contains military terms in Arabic which evidence their advanced military techniques; it refers to the Ghassānid king relaxing during his retirement in the countryside, and uses the terms for Arabic *villeggiatura*, such as *mutabaddiyan* and *tabadā*, which the extant sources on the Ghassānids have hardly ever preserved. For the poet and his verses, see Abū-ʿAli al-Qāli, *Dhayl al-Amāli wa al-Nawādir* (Cairo, 2000), 179–80.

[3] This was a collection of seven or ten odes, gathered together in the Umayyad period; see J. A. Arberry, *The Seven Odes: The First Chapter in Arabic Literature* (London and New York, 1957).

both flattering to the Ghassānids and indicative of the great drawing power of their court.

3. Some were Christians, and their arrival at Oriens suggests that the Christianity of the Ghassānids, not only their affluence and liberality, was an attraction.

4. Some were relatives of the Ghassānids, such as Ḥassān ibn Thābit and Yazīd ibn Abd al-Madān, the *sayyid* (chief) of Najrān and a descendant of its martyrs. Both poets came from well-established urban groups in western Arabia, and their visits to the Ghassānids to pay homage and compose eulogies reflect the great prestige of the Ghassānids among their congeners in the Arabian Peninsula.

As indicated in the previous chapter, some of these poets were themselves Ghassānids, hailing from Oriens; among them were ʿAdī ibn al-Raʿlāʾ. Although the Ghassānids apparently did not produce an especially distinguished poet, some of them could compose tolerable verse. More important than the aesthetic value of their poetry is its influence in making the Ghassānids connoisseurs and promoters of poetry. But the significance of poetry at the Ghassānid court is that it attracted poets from all parts of the vast Peninsula: western Arabia (Ḥassān and, from Najrān, Yazīd ibn ʿAbd al-Madān), midcentral Arabia (Ḥātim and al-Nābigha, the foremost poet of his generation), and eastern Arabia (ʿAmr ibn Kulthūm and al-Mutalammis); hence it might justly be said that in the sixth century practically everybody who was anybody in Arabic poetry in the Peninsula paid homage to the Ghassānids and experienced their liberality.

The Ghassānid poets are shadowy figures, from whose poetry only a verse or a couplet has survived; the exception, ʿAdī ibn al-Raʿlāʾ, has two surviving fragments. One of those poets is Arethas, the Ghassānid king during the reign of Justinian; another is Qātil al-Jūʿ; a third is Salmā, a woman; and two anonymous poets are also attested. The poetry ascribed to the Ghassānid Jidhʿ is still *sub judice,* but if it is proved authentic, Jidhʿ will emerge as the earliest Ghassānid poet (ca. A.D. 500).[4]

These poets raise the question of whether the dynasty, like the Lakhmids, had a *dīwān* of the poetry composed in their honor; no such collection is extant.[5]

[4] For Ibn al-Raʿlā, see Muhammad al-Marzubāni, *Muʿjam al-Shuʿarāʾ*, ed. ʿA. al-Sattār Farrāj (Cairo, 1960), 86; and Ibn Durayd, *al-Ishtiqāq,* ed. ʿA. al-Salām Hārūn (Cairo, 1958), 486, with note 3 for more sources on the poet. For Arethas/Ḥārith, see Abū al-Baqāʾ Hibat Allah, *al-Manāqib al-Mazyadiyya,* ed. S. Daradka and M. Khuraysāt (Amman, 1984), II, 377; for Qātil al-Jūʿ, see Hishām al-Kalbī, *Jamharat al-Nasab,* ed. N. Hasan (Beirut, 1986), 618–19; for Salmā al-Ghassāniyya, to whom is ascribed a heptad of *rajaz* verses in a *bukāʾiyya,* a threnody, see *al-Manāqib al-Mazyadiyya,* I, 351. For anonymous Ghassānid poets, see, for instance, Jāḥiz, *Rasāʾil al-Jāḥiz,* ed. ʿA. al-Salām Hārūn (Cairo, 1964), I, 209. For Jidhʿ as possibly the earliest of all Ġhassānid poets, see Chapter 7, above.

[5] On the Lakhmid *dīwān,* see Ibn Sallām, *Ṭabaqāt Fuḥūl al-Shuʿarāʾ*, ed. M. M. Shākir (Cairo, 1974), I, 25.

The Fourteen Poets

The fourteen poets who converged on the Ghassānid court from all parts of the Arabian Peninsula may be listed as follows.[6]

1. Imruʾ al-Qays, the foremost poet of pre-Islamic Arabia, was related to the Ghassānids, whom he refers to as his maternal uncles. One of his two best poems, the Caesar Ode, was inspired by Oriens, and according to one source was associated with his involvement with the Ghassānids; so was the *Muʿallaqa,* the most famous of all the Suspended Odes.[7]

2. Ḥassān ibn Thābit was the Ghassānids' relative and poet laureate, the source of much information about Ghassānid social life. Most of his extant poems on the Ghassānids were written in the Islamic period, after the fall of the dynasty; he composed them as a *laudator temporis acti*.[8]

3. Al-Nābigha, the foremost poet of the last phase in the development of Arabic pre-Islamic poetry around A.D. 600, was so close to the Ghassānids that he was in effect a second poet laureate. To him is owed precious references to their Christianity and to their campaigns. And as argued in the previous chapter, a unique ode in his *Dīwān* may be an *ekphrasis* on a statue of Aphrodite, which he would have seen in Palmyra or some other urban center in Oriens.[9]

4. ʿAlqama was a major poet of the Tamīm group in eastern Arabia. He wrote a celebrated epinician in praise of the Ghassānid Arethas, whom he eulogized in order to set free his brother. It has the only detailed description in Arabic verse of a Ghassānid king directing a battle—in this case, the decisive battle of Chalcis, in which Arethas fought as a Byzantine cataphract.[10]

5. Ḥātim was the chief of the Christian group Ṭayyiʾ, which had close relations with the Lakhmids. He too came to liberate some of his people whom the Ghassānid king had captured. The Syriac writers used the name of his group as the generic name of the Arabs, Ṭayāyē, thereby demonstrating the importance of the Ṭayyiʾ in pre-Islamic times.[11]

6. ʿAmr ibn Kulthūm was the *sayyid* of Taghlib, the powerful tribal group in northeastern Arabia, famous as a warrior and as the composer of one of the Suspended Odes. He left the Lakhmids and joined the Ghassānids in Oriens.[12]

7. Al-Aʿshā was the surname of Maymūn ibn Qays, who belonged to a

[6] Eight of these poets are discussed in detail in the companion to this volume, *BASIC* II.1; documentation to them will be given by cross-reference to it.

[7] See *BASIC* II.1, 259–65.

[8] See ibid., 232–46.

[9] See ibid., 221–32.

[10] See ʿAlqama, *Dīwān,* ed. D. al-Khaṭīb and I. Ṣaqqāl (Aleppo, 1969), 33–49; see also Sezgin, *GAS,* II, 120–22 who has argued persuasively for the contemporaneity of ʿAlqama and Imruʾ al-Qays.

[11] See *BASIC* II.1, 246–59.

[12] See ibid., 268–72.

subdivision of the powerful tribe of Bakr, which moved in the orbit of Ḥīra. A major itinerant poet of pre-Islamic Arabia, he was called *Sannajat al-ʿArab,* "the Cymbalist of the Arabs and Arabia." He too was one of the poets of the *Muʿallaqāt* or Suspended Odes, and visited the Ghassānids not only in the Provincia Arabia but also in Palestine.[13]

Those named above are some of the foremost poets of Arabia. Others, less highly esteemed by the Arab literary critics,[14] may be listed as follows.

8. Al-Muraqqish the Elder belonged to a subdivision of the large and powerful group Bakr, which moved in the orbit of Ḥīra and its Lakhmids. He, too, came over to the Ghassānid Arethas and, according to one source, became the king's secretary. He was a warrior who fought in the Basūs War, and was considered one of the *ushshāq,* the famous lovers in Arabic poetry who died of love (*welche sterben wenn sie lieben*).[15]

9. Al-Mutalammis also belonged to a subdivision of Bakr, left the Lakhmids of Ḥīra, and joined the Ghassānids together with his son, ʿAbd al-Mannān, who likewise was a poet. He and his son are associated with Bostra, a circumstance that strengthens the view that the metropolis of the Provincia Arabia was accessible to the Ghassānids.[16]

10. Like the two previous poets, al-Musayyab ibn ʿAlas came from northeastern Arabia. Al-Aʿshā was his maternal uncle. He came over to the Ghassānids, and his poetry was reminiscent of al-Nābigha's in its reference to their morals.[17]

11. Abū-Zubayd from the tribe of Ṭayyiʾ is explicitly described by the sources as a Christian, who retained his faith even after the rise of Islam. The caliph Omar employed him to collect the taxes, *ṣadaqāt,* of his group, but references in the sources suggest that he was a contemporary of Arethas.[18]

12. Labīd is one of two poets of the group ʿĀmir associated with the Ghassānids. One of his poems recorded the death of Arethas in specific terms, suggesting that he witnessed it. So he must be viewed as one of the poets who visited the Ghassānids.[19]

[13] See ibid., 272–78.

[14] In Arabic literary criticism, poets were often evaluated by layers, *ṭabaqat;* see Ibn Sallām, *Ṭabaqāt Fuḥūl al-Shuʿarāʾ*, a work that emphasizes the concept of layers in its very title.

[15] See C. Pellat, "Muraḳḳish," *EI*², VII, 603–4; Sezgin, *GAS,* II, 153–54; *BAFIC,* 455. For Heine's *Asra,* see *BAFIC,* 455–56.

[16] See *BASIC* II.1, 265–68.

[17] See Sezgin, *GAS,* II, 176–77, and Ibn Saʿīd al-Andalusi, *Nashwat al-Ṭarab,* ed. N. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (Amman, 1982), II, 657.

[18] For Abū-Zubayd, who is known by this tecnonymic rather than by his name, Ḥarmala, see Sezgin, *GAS,* II, 161–62.

[19] See *BASIC* II.1, 278–82. Some prose sources place Labīd with the Ghassānids at the battle of Yawm Ḥalīma. See Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shiʿr wa al-Shuʿarāʾ*, ed. A. M. Shākir (Cairo, 1966), I, 274.

13. The other poet who belonged to ʿĀmir is al-Nābigha al-Jaʿdi. The references to the Ghassānids in his poetry are clear, as he enjoyed their hospitality. He was a Mukhadram, a poet who was born before the rise of Islam but lived well into the Islamic period. He was considered one of the *muʿammarūn,* those endowed with extraordinary longevity.[20]

14. Finally, there was Yazīd ibn ʿAbd al-Madān, the lord of Najrān, who was related to the Ghassānids.[21]

Epilogue

The Ghassānids may have produced no distinguished pre-Islamic poets, but their descendants did, especially in medieval al-Andalus. Even in recent times, in the Mamālīk community of Egypt, which claimed descent from the Ghassānids, was born the major neoclassical poet al-Bārūdi (d. 1904). More recently still, the Arab Christian family of the Maʿloufs of Zaḥle in Lebanon, who similarly claim descent from the Ghassānids, produced a number of distinguished poets; the foremost of them was Fawzi al-Maʿlūf (d. 1930), whose work has been translated into five European languages.[22]

[20] See Sezgin, *GAS,* II, 245–47; A. Arazi, "al-Nābigha al-Djaʿdi," *EI*², VII, 842–43.

[21] See Abū al-Faraj Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (Beirut, 1958), XII, 11–14.

[22] For the poets of the Maʿlūf family, see R. al-Maʿlūf, *Shuʿarāʾ al-Maʿālifa* (Beirut, 1962). In his introduction, the author tries to document the Ghassānid descent of the Maʿlūfs and cites the names of distinguished Ghassānid poets in medieval times (9). For the epic poem of Fawzi, *ʿAlā bisāṭ al-rīḥ,* translated into five European languages, see 40–41.

IX

Oratory

Just as rhetoric was important and central in late antique literature,[1] so it was among the Arabs before the rise of Islam. Far less of pre-Islamic prose literature than poetry has survived; only a few fragments remain, some of which are suspect. Oratory represented the artistic arm of that prose. The *khatīb,* or orator, attained a very special position in pre-Islamic society, equaling and sometimes even surpassing that of the poet. Public speaking had perhaps an even more important function than poetry, since it was needed on various social, political, and military occasions. The Arabic sources describe in some detail the ideal orator and the venue of his oratory, even noting the staff or bow that he sometimes held in his hand. Certain tribes, such as Iyād and Tamīm, attained fame for producing the best orators.[2] To the former belonged Quss ibn Sāʿida, the most famous orator of pre-Islamic times, who was also the bishop of Najrān. He used to come to the fair of ʿUkāẓ, near Mecca, and preach there; the Prophet Muḥammad admired him and remembered his speech, which has been preserved and which is considered authentic.[3]

I. References to Ghassānid Oratory

As Arabs, the Ghassānids felt oratory to be important in all aspects of their life. Only a few extant oratorical compositions as well as a few significant references to that art remain to be examined in this context. The sources refer to the Ghassānids

[1] On rhetoric in Byzantium and late antiquity, see G. Kennedy, "The Classical Tradition in Rhetoric," in *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition: University of Birmingham Thirteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies 1979,* ed. M. Mullett and R. Scott (Birmingham, Eng., 1981), 20–34; H. Hunger, "The Classical Tradition in Byzantine Literature: The Importance of Rhetoric," in ibid., 35–47; and *Rhetoric in Byzantium,* ed. E. Jeffreys, Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies 11 (Aldershot, Eng., 2003).

[2] The *locus classicus* for all that pertains to Arabic oratory in pre-Islamic times is the detailed account in the ninth-century Abbasid author al-Jāḥiz, in his *al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn,* ed. A. Hārūn (Cairo, 1960), I, 306–410; see also J. Pedersen, "Khaṭīb," *EI*², IV, 1109–11, especially 1109–10.

[3] On Quss, see al-Jāḥiz, *al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn,* I, 308–9; C. Pellat, "Ḳuss, ibn-Sāʿida," *EI*², V, 528–29. Because his entry predates basic studies on Najrān and its Christianity, which began with the publication of *The Martyrs of Najrān,* Pellat's conclusion that Quss has no relation to Najrān is based on faulty assumptions and should be rejected.

themselves as great orators, and associate them with *manābir*, pulpits,[4] but nothing has survived of strictly *Ghassānid* oratory. Like its poetry, Ghassānid oratory followed the native Arabic tradition, which was strong and very well developed. But Byzantine influence on Ghassānid oratory—for example, in speeches delivered on the accession of a Ghassānid king or on his death—cannot be entirely ruled out. Evidently Arab oratory was known to the Byzantines; thus Choricius of Gaza speaks of "the clear-voiced orator of the Arabs," λιγὺν Ἀράβων ἀγορητήν.[5] Moreover, in section 25 of his *Laudatio Summi,* Choricius mentions a student who came from the Provincia Arabia to study with him and whose father was very well known in the province, γνώρισμα μέγιστον ὁ πατήρ. It is tempting to think that the father was the famous Ghassānid Arethas, and that the young man was one of his many sons.[6] As has become clear in this volume, Arethas was not only a doughty warrior but also a prince of peace, interested in the humanities: he was a connoisseur of poetry and apparently composed some himself. The career of Arethas' son Mundir, who succeeded him in A.D. 569, could reflect an education acquired in Gaza. He probably used Greek, the lingua franca of Byzantium, in corresponding with Justinianus, the *magister militum* in Oriens,[7] and in addressing a large Monophysite gathering, composed of individuals from various ethnic groups, in Constantinople in the early 580s.[8]

II. Influences on Ghassānid Oratory

One foreign influence on Ghassānid oratory that must have asserted itself was church homilies, inspired by Christianity—specifically, by Syriac Christianity, in view of the Ghassānids' intimate relations with the Monophysite Syriac church. But nothing of this religious oratory has survived.

Yet though Ghassānid speeches that display the influence of Christianity have not survived, speeches of other Christian Arabs have. The oration of Quss, the bishop of Najrān, has already been mentioned, but closer to the Ghassānids

[4] The term used is *manābir* (plural of *minbar*); see J. Pedersen, "Minbar," *EI*², VII, 73–76. The association of the Ghassānids with *manābir* is mentioned both by ʿAmr ibn Maʿdi Karib, in a dialogue with the orthodox caliph Omar, and in an eighth-century poem by al-Anṣāri, a contemporary of Bashshār ibn Burd. Both were proud of the Ghassānids, with whom they shared an ancestral homeland, Yaman. Because the two statements come from later Islamic times, their attribution may be called into question, but in any case they reflect the late Islamic perception of the Ghassānids. For the two statements, see al-Jāḥiz, *al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn,* I, 371; III, 117.

[5] *Choricii Gazaei opera,* ed. R. Förster and E. Richsteig (Leipzig, 1929), 79; discussed in *BASIC* I.1, 189–90.

[6] See above, Part II, Chapter 1, notes 90–91.

[7] See *BASIC* I.1, 373–78.

[8] See *BASIC* I.2, 900–908. As an orator in Greek and in Constantinople, he had for ancestors in the spirit the three Nabataean Arab rhetors and sophists of the third century who assumed the Greek names Heliodorus, Callinicus (who taught rhetoric in Athens itself), and Genethlius; see G. W. Bowersock, *Roman Arabia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), 135–36.

are two speeches written by the Ḥārithids of Najrān, their martyred relatives, around A.D. 520.

In his speech before he was martyred, al-Ḥārith ibn Kaʿb, the chief of the city, refers to Christ some seven times. He also expresses Arab sentiments, declaring that he received his wounds on his breast (that is, while facing the enemy and charging) and not on his back (while fleeing the battlefield as a coward). In so saying, Ḥārith, the martial saint, succeeds in integrating the Arab ethos within the Christian.[9]

The speech of Ruhm/Ruhayma bint Azmaʿ, the leading woman of Najrān, is slightly longer and breathes the spirit of Christianity even more strongly than that of Ḥārith. She more frequently names Christ, presented as the spiritual bridegroom for whose sake she prefers death to the renunciation of his name.[10]

In a number of respects, these two speeches are unique in the whole corpus of Arabic pre-Islamic prose literature.

1. The authenticity of this literature is often suspect, since many questions have been raised on the long process of its transmission down to the authors of later Islamic times, who included it in their works. But no such reservations apply to these two speeches: they were recorded in primary contemporary sources, based on eyewitness reports.[11]

2. The speeches resonate with Christian sentiments, and thus suggest the existence of a Christian Arabic literature before the rise of Islam.[12]

3. The two speeches were preserved not in their original Arabic but in Syriac, the lingua franca of *Oriens Christianus* in this period.[13]

4. Stylistically the two speeches are the unadorned prose of lay members of the community, not of literati or clerics like Quss, whose speech is certainly artistic in its use of rhyme and some verse. Almost all extant pre-Islamic prose literature, especially speeches that have survived, is couched not in plain but in highly stylized Arabic.[14]

[9] For the speech of al-Ḥārith, see *Martyrs,* 50–51.

[10] For the speech of Ruhm/Ruhayma, see ibid., 57–58.

[11] Simeon based his account on what he had heard at Jābiya from the refugees who came from Najrān. The phrase "Those who came from Najrān have said or recounted" occurs some eleven times in the course of the *Letter;* see *Martyrs,* 44, 50, 53, 59, 60, 61, 62, 64.

[12] The Jesuit Father Louis Cheikho spent a lifetime collecting traces and echoes of this literature in his *al-Naṣrāniyya wa Ādābuhā bayna ʿArab al-Jāhiliyya,* 2 vols. (Beirut, 1912–23). For the debate on this literature between Georg Graf and Anton Baumstark, including more recent contributions, see *BAFOC,* 435–43; *BAFIC,* 422–52.

[13] In Islamic times, Arabic superseded Syriac as the lingua franca of *Oriens Christianus*. The preservation of these two speeches represents a major contribution of Syriac to Arabic pre-Islamic literature; see the present writer in "The Syriac Sources for the History of the Arabs before the Rise of Islam," *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 256 (1998), 323–31.

[14] A cogent argument for the existence of Arabic artistic prose, *nathr fanni,* has been made by Z. Mubārak, *al-Nathr al-Fannī fi al-Qarn al-Rābiʿ* (Cairo, 1932), I, 34, 56.

The relevance of these two speeches to Ghassānid Christian oratory and prose in general is obvious. It was to the Ghassānid king Jabala, the father of Arethas, that some surviving inhabitants of Najrān came after the martyrdoms of ca. 520. They sought to invoke his aid as their relative against the Ḥimyarite king who had persecuted them. Among the letters they carried were these two speeches of Ḥārith and Ruhm, which were read to Jabala at Jābiya in Arabic. As has been pointed out, the Ghassānids looked upon their Najrānite relatives as role models, and as a result, a strong Najrānite presence developed in Ghassānland, exemplified by Najrān in Trachonitis and its votive church and by such pilgrimage sites as Maḥajja.[15] The Jābiya-Najrān axis clearly emerged around 520 and remained strong throughout the sixth century; at its end, sources attest the visit to the court of the Ghassānids by the distinguished Najrānite Yazīd ibn ʿAbd al-Madān.[16] Cultural and other exchanges, including relics of martyrs, must have been brisk between the two Christian centers; these two speeches are the earliest, nonmaterial examples of that traffic. Their sentiments must have resonated among the Ghassānids, especially in their churches during celebrations of the feast day of the martyrs. It is not difficult to imagine their impact on the Ghassānid converts to Christianity, whose enthusiasm was much enhanced by the martyrdom of their relatives in South Arabian Najrān.

III. Speeches of Ghassānid Poets

Although no religious prose compositions of Ghassānid provenance have survived, some secular ones have, associated with their poets.

Ḥassān is responsible for the most important of all references to Ghassānid oratory—both what he says in his odes and what is attributed to him in prose. In one of his unquestionably authentic poems, he says that his maternal uncle, *khāl,* was the orator who apparently headed a delegation from Medina to the Jābiya of the Ghassānids. Ḥassān then mentions his father as an orator who decisively spoke on a certain occasion in Medina, and finally he refers to himself as interceding with the Ghassānid Ibn Salmā for the liberation of three individuals, whom he names.[17] The verses make clear that the poet also prided himself on being an orator, in a family of orators.[18] In addition, the verse demonstrates the close relationship of Ḥassān to his patrons—it had begun with his uncle, in the previous generation. More importantly,

[15] On Najrān and Maḥajja, see *BASIC* II.1, 151–52; *BASIC* I.2, 828.

[16] See Abū al-Faraj Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (Beirut, 1958), XII, 7–14.

[17] See *Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit,* ed. W. ʿArafāt, Gibb Memorial New Series 25 (London, 1971), I, 40, verses 7, 8, 10–11.

[18] Compare a verse in which he taunts the tribe of Muzayna for not having produced an orator; ibid., p. 175, poem no. 69, verse 1.

it represents the court of the Ghassānids as one to which chiefs from Arabia would come as orators to present their cases before the Ghassānid kings.

A speech has survived, purportedly addressed by Ḥassān to the Ghassānid king, that enumerates the virtues of the Ghassānids in a contest between them and their rivals, the Lakhmids of Ḥīra. Ḥassān delivered the speech in rhymed prose; then the Ghassānid asked him to turn it into verse, which he did.[19] If the account is authentic (and there is no good reason to doubt that Ḥassān could compose rhymed prose),[20] it suggests that rivalry between the royal houses of Ghassān and Lakhm was an incentive for the composition of both verse and prose.

Another, longer speech, purportedly delivered by al-Nābigha, is also in rhyming prose. It is more detailed and more informative on the social and cultural life of the Ghassānids.[21] Its occasion was the liberation of some members of the tribal group Ḏubyān (to which al-Nābigha belonged), whom the Ghassānid king had captured. Most of the speech recounts the virtues of the Ghassānid king, but at the end al-Nābigha praises him by comparing him favorably to the Lakhmids.

A speech delivered by al-Nābigha might well have attained a celebrity, just as his poems did; it is quite likely that Ḥassān, his younger contemporary, heard of it. Ḥassān might have expanded and then turned into verse only the part on the rivalry of the two royal houses. The speech is an extremely eloquent and original piece of Arabic prose composition, and tradition is probably right to ascribe its composition to the distinguished poet. Its eloquence and intelligence resembles that which informed his *Iʿtidhāriya,* a poem composed on a similar occasion, when al-Nābigha presented a request that he hoped the king would grant.[22]

A hypercritical approach to such prose documents from pre-Islamic times may induce doubt about the authenticity of this speech or its attribution. But precise attribution is not as important as its authenticity, and the likelihood of the latter seems high. Most important in it are the terms the poet uses, which shed a great deal of light on the social life of the Ghassānids as a highly urban society.

[19] For the speech and the poem, see ibid., 489; a fuller version is provided in the older edition by ʿA. Barqūqi, *Sharḥ Dīwān Ḥassān* (Cairo, 1929), 181–82. In Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī,* XV, 124–25, it is al-Nābigha who is credited with the speech.

[20] The foremost neoclassical poet of modern Arabic verse, Aḥmad Shawqī (d. 1932), composed much rhyming prose and called it "the other poetry of the Arabic language," *Shiʿr al-ʿArabiyya al-Thāni*; see "al-Sajʿ," in *al-Mawsūʿa al-Shawqiyya*, ed. I. al-Abyāri (Beirut, 1998), VI, 112, line 1.

[21] See Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī,* XV, 124–25.

[22] He asked the Lakhmid king for pardon after some enemies had slandered him; see al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 29–39.

Appendix
Michael Psellos:
The ἐπιτάφιος λόγος on His Daughter

The funeral oration of Psellos on his daughter Styliane is one of the most famous ἐπιτάφιοι λόγοι in Byzantine literature.[1] Although its author follows the rules determining the structure of such orations, a section that describes the physical beauty of Styliane raises questions of propriety.[2] The description brings to mind the poem of al-Nābigha traditionally viewed as an ode on al-Mutajarrida, the Lakhmid queen and wife of al-Nuʿmān, his patron (discussed in Chapter 7).

One would not expect an author such as Psellos, who had worn the monastic habit for some time and was writing as a *Rhomaios* of the Christian empire, to mention and indeed dwell on breasts and thighs in an oration on his daughter.[3] But apparently he was carried away by his desire to praise his daughter's beauty by comparing her with Aphrodite. That Psellos was inspired by the statue of Aphrodite of Cnidus, to which he explicitly refers,[4] links his oration to the *qasīda* of al-Nābigha on the Lakhmid queen. The direct evidence that Praxiteles' masterpiece inspired Psellos in composing his eleventh-century oration strongly supports the inference discussed in Chapter 7 that the same statue inspired the Arab poet; such inspiration is in fact more appropriate for one describing a beautiful living queen than a father writing about a dead daughter.

In addition to the statue of Aphrodite, Psellos refers to the Song of Songs when describing his daughter's lips, neck, and stature.[5] In this case, Psellos invoked his ancestor in the spirit, Solomon,[6] to whom is ascribed the Song of Songs; perhaps the appearance of such sensual and sensuous imagery in the Bible itself encouraged Psellos to use similar language.

The explicit reference in Psellos to Solomon and his Song of Songs raises the question of whether the Arab poet, too, was also inspired by the Song of Songs, since his sextet of verses on the Ghassānids, it has been argued above, was inspired by scripture.[7] This is related to the still open question of whether the Bible in its entirety had an Arabic version before the advent of Islam. It appears likely that at least portions of the Bible were translated, such as one or more of the Gospels and

[1] For the oration, see *Bibliotheca Graeca Medii Aevi,* ed. C. N. Sathas, vol. 5, *Pselli Miscellanea* (1876; reprint, Athens, 1976), 62–73; for a translation with commentary, see Michael Psellos, *Mothers and Sons, Fathers and Daughters: The Byzantine Family of Michael Psellos,* ed. and trans. A. Kaldellis (Notre Dame, Ind., 2006), 111–38.

[2] See *Bibliotheca Graeca Medii Aevi,* V, 68–73.

[3] Ibid., 72.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., 70, 71, 73; see Song of Songs 3:3, 4:4, and 7:8 (verses identified by Kaldellis).

[6] Ibid., 70.

[7] See the closing lines of al-Nābigha's *bāʾiyya,* the rhyme in *B,* discussed in Chapter 7 (with note 64).

the Psalms.[8] Of all the books of the Old Testament, the Song of Songs would have appealed the most to a poetry-loving people such as the Arabs, and it may have been known to them in an Arabic version.

The Song of Songs would have been very fitting as a source of inspiration to an Arab poet such as al-Nābigha. Like his ode, and unlike the statue of Praxiteles, it is a work of *literary* art; moreover, it contains many references to Lebanon, a region well known to al-Nābigha from his visits to the Ghassānids in nearby Jābiya. Its two erotic protagonists—the Shulamite and a king, the Israelite Solomon[9]—recall al-Mutajarrida and her husband, the Lakhmid king al-Nuʿmān, in al-Nābigha's ode. So, the possible influence of the Song of Songs on al-Nābigha's poem may illustrate the rise and development of a Christian Arabic poetry, inspired by the Bible.

Thus the ode of al-Nābigha may represent the influence of not one but quite possibly two elements of Byzantinism on Arabic poetry: Christianity through its sacred book and the Hellenism of classical Greece through Praxiteles. In addition, the examination of Psellos' oration has shown the fruitfulness of the comparative approach in studying an Arabic ode, since that approach has drawn attention to the Song of Songs as a potential second source of inspiration and, through its explicit reference to Aphrodite of Cnidus, has strengthened the case, drawn only inferentially from the poem itself, for the influence of Hellenism.[10]

[8] An argument for this position is presented in *BAFOC,* 435–43; *BAFIC,* 422–30.

[9] Solomon was in al-Nābigha's thoughts when he wrote his ode asking for forgiveness from the Lakhmid king al-Nuʿmān: in it, he alluded to Solomon as the builder of Palmyra, according to the legend familiar to many pre-Islamic Arabs (see above, Chapter 7, note 31).

[10] I should like to thank my colleague, Eustratios Papaioannou, warmly for drawing my attention to Psellos' elegy on his daughter.

X

The Ghassānid Identity

It is now possible, drawing on the evidence provided by the volumes that make up *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century,* to present a clearer picture of the Ghassānids than ever before. Before they became *foederati* of Byzantium toward the end of the fifth century, the Ghassānids had lived in the highly sedentary south of the Arabian Peninsula. After their wanderings in western Arabia on their way to the north, they lived in urban centers such as Najrān and Medina/Yathrib, then finally settled in the highly urban Byzantine Diocese of Oriens.

Of all the *foederati* of Byzantium from the fourth to the seventh centuries, they were the strongest and longest lasting. For a century and a half, they fell under the powerful threefold influence of Byzantinism: Roman political and military institutions, the Christian faith, and Hellenic culture. In their professional, social, cultural, and spiritual life, the Ghassānids' response was broad and sometimes intense. Unlike the Germanic tribes who were *foederati* in the Roman Occident, they were related, ethnically and linguistically, to the large Arab component in the demographic landscape of Oriens: namely, their predecessors in the limitrophe, the Arabs of Petra and Palmyra, who had lived in Oriens before it was annexed by Rome and even before Alexander conquered the region, and who became *Rhomaioi* after the promulgation of the Edict of Caracalla in A.D. 212. Thus the Ghassānid Arabs, though newcomers, were not utter aliens in their new environment; they were living among congeners, and all spoke the same language in their everyday lives.

This volume concludes by assessing the effect on the Ghassānids of their long residence in Oriens, under the powerful influence of Byzantium. Were they assimilated, integrated, or acculturated as they moved in the orbit of Byzantium, drifting away from their Arab peninsular moorings and losing their identity as Arabs? To answer this question, each of the three components of Byzantinism is considered.

The Roman Component

As *foederati* of Byzantium, the Ghassānids' primary function was military, and they assimilated much of the Roman military system. As Arab peninsular warriors, they had fought in lines, *ṣufūf,* in individual combat and had employed classic

Arab tactics—the charge (*karr*) and, when necessary, the retreat (*farr*). Now they were organized in and fought as units, like the Roman army formations: they became a *jaysh,* an army, structured by *katība* ("division"; plural *katā'ib*).[1] The *cuneus* or wedge had been well known to the *foederati* since the days of Queen Mavia in the fourth century. The Ghassānids became cataphracts and their horses were also mailed. In battle, they invoked new patrons such as Jesus, the Roman Sergius and other Christian saints, and Job.[2] When Arethas' father, Jabala, died in A.D. 528, the short obituary notice observed that "he had much experience in the use of Roman arms."[3] This assimilation is reflected in the Latin and Greek terms acquired from the Byzantine military establishment that at different times entered the Arabic language: these included *castrum, strata,* ζωγράφος, *miliarium, veredus,* and *stabulum,* which became *qaṣr, sirāṭ, zukhruf, mīl, barīd,* and *iṣṭabl*.[4]

Byzantium also integrated the Ghassānid military aristocracy into its structure, as reflected in the titles and honors it conferred on their commanders.

1. In the *cursus honorum,* the titles *clarissimus, spectabilis,* and *gloriosissimus* (and its variants) were conferred on the officers of various ranks in the Ghassānid army.

2. The honor *patricius,* most prestigious though not related to any office, was also granted.[5]

3. The title *basileus/*βασιλεύς, *malik,* was conferred with its insignia.[6]

4. *Flavius,* the *nomen gentilicium,* was also bestowed on certain members of the Ghassānid aristocracy.[7]

The last three titles are particularly significant for an analysis of the problem of identity.

[1] Procopius, too, when referring to the contingent of the Ghassānids at the battle of Callinicum, refers to their army, στράτευμα; *History,* I.xvii.7. The term *jarrār,* "commander of a thousand," was most probably a translation of Greek χιλίαρχος. *Kardūs* could have derived from *cohors* or *exercitus*.

[2] For these new military patrons of the Ghassānids, see *Dīwān al-Nābigha al-Ḏubyānī,* ed. M. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1977), 53, verse 16; cf. the old pagan slogans in war: *labbayka rabba Ghassān! rājilihā wa al-fursān*—"at your service, Lord of Ghassān! their infantry and their cavalry."

[3] Zacharia of Mytilene, *Historia Ecclesiastica,* ed. E. W. Brooks, CSCO, Scriptores Syri, ser. 3, vol. 5 (Paris, 24), 64.

[4] For other Latin terms that entered Arabic in this pre-Islamic period, see the present writer in "Latin Loan Words," in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics,* ed. K. Versteegh (Leiden, 2008), III, 6–8. The ζωγράφος was the painter who polished the shields of the Roman soldiers; see G. Bowersock, "A Report on Arabia Provincia," *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971), 230, and *BAFIC,* 477 note 74.

[5] For the sequence of the three titles and for *patricius,* see *BALA* II, 115–37.

[6] See *BASIC* I.1, 109–17.

[7] See ibid., 509–10, and *BALA* I, 78–79. This imperial *gentilicium* was officially conferred and not personally assumed by those who bore it, and so it was conceived long ago by Nöldeke (*GF,* 15). For *Flavius* as a status designation, see J. Keenan, "The Names Flavius and Aurelius as Status Designations in Later Roman Egypt," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 11 (1973), 33–84; 13 (1974), 283–304.

a. The title associated with the patriciate was almost a tecnonym, since the *patricius* was called *Pater Augusti*. It related the Arab incumbent of that honor to a group of individuals, the *patricii,* who belonged to various non-Arab ethnic groups in the empire whose affiliations lay outside the circle of his clan (Jafnid) and his tribal group (Ghassān).

b. The flattering title Flavius connected the honor directly to the family of the emperor, the second Flavians, the house to which the Byzantine emperors started to relate themselves in the reign of Constantine. With regard to lineage, it was even more telling than *patricius.* The term affiliated the Ghassānid ruler most clearly and explicitly not with his own clan or tribe but with an alien personage who was not an Arab.

The titulature of the Ghassānid king no longer had the patronymic or tecnonymic so characteristic of the Ghassānids; it came closer to the *tria nomina* of the Roman world, although that nomenclature was in decline in late antiquity. It represented a dramatic transformation, especially since Arabs such as the Ghassānids tended to conceive of the world as bimorphic—Arab and non-Arab, ʿAjam (literally, "Dumb").

c. The title of king, *basileus,* functioned similarly. It connected the Ghassānids to a group of "barbarian" rulers, also given that title. These formed what has been termed "the family of kings" around the Byzantine ruler, who was himself not king but *autokrator, imperator,* until the reign of Heraclius; then, in A.D. 629, the short title Πιστὸς ἐν Χριστῷ Βασιλεύς, "King Trusting in Christ," replaced the long one.[8]

The Christian Component

Of the three components of Byzantinism, it was Christianity that proved to be the most influential in the life and the history of the Ghassānids. And of all the Arab groups before the rise of Islam who converted to that faith, it was the Ghassānids whose lives were most fully permeated by Christianity.

The importance of Christianity to them was reflected in their services to it: they revived Monophysitism around A.D. 540; they protected the Holy Land; they spread Christianity in the Arab area of Oriens and northern Arabia, especially during the long episcopate of Theodore; they erected churches and monasteries; their king presided over church councils; and their social life was so profoundly suffused by their faith that poets such as al-Nābigha and Ḥassān, from distant parts of the Arabian Peninsula, noted its effect on their character. Christianity also provided them with two new role models: the holy man and the

[8] See the present writer in "The Iranian Factor in Byzantium during the Reign of Heraclius," *DOP* 26 (1972), 295–320.

ascetic. Ecclesiastical writers now gave their rulers such titles as *Christophilos, Eusebes* (Christ-loving and pious).[9]

The Christianized Arabs benefited in two ways from St. Paul's emphasis on the universalism of Christianity and on removing the barriers between Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian.

First, the cloud of biblical opprobrium under which they lived as Ishmaelites and Hagarenes—that is, descendants not of Sarah but of her maidservant, Hagar, who bore Ishmael—was lifted. Influential saints in the Jordan valley, such as St. Euthymius, helped the Ishmaelites enter into the new fold of Christianity.[10]

Second, Christianity enlarged the breadth of their affiliation. Before their conversion to Christianity, they viewed themselves as positioned within three concentric circles: their house, the Jafnids; within their clan, the Ghassānid; surrounded by the large tribal group, the Azd, their blood relations. They were proud of this strictly Arab, peninsular lineage, which was sung by their poets.[11] Now a new, non-Arab, dimension of affiliation was added. They became not only Christian Arabs—that is, a group of Christians within the wide group of ethnic Arabs who adopted Christianity—but Arab Christians, a group of Arabs within the still wider and all-embracing circle of the Christian oikoumene, which encompassed the whole of the Mediterranean world. The Ghassānid place in this large Christian affiliation is best revealed in the career of Arethas and his son, Mundir. The former presided over a church council of the Monophysite movement, when that confession was troubled by the Tritheistic heresy of Eugenius and Conon; the second presided in Constantinople over representatives of the entire Monophysite world, from Egypt as well as Oriens.[12]

The Hellenic Component

The Oriens to which the Ghassānids belonged had been a Seleucid territory for some three centuries before it fell under Rome's rule with the settlement of Pompey in 63 B.C. It thus had a strong Greek substrate, which persisted throughout the seven centuries of the Roman and the Byzantine periods. Greek received an impetus when the empire moved from Rome to Constantinople and was Christianized: the sacred book was a Bible composed of a Greek version of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) and the Greek New Testament, and the Church Fathers wrote in Greek.

[9] For this ecclesiastical title, see *BASIC* I.2, 810–14, 816.

[10] For the many references to St. Euthymius and the Arabs, see the index of *BAFIC,* s.v. Euthymius.

[11] Al-Nābigha (and not just Ḥassān, their relative) refers to the Ghassānids' descent from ʿAmr ibn ʿAmir; see *Dīwān,* 42, verse 9.

[12] See *BASIC* I.2, 805–24, 900–908.

So the Ghassānids, as *foederati* of Byzantium in Oriens, were not strangers to the Greek language. The Greek communities of the Seleucid period continued to live in Oriens; the closest political entity to the Ghassānids was the Greek Decapolis, with which they had very close relations. But as Semites, they were closer both ethnically and linguistically to the Aramaeans in Oriens and Mesopotamia, who spoke Syriac/Aramaic. And it was an Arab king, Abgar the Great, who made Edessa the spiritual capital of the Semitic Christian Orient, the counterpart of Antioch for Graeco-Roman Oriens. Nevertheless, there is clear evidence that Greek played a role in the social and cultural life of the Ghassānids.

Despite their strong sense of Arab identity and the fact that the Arabic script appears for the first time in Oriens among the Ghassānids in the Usays inscription, almost all their inscriptions are in Greek. These are found in the reign of Arethas; of Mundir, his son; and of Nuʿmān, his grandson.[13] Greek even appears on the seal of the last Ghassānid king, Jabala ibn al-Ayham, before the fall of Oriens to Islam.[14] This was understandable; Greek was the language of the culturally dominant, and in the mostly non-Arab portion of Oriens it was much better known than Arabic. Because the rulers relied on inscriptions on monuments to disseminate information, Greek was the right language to use to achieve their purpose.[15]

Although the pagan aspects of the classical heritage of Greece were sharply condemned by the church, Greek science and medicine retained their prestige and remained indispensable. Hence the appearance of Greek terms, naturalized in and incorporated into Arabic; three discussed in this volume are *diryāq,* "antidote," from θηριακή; *mumis,* "prostitute," from μιμάς; and *bayṭar,* "veterinarian," from ἱππιατρός.

The Arab Foundation

The Ghassānids' strong sense of Arab identity is reflected in various ways, which may be summarized as follows.

1. Their lineage. This involved the house they belonged to, Jafnids; the clan, Ghassān; and the larger tribal group, Azd. They were aware and proud of these affiliations.

The Ghassānids were often called "the Sons of Jafna," ʿAwlād Jafna, and the

[13] See *BASIC* I.1, 258–61, 489–512, 505. The Ḥarran inscription is in both Arabic and Greek (325–31).

[14] See the present writer in "Sigillography in the Service of History: New Light," in *Novum Millennium: Studies on Byzantine History and Culture, Dedicated to Paul Speck,* ed. C. Sode and S. Takács (Aldershot, Eng., 2001), 369–77.

[15] Even Shāpūr I, the son of the founder of the Sasanid state and archenemy of Rome, found it necessary to give a Greek version of his *Res Gestae* in the famous trilingual inscription; see R. Frye, *The History of Ancient Iran,* Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft 3 (Munich, 1984), 371–73, and *BALA* III, 299–301.

king or prince was called "the son of Jafna," Ibn Jafna. The term *usra,* "family," is used by a poet to refer collectively to the royal Ghassānid house, demonstrating that outsiders perceived the Ghassānids' strong family ties.[16] Al-Nābigha, one of their principal panegyrists, enumerated almost all the important members of the dynasty and presented them as a family in a quartet of verses.[17]

The clan, Ghassān, is not mentioned as often as Jafnid, but when it does appear it is as an expression of a sense of pride.[18] Thus it appears in one of Ḥassān's poems as *Yā La Ghassān,* a war cry shouted during one of their battles with the Persians that displayed their celebrated endurance, *ṣabr.*[19] In another poem, he named both the clan and the larger group, Azd, thereby expressing his own and the Ghassānids' pride in both.[20]

2. Their onomasticon. Whereas the Arab groups who preceded them, such as the Ituraeans, the Nabataeans, and the Edomites, had assumed Graeco-Roman names and been almost fully assimilated by the Graeco-Roman establishment, the Ghassānids scrupulously kept their names Arab: Ḥārith, Jabala, al-Mundir, al-Nuʿmān, ʿAmr, Ḥujr, and so on. So too did Ghassānid women, with such names as Hind, Layla, and Ḥalīma; the exception, Māriya (after the Virgin Mary), was assumed for obvious reasons.

Their sobriquets likewise were Arab, often reflecting their Arab ethos—particularly hospitality—such as *Qātil al-Jūʿ*, "the Killer of Hunger," and *Maʾ al-Samāʾ*, "Water of Heaven."[21] Other Arabic nicknames included *al-Aʿraj,* "the Lame"; *al-Ayham,* "the Irresistibly Courageous"; *al-Aṣfar,* "the Yellow" (Arabic for Flavius); and *Qaṭām,* "Eagle." Even when they set up a Greek inscription, they simply transliterated the Arabic name: thus *Qātil al-Jūʾ* became Καθελόγος, Kathelogos.

The Ghassānid self-confidence demonstrated in their retention of a strictly Arab onomasticon must have been enhanced and flattered in the latter half of the sixth century, when no less a personage than the daughter of Justin II and his wife Sophia was given the name "Arabia." This surprising choice for a Byzantine

[16] See ʿAbīd al-Abraṣ, *Dīwān,* ed. T. Asʿad (Kuwait, 1989), 56, verse 4.

[17] For this quartet, see Al-Nābigha, *Dīwān,* 166; for its analysis and translation into German, see Nöldeke, *GF,* 33–34, verses 1–4.

[18] It appears at the end of Simeon of Bēth-Arshām's *Letter* on the martyrs of Najrān (see *Martyrs*, xxxi, 63) and in the name of a monastery (see *BASIC* I.2, 833–35).

[19] See *Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit,* ed. W. ʿArafāt, Gibb Memorial New Series 25 (London, 1971), I, 308, verse 13.

[20] Ibid., 183, verse 2.

[21] For these two Ghassānid sobriquets and their connotations, see Hishām al-Kalbī, *Jamharat al-Nasab,* ed. N. Ḥasan (Beirut, 1987), 616, 618–19.

princess demonstrated the influence that the Ghassānids wielded in imperial circles and reflects the early inclination of Justin II and Sophia to Monophysitism.[22]

3. Their location. The Arabness of the Ghassānids must have been kept alive by their having settled in the limitrophe, adjoining the Arabian Peninsula; they therefore lived next to the great ethnic reservoir of Arabs and Arabic-speaking groups with whom they had to deal in peace and in war, whether conducting punitive expeditions or defending the frontier against marauding pastoralists. Their responsibility to fight the "Unknown Wars"[23] in the Peninsula helped keep alive their sense of ethnic and linguistic identity.

The Ghassānids had also some important contacts with the Outer Shield: Arab tribes beyond the frontier who were on friendly terms with Byzantium. Thus, the Ghassānids never lost their connection with the Arabs and the Arabic language.

4. Their script. Script has always been a badge of identity. The epitaph of the most distinguished federate Arab figure in the fourth century, Imruʾ al-Qays, was engraved by *foederati* in Arabic, expressed in the alphabet of the Nabataean Arabs, which was the Aramaic-based script then prevalent in Oriens. No federate inscriptions have turned up so far for the Salīḥids of the fifth century. But with the advent of the Ghassānids, the Arabicization of the script of federate inscriptions appeared for the first time in the Zabad and Usays inscriptions. In these two inscriptions, especially in the Usays inscription, a new Arabic script suggestive of the later *naskhi* style is used, clearly differentiated from the Nabataean script; it can easily be interpreted as an expression of the Ghassānid Arab identity. And if, as seems likely, the Ghassānids inspired the translation (or retranslation) into Arabic of the Gospels and other portions of the Bible rather than depending on a Syriac or a Greek version, those translations also would have been an expression of their Arab identity.

5. Their sponsorship of poetry. Perhaps most important, the court of the Ghassānids was a great venue for Arabic poetry; there were recited some splendid panegyrics, which still stand in the front rank of Arabic poetry. This poetry blazoned forth their virtues in war and in peace. Poetry was then the most effective means of propaganda, used to protect and enhance the image and prestige of the Ghassānids in the Arabian Peninsula. This reliance on poetry kept them close to the Arabic language, a closeness that became even more intimate when they themselves produced some poets, such as ʿAdī ibn al-Raʿlāʾ.[24] And a number of their

[22] See *BASIC* I.1, 390–93.

[23] Major military operations were conducted by the Ghassānids in the service of Byzantium, nowhere mentioned in the Byzantine sources but documented in detail in the contemporary poetry—hence their description as the "Unknown Wars."

[24] For the verse composed by one of their chiefs, Qātil al-Jūʿ, "the Killer of Hunger," see Hishām al-Kalbī, *Jamharat al-Nasab,* 619.

kings and phylarchs—including Arethas, as his encounter with the poet ʿAlqama reveals—were connoisseurs of Arabic poetry.

6. Their perception by others. The Ghassānids' self-awareness as Arabs must have been bolstered by the official Byzantine practice of always referring to them as *Saraceni/Sarakenoi,*[25] even though the highest Byzantine titles, such as *patricii* and *gloriosissimi,* were bestowed on their rulers. But those rulers, like the rank and file of the Ghassānids, remained for the Byzantines *Saracens*. Moreover, they lacked the legal status of Roman citizens, *cives* or *Rhomaioi*. Although *civitas* may have been extended to their kings and to distinguished members of the royal house, the rest remained only *foederati*.

The Arab-Byzantine Ghassānid Identity

The interaction of four elements outlined above created a new Ghassānid identity, which may be described as Arab-Byzantine. It was richer, inclusive, and multifaceted, and was the result of a century and a half of life spent in the service of Byzantium as *foederati* fighting its wars and as Christians following the teachings and ideals of their faith. This may be illustrated in one area where these elements interacted.

In their function as *foederati* for the empire, the Ghassānid exercised one of the twin virtues of their Arab *murūʾa*—courage and endurance in battle. This was professionalized and sophisticated by the Roman element when the Ghassānids were trained to fight in the Roman manner. The new Arab warrior, Romano-Arab, was then affected in the performance of his duty by the most powerful component of Byzantinism, namely, Christianity. The wars that the Ghassānids were fighting were now *spiritualized* and made more meaningful by being harnessed to the ideals of their religious faith, as they undertook religious war in defense of the Christian Roman Empire and its Holy Land in Oriens against Persians and Lakhmid Arabs. In short, the Ghassānids now fought as *milites Christi,*[26] whom they invoked in their battle cries as they did saints such as Sergius, their Roman patron saint.

Christianity also spiritualized whatever chivalry the Ghassānids possessed in war and peace. The seeds of chivalry were sown in the pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula, and its most outstanding representative was the black Abyssinian knight

[25] For a very interesting account of the employment of this term in later Islamic times, see A. Savvides, "Some Notes on the Terms Agarenoi, Ismaelitai, and Sarakenoi in Byzantine Sources," *Byzantion* 67 (1997), 89–96; see also the present writer in *RA,* 123–41, and more recently in I. Shahîd, "Saracens," *EI*², IX, 27–28.

[26] See A. von Harnack, *Militia Christi: Die christliche Religion und der Soldatenstand in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (Tübingen, 1905; reprint, Darmstadt, 1963), still a standard work on the subject. The introduction to the English translation offers some useful observations on the views of the author; see *Militia Christi: The Christian Religion and the Military in the First Three Centuries,* trans. and intro. D. M. Gracie (Philadelphia, 1981).

ʿAntara; but his was a secular form of chivalry untouched by any religious sentiment (or so it seems in what has survived of his poetry). In the case of the Ghassānids, the spiritual dimension was imparted by Christianity. And so the Arab *miles Christi* in the Orient, represented by the Ghassānid, foreshadowed in a modest way his counterpart, the chivalrous *miles Christi* of medieval western Europe.

The retention and cultivation by the Ghassānids of a strong Arab identity as the foundation of their new inclusive Arab-Byzantine status had important consequences for the limitrophe in Oriens and for Oriens in its entirety. The Arab *Rhomaioi* of Oriens, Nabataean and Palmyrene, had been assimilated by the Graeco-Roman establishment, and their Arab identity slowly eroded. The *foederati* of the Byzantine Oriens, who were newcomers from the Arabian Peninsula, infused fresh Arab blood into the limitrophe and thereby revived the strong Arab presence in Oriens, which had been almost extinguished by the gradual Romanization of the Arabs of the region following the Edict of Caracalla. Unlike the Nabataeans and Palmyrenes, the great majority of the *foederati* remained legally noncitizens. The *foederati,* especially the Ghassānids, effected the Arabization of the limitrophe, as illustrated most clearly by the emergence of their court as a great venue for Arabic poetry. This Ghassānid achievement influenced Oriens both in the Byzantine period and after the Muslim Conquest. They first made Oriens a tricultural region, consisting of Graeco-Roman, Aramaic-Syriac, and Arab sectors. In so doing, the Ghassānids also prepared the way for the future and greater Arabization of the region after it was conquered by the Muslims in the 630s and the Umayyad dynasty was established in Oriens, now Arab Muslim Bilād al-Shām.

Addenda et Corrigenda

Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century

In some sixty pages, 138–201, I opened in great detail the dossier of the Arab Queen Mavia and her extraordinary career. Since then a torrent of studies has appeared on Mavia and in some of them it has been maintained that Mavia converted to Christianity *after* her victory over the emperor Valens. This is a view that cannot be accepted, since it reflects an erroneous view of the state of Arab Federate religious life in the fourth century. The rebuttal of this view will take too much space; hence I limit myself to expressing my dissent and to saying that my article on this point will be written in due course.

Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century

At pp. 540–43 I made a few observations, following Michael Avi-Yonah, that the Edomites to whom the Herods of Judaea belonged were an Arab people, and I had considered them such in *RA*. Since then, I have become convinced that they were indeed Arabs. My conclusions were expressed in an article titled "The Ethnic Origin of the Edomites," which will appear soon in *ADAJ*, the Annual of the Department of Antiquities in Jordan.

Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century I.1

On pp. 318–22, I drew attention to the curious and most unusual name for a member of the imperial family, namely Arabia, which the daughter of Justin II and Sophia had. I suggested that since the Ghassānid Arabs and their king, Arethas, were in the good graces of the empress Theodora, as good Monophysites, as were Justin II and his wife, Sophia, before they changed and came over to the Chalcedonian position, the assumption of the name Arabia was intelligible in this context, as an expression of pro-Ghassānid sympathy on the part of some members of the imperial family.

Since then, a new light has come from the *Anecdota* of Procopius on Theodora and the Arabs. In XVII, 14–23, he discusses a lover of Theodora (before she became empress) to whom she bore a son, John, but whom she did not want. The father then took him away to Arabia. The sentence in the *Anecdota* in which Arabia occurs reads, ἐς τὴν Ἀραβίαν ἐς ἥνπερ ὥρμητο ἀπιὼν ᾤχετο, which the translator of

Procopius, H. B. Dewing, rendered, "He went his way to Arabia, whither he was bound." "Whither he was bound" does not make much sense to me as a translation of the Greek. The crucial word in the sentence is ὥρμητο, the pluperfect of the verb in the middle voice. Our colleague Stratis Papaioannou surely is right when he translated the clause as "whence he came, from where he came," i.e., from Arabia. This makes the lover an Arab, either from Arabia in Egypt, mentioned in Egeria's account of her visit, or the *provincia* Arabia, a welcome datum to the relation of Theodora to Arabia and to the name of Justin II's daughter.

For "marriage" at line 16 of p. 319 on Arabia, read "birth."

As early as 1919, E. Stein in his *Studies* lamented the fact that Byzantinists did not pay enough attention to the oriental sources, in this case, the Syriac; see *BASIC* I.1, p. 449. More recently, Peter Brown, the father of late antiquity, has vigorously stated the case for the importance of these sources; see my *BALA*, II, p. XVIII. The Persian War did *not* start in AD 530. The incontestable Syriac sources record its earlier outbreak; as early as 528, Byzantium lost the Battle of Thannuris, in which Belisarius took part as the Byzantine commander; see *BASIC* I.1, 76–79 and also the chapter "The First Persian War (527–532)," pp. 62–82. Apparently Croke ("Justinian, Theodora, and the Church of Saints Sergius and Bachhus," *DOP* 60 [2006]: 25–63) missed that detailed discussion of this war. Furthermore, his view on the inception of the First Persian War of Justinian's reign is derivative, emanating from G. Greatrex, whom he cites. On p. 51, n. 131, Croke also refers to the suppression of the name Bacchus and suggests a new explanation, different from mine, expressed in my article, pp. 478-479. I leave it to the reader of the two articles to decide which the more plausible explanation is.

Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century II.1

At pp. 267–68 I discussed the poet al-Mutalammis, who deserted the Lakhmids and came over to the Ghassānids, together with his son ʿAbd al-Mannān. In note 231, p. 268 I suggested that the theophoric name ʿAbd al-Mannān was Islamic and that *Mannān* was one of the many names of God in the Qurʿān, the so-called al-Asmāʾ al-Ḥusnā. This was an error since *Mannān* does not appear as one of these, which come to 99, although the concept of *mann*, gracious giving, is important in the Qurʿān as one of God's attributes. So ʿAbd-al-Mannān is a Christian theophoric name to be added to others, which the Christians assumed in pre-Islamic times, such as ʿAbd al-Masīḥ and ʿAbd-Allāh. For al-Asmāʾ al-Ḥusnā, see L. Gardet in *EI*², I, 714–17.

One of the many good reviews of *BASIC* II.1 was that of H. Gaube in *BZ* 99, no. 2 (2006): 691–93. The review is positive and it has described in detail the contents and the structure of the volume in such a way as to arouse the interest of the prospective reader, to whom, however, the following observations are addressed:

a. The sedentariness of the Ghassānids has the consensus of all medieval Arab sources and has been explained in great detail in *BASIC* II.1, 1–20. The Ghassānids crossed the threshold of sedantariness, which cannot be doubted by a strange reference in Gaube's review to Makka, which *inter alia* does not have to be a Paris or a Vienna to be a city. *Prachtvolle* on Jabiya's buildings is not my description as Gaube suggests, but that of R. Brünnow, his *Landsmann*, who visited it toward the end of the nineteenth century (ibid. 103–4).

b. Hamza and his list of Ghassānid buildings. Nöldeke was puzzled by Hamza's list but that was before Alois Musil, and more recently P. Michele Piccirillo, discovered Ghassānid structures. Ernst Herzfeld made the important contribution of discovering Hamza's source, *Akhbār Mulūk Ghassān* (which Nöldeke incomprehensibly missed) and so he rehabilitated Hamza and established him as a reliable source of the Ghassānids, for which see *BASIC* II.1, 342–45. Gaube must have missed pp. 343–45, crucial for rehabilitating Ḥamza.

c. Brünnow vouched for the Ghassānid origin of Mushatta. I revived his view only because of the discovery of a Ghassānid church in the same region, that of Madaba. I also added that Mushatta may have only a Ghassānid substrate, as many Umayyad structures undoubtedly have. Mushatta is anepigraphic and, so, who built it is still an open question.

d. Ghassānid social and cultural history does not depend only on Ghassānid structures, as Gaube seems to think. But these are not irrelevant and are indeed helpful. Their history depends on authentic contemporary literary sources, mainly poetry, as has been illustrated in this present volume, *BASIC* II.2, in great detail.

Ḥuwwarīn/Evaria was discussed many times in both *BASIC* I.1 and 2, but more significantly in *BASIC* II.1 (index, p. 462), which has presented the archaeologist with a roadmap of Ghassānid and Umayyad sites to be excavated. Since the appearance of *BASIC* II.1 in 2002, Ḥuwwarīn, nowadays called Hawarine, has been excavated; see W. Khoury, "Hawarine: Primiers résultats, campagnes 2003–2004," in *Mélanges Jean-Pierre Sodini*, *Travaux et Mémoires* 15 (2005), 299–316.

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